

Thursday, December 3, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONTRACTS COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held December 3, 2020, by video conference, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Joseph Sokolovic, and Joseph Lombard. Board member Dr. Sosimo Fabian was present.

Supt. Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the committee's minutes of October 22, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the facilities department lease for property at 1085 Connecticut Avenue.

Supt. Testani said we have been working over the last several months with the city to try to find another viable option to renewing this lease. He said the city's public facilities department could not find space, particularly indoor for vehicle storage. He said talks with the owner led to a three-year lease. He said the city has a possible solution to fulfill the board's needs in the future.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said the owner was very adamant that the board would have to vacate the property if a lease was not negotiated. Marlene Siegel, chief financial officer, said the facility was 44,876 square feet. The

superintendent said the board uses all the space, but the police parks some vehicles in the parking lot outside.

The superintendent said he did some of his own searching for commercial real estate and worked with Max Perez, but apparently commercial real estate is a hot commodity in the city currently. One option located was priced at \$6.5 million.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said he guessed between 15 and 20 vehicles were stored inside the building. He said the police does not reimburse the board for parking about ten vehicles outside the building, but if asked to pay they might just move the cars somewhere else.

In response to a question, the superintendent said the downside to the lease arrangement are the lease costs incurred by the board as opposed to being incorporated into a city facility.

Ms. Siegel said the three-year extension was negotiated instead of a five-year extension. Retention of the annual three-percent multiplier was also negotiated, which is usually higher in three-year leases. The annual costs will grow from \$266,000 in 2020 to \$292,608 in the third year.

Mr. Weldon said the city charter allowed for three-year contracts with two one-year options, so the total contracted time could go up to five years. He said it was good that the district proactively sought a shorter term. Ms. Siegel said the district attempted to negotiate a shorter term, but the landlord was not interested.

Supt. Testani said from discussions with the city at least two years was needed for the future solution.

Mr. Lombard moved “*to refer this matter to the full board with a recommendation to approve the lease as discussed.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on a solicitation of absence management and substitute staffing services.

Ms. Siegel said three years ago an RFP was issued for absence management and substitute staffing services, and Kelly Educational Services was the selected vendor. We are now in the third year of the contract, which expires on June 30, 2021.

Ms. Siegel said a new RFP for a three-year period was planned, including a provision for a one- or two-year extension in the contract with the vendor that is selected.

Ms. Siegel said the current absence management system utilizes the Frontline electronic software, and covers teachers, classroom paraprofessionals, and noncertified staff. Personnel are required to code their absences to that system.

Ms. Siegel said the substitute staffing services pertains to substitute teaching staff, for both occasional, long-term, and building substitutes. Placement of substitute pre-K paraprofessionals in general education classes will be included.

Ms. Siegel said currently in a general education pre-K there are up to 18 students and one paraprofessional, with a one-to-ten staff ratio required. When a para is absent, we must make every possible effort to provide a sub. Currently, principals contact Ms. Siegel and she makes a request to Delta T, the current vendor. She said the plan is that the vendor providing substitute teachers also provide the pre-K subs next year because the absences are required to be reported to the Frontline software. This will streamline the process with the vendor managing the substitute teachers and paras, which will be a new innovation.

Ms. Siegel said this RFP will give the primary provider two days to fill long-term absences, after which the district could request assistance from another vendor or vendors in filling positions.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said the current contract specifies if the vendor does not achieve a 90 percent fill rate, in the second and third years the overhead rate for occasional subs would be reduced by 1.5 percent. Failure to achieve the fill rate creates a penalty to the company and the monetary benefit goes to the board. She said she believed there were about \$20,000 savings in years two and three of the current contract.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said she could not recall a year in which the staffing service reached a 90 percent fill rate.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said the RFP includes mention of possible MBE points to vendors. Mr. Weldon said typically to qualify as an MBE a vendor has to register with the Connecticut DAS and there is a certification process.

Mr. Sokolovic said he wanted to be sure if someone claims the credit that they're entitled to the credits.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said the absence management system is not done in-house because there are multiple facets, including recruitment, screening, mobility among applicants, unemployment, training, payroll processing, and workers' compensation.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to refer this to the full board for approval with a recommendation that the board approve issuance of this solicitation.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on February 25, 2021*