

SPECIAL CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2009

WESTERN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

400 PHENIX AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 6:15 P.M.

PUBLIC MEETING: 6:30 P.M.

PUBLIC BUDGET WORK SESSION: 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

The regular monthly meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at Western Hills Middle School in the auditorium with the following members present: Mr. Traficante, Mr. Stycos, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mrs. Ruggieri, Mrs. McFarland, and Mrs. Culhane. Also present were Mr. Scherza, Mr. Nero, Mr. Votto, Mr. Balducci, Dr. Lundsten, Mrs. Coogan and Attorney Cascione.

Chairman Traficante called the meeting to order at 6:14 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the members adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws PL42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel; PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining/Litigation (Caruolo Action; Negotiations' Update; UBIO, Inc. versus Cranston School Committee); PL 42-46-5(a)(4)

Chairman Traficante reconvened public meeting at 6:55 p.m.

The roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

I. Executive Session Minutes Sealed – January 28, 2009

Moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mr. Lombardi and unanimously carried that the January 28, 2009 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

II. Public Acknowledgements / Communications

Chairman Traficante acknowledged that there are three council members with us tonight and he would like to thank them for joining us. They are Councilman Citywide-at-Large, Mario Aceto, from Ward 4, Robert Pelletier, and from Ward 6, Michelle Bergin-Andrews.

III. Chairperson Communication

Chairperson Traficante stated that so we are all on the same page, he would like to review numbers for everyone present. The School Committee is very familiar with our crisis and he wants to make sure that everyone in the audience understands where we stand with the budgetary process. If you review 2007-2008 school year, we finished that year with a \$4.5 million dollar deficit. Caruolo Action was filed that particular year and somewhat lost in Superior Court. We are now awaiting a hearing from the Supreme Court on the 2007-2008 budget.

As of this time, we have a deficit of \$4.5 million dollars, which must be repaid to the City of Cranston starting in the current school year. In 2008-09 the budget proposed by the Superintendent far exceeded the 5% cap that the state mandates, so the School Committee cut \$8 million dollars to bring the proposed budget down to that cap of 5%. Furthermore, because the City Council basically level-funded us, the School Committee cut an additional \$5 million dollars for a total of a \$13 million dollar cut in the current school budget year. We still have a deficit of \$2.7 million dollars in the current school year. We are still awaiting a hearing before the R.I. Department of Education on the subsidy that we rendered to the CAC&TC each year for \$500,000 which we are responsible for at the present time. In regards to our district Special Education, we may be able to curtail that. Mr. Balducci will explain that shortly. We must start paying the City of Cranston back in the current year of \$900,000 per year for the next five (5) years. In terms of our legal expenditure, we have over-exceeded by approximately \$200,000. That totals about \$1.6 million dollars which we must add to the \$2.7 million dollar deficit in the current year which brings us to a total of \$4.3 million dollars. In essence, we are facing an \$8.8 million dollar deficit going into next year's school budget. Included in the new budget that the Superintendent has proposed, is a 1% increase. Included in that request is an additional \$4.1 million dollars of City dollars from the Mayor and the City Council. We have been told by the Mayor of Cranston that we will not receive \$4.1 million dollars based on the numbers he has from the State and the kind of problems they face on

the municipal side. In essence, it will not be a \$1.1 million dollar increase; we will have to look for additional dollars in next years' school budget as well. We are also assuming that the State is going to decrease our educational aid by 3% next year. Because the Superintendent's budget is at max, 4.75%, with anything that this School Committee puts back into the budget, we must find an equal amount to take out to meet that 4.75%.

Chairman Traficante asked the public that when they come to the microphone tonight, please understand that regardless of what your asking for, this school committee has to find an equal amount to put back in the budget to make sure we present our budget to the City Council and it does not exceed 4.75%.

IV. School Committee Members Communications

Mr. Lombardi noted two points that he would like to make: one being that this committee is going to keep an open discourse with every issue, every program, every topic and every financial impact. Contrary to what is read in the newspapers, we haven't cut anything yet. All that has been done is getting recommendation from the Superintendent to get to a level of funding that is workable within the legal confines. A budget that even the Superintendent admits is terrible and inadequate from an educational standpoint. Secondly, as we undertake this discourse of this debate, Mr. Lombardi would urge the public that when they are communicating by e-mail to School

Committee members, please sign your communications. This is not an opportunity to lash out at members of administration or to lash out to members of the School Committee. All he asks is that the public please put a name with the communication to your school committee member, so that we can answer you appropriately.

Ms. Iannazzi noted that she would also like to mention that at one of the last meetings of both the City Council and the School Committee with the Mayor and our State representatives, Mr. Traficante noted that representative Mattiello had come forward and offered to help. Representative Mattiello along with the Cranston Representative Delegation and Senator Hanna Gallo, Cranston Senate Delegation, has led just that. They've asked Cranston Public Schools to prepare a list of mandates that are costing the City of Cranston money and to prioritize that list in terms of what can be cut or what can be eliminated. She noted that the Superintendent is in the process of preparing a list and once that list is ready for general circulation, a meeting will be scheduled with our General Assembly members and we will ask them to come to the table and help us.

Mr. Scherza reported that in regards to this topic, he did speak at length today with representative Mattiello and they have scheduled another meeting for next week. He noted that when we talk about mandates, we're talking about thousands of laws, regulations, etc.

Mr. Lombardi added that in regards to Chairman Traficante's

statement that we are in the Supreme Court on the Caruolo Action, our lawyers informed us tonight at executive session that the motion to expedite the hearing has been granted by the RI Supreme Court, which means that we are on a fast-track to get the case heard sooner rather than later.

Chairperson Traficante noted to Mrs. Culhane that we have the athletic director here tonight to answer the several questions we have for him.

V. Consent Agenda

The following Resolutions appear under the Consent Agenda:

NO. 09-1-16 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the retirement of the following non-certified employee(s) be accepted:

Mary Ann Ambrifi, Chief Secretary

Cranston High School West

Effective Date: 1/30/09

NO. 09-1-17 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Cranston School Committee approve and sign the revised stipulated order in the UBIO, Inc. versus City of Cranston and Cranston School Committee, Rhode Island Supreme Court Case

No. 03-4858 regarding the payment of \$266,982.00 to the City of Cranston for past due real estate taxes from the calendar year 2003 to the present, and for future taxes until the expiration of the present lease between UBIO, Inc. and the Cranston School Committee.

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that this Resolution be adopted.

TABLED RESOLUTION:

NO. 09-1-2 – RESOLVED, that effective February 1, 2009, the Cranston Public Schools will charge non-free or reduced eligible students \$1.00 per meal for breakfast in all non-Title 1 schools. The school administration will also work to have school affiliated organizations, such as PTO's and extracurricular activity groups, operate school breakfast programs in schools with low participation. Such organizations will work with the school food service director to comply with all government laws and regulations and shall receive any income from the breakfast sales in that school, after the Food Service Program has been reimbursed for its costs. If a school affiliated organization is chosen to operate a school breakfast program, the School Committee will be notified.

Moved by Mr. Stycos to remove this Resolution from the table, seconded by Mr. Lombardi and unanimously carried to remove this

Resolution from the table.

Discussion: Mr. Stycos reported that he will move to amend the date on this resolution and then move to table it again. Mr. Stycos reported that he had a wellness committee meeting and the committee wanted to discuss this issue and asked him to extend the resolution. The central problem now is that for every non-free or reduced meal/breakfast that we are giving away free, it is costing in the neighborhood of \$1.25. This committee will meet tomorrow evening, and after this meeting with a specific proposal they will be able to discuss it more fully. Mr. Stycos would like to amend the Resolution date from February 1, 2009 to March 1, 2009, right now to keep the Resolution alive, he stated:

Moved by Mr. Stycos to accept this Resolution as amended, seconded by Mr. Lombardi and unanimously carried to amend this Resolution.

Moved by Mr. Stycos to table this Resolution, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried to table this Resolution.

VI. Announcement of Future Meetings

The School Committee Budget Hearing will meet at Western Hills Middle School on Monday, February 2, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Scherza asked the committee if he could indulge them for one minute to speak on the resignation for the purpose of retirement of Mrs. MaryAnn Ambrifi who has served this district as a secretary for the past thirty-two years. The last twenty-one of which she has been the Chief Secretary to the Principal at Cranston High School West. She has been through a number of principals and touched thousands of lives of many students and she will be missed. Chairperson Traficante also congratulated Mrs. Ambrifi on her deserving retirement.

VII. Adjourn the Public Meeting and Convene to Public Budget Work Session

Motion was made by Mrs. Culhane, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the Public Meeting be adjourned and they reconvene to the Public Budget Work Session.

At this time, Chairman Traficante gave the public an opportunity to speak first and then he will allow the School Committee members to ask further questions of the administration regarding the budget.

Breanne Lamont: 54 Woodview Dr. – Hello, I'm Breanne Lamont. I'm

a Junior at Cranston West and am currently enrolled in Level 2 Honors of the Graphic Communications program, or home away from home as many of my peers in the program call it. I take an active interest in my school, taking advantage of the many after school activities and special opportunities Cranston West has to offer. Therefore it was an easy decision to join Graphic Communications. Graphics means a lot to me, it gives me the chance to learn valuable life skills and be in a professional environment. I'm here to give you the opinion of a student, of someone who relies on her elders to give her the best education possible. The only way to receive that education is through a supportive classroom with an adequate amount of reliable teachers. The "Assistants" that you want to cut, are no more assistants than any teacher is. The unique and vital hands-on approach that the Career & Tech Center provides relies on the teacher's ability to assist all the students, which for some programs cannot be done without more than one adult in the room. I personally feel that removing the so-called assistants is incredibly detrimental to the education of many students. Thank you.

Gianna Velino: 31 Bradford St. – She is a junior in the Graphic Communications Program at CAC&TC and supporting the Technical Assistants – (see speech attached #2 for the record)

Alexandria Lamont: 54 Woodview Dr. – I am a freshman at Cranston High School West and I am here for the Elementary School Band/Strings. The point of the orchestra is to develop a better

musical sense. After my six years of playing violin I have found that I have read books at a faster pace. I can map it more than most average students. At the age of 7, 8 and 9, to pick up an instrument would help matters so much because they would grow mentally and they would make friends more easily because they have common interest. Also they would get to go places, where in regular school they don't take them. Because of music programs, they are highly given attention to.

Alyssa Roberti: 63 Beckwith St. – Junior at Cranston High School East and involved with Music since 3rd grade. (see speech attached #4 for the record)

Pam Schiff: 68 Mauran St. – After reviewing the budget, she found areas to be of concern. (see speech attached #5 for the record)

Elaine Arbor: 41 Buen Vista Dr. – Speaking tonight on behalf of the technical assistants at CAC&TC. (see speech attached #6 for the record)

Antonella Pasquariello: 2072 Cranston St. – Speaking on behalf of the Technical Assistants Program. I am actually a parent of a pre-school student in the program. I've been involved in this program for about three years now and hopefully this little guy will attend as well some day. I understand that there is a need to cut the budget, we all are tightening our belts and we are all dealing with the same

economy, but keep in mind when your making a decision on this program in particular. You have the high school students who are involved and pre-school children. I can't see how teachers that are there now can take on doing the administrative task while keeping a safe and satisfying environment. This is a huge work load for these people. They need security and I would be questioning, especially as a parent, I would be concerned about future participation for pre-schools in the future. I just don't think that they can be safely watched.

Councilman Robert Pelletier: 81 Laconia Road – First of all I want to commend all of the committee members for the 1% increase in this year's budget. That's monumental. In good times, you would never see a 1% increase. This is huge. But again, during these hard economic times everybody understands that drastic cuts do need to be made. One of the things I've always advocated for is the Career & Technical Center, youth programs and youth sports. These are all the things we cannot afford to have cut. Teacher Assistants in the Career & Technical Center desperately need a lot of help. These are good programs for the children. We attended open house recently with a couple of School Committee members and had a great time and saw what the students are doing. Those are skills that they can bring into the real world to get jobs. If we don't have teachers and teacher assistants, the students are going to fall by the wayside. I urge you all to not cut the programs for teacher assistants. Thank you.

Peter Paulella: 4 Heritage Ct. – I was a member of the first class here in 1971. I have two daughters in the school system, one of which is across the hall at a play practice which we have to pay for because the school department cannot afford it. My two daughters are in the Strings Program, EPIC, they love sports, they are very good students and they take after their mother. I'm here today, not just because of the cuts. This is the first generation in the history of our country that will have less than their parents. Very, very sad. I'm here to speak on an issue that was brought up a couple of years ago by the administration about students from other communities attending Cranston Schools. From what I hear, it's continuing to the extent that RIPTA buses are dropping off students from other communities to attend Cranston Schools. I know this is not new to you. Does any one here have any information as to how much money this is costing us? I know each student costs thousands of dollars and more if he/she is a special education student. Is anything being done. We have to take care of our City. Is anything being done about this?

Chairperson Traficante noted that we are going to hear the comments of the general public first and then the administration will try to respond to some of the questions asked tonight. If it will clarify what is being done in your particular area, for example. So we are asking the public to speak first.

Maria Santonastaso: 10 Canterbury Ct. – Speaking on Technical Assistants and the Child Development Program classes. (see speech

attached #10 for the record)

Kimberly Trainor: 800 Laten Knight Rd. – Speaking on the Child Development Program and Technical Assistants. (see speech attached #11 for the record)

Nicole Hauswirth: 19 Concord Ave. – She is a senior in the Child Development Program and speaking on the Technical Assistants. (see speech attached #12 for the record)

John Mancini: 189 Auburn St. – To speak on Cranston High School East Hockey. (see speech attached #13 for the record)

Christopher Muncy: 75 Chestnut Hill Ave. – Speaking on the Hockey Program at Cranston High School East. (see speech attached #14 for the record)

Dick Ernst: 71 Philmont Ave. – I'm here to support the Cranston High School East Hockey Program. I'd like to see these kids stay on ice and keep out of hot water. This program keeps kids from facing failure and to not give up and keep trying. Cranston East has one of the greatest heritages in all of the interscholastic sports, not just hockey. Mount St. Charles, Cranston East, Burriville and LaSalle teams have had tremendous records over the years. I've competed in athletics some sixty years and my most cherished times were playing for Cranston High School. My boys played and they went on to

become a teacher and coach. Maybe there's a kid out there who doesn't have that opportunity that I had and my boys had. That's neither here nor there because money is the issue. When we speak about money we speak about parents who invested a small portion since their kids were five years old. We speak about going to the rink in the morning, paying for equipment, paying for travel teams, ice fees. It's a tremendously expensive sport and these people have done this with the primary goal that their child is going to play hockey. To me it's so cruel when we speak about money and not have some empathy or sympathy towards these parents who have invested a small portion for their kids to play hockey. And then we look at numbers and say West has a good team and a number of players. In numbers in hockey, the kids on West are probably playing fourteen or fifteen boys. East is playing almost the same. Those are the ones who play and get the most benefits. The West team has fifty kids out there and they are on the team on the ice. As far as playing, representing the school and the City it is the same. Of course, this year, East has a tremendous coach doing a tremendous job, but financially I don't see the difference other than there is more boys at West. When across the ice rink of fame the goal seems dim, the wise old coach with experience came up and spoke to him. He said, "kids, the main point now, before you win your bout is keep on fighting today until you've worn that boy out. Kids cut out and go in there low and hard. Keep your eyes on the goal and skate on yard by yard. And more than all you don't sit there whining, let's all keep on coming back with all you've got. Until above the law, you hear the sentence

still, we might as well let this guy through, this team through before we all get killed. Thanks a lot.

Mr. Scherza spoke and stated that he wants to thank Mr. Ernest and many of you may not know it, but he was a big part of his development in hockey even before he went to High School and even had the opportunity to employ him as a coach twenty years later and I've known him for a long time. He's a person I admire and his words are well taken.

Lillian Maintanis: 88 Chickory Lane – I represent myself and all of the Bus Monitors that are here tonight (10-12) and the ones that could not make it. I understand that the School Committee is considering taking the Bus Monitors off of our jobs. We are asking you to please consider not doing this for a lot of reasons. Safety, Safety, Safety is the most important reason and the safety of our children. They say that it can only happen on busy streets. We know that children can be crossing the street and it can happen. Just the other day on my route of picking up at a school, the bus was coming in and there was a snow drift and the kids could not get by. They had to climb up on the snow drift to walk around the bus, at which time they could have slid under the bus. We all take our jobs seriously; we've been on the job a long time. We help control the children on the bus by not screaming, by not yelling or distracting the bus driver. The parents really appreciate us being there. We have eyes everywhere. We put ourselves in danger in the streets. There are many times that we are

waiting for the child to cross the street and there are cars that pass the flashing lights. We're out there first, we're endangering our own lives before that child crosses the street. I am asking, please consider all the safety issues. The bus monitors get to know the children by name and exactly where those children are going, what house they live in, not to let the children go with one parent. It's a safety issue and we are asking you to please consider there has not been a bus accident with a child for a long time because the monitors are there. We are asking you to please not take the bus monitors off for the safety of the children which is important to us and hopefully as important to you.

Christine Munty: 75 Chestnut Hill – To speak on Cranston High School East Hockey. (see speech attached #17 for the record)

Joseph Esposito: 91 Shirley Blvd. – I play hockey at Cranston East. I never played sports with a group of guys like this. Hockey builds character, responsibility and friendships. I don't think any money can do anything like that. Thank you.

Will Wells: 77 Bain St. – I played with the team for three years. If it wasn't for East hockey, I wouldn't play sports. I'm not exactly the best player on the ice and if you mandated that we would have to play for West team, players from our team would just get hurt. The skill that is between East and West is phenomenal. They are in first division, we are in third division. It's an opportunity for people like

me to play hockey when I normally wouldn't.

Justin Dimaio: 99 Bryant Rd. – I'm speaking on behalf of the Cranston High School East boys' hockey team. As the captain, I just want to say, I see what goes on in the locker room, etc. One word that associates that team is HOCKEY. I've never seen any boys put in more effort than them. I may not be financially sophisticated but when it comes to the budget situation, that team has the most heart and they deserve this more than anyone else. They have seventy-five guys try out and six or seven goalies. We had six or seven guys at try-outs. The competition is a big thing to us. A lot of people say Cranston East Hockey doesn't have competition but I say if you beat a D-1 A team that skates four lines and six defensemen and your town rival last year, I'd say that is pretty good. Four years on the team has taught me so much. My freshman year was devastating watching the rink burn down and two days a week getting up and driving to Providence to play outside. Strapping on my hockey gear outside when it's 10 degrees out at 4:30 in the morning. That's because I love the sport and I want these guys to have the same opportunity. That's hockey. I'm lucky I have a generous principal. I used to come in late and I'd be telling him that I just got back from Providence and I could not get a ride from my mom. I want these guys to have the same opportunity because I go to hockey in the morning at 4:30 then I scoot over to Cranston East to go to Jazz Band for another 45 minutes until school begins. That's how my day begins. I did nothing when I was a freshman. Four years is a big improvement.

Mr. Ernest built this program basically and is such a big aspect of this team. I'm not going to be here next year, but I love these guys a lot and they have heart and I want the same for them.

Donald Botts: 65 Tennyson Rd. – I just jotted down some notes on my laptop. I have tremendous respect for the administration and the School Committee and I realize that these are hard times. I realize due to the condition of the State that the funds that we expected to have are not going to be there. That being said, I think some programs year after year always come up on the docket to be eliminated. EPIC students are gifted students. I don't have a child in the EPIC Program but I feel as though these students without the program won't be challenged enough in their schoolwork to obtain some of the goals they should be obtaining. I don't want to make this a Special Ed. vs. gifted students but they do tend to be the ones that see the mandates. They do tend to see the money. Maybe rightfully so, but the EPIC kids deserve just as much attention through that program. I also have questions on the budget:

HORTON School: I realize that the school was closed three years ago. I still see that they budgeted one teacher, one teacher assistant and one special education para. I assume that there must be some classrooms at Horton right now. To me that seems pretty wasteful because then you also require a library media coordinator, at a cost of \$4,556 and a nurse at \$37,000 and a custodian at \$38,000. This year we shut down 6th grade at middle schools and redistributed

these students at the elementary schools. I don't see why this one classroom at Horton can't be moved over to Bain for a considerable amount of savings. I understand that you also need a physical education teacher over there so of course the savings probably don't seem that much, but it is a suggestion. Elementary guidance, not sure if that is mandated @ the elementary schools. I'm not sure what their function would be. My recollection of guidance counselors used to be to tend to push students into the track they needed to go to to help students with college applications. I don't think that elementary school kids will be filling out college applications at this time. I noticed that the Sanders Program coordinator got a raise of \$5,178 during this budget cycle. I'm not sure why we are giving raises to administration people. Finally, I challenge the Superintendent, with all due respect, his district reports in the previous years did show cuts and I notice that you received raises two years ago and three years ago. Cranston East hockey program is a very important program. I watched the power point slides on the website and the anticipated cost savings of \$6,500 to remove the hockey program at East and I challenge the Superintendent to take a pay cut to save the hockey program. I don't have a child in the program but I urge the school committee and the school administration to level fund teachers for the life cycle of the next contract. I also urge you to do 20% co-payment for health insurance. This is a considerable strangle hold on the school contract and I hope that you see to it that this is done.

Jessica Joly Palumbo: 235 Armington St. – Life-long Cranston resident, teacher and parent. (see speech attached #22 for the record)

Allyssa DelVecchio: 48 Lindsay Lane – She is a 5th grade student at Orchard Farms School in the EPIC Program. (see speech attached #23 for the record)

Gianni Figueroa: 20 Urban St. – I came in late and didn't have a chance to sign up, but I was hoping I could say a few words. As a student, I am in the 5th grade in the EPIC Program. EPIC to me is sort of like a dream. Its fun and we get to do many projects. Last year I made a very big board and got to talk about car racing tires. For me it was fun and I got to do a little research on something I liked. I got to read it to quite a few people. For me, EPIC is a fun program that I can look forward to every week.

Joseph Esposito, Jr.: 98 Shirley Blvd. - I apologize to everybody on the committee, I was one of those people who sent an e-mail and didn't sign it. I will resend the e-mail tonight and wait for a response. First of all I wasn't able to attend the last meeting but I saw a news-clip after that and one statement stood out in my mind. That was about numbers. If we found enough evidence in those numbers that was enough to cut Cranston East hockey, I am sure there is enough evidence in those numbers as well to be found to cut overspending in other sports. We supply all of our kids' equipment.

If you talk about numbers, can you imagine what the high school football team would look like if they had to buy all their equipment? They don't! As Mr. Ernest said, we spend thousands of dollars up to this point for our kids to play hockey. The reality of it is some of our kids will never be able to play Division 1 hockey and that's why we chose Cranston East rather than Cranston West in the Voc. Program to play hockey. These kids out here are playing for pride. This weekend they played their hearts out against two of the toughest teams in their division. And against both those teams, they came out with ties. This was some of the greatest hockey I've ever seen them play. After they came out of the locker room, I looked at my son and said you played a great game. The first words out of his mouth were, "Yes, but now we have to go to the meeting without knowing". Is that what sports is all about. Is that what we read to be all about. It's not. It's not what we're teaching these kids in sports, that if your not good enough we're going to cut you. I think that's the wrong message that we're trying to send these kids. We need to save this program.

Dayna Laorenza: 44 Florida Ave. - I'm here on behalf of the Technical Assistants being cut. I am a Technical Assistant in the Graphic Communications Program at Career & Tech. Center. I'm not only speaking on behalf of my job but also as a graduate of that class and some of my students had mentioned earlier that not only do we teach industry level design programs, we also teach printing. Those of you in the school department know how much we do because you see your letterhead every year. You know that we do a lot for the school

department. A lot of what we get done is because of the technical assistants there. We have very large class sizes. We've been able to take up to twenty kids with our class right now only because of the fact that we have technical assistants, teachers, etc. It is a lot trying to keep everyone contained and get work done and also do outside projects for the school department. I have some pictures of our classroom in case you haven't been there or haven't seen it. (See attached Pictures for the record) Thank you very much for your time.

Mark Tetreault: 7 Humming Bird Ln. – I've had the pleasure of being here in front of you before. I hear a nice phrase, it works well and it's about numbers. It is: No questions hold about numbers. We're back in the same merry-go-round again. We look at all truth and it's easy because of the way the budget is presented these days, it's a nice line item and you can just chop it out and bang you have a savings because the numbers are all summed up for us. Like Cranston East Hockey, put it on the chopping block. My position is that if we keep looking at all the hanging truth, potentially the budget that's now 86 some-odd percent salaries and benefits, it's going to keep creeping up to 90%, 92%. Eventually there's going to be nothing left but salary and benefits. So, if we look at that analysis and then say, "Ok it's easy, we'll kill them with co-pays and chop the salaries down and fix this." A lot of it comes from the way the budget is presented year after year. We've argued about this. We are all frustrated about it. It's too granular in a sense of picking on teacher by teacher, position by position basis in this system. As a school committee you

shouldn't be looking at a teacher position over here as an assistant in the Child Development Program. You should be looking at the first grade, in general, which is out of touch if you compare it to every other system and we need the administration to fix that. I think the school committee's job really is an executive position and they should be pushing it back on to their managers to efficiently find where the proper structure is. I believe that if you actually reach out through the numbers and create a budget that is actually readable and provided correct information on a service-by-service basis, instead of employee by employee basis, you would find a very easy way to take advantage of your efficiencies and reduce your burden without having to cut into every single program. Thank you.

Paul Bessette: 100 Stone Dr. – I know the task you guys have with the budget. I do work for the City as a police officer. I know concessions that have to be made on everybody's part. But this isn't the way to do it. I got the job (Head Coach – East Hockey) a week before the season started knowing what I was getting myself into. I knew it was going to be a tough job and I knew it was going to be a tough road ahead of us. I let the Athletic Director and the Principal know that during the interview. As everybody said already we've worked hard and we've show everybody that we belong here. At 4-4-3, I was told that we weren't supposed to win a game this season. But ever since this budget came out to cut East Hockey, we haven't lost a game. These kids come up and play hockey every day at practice, showing up at 5:30 every morning and at 2:30 in the

afternoon as soon as school gets out. You've heard what everybody said including Mr. Ernst. It's hard to follow in his path. My father graduated from CHSE and he was a member of the hockey team along with me. I'd like to have my nephew and the rest of the kids have the same opportunity as I had. I ask that you reconsider cutting the program from the budget and keep the hockey program going strong. Thank you.

Suzanne O'Shea: 35 Raven Circle – I am speaking tonight as a representative of the EPIC Advisory Board. (see speech attached #29 for the record)

Robert Watts: 59 Hoffman Ave. – I have been a teacher at Cranston High School East for the last twelve years in the Social Studies Dept. I was a student at Cranston East from 1989 – 1992. I was a hockey player for Cranston East at that time. I coached the East hockey team for five years, three years as an assistant and two years as a head coach. We've heard many people speak here tonight. Mr. Munci, Mr. Esposito, Mr. Bessette, Mr. Ernest and Justin Dimaio all spoke very eloquently about the past history of Cranston East Hockey and the current state of Cranston East Hockey. And so the only thing I have to say is when you make a decision, you need to make a decision that's reasonable. There has to be a reason for it. If you were to meet with these boys in a room and you'd have to explain to them why you're going to cut Cranston East Hockey, what would you say? Are you going to tell them that the numbers are low? That's a team right

there. That's not three guys with hockey jerseys on, that's a team. Cranston East has always had a team, every year since Cranston East has been around. That hasn't changed. That's a story that somehow over the past few years has become fabricated that the numbers are low. They always have a team. That's not a reasonable answer. You might say that the skill level of the team has declined from the great teams of the 1960's like Joe Cavanaugh, one of the top five hockey players in the history of Rhode Island. How does that plan out? The values are the same. The values of these boys learning the skills today are the same as they were back in the 60's. On Sunday morning the people get their cup of coffee and their newspaper and they look in the sports section and they go to the high school sport section and scroll down and to see if Cranston East Hockey won. Look at that, Cranston East Hockey beat Warwick Vets. These aren't people that played hockey for Cranston East. These might just be four students that know the tradition and know the pride. And that's called community. And that's called pride. Those two are the most important values that we teach these young children today. You need to let that flourish and keep the hockey program. It has a long history and it would be irresponsible to anything other than to allow the program to stay. Thank you.

Jamil Jorge: 138 Victoria Ave. – I'm currently a senior at Cranston High School East. This is my thirteenth year being in the Cranston School public school system. I'm here to speak on the music program. Music is more than just a performing ensemble. It teaches

life skills to any individual that can carry on through life. Being involved in ensemble has helped me with such things as commitment, responsibility, cooperation, communication skills, and discipline. Developing each of these traits through music brings into society a difference. As individuals who involve themselves for the benefit of our society we form a close bond. As a community that holds such a powerful mind now holds a family. As a family we support each other. I can remember two cases in this program where we have been as close as a family where we had a friend of ours who's house burned down and the whole family lost everything. We all donated clothes, etc. And another case was when one of our music members' father died of a stroke at such a young age. Immediately the day this happened, we started forming funds and getting things for them, doing things they can't do because they were in financial stress. The reason we do this is because through the music program we have come to learn to support each other and to work together through cooperation. By being a family, we want to help each other through the most terrible events such as these. The reason I'm telling you about these events is because by eliminating music in elementary school your disturbing the entire music program by the very roots of it. There is no chance for a student to flourish in middle school and high school. Interest in music begins at a young age when a child is still at that stage when they want to do and see new things. The love for music would develop at a young age and follow to higher levels in higher educational grades. By high school, if they did not have music in the elementary level, they would not

have the interest still. In the long run, by cutting elementary music, I think that for the most part the numbers will start to die in middle and high school. You won't have that same amount of commitment that a lot of people would have if they started music early. On my own behalf, music has become such a benefit for me, I couldn't put it into words. Due to great influences I've experienced over the past eight years in the music program, I want to go on to college in the music program and hope to come back to this community and family.

Melanie Rainone: 152 Ausdale Rd. – I am a freshman at Cranston High School East and I would like to speak on the music program. (see attached speech #32 for the record)

Brendon Rebello: 545 Pontiac Ave. – I'm here to talk about the music program. I've been involved in music since 4th grade, nine years ago. I am in ten music programs at Cranston East and I'm proud to say that. I love music because it's my escape from normal life like the economy, the war in Iraq or anything else. It's my escape. I love to play the trumpet. I wouldn't had realized my love for music if I hadn't picked up a trumpet in the 4th grade. Even if I didn't know what it was, I can remember when I first took it out, I took it out because it was shiny and I liked it. The point is most kids when they're young, they don't figure out what they want so they try a lot of things. Trying music will be a great stepping stone for them because without it, they won't have that part of their life that they could have been. If I wasn't in Music, I'd be a completely different person. I met so many

great people and had so many great experiences over my young life. I hope that you take this into consideration and please keep the music program.

Kristen Johnson: 62 Greylock Ave. – I am a junior at Cranston High School East and I've been in music since 3rd grade. I can't tell you how much band has changed my life dramatically and I know out of the entire crowd, the Cranston East Marching band feel that music is such a drive and determination. My sister was in the Cranston East band and there are such great programs and it made me pick up an instrument in elementary school to see how happy my sister was. She spent long tedious hours in Cranston East Marching Band and she still would come home and be so excited for those competitions. Every Saturday, she'd be out until 2:00 in the morning and come home so proud of herself. It made me pick up an instrument in third grade. We had a great marching season. I just want to know that other kids will have that great opportunity to live those dreams, to have that determination, to learn those lessons that you learn in band camp or have that first great feeling that you have when you stand up on stage and say, "I accomplished something". Having a challenging piece of music in front of you and playing it on stage and having your parents say they are proud of you for something that you did, something that you learned that was very difficult. Just as teaching a child a second language, you want to start out younger. They learn better. I think that cutting the music program will just take so much away from those children and it would be gut wrenching to think of

that. Please listen!

Dennis Greco: 56 Henry St. – I would sincerely like to thank you for the way you went about this process last year. It became clear to me and I sincerely express to you that you made every single effort to make these very difficult budgetary decisions. So that it would have the slightest impact as possible on the kids day-to-day educational experience. I realize it's a new ball game this year with hard decisions to make and frankly even harder issues to address. But I'd like to continue evoking that same spirit that you all had last year. I recognize that it's hard to do this year. The number of programs your talking about cutting is the best exhibit. But I would like to make a couple of suggestions to you. We're in a difficult state and you know better than I do how difficult it is. I would suggest that all parties that stand before you that work for the school department that come into this room and talk to you, and you as well, need to talk a little bit about where you might be giving. A couple of sacrifices I suggest to you are specifically an analytical eye towards streamlining consolidation of many of our administrative efforts. To literally save some salary benefits. And secondarily, a reasonable but yet resolute approach to negotiate our teachers about what their financial package is going to look like going forward. It's a dirty word to talk about. I realize we're talking about people's pocketbooks and their jobs. And I don't like to suggest it. Jobs should be consolidated or teachers should contribute more to health insurance. I pay for my kid's food as much as anybody else does. But I do know that in

tough economic times, in the private sector and should be in the public sector, everybody needs to sacrifice. I'm a small business owner. There are many years where I don't get a salary increase. There have been year in and year out where I don't get a salary increase but I give my employees raises. I do that because in difficult times, they don't get the same raises they used to get. I think that's the approach, collectively you have to take. Because the budget is approximately 89% personnel costs, that's the only way we're going to be able to come up with a real balance budget. I recognize that it is not only a difficult situation but the timing for focusing on some of these things stink. If you're in negotiations with teachers, you can't now set a budget that's due April 1st. If you read the paper today, the president is talking about a stimulus package which is supposed to have earmark municipal funds. If what we read is true, it's going to trickle down. But there's a lot of influx. So because of that, I would suggest that you need to do the best you can. Not to cut things that are impacted. There is one specific issue I wanted to talk about, which I talked about last year. Nobody wants to have their areas cut. But we all have to give something. I just want to speak about the EPIC program. You heard Mrs. O'Shea give you a very detailed description of how this program benefits. Not just kids in the program, but those outside too. I know from my own personal experience that teachers give professional developments to their colleagues at a cost save. I know they help with curriculum decisions. I have two kids in the program. Not only do they spend an additional small group time with those kids, helping them develop

their special skills, but they deal with my children's classroom teachers and help them with curriculum decisions for my kids. This is one program because of the way it is linked with the classroom curriculum that I can't replicate for my kids outside. My kids play CLCF sports, they take music lessons. I know it's not mandated and I know in the Caruolo Action we took a beating because it's not mandated. Some things are worth fighting for. Thank you.

Chairman Traficante noted that this concludes the public speaking portion of the meeting. The Superintendent would like to respond to some of the questions and comments that were made by the general public. Chairman Traficante stated that each and every speaker was treated with respect when they came to the podium tonight to address the Superintendent; he expects the public to do likewise when the Superintendent speaks on his proposed budget. You may not agree with him, but he has the right to at least present to you his thoughts behind why the cuts were made.

At this time the Superintendent addressed the public. Mr. Scherza stated that none of us take any pride in this situation and there were some great things that I heard tonight that I can't not agree with in my heart. Things that we would like to see kept in. There are things that go against the grain of our philosophy. He stated that he means that sincerely. The programs that we know that we want that, as administrators we were part of developing and constructing. These programs are near and dear to me and my background. You know

that I am a hockey brat coming from Canada whose father was a professional hockey player and I played hockey myself. Hockey is near and dear to me. This is not easy. But there is a responsibility to do everything within the law to try to balance the budget. There will be some heated discussion regarding these programs with the committee and the administration. The elementary orchestra and the elementary bands and music programs are something that is not required by law. We did take a beating and I was on the stand for a day, along with Mr. Traficante who was on for several hours. Judge Savage ordered the City and the school department to undergo a program audit in which a team of consultants would come and scrutinize us on the budget and the programs. Right now, the consultants are nearing completion of their program audit. These are consultants that we are literally paying tens of thousands of dollars to process this program audit. We are obligated to follow the law, first and foremost. Things discussed such as, gifted and talented, music, sports, are really go beyond our enrichment areas. This is a time that we laid off dozens and dozens of teachers over the last three years. We've cut programs. We have impacted kids in order to keep some of these programs. We're at the point now where it is very difficult to sustain them and it would be hard for us to do this without going out of compliance and jeopardizing ourselves financially and putting the City into further debt through the long court actions. In regards to the City Counsel and the administration, we're trying to work together but it doesn't help matters or it doesn't help us when we're adding to the deficit when we've already been told by court order and

by consultants to fix the problem and we know that some of these things will be required to do it. It's tough. What's happening here is we're reiterating what's happening with our economy. This is the toughest of tough times. I've never seen anything like this at any time in my career. These people have a very difficult job to do and the issues are very complex. There are no real easy solutions. With that said, I will review a few of the issues here.

Mr. Scherza stated that before he begins, he would like to reiterate what Mr. Traficante had stated earlier, that the budget is 8/10's of 1% increase over last year. In most instances that's fantastic. Not even looking at the State yet, we've already budgeted for a 3% decrease and it probably may be even at 4%. There is a cap at what the State can generate and give to us and the City side. We've been meeting with Mayor Fung already. Tomorrow we have another meeting with Mayor Fung and the City Council. We talked about these issues and there's not a doubt in my mind that if all of these cuts were sustained that had been proposed, we would probably have to cut somewhere in the vicinity of \$2 million dollars more just based on what the City's ability to help us is in this upcoming year will be. The orchestra and music, as we said, is not required by law or regulations. They're wonderful, I support them, I've been to a lot of concerts myself, my grandchildren have been involved and continue to be involved and I'm getting it from them as well. In terms of the JROTC instruction, they are in our budget by the United States Army. The U.S. Army pays for all of the material and supplies as well.

The sheet music will be looked into. Your words are not falling on deaf ears. We may not be able to accommodate all of the things you want us to but I give you my word and I know the committee would join me in considering all recommendations.

The technical assistants at the Career & Technical Center are wonderful people. They do a great job. This is the cut that does hurt kids. We've been cutting off a lot of things that's important and makes our programs run.

As far as out of town students attending Cranston Public Schools, we've made a concerted effort to try to weed them out. Are we going to find every one of them? I'm sure we won't. The ones we know about we get out. Mr. Nero is more than compulsive and conscientious about doing that. We have been asking students who do not belong here to leave and go back to their communities. Much of what you see coming over the RIPTA busses come from the far end of Cranston and are not eligible for school bussing. Some are placed here by DCYF. Some are placed here by Family Court, even though they live in group homes or facilities in other communities. Then there are still other students who are seniors. Once a student completes his/her junior year in Cranston, they are entitled to stay in that school the following year to graduate, even if they live in another community. In some cases that's been happening. I don't have to tell any of you that in this economy, Mr. Nero brought up at this mornings

meeting, the number of families who have been put out of their houses either through evictions as renters or its owners or by foreclosures. Those numbers are growing. Three years ago we put out 186 students that we caught and we've even gone on to try and prosecute some of them. We are trying to be diligent on that and again some of these we know about and some we don't know about.

As far as the Horton School, it not a traditional elementary school at this time as it used to be. The Horton School now is a Special Education facility that has allowed us to bring very intensive special need students back from out of district placement that are extremely costly and take care of their problems here. Running programs in the Horton School saves us enormous amounts of money. The out of district costs for some of those kids goes somewhere in the vicinity of \$55, 000 to \$60,000 in many cases. By bringing them back we can save money. We're providing Special Needs classes in there for very intensive cases. It also serves as an office area for our Central Registration and our English as a Second Language screening. Many of our active members who are Dept. Chairs or School Psychologists who visit many schools but need an office are centralized at Horton. The Horton School is in use but not as a traditional school. We do have two classes that function there as well.

In regards to our elementary guidance people, we did eliminate one position already and we will be looking at other positions as we go forward to making more cuts. Elementary guidance is required in

some ways because some students have this in their IEP (Individual Education Plan) which we are obligated to follow by the Federal Government. They serve a much different purpose than high or middle school counselors. There are different needs at different levels. This is what the social workers do, they do counseling, group programs and some do interventions for special needs students and a host of other things.

In regards to the Sanders Program and the comment that the Director received an increase in salary, Mr. Scherza asked Mr. Votto to comment on this. Mr. Votto answered that during the discussion and during the break, Mr. Balducci and I had a discussion. They don't have an answer at this time, but did note that there were no raises given to any of the administrators last year. It looks like we will have to investigate this matter. Mr. Scherza reiterated that they will look into this. If it's an error, we will address it and take care of it right away.

Mr. Scherza also stated in regards to Mr. Greico's suggestions, that they are good suggestions. We've been consolidating administration quite a bit over the last few years. We've eliminated administrative positions. As far as negotiations go, we are holding the line and right now, we are going forward with no raises. It makes it very difficult to negotiate when you know that you don't have anything to negotiate with. As far as the administrators, they are actually going backwards in some ways because they raised their co-pay and they are all

paying 20% in their cost share for health care. This upcoming year they will lose their longevity and their salaries will definitely be cut by that. The administrators have stepped up for this and next year. In regards to our laborer bargaining units, despite that some of them are working without contracts, despite the fact that the economic times are hard, they are still performing their duties 100% in their classrooms and I commend them for that and I thank them for that.

Chairperson Traficante stated to the members of the committee that Mr. Stycos brought up a good point tonight. We will only bring up one topic at a time. We'll ask all our questions on that particular topic before we go to a new topic. Mrs. Culhane e-mailed him during the course of the week to address the athletic issue, i.e. middle school sports, hockey situation, the uniform situation, and the athletic director, Mr. Traficante, is here tonight so he will address these questions.

Mr. Traficante (Athletic Director) stated that first of all, he would like everybody to realize in front of him and behind him that the total athletic budget, middle and high school, is less than 1% of your budget. If you cut all the middle school sports and all of the high school sports, it has this much of an impact in the deficit. My entire budget is less than 1% of your budget. Now that being said, 70% of that budget goes to coaches' salaries and official fees. As far as supplies, materials and equipment, it's not a lot of money. No one in this room is envious of your position. Not many of us want to do

what you have to do. That being said, I'm not coming to the microphone tonight, nor will I at the next two meetings, to advocate any kind of equal cuts at Cranston High School East or Cranston High School West. What I am going to advocate is that we don't cut anything from either schools. But I will advocate to the School Committee and I've been advocating this for the last few years that this high school budget is sorely, sorely under-budget. I haven't bought a uniform for a major athletic team in maybe five years. Cranston West boys' hockey uniforms are bought by the parents. They raised \$6,000. Cranston West football uniforms are the same. The parents raised \$4,500. Cranston East football, three years ago, was the same thing. I don't pay for that. I've been advocating for five years, not that I want to, to drop middle school sports. We can't afford it. We're under-funded at the high school and middle school level. I am advocating taking the \$127,600 from middle school sports and cut it. I think that out of 1% of my budget, giving you \$128,000 is more than fair share from the Athletic Dept. This is not an East/West thing. It's not a boy/girl thing. This is about high school juniors and seniors and sophomores trying to play high school sports, trying to get athletic scholarships and having a good time in high school. We owe them that. I'd love to have middle school sports. Those kids have all their avenues. They have CLCF, they have little league, travel teams, and select teams. I'm here to advocate, don't cut sports at East and don't cut sports at West. Take middle school sports. From my 1% budget, I think \$128,000 is pretty good.

Mrs. Culhane responded that she would like to thank Mr. Traficante for getting back to her quickly and the answer to her question was answered; however, two of her colleagues have questions. Mrs. Culhane asked Mr. Traficante if he could touch on a question where some people were under the impression that hockey generates revenue from ticket sales at the door. She stated that Mr. Traficante explained this matter to her and he also explained how the rental works for the City. She asked if Mr. Traficante would expand on that for the committee and explain how those things work.

Mr. Traficante answered that when he first became Athletic Director nine years ago, they used to get a reimbursement from pre-sale tickets. They used to get a reimbursement of play-off tickets. They would get a percentage. He knows that his first couple of years on the job, that was approximately \$9,000-\$10,000 between the two schools. He noted that's long been gone. We don't collect one dime for the rink. The way the rink makes their money is that they have a concession stand and they charge the interscholastic league an amount per hour per ice time. That's how the rink makes their money. The interscholastic league makes their money at the games. They get all the money at the games. The interscholastic league makes their money from the door and the rink makes their money from charging the interscholastic league rental fees. We don't get a dime from that money, whether it's playoffs or regular skating.

Mrs. Culhane asked how the rink rental works for us vs. how it works

for other Cities, towns and other schools. Mr. Traficante answered that he doesn't know the exact date but it goes back to another administration in excess of 20 years ago. At that time they had two hockey teams, East boys and West boys. The City and the school department came to an agreement that the two hockey teams would receive free practice ice Monday – Thursday. The times would be approximately 2:30 – 4:10 which was prime ice. In return the school department provides the City with free bus transportation to all the summer programs at all the Elementary schools in addition to free gym time for basketball teams that the City would run. Mr. Traficante stated that this was a good deal. For the last nine years to the last four years we grew to four hockey teams. They are East boys, West boys, Co-op girls, as well as West Junior Varsity. That agreement is still intact to a certain extent but there is only so much ice that they can give us. Occasionally to take care of four hockey teams, I'd purchase additional ice time. If you put out an e-mail regarding all high schools that don't have rinks in the State of RI to rent ice, you would rent that sheet of ice for an hour for a minimum of \$225/hour within five minutes because there are that many schools that don't have ice rinks. They still accommodate us pretty well and to date I've had to purchase \$1,400 of additional ice at \$190/hour. So if you go to any City or town to find out if they could run four hockey teams on \$1,400 worth of ice, they'd be very envious of us. We've lost Friday night games now as a rule because the rink has obligations financially as well. They do community skating on Friday nights now. They make a lot of their money on Friday night skating. The rink has

done a tremendous job going above and beyond with the original agreement with the school department.

Mr. Lombardi referred to Coach Bessette's comment on the choice of the speakers. He stated that it is always pleasurable here from this stand point to see the maturity and dedication and their abilities to speak publicly. For the new members, last year he read the Caruolo statute a thousand times, and for last year and he will do it again this year that middle school sports for the reasons articulated by Mike Traficante is deemed to be a luxury. It is deemed not to be required by law, contract and regulations. It's deemed to be an extension of community sports and while I am a soccer official myself, middle school sports is a luxury. It's unnecessary and I voted against it once. I saw the six votes were for it, I went along with the six but Mr. Traficante makes a lot of sense. But for Mr. Lombardi given the choice between Mr. Traficante offering us \$127,000 cut and to save \$6,500 for the Cranston East Hockey, which he respectfully disagrees with the Superintendent, is required by regulation because it's a high school sport, I'm prepared to make that jump and I agree with you.

Mrs. McFarland stated that she met early this morning with some of the administration to go over some of her concerns. Two of her colleagues have asked a couple of questions that she already had asked. The only thing she would add to this is that she is willing to support that initiative as well as long as we put back the cross-country for girls.

Mrs. Ruggieri noted that she also wanted to put her support with Mr. Traficante's suggestion. It seems to her that instead of putting the same thing up every year, they need to start looking at things in a different way. They need to start making some meaningful changes. We keep presenting the same programs year after year and I felt this way from the other side of the podium and its part of the reason why I'm up here. We need to start doing things differently and it's unfortunate that that's the choice we have to make. But if that's the choice we have to make, it's a choice that makes sense. So she will support Mr. Traficante also.

Chairperson Traficante suggested to Mr. Traficante (A.D.) to elaborate on the Interscholastic League Rules because he has received a lot of e-mails regarding those particular rules and how it applies to kids from East and West.

Mr. Traficante (AD) answered that in regards to say for example whether it's the vocational school and Cranston High School West or the ROTC Program and Cranston High School East, if a student of East from our City attended the vocational school and begins in the tenth grade they have two options. They can either play for the school that their attending or they can play for their feeder school they must attend. Just because a tenth grader is at Cranston West Vocational School, does not mean he has to play for Cranston West. This past year one of the captains of Cranston East football team was

at the Charter School and played for Cranston East hockey. We have a wrestler who is at Cranston West, wrestling for Cranston East. If they go for tenth grade at the Vocational School, they have a choice to play for Cranston West or they play for the feeder school. We also have students here from Johnston, West Warwick, Scituate, so they too have the same choice. They can play for Johnston High School, West Warwick High School, etc. as their choice. But, once they make their choice say to try out for the team and don't make it or doesn't like the school and transfer back to Cranston East as a junior, he can do that but he now becomes a transfer student which would force him to sit out 50% of the season. The same thing would be true if a Cranston West student went to Cranston East with the ROTC program he would follow the same guidelines.

Mrs. Culhane stated she understands the superintendent in doing this was a cost savings and she knows things go flying around – this is a East issue, this is a West issue, but she understands this was not his intention, however, in saying that she supports Mr. Traficante's proposal and she supports Cranston East sports and she refuses to let the perception be that the East side is getting cut all the time. I will fight for the East side. Sometimes perception means more than the reality of the situation and if that is going to be the perception we need to do what we need to do to bring the community together just like we did with the High School Musical, bringing East and West together instead of doing things that are going to continue to divide us.

Mr. Stycos stated he would like to thank the Superintendent for the budget. Last year he was quite critical that the budget was not balanced, it was an illegal budget because it funded everything that we wanted to have in it when it first came to us and we had to make cuts. Mr. Stycos again thanked the Superintendent stating this budget is very legal and very helpful because it sets out pretty clearly what the choices are that we have to make. The second thing was he wanted to thank everyone for speaking tonight. It helped him on some issues and he thinks it is extremely important that they talk with the mayor, with the city council, and with the legislature because if you follow this process at all, we will pass the budget and our budget is almost always cut by the city and the city in the last two years has level funded us. They have been able to say proudly that they haven't raised taxes and that has put us in an incredible financial hole which is one of the reasons we are in a real mess. You need to communicate, especially when we are done with the budget. You need to communicate with the council and the mayor and the legislature (because they control a lot of our money) saying you want money for the schools. If they don't hear from you we are going to be cutting more stuff.

Mr. Stycos stated his last point is about the myth of the students riding on the RIPTA bus who are from Providence. This started years ago and I think it is completely false. I have ridden the bus that comes from Kennedy Plaza through Edgewood to Cranston East. Last year

when I rode it there were three kids on the bus and when I got on they could have been part of Cranston, up the bus line, they got off at Park View and I tend to think they were from northern Edgewood. This year I rode it and the only people that got on the bus got on after me and they were obviously Cranston residents. This is just something that has been repeated so many times that RIPTA is running bus routes to bring kids into our schools from out of town which is wrong. People need to recognize that there is a little racism in those comments. When I first moved to Cranston, just about everybody who lived in Cranston was white and in the last twenty-five years we have had a lot of new residents and some of those new residents are black, and some are Hispanic and some of them are Asian. I think a lot of people go around with this notion that if somebody is on one of our playgrounds, or on a bus, they must be from Providence because their skin is not white. I really need to ask people to put that thinking to bed. It is just plain false. There is no evidence of it. The administration he knows, tracks down people who they think are not from Cranston and goes after them. If you know of anyone, please let them know.

Mr. Stycos also spoke on the hockey subject. When he looks in the budget book, under equipment, these are very small items but nonetheless, there is \$800.00 for the East boys' equipment, and \$1,200 for the West hockey team equipment and he can understand that because the West hockey team is bigger. Mr. Stycos questioned the \$4,000 in the budget for the girls' hockey. Mr. Traficante (AD)

stated he has put that aside for the girls' team. Originally this was a two year agreement with the interscholastic league. After our two years were up we had to reapply for permission once again to be a co-op team. Originally I bought them a black shirt with white lettering that said Cranston and a white shirt with black lettering that said Cranston because I didn't feel it appropriate for them to wear green or red. Well, they thought the uniforms weren't what they wanted so they went out and fundraised and they got their own colors and their own logo and bought their own uniforms and call themselves The Thunderbirds. The reason there is \$4,000 there is because once every year he has to go back and reapply to be a co-op team. He can't send that letter in until July, long after his budget has been handed in. If the Interscholastic League says no, you cannot have a coop team you have to stand on your own, if one of those two schools can stand on their own and I have to buy uniforms for that particular school, where do I get the money from? If you look at my budget for the past two years you will see I did not use the \$4,000. The only reason it is there is in the event that I get denied in July and I have to purchase uniforms. Mr. Stycos stated if we do get approved you won't know that until July. Mr. Traficante stated he sends the letter in July for the hearing and normally he gets the first hearing in August. If we get the permit to serve as a co-op team once again that \$4,000 can be turned over during budget revision.

Mr. Traficante, chairman, stated nobody loves Cranston East more than himself. He taught there for twenty years, coached football and

wrestling, an administrator there but it just bothers me to no end that this city has become so parochial. We have an Eastern Cranston and we have a Western Cranston which doesn't exist. We have a city of Cranston and members of this committee advocate not for East kids or West kids, we advocate for all the kids of Cranston that is his philosophy. He then addressed the East Hockey Team – I think you got a pretty good impression tonight as to which way the committee is going to go regarding your team. Don't walk out of here tonight feeling comfortable with yourselves because you better be at the City Council meeting when we present this budget to the City Council because if we cut a couple of more million dollars which we expect to be done, we're back here again looking for further cuts. So, don't be too comfortable. You better be advocating for our budget. Mr. Traficante also encouraged the coach to attend the presentation to the City Council.

Mrs. McFarland stated she had the opportunity during the break to speak with her former colleagues, Councilman Aceto, and new Councilman Pelletier in regards, and she knows the chairperson knows the one committee she asked to be on and one of the efforts that she made previously when she was on the council, was Consolidation. She wanted to ask each of the councilmen to actively petition the City Council and work with us to try and make consolidations in the city. If we can consolidate some of these services we wouldn't be battling over tax dollars, we would have a city that is more efficient, that's more productive and we would be

able to have other cities follow what we are doing. We have been working so hard to get to that point but can't seem to get there. She asked for their support in asking for consolidation of services.

Mr. Lombardi thanked Councilman Aceto and Councilman Pelletier who were sitting here throughout this process to get a real taste. Other than Councilman Lupino and then Councilwoman McFarland sometimes, we didn't have many visitors come to the School Committee budget hearings and stay as long as you have and he appreciated that. One of the things that troubled him, and he asked that they pass this on to their colleagues, that it has been said to our chairperson and to our Superintendent, that there is no way that you are going to get your \$4.1 million dollars. He thinks the proverbial cart has been put before the horse and it bothers him and troubles some of his colleagues that we're already being told that we're not getting that money. There must be a funding source available to us. Mr. Stycos and I don't always agree but we agree on this point. We have a gapping hole and we have a huge rainy day fund and we have a tsunami upon us. They have to find the sources for us.

Mr. Stycos stated a couple of meetings ago that he asked the administration to look at the possibility of whether we could loan our energy person to the city to run some kind of similar program with the city. Mr. Scherza stated we did check with EEI and the company that we are contracted with, and they said they only work with school departments. The other thing is we have one person for

approximately 30-31 buildings right now and she is spread pretty thin. It would take a little more resource to do all the city buildings. We are in the 2 ½ to 3rd year of the contract.

Mr. Stycos noted that the top floor of the Norwood Avenue School, with the exception of an office for the school lunch program, is empty. He was wondering if we could offer that space to the City. They often talk about getting out of the Hamilton Building and this may help them to do just that. Mr. Scherza noted that he can't respond to that because it hasn't come up yet when we have met with them. Mr. Scherza stated that he is looking at other program (s) he could put there. One of the things he did approach Mr. Traficante about is having the NEL/CPS Charter School take over the Sanders Program and Mr. Balducci is looking into the cost, which he literally asked him to do today. But he is in the process of looking into that. Mr. Stycos stated that in the long picture when we moved the 6th grade out of the middle schools, he thinks that they should do some kind of inventory as to available space and if there is space, offer that to the City so they could perhaps do some consolidations on their part.

Chairman Traficante reported that they had a very informative conversation this morning about exactly what Mr. Stycos was talking about, i.e., Norwood Avenue School. We were also talking about even the possibility of moving the Horton Program over to Norwood Avenue School but they haven't had any meetings with Cheryl

Coogan or Judy Lundsten yet. One of the things posed as a question was to use the top floor for the Sanders Program and the first or main floor for the Horton Program and the lower level for the Eighteen to Twenty-One Program, as it is now. At that time, Horton would still have our Central Registration Office and the ESL Screening office. This just came up today and we started to take a look into it. Mr. Scherza feels that they may have something for the committee very shortly.

Mrs. Culhane referred to the line items on the Plant Operations part of the budget. She noted that, in regards to consolidation, is there any where in the Plant line items that we might be able to consolidate with the City. Chairman Traficante noted that he presented the Mayor with the study that we did for the past year and a half. We submitted the report that Mrs. McFarland and Mr. Balducci did which was the personnel part. He, himself, was on the Transportation and Public Works area. All this was submitted to the Mayor and Mr. Traficante reminded the mayor and will remind him again in the morning that we have to start sitting down and talking about some of these possibilities. We've been talking about consolidation of Plant Operations and Transportation.

Mr. Lombardi referred to the Saturday Detention Custodial line item, in which a question was asked at the last meeting. Mr. Balducci noted that that particular line item is on page 22, top of the page. And it is correct in assuming that it was a mistake and should have been

removed. Mr. Balducci stated that he will see to it that it is removed. Mr. Lombardi noted that it is reflected as \$4,700 on the Superintendent's presentation. Mr. Balducci stated that that is correct that \$2,000 was removed from Cranston West Custodial account. The \$2,700 is the Cranston East Custodial account.

Mrs. Ruggieri noted that all the cuts that are proposed on this budget are basic programs cut for the most part and cuts that directly affect the children. They have been considered and deemed unnecessary or not mandated or not required by law or regulations. Most of those fall in the 11% of the budget that we look at. She asked that looking at the other side of the budget, is there not similarly not required by law on that side of the budget that could be looked at? The budget as a whole. Mr. Scherza noted that the 11% Mrs. Ruggieri is referring to is everything except salary and benefits. In terms of salary and benefits, we don't have authority to change these. None of our administrators do. The savings that we can do to attrition are well defined in the contract. We cannot change these, they are changed by selective bargaining, which this committee is engaged with now with six of the seven remaining employee groups. That is really a matter of collective bargaining and we are looking into those things whether it be cost sharing, co-pay, program, salaries. The committee has been very aggressive in looking into trying to save. Mr. Traficante and Mr. Scherza both met with the leaderships of every single bargaining unit and asked them to help us to come up with suggestions that could help us save. Mrs. Ruggieri stated to Mr.

Scherza that he took a beating for maintaining programs that weren't considered necessary. Is there not a similar thing throughout the entire budget that was looked at? Mr. Scherza noted that he would hope that they have looked at everything.

Mr. Nero stated that in reference to law, regulation and contract you just can't think of programming. He spent a considerable amount of time in the last six months with the program auditors and even things that might go to plant and asset protection under the BEP are required of health, safety and welfare asset protection so you can look at things and look at programs and things like EPIC and middle school sports come up all the time and I always said that a decision has to be made and we have to move on. He noted that even things that you see i.e., equipment and all of those different things you can say that they are really not required by law, regulation and contract but the BEP requires that the school needs certain things that will be on programming and they have to be minimally staffed. When we look at this, asset protection gets creamed every single year. Our auditors say, "Why do you continue to do that", because you have to protect the assets that you have and again it models mandate for the BEP but it is not a program.

Ms. Iannazzi noted that this whole budget process would be a lot easier if we had the performance audit complete. We were told we would be getting it in November and here it is the end of January and we still don't have it. Perhaps we can remind the City to help us

move that along as well.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated that the budget process as a whole really needs to be looked at. The deadline and the restrictions that are placed. You're trying to create a budget while you're trying to negotiate. You're put in a position where you're not really able to negotiate. This is what should be looked at. Chairman Traficante answered that the Charter focuses on a time frame that the School Committee must serve the budget to the Mayor by a certain date. The Mayor must serve to the Council by a certain date and it must be approved by May 10th or by May 15th by Charter. Unfortunately the General Assembly doesn't approve their budget until sometime in June or July. Mrs. Ruggieri noted that that is a process and a Charter issue that should be looked at.

Mr. Scherza reiterated that not only is this a Charter issue but we are working very hard with our State Legislators and he would ask everyone in this room for their support. That is to enact a Student Funding formula. We remain the only State in the U.S. that doesn't have one. If such were in place, we would note the revenue and we could present a more rational budget to our City Council because we would know what the revenues are and what we have to work with. Right now it's irrational, this process, because we don't know the revenues to the City or State until after we've made our budget.

Mr. Lombardi referred to the Technical Assistants and asked about

the Superintendent's presentation of the five technical assistants being cut of the seven that are there. He stated that he knows the culinary and construction are the two areas that are going to be retained. He asked if Mr. Balducci knows the other five areas that are proposed to be cut. Mr. Balducci reported that some of the other areas are: Aquaculture, Graphics, Child Development and Health.

Mr. Votto in referring to the 88 – 89% and looking at the 11% that affects the kids, ladies and gentlemen the 88-89% when we cut, affects kids. Unfortunately everything we do affects the kids. The 11% are books, supplies, and textbooks. When we address personnel, that 88% or 89% we're impacting the kids. We're cutting custodians and teacher assistants. Over the years, we've cut teachers as Mr. Scherza has said, we've cut secretaries and all this has an impact and the 88% is there for the kids even though people try to make it sound like it is not, like we're paying people to do nothing, the kids are impacted by cuts in the salary area. Obviously we're reducing staff by doing this. The 11% really is the books, supplies, pens, pencils, paper, etc. The 88%, every time we touch it, every time we lay somebody off, reduced staff affects what we're providing for our kids.

Mr. Scherza referred to Mr. Votto's comment. He stated that he said it before and will say it again, in terms of the high cost of labor, education is a labor intensive industry. Our resources are the people and nothing is more important than putting a good teacher in front of

every kid.

Mrs. Culhane noted that she would like to reiterate what Mr. Scherza just said. She noted that she has had a lot of discussion with people and they have said, “Well that 11% was going towards my child’s education”. And while she does believe that all our labor unions need to be making some considerable concessions in health costs, your child’s education, all the books, tools, and instruments in the world don’t mean anything if there isn’t a teacher there to do that job.

Mrs. Culhane thanked Mr. Scherza for his comment, noting that your child’s education is the teachers. Going back to the Career & Technical, Mrs. Culhane asked if we’ve contacted any other Career & Technical Centers either a secondary level or college level to find out how they are staffed and what kind of assistants they use in their classrooms. She also asked, particularly in the Child Development portion, how exactly does that pre-school work. Do we generate revenue that goes into our general budget?

Mr. Balducci answered that as far as contacting other Career & Technical Centers the answer would be that we have not at this time; however, that’s not to say we can’t make that call tomorrow, which we will. The second question regarding the pre-school program. Mr. Balducci answered yes; tuition is generated from that program; however that goes back into that program to sustain it. Each High School and Middle School is given a student activity fund to manage all their activities. The Child Development program does receive a

piece of that allocation but again not enough to run the program the way it should be run. So again the tuition is supplemental to that program for supplies and materials or whatever they feel is necessary for the program.

Mrs. McFarland asked if they would separate the amount that you actually budget how much would you receive from those tuition payments. Mr. Balducci stated that he could get that information before the week is over. Mrs. McFarland also asked if that program has a waiting list. Mr. Balducci noted that the program is a very popular program, so it wouldn't surprise him if there was a waiting list. Mrs. McFarland asked also, if Mr. Balducci would find out how extensive the waiting list is.

At this time, Chairman Traficante asked Mr. Balducci if the tuition is \$200 per child. Mr. Balducci stated that he wasn't sure of the exact amount. Chairman Traficante called Ms. Coutu to the podium. Mrs. Coutu is the Assistant Principal/Director of the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center.

Mrs. Coutu noted that at the present, tuition is \$200 per student per year for a pre-school student. At the moment she is not sure about income being generated for the Career & Tech. programs or not. She noted that right now they get \$1,500 stipend to begin the year as seed money for materials, food, etc. They are bringing in approximately \$3,800 at this moment for the program. She is not sure if the program

is generating income yet.

Mrs. Coutu reported that the waiting list for the pre-schoolers is very extensive. Mrs. McFarland asked what the determination is in deciding what child is chosen to go and do they have to be Cranston residents. Mrs. Coutu reported that they usually take whoever is next on the list; however they do give preference to the teachers in the system so that the children can be in the schools with their parents. As far as she knows they can take students from anywhere because of the fact that they are a technical school. Our students, themselves, come from Johnston, Foster, and Scituate. Mrs. McFarland asked if there is a policy/procedure on how you handle the waiting list and how you determine preferences, etc. Mrs. Coutu answered that the teachers keep a running list and they keep it in order and as far as she knows they take the students from the next person on the list. Mrs. McFarland asked who made the determination to take children of teachers in the system. Mrs. Coutu stated that that decision was made before she came on board as Director. Mrs. McFarland reiterated to the administration that she would like to see the policies and procedures on how those programs operate and are funded. Mrs. McFarland also discussed with Mrs. Coutu the amount of \$200 per student per year, stating that this is a very low amount of money since most parents would pay that amount per week.

Mrs. McFarland reiterated that she feels that this is a wonderful opportunity in which our children in our City get the opportunity to be

educated in the system with teachers who do a tremendous job in educating all of our children so to have a child in such early stages in their life to have such a great opportunity but to be able to make sure that we can afford such an opportunity that we have to make sure that we're properly maintaining and funding such a program appropriately so that ability will be there for all people of Cranston.

Mrs. Culhane asked what the teacher to child to pre-schooler ratio was. She also asked how many students are working in that program. She made a comment that if the information is not readily available they can get back to her. She was just wondering about the children and the DCYF requirements and are the students in that program considered in these requirements because usually it's a ten to one ratio. Mrs. Coutu answered that they do follow DCYF requirements and she just saw something that depending on their age, it's twenty-four students. Five year olds require 2 adults for 24 students. As the age gets smaller, the ratio is different. Mrs. Coutu reported that they have two adults in the room at all times with them. In the program they have approximately 22 – 24 students in two different classes and they switch off in the pre-school. Mrs. McFarland asked if that second adult is one of the technical assistants. Mrs. Coutu reported that there is one technical assistant and one of the teachers is always in the pre-school.

Mr. Lombardi asked Mr. Balducci if he was researching the legality of being a revenue producer. Mr. Balducci answered that yes he is. Mr.

Lombardi noted that this has a significant potential as a revenue source for us.

Mrs. McFarland asked if the square footage of the area they are utilizing is conducive to only 24 children. Mrs. Coutu stated that she believes it is. However, she states that they could increase the payment. Mrs. Coutu stated that they are trying to find out what they can do in terms of revenue.

Mrs. McFarland referred to the printing program, stating that that is a non-profit program that they are actively running operations, i.e., printing, catering, etc. This is a great opportunity for students to be involved by having their services be utilized by the school department and by the City too. Mrs. Coutu noted that they did do the printing for the City and the school department.

Chairman Traficante asked if Mrs. Coutu would kindly write up a report on what kind of questions was asked to Mr. Balducci and Mrs. Coutu regarding this particular program. And to also give thought as to what she plans on doing with the auto shop and the space there to consider if this space would be potentially a good location to expand a program like this as well as aquaculture. Mrs. Coutu answered that the problem is that they would have to have some one come in and fix the area. There is a lot of work that has to be done to the area which should cost quite a bit.

Ms. Iannazzi asked the Superintendent to include Mrs. Coutu in plans under the Obama stimulus plan in which Cranston is slated to get \$5,000,000 in construction funds. She asked the Superintendent for Mrs. Coutu to prepare a list for construction projects at the Cranston Area Career & Tech. Center.

Mr. Scherza stated that some of the things mentioned here to be accomplished at the Career & Technical are drops needed, asbestos abatement, electrical work, etc. Those are basically the things that we are in court over. Mr. Scherza noted that he would caution the committee about using Cranston resources to support something the State is obligated to do. If the stimulus funding does come through to us, it has been discussed with Mr. Matiello today, as well, he would hope that the State doesn't take it away for State facilities and that Cranston gets the money designated for Cranston.

Mrs. McFarland noted that the State has money coming to them through the stimulus package and she hates to see them waste any of our money and there's going to be quite a discussion on the State level of how each municipality is going to get money if we get it all. They are already talking about on the State level we can use it for this program; we can move this million dollars here, etc. She stated that there is going to be people all over the place both in the Senate and the house side to work out the details to that. If it is a State building then we should be utilizing State resources and their money that's funded through them.

Mrs. Ruggieri noted that without a fair share of funding formula, we manage to get less money from the stimulus so that's just another reason why Cranston really needs to band together to push a funding formula.

VIII. Adjournment

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. McFarland and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**Andrea M. Iannazzi
Clerk**