

Wednesday, October 3, 2018

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 3, 2018, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m. Committee members present were Chair Jessica Martinez and Dennis Bradley. Board members present were Hernan Illingworth, Joseph Sokolovic and Maria Pereira.

Supt. Dr. Aresta L. Johnson was present.

Ms. Siegel said the city is treating the additional funds of 2017-18 of \$387,593 in two parts; an additional allocation of \$137,593 and \$250,000 applied to the ECS rollback. She said that was not how it was originally appropriated.

Ms. Siegel said when OPM went to the City Council in December the district was not aware of this until she questioned why the budget was short. Based on the minutes of the City Council shared this afternoon, the compensation to the board for losing \$250,000 in ECS funds was made from the \$387,000.

Ms. Pereira said the City Council doesn't understand anything about the MBR (minimum budget requirement). She said she didn't believe they did this intentionally.

Ms. Siegel said it was not clear that the council understood the implications of agreeing to that proposal. She said it is the board's position that the council appropriated \$387,593

and that full amount should be carried forward.

Ms. Pereira said this is exactly what happened in Ansonia. She said the law is clear that once funds are appropriated they cannot be reduced. She said Ansonia was going to lose in court.

Dr. Johnson said the state Department of Education had not been informed yet. She said she agreed with the city for additional time to Friday for a response.

Mr. Sokolovic said the board should take a proactive approach and get a letter to the city. Ms. Martinez said she would be willing to deliver the news to the City Council as Finance Committee chair.

Ms. Pereira suggested that the board on Tuesday vote to have Berchem Moses issue a formal letter to the mayor and the City Council claiming that this is illegal and our expectation is that we will get the full allocation under the law to meet the MBR.

Ms. Martinez suggested the board give the city until Friday to respond. Ms. Pereira noted she would be speaking to the City Council on November 5th. She encouraged Dr. Johnson to do so as well.

Ms. Martinez said this was really disheartening because she viewed the board as a department of the city, not a separate entity.

Mr. Illingworth said Mr. Flatto, Mr. Shamus and Mr. Gaudett were confused at today's meeting at what Mr. Nkwo was talking about, although towards the end Mr. Flatto was starting to talk Mr. Nkwo's language.

Mr. Illingworth suggested Dr. Johnson have a direct conversation with Mayor Ganim about this. Dr. Johnson said she would reach out to the mayor tomorrow. She said she believed that Mr. Nkwo could not arbitrarily decide that the \$250,000 was a loan that he wishes to take back.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said she did not have any information on the SROs.

Ms. Siegel said official enrollment data as of October 1 is now available for the interdistrict magnet schools. She said the Aerospace school at Fairchild Wheeler has not met the residency standard required. The percentage of students from suburban districts must be at least 25 percent. Aerospace's percentage is 23.16 percent. She added the superintendent asked the assistant superintendent to work with the principal to increase enrollment.

Ms. Siegel said a corrective action plan is being worked on and will be submitted to the state in early November because approval is needed by December 1st.

Ms. Siegel said total suburban enrollment across all four interdistrict magnet schools is 1,879 as of October 1, compared to 1,913 last year. Suburban enrollment is currently at 510 compared to 549 last year.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said the district would not lose money in the year the under-enrollment occurs. If the state approves the corrective action plan funding is maintained.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said the four districts that are parties to the lawsuit about magnet school tuition

have not been helpful in encouraging parents to participate in recruitment sessions and to enroll their children in the schools.

Ms. Pereira said if the district could point to the drop in enrollment from those four districts it would be helpful to Bridgeport's case. Ms. Siegel said the decline was principally due to less students from Stratford and Trumbull.

Ms. Siegel said Discovery Magnet had 33 percent suburban enrollment; the IT School's percentage was 26.1 and Zoological was 25.9 percent.

Ms. Pereira said it was crazy that the target was missed by eight students. She said she hoped something would be documented about this.

Ms. Siegel said up to \$217,000 could be lost for not meeting the target. Ms. Pereira noted the four towns owe the district over a million dollars in magnet school tuition.

Ms. Siegel said on a positive note federal appropriations in major grants have been released and are approximately stable. She added Title IV-A continued this year and the appropriation increased significantly by about a half million dollars. She said these funds are already expended on an iQuest science initiative.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said the funds received last year from the federal government for Puerto Rican students was a one-time allocation. She said the state included about \$235,000 as part of the ECS for displaced students. She said that may or may not be continued in 2019-20.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the number of students from Puerto Rico had been stabilized.

Ms. Siegel said in regard to the Connecticut Partnership AFSCME is transitioning on November 1st. The LIUNA union transitioned on October 1. She said arbitrations are underway regarding NAGE and other unions. She said the continuation of the current health plan will reduce savings in the budget gap plan anywhere from \$300,000 to \$450,000.

Ms. Siegel said she remained concerned about the upward trend in special education enrollment. On October 1st, 3,347 students were in special education, which is 16.42 percent, compared to 15.18 percent at the same time last year.

Ms. Siegel said the overall enrollment in the district has declined by about 400 students: 270 at the elementary level and 130 in high school. She said a factor may be that charter schools are expanding. She added this may allow additional consolidation of class structures next year to achieve savings.

Ms. Pereira said the district had the vast majority of NAGE employees, but the city negotiates the contract. Ms. Siegel said the city is in arbitration and she expects the city will be successful in reaching an agreed transition to the partnership.

Ms. Siegel said other unions such as city supervisors, nurses and trades will probably transition around January 1st.

Ms. Siegel said in summary we're continuing with deficit prevention mode, complying with the budget plan and monitoring very carefully budgetary expenditures. She said if

any negative trends emerge she will alert the superintendent to the causative factors.

Ms. Martinez moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of September 12, 2018. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bradley. Corrections were noted. The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the Carver Foundation contract with Classical Studies Magnet Academy.

Ms. Siegel said the latest contract as reviewed by the city attorney was provided to the committee. She said Nadira Clarke, who worked with the city attorney, could not be here this evening. The changes made relate to legal requirements and not the specifications of the program.

Ms. Martinez moved *"to approve this and bring it the full board at the next meeting."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

Ms. Pereira suggested references to "the district" be changed to the "Board of Education." Ms. Siegel said that change would be made.

Ms. Pereira suggested references to Mr. Lombardi be changed to the business office and a reference to the CAO of the city be changed to the superintendent. She said the board should be added as an additional insured.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next item was on Protraxx agreements.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said these are

instructional services and there is a waiver of competitive bidding.

Ms. Siegel said the first segment is for the current year(2018-19) for continuing education software. She said the agreement was renegotiated at a lower price than last year.

Ms, Siegel said we want to sign a two-year agreement for 2019-20 and 2020-21.The 2019-20 and 2020-21 agreements would cover continuing education software and teacher evaluation software, which would replace TalentEd. She said TalentEd has been in the district for three years.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said Protraxx is used in Stamford for teacher evaluations.

Ms. Martinez moved *“to approve the Protraxx agreements for the years 2018 through 2021.”*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

The next item was on E-Rate.

Ms. Martinez said the item was approved at the prior meeting, but back on the agenda at the request of Ms. Pereira. Ms. Pereira said she just needed time to read the documents for the Regular Meeting.

Mr. Bradley left the meeting and a quorum was no longer present.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the committee on March 13, 2019