

Testimony of Lisa Haver  
School Reform Commission  
May 21, 2015

First topic: School District Priorities

The SRC has paid \$1.37 million—so far— to its lawyers to represent the district in a case filed over two years ago by a former employee in a whistle-blower case. Even after the jury's ruling that first amendment rights were violated, the SRC's lawyers are still filing appeals. The employee was only awarded back pay, not damages, but the SRC is still spending taxpayer dollars to its lawyers to file appeals.

They also continue to pay the firm of Blank, Rome to file unnecessary motions in the complaint which APPS filed in November which asks the SRC to do one thing: obey the law. Stop violating the PA Sunshine Act. No money damages are being asked for. Can and should the SRC obey the Sunshine Act? Easily. So what is the holdup? Coming to a settlement would mean an end to the gravy train to Blank, Rome. Which, again, the people of the city pay for, of course.

Question: how much has the SRC paid Blank, Rome so far on the Sunshine Act complaint brought by APPS? Does the SRC have any intention of settling this complaint and voluntarily obeying the Sunshine Act?

Second topic: giving public school to private operator without community meetings

Young Scholars, the private operator approved by the SRC to manage Douglass Elementary School, has failed. In another example of doing whatever it feels like, regardless of laws or rules or regulations or responsibility to district stakeholders, the SRC actually approached Mastery to take over management of the school. They now just make stuff up, like calling it a "turnaround of a turnaround." Without scheduling even one community meeting, the SRC will vote to hand over a public school to a private charter operator. Do we know how all of this went down? No, the SRC's latest trick is to speed up the process of closing or turnaround schools, as it did last month with a high school in Kensington. In fact, this resolution was added just two days ago. It

doesn't mean as much when SRC resolutions are released earlier when major resolutions can be inserted two days before the SRC vote.

Question: will the SRC postpone this vote in order to hold community meetings, as it is required to do, before handing over a public school to a charter?

### Topic 3: Resolution A-22 Contracts for Blended Learning

SRC will vote to award contracts to a number of corporations including Redbird, Think Through Math, Mind Research, First in Math, Achieve 3000, Reinhart, Think Cerca, Edmentum, Compass, Defined Learning, Educurious, Edgenuity, Fuel and **Pearson**, to install "Blended Learning"—

which puts students in front of computers instead of teachers for a significant portion of instructional time.

Question: how will this work, will parents be notified of this change, which schools will be affected?

### Topic 4: June SPP

The SRC has scheduled a "get to know your SRC members" forum on June 1. Although there is a moderator who is an established journalist, the SRC is requiring that all questions be sent to them ahead of time. Once again, we see the SRC trying to present the illusion of transparency while actually making sure, by reviewing the questions ahead of time, that there is none. Members of APPS have said time after time that public questions should be asked and answered in public.

Question: will the SRC respect the intelligence of the public and honor journalistic integrity by taking public questions from those present at the SPP in June?