

Monday, October 7, 2019

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 7, 2019, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth, John Weldon and Sybil Allen. Board member Joseph Sokolovic was present. Committee member Maria Pereira arrived subsequently as noted.

Ms. Allen moved approval of the minutes of April 1, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

Ms. Allen moved approval of the minutes of July 30, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

Ms. Allen moved to move up the agenda item on the security report ahead of the facilities report. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

Lt. Grech presented a security report. He said he had been involved in school security for nine years and this has been the best he has seen. He said the superintendent's office has been really supportive. Lt. Grech said there are 12 SROs assigned to the schools. Since the beginning of the school year there have been 559 calls for service and there have been eight arrests, all of which were approved by a sergeant.

Lt. Grech said there are currently 72 security guards and seven sub guards. He said two security guards have recently retired and these are vacant positions.

In response to a question, Lt. Grech said the guards' training is up to date and the goal is to get all guards CPI-certified, which includes training on restraint.

Ms. Pereira arrived at the meeting.

In response to a question, Lt. Grech said seven guards are assigned to each high school. He said there had been no complaint this year about entry into Fairchild Wheeler.

Ms. Pereira said she would like to see the resumption of reports on arrests in schools. She said the one report provided last year was full of errors.

In response to a question, Lt. Grech said five arrests this year have been at the high schools and three at middle schools. He said due to ongoing criminal investigations he could not get into specifics about the arrests.

Ms. Pereira said there was a problem with police in schools. She said the 20,000 SROs hired nationwide since Columbine have not stopped a single school shooting. She said she did not support police in schools. She said there is no reason to arrest a child unless there is a weapon involved.

Lt. Grech said he could provide a breakdown of the arrests by gender and school at the next meeting. Ms. Pereira requested a similar report on last year as well.

In response to a question, Lt. Grech said when he first took

over nine years ago there were 280 arrests a year in the schools, which was reduced to 32 last year. He said typically arrests are higher in the beginning of the year and it trickles lower and lower as the year goes on.

In response to a question, Lt. Grech said he believed this year's arrests consisted of six males and two females, but he did not have a racial breakdown.

Ms. Pereira said there needed to be comprehensive policy to address the situation where predominantly black and Hispanic males are being disciplined in ways that other races and genders are not. She said children should not be put in the justice system except in the case of something involving a weapon.

Mr. Sokolovic said there could be institutional biases or systematic problems in the city that have nothing to do with the person involved. He said we have to look at the numbers dispassionately and take down the vitriol.

Ms. Pereira asked about arrests involving children who have IEPs. Lt. Grech said before any child is arrested the officer must call the supervisor. The supervisor will respond and speak to the principal and the officer to make a determination. He said if other resources can be given to the child instead of an arrest that is done.

The next agenda item was a facilities report.

Ms. Pereira said she made a referral to the committee regarding an after-school program by an outside entity. The staff members present said they did not know anything about the after-school program taking place at Central High. Mr. Illingworth said he thought Acting Superintendent Testani

would be present tonight.

Mr. Illingworth said Mr. Testani told him the program was designed as a pilot and was located at Central High because it has two gyms, unlike Bassick or Harding.

Ms. Pereira said Lighthouse came into the schools with ten pilot locations, expanded to 24 schools and a summer program, and it was costing the district significant sums. She said under state statute the school board has authority over the use of school buildings. Mr. Illingworth said he understood there are no costs to the district for the pilot program.

Mr. Illingworth said he would ask the superintendent for more information.

Ms. Pereira said the program was being held on Friday nights at Central High. She said she would like a written comprehensive report, including an explanation of why the program was not brought to the board.

Mr. Sokolovic said at the very least he would like to see an MOU with the city that there would be no expense to the board. Mr. Illingworth said that was a reasonable request.

Robert Hammond of the facilities department presented. He said the department was probably at its lowest staffing since 2014. He said the number of current staff is 151. Of the 151 there have been four retirements and one termination, leaving five vacancies.

Alan Wallack said the square footage of the district has increased since 2014 due to new schools, although the current Harding has less square footage than the prior

building. He said new buildings are easier to maintain from the point of view of custodians, but they have more complicated HVAC systems which are computer-based.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said the department was not allowed to hire temporary employees similar to substitute teachers due to the union contract. Mr. Wallack said because the department is short-staffed there are additional costs for overtime. He urged when vacancies occur in the department they should be filled.

Mr. Hammond described the fall clean-ups that take place at the school. Mr. Wallack said the department used to have seasonal employees for March to November. Mr. Hammond said they were paid minimum wage. Ms. Pereira said temporary employees are limited now by the city charter to 90 days of employment.

Mr. Hammond said middle and elementary schools are typically staffed by one custodian during the day, with the nightshift beginning at 2:30 p.m.

Mr. Wallack said the department's landscaping budget used to be \$160,000 for vendors, but it is now done in-house.

Ms.. Pereira said there was a press conference that Mr. Weldon was at that the board doesn't know anything about. She said a committee about school buildings was discussed, despite the existence of the School Building Committee, which is required under state statute. Mr. Wallack said he was on the committee. Mr. Weldon said there have not been any meetings of the committee. Mr. Illingworth said he would ask Mr. Testani to report on the committee.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said he was

working on the flagpole issue at Park City Magnet with the fire department.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said the new school playgrounds use engineered fiber, not mulch. He said there is an issue with the mulch being washed away by rain, but if rims are placed the playgrounds are not ADA-accessible. Mr. Hammond said the city was going to provide mulch at several schools.

Carmen Ortiz, principal of Waltersville School, and John Cunningham, a teacher, presented on a grant obtained for the school playground. Ms. Ortiz said the current playground is not compliant with the ADA. She said the school includes classrooms for medically fragile children and children in wheelchairs cannot get into the current playground.

Ms. Ortiz said Mr. Planas directed her to the committee for approval. Mr. Illingworth said the matter would have to be brought to the full board.

Mr. Cunningham said the proceeds for the grants are in MUNIS now. He said the grant was a state grant for low-performing schools.

Ms. Pereira said she had concerns about liability issues around swings. Mr. Wallack said swings are not used in the district's new playgrounds. Mr. Cunningham described the style of seats used for the swings. Mr. Wallack said the company could probably put in other elements than swings that the school would be happy with.

Mr. Cunningham said there is a handicapped version of a merry-go-round in the proposal. Ms. Ortiz said the proposal was discussed with the teachers that work with the medically

fragile students.

Mr. Weldon said the matter could be addressed at the next regular meeting. Mr. Cunningham said he would work with the facilities department to replace the swings in the proposal.

The next agenda item was a presentation on energy efficiency. Christopher Duffy-Acevedo of Pequot said he presented to the board last spring. He said he was recently recognized by the media for having reduced the utility payments on a property called Seaview Village by 70 percent without public subsidy. He said the efficiencies create savings and don't involve capital expenses.

Ms. Pereira said she had no recollection of a prior presentation. Mr. Acevedo said he had been in a meeting with Chris Taylor and Dennis Bradley. He said he has also spoken to the city electrician and Mr. Hammond, Dr. Johnson, and Mr. Testani as well.

Mr. Acevedo and the representative of the company supplying the products said the proposal was to pick two high schools and two elementary schools to develop a benchmark so we can demonstrate what can be achieved. The product incorporates a measurement technology and a performance monitoring technology for energy use. He said a filter is used to eliminate harmonic interference, which can save 10 to 20 percent on the energy bill. Also used is a thermal screen for windows that reduces 10 to 20 percent of heating and cooling costs. He said a second phase could involve a deep retrofit of the entire school system. He said the idea is to have the lease payments cost less than the energy that is eliminated, so the district comes out ahead immediately.

Mr. Acevedo said the screens are attached to the windows. He said the screens are so effective they eliminate the need to replace old windows. He said the screens collect heat from the sun for the building, with the opposite taking place in warmer weather. He said the filter device harmonizes wave lengths of electricity to create efficiencies.

In response to a question, Mr. Acevedo said he has not worked with any schools with this technology. He said he could provide the board with quantifiable data on savings at the Jesuit School in New York.

Ms. Pereira said because it involves goods and services the matter would have to go out to bid.

Mr. Weldon suggested circulating information on the technology and the concept of the lease to the board. He said a next step might be for the facilities department to formulate an RFP.

Mr. Illingworth said the committee needed more information. He said proposals like this normally come through the facilities department. He asked that a cost-analysis be presented.

Mr. Weldon said the Facilities Department should look at what schools this might be appropriate for and develop a scope of work for an RFP as a pilot. He said the RFP could be open-ended enough to incorporate different technologies and other companies.

Ms. Allen moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the committee on January 22, 2020