

City of East Providence Budget Commission
City Hall
145 Taunton Avenue
East Providence, RI 02914
(401) 435-7500

Public Hearing Meeting Minutes
October 18, 2012, 5:00 pm
Room 306, City Hall

Members: Diane Brennan – present
Michael O’Keefe – present
Stephen Bannon – present
Peter Graczykowski, City Manager – present
Mayor Bruce Rogers – present

Other Attendees: Rob Eaton, Budget Commission Fiscal Advisor
Heather Martino, Interim Human Resource Director
Malcolm Moore, Finance Director
John Cimino, Interim Finance Director
John DeGoes, Interim Superintendent

The meeting commenced with public comment beginning at 4:38 PM due to the Regular Working session ending before schedule. Diane Brennan indicated there would be no action items before 5:00 PM, but would open the hearing for public comment.

Diane Brennan begin the public hearing by stating that the Commission asks the public to sign-in if they wish to make a comment on the proposed FY 2012-2013 Budget. The sign-in sheet is at the front door for name, address, and topic of discussion.

1. Final reading of an Ordinance Ordering the Assessment and Collection of Property Tax on the Ratable Real Estate, Tangible Personal Property, and an Excise Tax on Registered Motor Vehicles and Trailers. Budget Commission approved.

2. Final reading of an Ordinance Making Appropriations in support of FY 2013. For the purposes of these minutes, public comments are listed in order of discussion with the name of the member of the public.

- Val Lawson. Ms. Lawson agreed that it would be beneficial from a financial perspective to change Kindergarten to half-day instead of full-day. She stated that she hopes comprehensive due diligence would be completed before closing Oldham School. As the Interim Superintendent stated has indicated, the school has made significant educational advances. Ms. Brennan stated that she appreciated Ms. Lawson’s concerns and that the proposed FY 2013 Budget includes and supports Oldham School. Ms. Lawson stated that the School Committee would like to do anything possible to help. Mayor Rogers asked if there had been any discussion among union members with a recommendation to close a different school. Ms.

- Lawson indicated that there had not been. Michael O'Keefe stated that Ms. Lawson has been nothing but cooperative since the day the Budget Commission got to East Providence.
- Lisa Carolan. Indicated that she was an Oldham teacher, but the response from Ms. Lawson's comments answered her question if the school would be opened or closed for FY 2013.
 - Lauren Alianiello. Stated that she had concerns of closing Oldham School and the full-time Kindergarten program. She stated that closing this program will hurt children and ultimately the school system. It is difficult to teach with just a half-day, full-day would be helpful.
 - Chrissy Rossi. Ms. Rossi stated that the \$15 million School Bond should be used to fix Oldham School. She asked if full-day kindergarten was included for the 2013-2014 school year. If a decision would be made to change to half-day, then notices would have to be sent to staff by March 1, 2013. Ms. Rossi asked if \$71 million would be enough for maintenance of effort required by the School District. Ms. Brennan stated that the maintenance of effort would be adequate. Ms. Rossi asked why the newly consolidated Information Technology personnel costs are 100% allocated to the School budget. Ms. Brennan indicated that 50% of these costs are planned to be credited and re-allocated to City during the fiscal year.
 - Laurie Brown. Ms. Brown indicated that she was the Chairman of the East Providence Local Advisory Commission. She stated that was offended by a remark made by Michael O'Keefe at the last Budget Commission Meeting on October 4th. Mr. O'Keefe stated that he would like to go over the entire conversation at the last meeting and that information was incorrectly reported. He clarified by stating that special education in East Providence has the highest participation rate of any city/town in the state and that the cost of each special education student was the highest in the state. The five-year goal is to get special education costs down to the statewide average per student. He stated that he understands this is a hot topic and that this is a treatment question and not a budget-driven question. He advised that the advisory group review the RIDE presentation available for special education and work on these issues.
 - Rebecca Warr. Ms. Warr stated that she heard rumors Oldham School will be closing. These rumors will be hurting the progress made with educational achievements. It's difficult to hear that we're going to close the school because it is a bad facility when Oldham is the exception to East Providence in education. She stated that the School District should redistrict schools, not send students to area schools.
 - Freddy Ryba. Mr. Ryba stated that he believes full-day kindergarten is crucial for foundation of a child's education. He stated that Oldham is always on the chopping block for cuts. Mr. O'Keefe state that comments should keep coming on how to provide these types of services. Even if it means raising taxes, the City & School can't keep raising deficit.
 - Stephen Furtado. Mr. Furtado just clarified that the purposed cuts to schools would not take place in FY 2013, including closing Oldham School.
 - Tom Riley. Mr. Riley stated that he was on the Canvassing Board and that the proposed FY 2013 Budget does not fully comply with the staffing levels mandated by the state for elections. Ms. Brennan asked if Canvassing could provide a synopsis of

- these issues and submit to the Commission. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the Budget Commission during Budget Hearings in the spring laid out when elections would occur over the next two years and what help is needed.
- Victor Pierria. Mr. Pierria asked what the background was on the statistics for East Providence's special education costs. Mr. O'Keefe stated that it would be beneficial to bring the community in for a presentation by RIDE on special education. It would get everyone in the room and ask the experts about the data because it is not easy to extrapolate and understand. It is also the ideal opportunity with a new school committee.
 - Jessica Bosham. Ms. Bosham asked why the line item for athletics in the school budget did not decrease by \$106,000 as this was the allocation for middle school sports. It was determined that the line item did not include stipends and salaries for those in middle school sports and that is why it did not decrease by \$106,000.
 - Mayor Bruce Rogers. Mayor Rogers asked about how the items brought about in tonight's are public hearing could be addressed going forward. Ms. Brennan stated that we can make these Budget Commission agenda items as the FY 2013 budget is amendable. Mayor Rogers asked if the Carousel could be an item going forward. Mr. O'Keefe stated that this is a legal question, but does not matter because it is budget neutral. Ms. Brennan stated that the Carousel is included in the FY 2013 Budget with CDBG funds. Peter Graczykowski stated that it is a legal question whether or not the Carousel employees are city employees. Ms. Brennan stated that we will wait until we get a legal opinion.
 - Tony Ferriera. Mr. Ferriera asked if the Budget Commission will not work for FY 2013-2014 once it leaves. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the City Council, once the Commission leaves, will have to revisit point of raising taxes or decreasing expenses. The hope is that revenues will naturally increase with national, state, and local economies rebounding and expenses staying the same. These decisions will be for the City Council at that time. Mayor Rogers stated that the City Council will continue to have to explore options once the Budget Commission leaves and that the City will have big challenges that it will have to resolve.
 - Bob Rodderick. Mr. Rodderick asked if a school resource officer had been included in the FY 2013 Budget. It was determined that it was.

Mr. O'Keefe motioned to approve the proposed FY 2013 Budget. Mr. Graczykowski seconded the motion. Budget Commission approved.

3. Final Reading of an Ordinance Authorizing the Director of Finance to Borrow in anticipation of taxes. Budget Commission approved.

4. Final Reading of an Ordinance Authorizing the Director of Finance to Borrow in anticipation of revenue. Budget Commission approved.

5. The Public Hearing adjourned at 6:04 PM.

Approved by the East Providence Budget Commission November 1, 2012.