

Tuesday, January 10, 2018

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE OF THE
BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held January 10, 2018, at
Central High School, 1 Lincoln Boulevard, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Chris Taylor and Hernan Illingworth. Board members Maria Pereira and Joseph Sokolovic were present. Committee member John Weldon arrived subsequently as noted.

Mr. Taylor said this was his first meeting as chair and asked everyone to be patient with him. He said he does not mince words.

Mr. Illingworth moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of November 2017. The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor. Mr. Taylor and Mr. Illingworth abstained. The motion was approved.

The next item was a tour of Central High. Nick Masciangelo, director of construction management for the city, said he would be the tour guide because he is running the project. He said Alan Wallack is also knowledgeable with aspects of the project.

He said B Wing was under containment and could not be entered and abatement is planned to begin Monday. He said A Wing was substantially complete and for the most part the other wings are done. The kitchen was just turned over last week to the Nutrition Center. He said the work on the auditorium is still in progress.

Mr. Weldon arrived at the meeting.

The tour of the school then occurred.

Ms. Pereira said she believed the district should never do a major renovation again while it is occupied by students and staff. She noted there were 70 workers onsite during the day and 30 at night. Mr. Taylor said he agreed. He said Mr. Masciangelo is new to Bridgeport

and he inherited the project from Morganti and O & ZG.

Mr. Taylor says from where he sits Mr. Masciangelo gets a pass on this because he can answer a question without taking us through the park.

Assistant Superintendent John Lischner addressed the next agenda item on Bridgeport Police Department fees. He said there was prior committee discussion about police fees and SRO overtime.

Ms. Pereira said this issue was done in the Facilities Committee because the committee dealt with security issues. Mr. Taylor said it sounded like a finance issue.

Ms. Pereira said apparently these costs are billed to us without our knowledge or permission. She said the board cut its five SROs to save \$500,000. She said Ms. Siegel said the board was not paying any fees, but now we find out that the police department has billed the board for \$100,000.

Mr. Lischner said he did research with Ms. Siegel and there is a SRO grant, which the city manages. The grant funds the SROs, but not the overtime service associated with that.

Mr. Lischner said from 7:30 to 3:30 p.m. the SROs fall under the grant. Sergeant Collazo, the supervisor of the SROs, said there are nine SROs. Mr. Lischner said anything after 3:30 will be handled by the police department or there can be arrangements for after-school events like sports or other gatherings.

Mr. Lischner noted there were two SROs and four security guards at the basketball game just witnessed by the committee's tour. He said those numbers fluctuate depending on the anticipated number of visitors. He said we also rely on the dynamics going on in the community as determined by the police department.

In response to a question, Sgt. Collazo said the SROs are broken down into sectors for the East Side, Central and the West Side.

Ms. Pereira said the SROs do police work such as domestic violence

and car accidents. They also service charter schools and parochial schools. She said the city could not decide to bill the board \$100,000 for a service that the board did not approve.

Sgt Collazo said the SROs are not responding to domestic calls. From 7:30 to 3:30 they are strictly for schools in Bridgeport. He said if they are at a domestic incident, he pulls them off. He says traffic issues should not be handled outside of the sector they are working in. He said most of the time the SROs can be pulled away from incidents and he replaces them with a city police officer.

In response to a question, Sgt. Collazo said he is a supervisor and he is able to get a city officer to replace the SRO. He said the culture in the department is such that officers know they have to take over incidents from SROs.

Sgt. Collazo said any late files or overtime after 3:30 is paid through the city and not the board.

Sgt. Collazo said an SRO is an officer that has been through a week-long training course of learning to deal with children and schools. He said in the past there was a school police officer who was assigned from 2:30 to 10:30. He said all eight officers were needed during the day. He added the force of SROs and school police was as large as 15 officers in the past.

Sgt. Collazo said incidents in neighborhoods that lead to school lock-ins lead to SROs being stationed at the schools to provide protection. He said Luis Marin constantly has lock-in and lockouts.

Ms. Pereira said according to Ms. Siegel the \$100,000 is primarily for athletic events. She said the board eliminated the five SROs to save \$500,000 because it was facing a \$16 million deficit. She said under the city charter the expense of \$100,000 had to go out to bid; it doesn't mean that the Bridgeport Police Department gets that work.

Ms. Pereira said we are an extension of the city, the children are city students, and they are entitled to safety and protection. She said Achievement First and the parochial schools are not billed for police work; she asked why the board is being billed.

Ms. Pereira said she was at a basketball game that had less than 30 spectators, but two police officers were present.

She noted the board had to lay off 193 staff members in the last few years. She noted the Puerto Rican Day parade was not billed for the hundreds of hours expended by the police department for that day.

Mr. Taylor said Ms. Pereira got her point across. Ms. Pereira said she can't be interrupted when she has the floor according to Robert's Rules. Mr. Taylor said he agreed with the points Ms. Pereira made.

In response, Mr. Lischner said to be honest he didn't know whose responsibility it was to provide security at a basketball game.

Jim Meszoros, president of NAGE, was recognized. He said Mr. Lischner was designated head of school security officers.

Mr. Meszoros said he believed the SROs should be funded fully through the city. He said there are currently 82 school security guards and there are also sub guards.

Mr. Taylor said he was in opposition to paying \$100,000 to pay for outside security. Ms. Pereira said a motion was needed to direct Ms. Siegel not to expend the funds for invoices submitted. She added we could ask Chief Perez appear here, although he's repeatedly refused to come before the board.

In response to a question, Mr. Lischner said decisions on the level of security at games is based on past practice. Generally speaking, one security guard is employed for every hundred persons expected. Mr. Meszoros said the former chief, Mr. Nealy, used a state formula per hundred people. He said we have to be prepared in case there is a big crowd at a game.

Mr. Meszoros said he works at Webster Bank Arena also. For a crowd of 8,000 he is provided one sergeant and three officers. He said the district's protocols are not on paper. He said he has urged Mr. Lischner to put things on paper.

Mr. Taylor said if Mr. Meszoros drafts something up and submits it, he would like to take a look at it.

Mr. Illingworth said he could support the proposed motion. He said his concern was adults fighting over the issue, but the kids and the athletes might suffer if the police refuse to cover the games. He suggested bridges be built with the mayor's office, the chief and the City Council.

Mr. Taylor said he was all for security, but not at the expense of this board. He noted the city has a police budget of \$110 million. Ms. Pereira said last year the city gave the board \$357,000 out of \$3.4 million additional.

Mr. Weldon asked if there was a prior agreement to encumber the board in writing as to the arrangement. Mr. Lischner said there was not such an agreement to the best of his knowledge.

Mr. Taylor said he was not going to argue semantics, he only wants the kids safe.

Mr. Illingworth moved *"a recommendation to the full board to direct Marlene Siegel stop paying the Bridgeport Police Department's overtime fees until we continue the dialogue with the police department and all city departments so we can come out to a resolution that will benefit the entire city, but mainly the students of Bridgeport."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

The next item was on security at city parks for sporting events.

Mr. Lischner said there was a discussion in prior meetings about security guards at places like Seaside Park. He said teams go to places such as Seaside Park for practices. He said he learned there had already been an arbitration. According to labor relations, NAGE filed a grievance against assigning security guards to such events. There is a binding agreement saying that we will not assign security guards to those sites.

Mr. Meszoros said the reason there was an agreement was because

this is a city function, as it was when Mayor Finch put security guards in the parks. He said a Board of Education team goes into a park because we don't have a facility at the school. Bassick High does not have a soccer field or a baseball field, so they use Went Field and Seaside Park.

Mr. Meszoros said he would like for security guards to cover those events, so the arbitration item would have to be removed from the contract at the next negotiation.

Mr. Weldon asked if there was interest in negotiating a memorandum of understanding(MOU) in the interim. Mr. Meszoros indicated that would have to be done through labor relations.

Mr. Lischner noted there would be a cost to such coverage. Until there was an MOU, security would have to be provided by the police department by SROs. The overtime costs would be approximately \$75 an hour.

Ms. Pereira said security guards only have authority on school grounds, not in the city parks. Mr. Meszoros said security guards are properly trained to take care of an incident in a city park at a game.

Ms. Pereira said the power of the security guards should be researched off of school property. Sgt. Collazo said they would have zero power. He said after a call by a security guard to the police department about children he doubted there would be a guaranteed rapid response due to the amount of calls the city receives.

Mr. Lischner said calls made at 3:31 and after from schools about a breaking and entering are often not responded to for several hours. Sgt. Collazo said there was an incident where a teacher waited for two hours for a police officer to respond to an assault report. He said such calls to the police are prioritized.

JoAnn Kennedy was recognized. She said Sgt. Collazo was playing both sides. She said we had to decide that schools are not a prison; these are children, the majority of which are minors.

Steve Nelson was recognized. He said from a police perspective everything is prioritized. He said when the district had its own police

officers the system worked and it was unique among cities in the country.

Mr. Lischner said as of now SROs are not sent to every practice and baseball game off site.

Mr. Nelson said he witnessed events such as drug activity and shooting with BB guns in the area of city parks where games are taking place.

Sgt. Collazo said police officers are put at Went Field and the school near P.T. Barnum, because there are problems in that area, including paintballs and BB guns.

Mr. Lischner said he recommended a budget analysis study be done about costs and something be created on paper as a guide, as discussed by Mr. Meszoros. He said it could be completed by the next Facilities meeting. He said the only way we could eliminate the \$100,000 expense is if the city picked it up. To replace the SROs with security guards it would still cost about \$50,000.

Ms. Pereira noted police officers on overtime have to work for a minimum of four hours due to state law. Sgt. Collazo said for shorter events officers can be kept over and be paid hour for hour.

Mr. Lischner said he could provide a year-to-date cost for 2017-18 and a cost analysis for 2016-17.

The next agenda item was on fingerprinting. Mr. Lischner noted any employee of the Board of Education must be fingerprinted to work with students. He said the answer to the question raised in November was we do not have to assume that cost. There is a \$12 processing fee that is paid to the state. There is a service for three hours a week, usually Thursdays from 3:30 and 6:30, at 1085 Connecticut Avenue, for fingerprints. That is an overtime charge for the police officer.

Mr. Taylor asked why we are paying for background checks. Mr. Lischner said new hires can go to the police department and make an appointment in a week to two weeks, so the services of the person

hired can't be used until that happens.

Mr. Taylor said if the teacher or employee wants the job they can pay for that. Mr. Lischner said the fingerprinting could be stopped. Ms. Pereira suggested checking the BEA contract. Mr. Lischner said he would check.

Mr. Weldon said we're providing a convenience by having an outside service available, so we're paying an officer three hours to be available.

The next item was the 2018-19 facilities capital plan. Mr. Wallack said the district is required to present a five-year capital plan and a one-year capital plan. The plan must be submitted to the city by January 19th.

Mr. Taylor said it was a lot of information to digest and asked why he was just getting it tonight. Mr. Wallack said he was following past practice in bringing the documents. He said in the future he could provide documents directly to the committee members, but the prior superintendents liked to have everything go through their office. Mr. Taylor said he better have the information at least five days before his meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said the plans could be presented in the November time period, but the report is based on current needs. In November we may not know what boilers need replacement.

Mr. Taylor suggested the item be tabled. Mr. Illingworth noted a special meeting would be needed to meet the January 19th deadline.

Mr. Weldon moved to table the item to a special meeting on January 16th. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth.

Mr. Weldon asked that Mr. Wallack ask the superintendent's office to disseminate the information to all board members well in advance.

Ms. Pereira noted Bassick was ranked number one in priority on the list. Mr. Wallack said the RFQ for Bassick will hit the newspaper the first week in February.

Mr. Illingworth said Bassick was number one, but Winthrop should be considered because it was in dire need as well.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next item on the agenda was the five-year capital plan.

Mr. Weldon moved to postpone the five-year capital plan to January 16th. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was the use of school facilities policy. Robert Hammond said he provided documents to the committee. He said the rates per hour were increased by three percent for salaries estimated through the year 2021-22. The building fees were raised on a percentage recommended by the chief financial officer.

Mr. Taylor this was too much for him to digest right now. He requested the item be tabled.

Mr. Illingworth noted the item was not time-sensitive and could be tabled to the next Facilities meeting.

Mr. Weldon moved the use of school facilities policy be tabled to the next to the scheduled Facilities Committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on building capacity study for school buildings. Mr. Taylor said we're looking for schools that are under-occupied and looking for a cost-effective solution to the situation at Classical Studies. He said he had been told that Dunbar School and Tisdale School are heavily under capacity. He said there might be an opportunity to consolidate those two schools and to move Classical Studies into Dunbar School.

Mr. Taylor said he lives in the East End, which is the only community that does not have a magnet school. He said Classical Studies could be in Dunbar in September.

Mr. Wallack said he was glad this was on the agenda. He said the board needs a long-range facilities plan. The last one was done almost fifteen years ago. He said capacity and an educational program are two different things. Dunbar has about 413 students while the capacity is 750. He said there are about 600 students at Tisdale now, which has a capacity of 750.

Mr. Wallack said the educational program has been changing. Right now there's a big push for pre-K, early childhood education. Classrooms and bathrooms have to be retrofitted. He said enrollment projections involve sophisticated plans and community input. He noted that some schools are not ADA-accessible and that has to be addressed.

Mr. Wallack said once a plan is formulated, you work with the city, create a ten-year construction program and the bonding is spread out. He said it doesn't work to go year to year.

Mr. Taylor said he had an immediate problem at hand with Classical Studies. He said he would appreciate it if a building was found for them immediately. He said he did not believe in waiting four years and \$70 million for the diocese site. He said the kids at Classical needed immediate attention.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said he believed there were about 350 students in one building at Classical Studies and 162 at the annex.

Mr. Wallack said we don't build schools for less than 500 students. Mr. Illingworth said there would be no problem filling the seats at Classical Studies.

Mr. Weldon moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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