

**CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**SPECIAL MEETING**

**MAY 18, 2011**

**WESTERN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**400 PHENIX AVENUE**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: 5:00 P.M.**

**PUBLIC SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MINUTES**

**The special meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at Western Hills Middle School with the following members present: Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Bloom, Mrs. Ruggieri, Mrs. Culhane arrived at 5:20 and Mrs. McFarland arrived at 5:35 p.m. Mr. Traficante was absent with cause.**

**The meeting was called to order at 5:10 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Lombardi and seconded by Mrs. Ruggieri and unanimously carried that the members adjourn to Executive Session Pursuant to RI State Laws PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel; PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation (Contract Negotiations' Update- Bus Drivers/Tradespeople/Mechanics, Custodians);(Teacher Negotiations;Teacher Assistants/Technical Assistants/Bus Aides Negotiations), (Secretary Negotiations), (Transportation Contract).**

**Call to Order – Public Session was called to order at 6:42 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was conducted and the roll was called. A quorum was present. No votes were taken in Executive Session.**

**Executive Session Minutes Sealed – May 18, 2011. A motion to seal these minutes was made by Mr. Lombardi and seconded by Mrs. Ruggieri. The roll was called; all were in favor.**

### **Chairperson Communications**

**Ms. Iannazzi stated in addition to the agenda is Chairperson Communications, two communications; first of all I would like to recognize the ten members of Troop 6 who are present attempting to get public service hours. Secondly, for those of you that have not seen it Mayor Fung saw fit, instead of communicating with the School Committee, to communicate with the Cranston Herald and release a letter to the editor today. I individually am too upset, disillusioned, and disappointed in the Mayor to comment, however, fortunately for us Mr. Lombardi is not so I am going to give the Chairperson Communications to Mr. Lombardi.**

**Mr. Lombardi stated – first before I say what I am going to say because of fire code regulations I ask that everybody please find a seat and clear the aisles because we need to do that. I want to make everyone aware of the exit signs because this is probably the most attended School Committee meeting that I've seen in five years. The exits are to the back and these side doors as well.**

**Before we begin I want to take the opportunity of the Chairperson Communications. It is with great disdain and great anger and great disgust that I had the opportunity today to read an op-ed piece that will appear in this weeks' Herald entitled, "The Case of a Mayoral Academy in Cranston." In that article and I certainly won't bore you but I am going to be a little long-winded. What the mayor raises rather than choosing to speak with the School Committee and his constituency directly chose to seek out an op-ed piece in the Cranston Herald and he first raises issue with our Superintendents' use of the accolades that he places on our schools as "high performing." He negates that by saying, as we all know our ability "to clear the bar depends on how high or low the bar was set in the first place." Then he goes on to site apparent statistics and comes to the conclusion that "we can do much better." That's his quote. How he proposes to do much better is to pursue what he calls "embracing several state-wide reforms including welcoming a Mayoral Academy, an innovative type of public charter school (as he refers to it) to Cranston." Interestingly he ends the op-ed piece by indicating that he writes this as your mayor and future Chairman of the Board of that new Mayoral Charter School.**

**Well, first of all I am a lawyer and Superintendent Nero is the Superintendent and he's given thirty-two years of his life as an educator to the Cranston Schools and everyone knows what he has done for the Cranston Schools. I want to preface this by saying I would never use this stage or this arena as a political campaign piece and I can tell you now and you can print this, I am not running for the**

mayor for the city of Cranston. So I am not doing this out of political advantage. I am doing this out of disgust for what I read today and I must say to you that my disgust cumulates from this op-ed piece but it begins with the utter lack of cooperation we have received over the years from city hall and I will say it again, the utter lack of cooperation we have seen from city hall. I am sick and tired of people saying that my taxes are going up because the school system is wearing on our taxes. The fact of the matter remains over the last three years we've suffered three substantial tax increases. By my estimation that equates into about \$18 to \$20 million dollars of revenue generated from taxes. Let me tell you what the school system got from that \$18 to \$20 million dollar return on the revenue. The school system got \$1 million dollars two years ago. The school system got \$1 million dollars last year. The city will tell you they gave us that money; I will tell you that was a promise from the Napolitano administration because they promised to sell the police station and they owed us \$1 million dollars so that wasn't given to us; that was promised to us from a prior administration.

This year, we got \$1.6 million dollars from the mayor and an additional \$600,000 segregated with the mayor in an account for special education as we need it. So they will pay it so let's call it \$2.2 million. So for purposes of this discussion that \$18 to \$20 million dollars in tax revenue got us \$3 million dollars over three years or \$3.2 million dollars over three years. So the next time someone tells you that it's the school system that is taxing the city of Cranston you can tell them those are the numbers, those are the facts. I don't need

**an op-ed piece to say my piece. I am telling you straight in the eye. In addition to that, I'm also troubled by the fact that a lot has been going on. The six people here today or the seven people on the School Committee work very, very hard. Everybody has strength in a different area and we work hard at what we do. We are volunteers, we are elected by you, we answer to you, we are paid not a penny. We spend a lot of hours at a lot of meetings, at a lot of negotiations, at a lot of special events, award ceremonies, graduations, all because we love the Cranston School system. Among our responsibilities two that were most near and dear to me was a desire to obtain a global resolution with the city of Cranston. So I am not going to reveal to you what was going on because that is executive session stuff but I will tell you I stand poised here to tell you that we were prepared to offer to the city monumental concessions from our unions, particularly our teachers' union, monumental concessions unheard of. Concessions that would have made us proud, that would have put us arm in arm on city hall steps to the rest of Rhode Island to show them what two diverse groups can do at a bargaining table without the need to fight. But that global resolution required the participation of all the parties and I said to the folks on the council and as I said to people representing the mayor, because the mayor chose not to come, I said this is much akin to learning how to dance a ballroom dance and nothing is contingent upon something so forget saying the teachers aren't willing to negotiate because the mayor isn't willing to do this, or Transportation's not willing to negotiate because they're not willing to do this or the secretaries, and on and on and on. It was**

a long hard waltz that we had to put together and I think the media knows that the global resolution basically said that this School Committee with the work of its' school superintendent achieved savings over the last two years in excess of \$7 million dollars. If you don't believe me the superintendent's memo is right here, people have seen it, and its \$7.2 million dollars starting with the move from 6th grade back to the elementary schools and moving forward with the concessions. The mayor's own analysis, it became an analysis because by its own terms, the mayor's own auditors, they told us we were actually \$1.4 million dollars ahead of the concessions that we proposed, a head of. It wasn't \$3.3 and change it was \$4.8 change. That's what they told us. They also told us that you are at or below the Basic Education Plan by \$3.9 million dollars. I am not making it up folks, I'm not writing an op-ed piece, this is their auditors that said that. That's who said it and so consequently armed with this audit and armed with the \$7.2 million dollars and armed with the fact that \$940,000 was not given to us in state aid which should have been given to us in state aid which by state law the Rhode Island Department of Education has told us is a burden of the city and not a burden of the school department, that wasn't included. That brought Mr. Nero's concessions to \$8.1 million dollars that we saved. So we made a pledge to the council and we recognized all the members of the council and I want to say for the record that the council opened their arms, opened their ears, and opened their eyes and it is the first time since I have been on this School Committee that we have gotten along and shown respect for one another. We trust one another and

**we honor each other's opinion and they listened to us and we listened to them. We told them and looked them right in the eye and said, look, this guy has proposed \$8.1 million dollars in savings, we, (7), are going to go back and beat up all our unions and we're going to get the concessions from all our unions and our unions are willing to sit with us to do that in good faith and we're going to get millions more for you based on that respectful members of the City Council we ask that you forgive our debt for three years. The problem is we need three groups to do that, we need the School Committee, we need the City Council, and we need the mayor. The mayor has chosen to say no to us and we can't do that. You can call me whatever you want to call me, my plan was really to wipe the slate clean and get rid of this BS and let's move forward and as the Superintendent says, all I want to do is pay my bills. I don't care about magic words like maintenance of effort, I don't care about any of those things, and all I want to do is pay my bills and we work long and hard and the mayor he chose not to send his Director of Administration, he chose to send his lawyer to the meeting and that was it. We were supposed to get a response and we got a response and the response is no. But he went beyond that and he went and said no with this op-ed piece and he said to the people of Cranston your children are underperforming and your teachers, if I were a teacher today I would take this as a direct slap in my face, that's what this is. He has no faith in the city of Cranston. He has no faith in the Cranston School system and forgive me for getting personal but it is personal. He's proposing a Mayoral Academy? Well I hope one thing happens in this Mayoral Academy. I**

hope this Mayoral Academy takes only Cranston kids and I hope it holds 10,000 kids because it will not...it says it will provide it says, excellent public school options for many Cranston students. Not for all of them but many and so if I had to put my money on the line, my money is going to go with a guy who has given 32 years of experience to the district, 32 years of education, not someone who served 4 years on the City Council and served as a lobbyist for an attorney for an insurance company. My money is on the school system and I would be remiss if I didn't say this, Liz (Larkin) I am sorry for all the times that we have spent doing what we have done because I think and I hope we can still make great things happen but this was a personal affront to me, my School Committee, and to the students and teachers of the city of Cranston and I can only think this is a portends of seeking higher office, I don't know what it is but it is awful, upsetting and troubling to me and I thank you for listening to me.

### **School Committee Communications**

Mr. Bloom stated – I just have a couple of comments. Last week I hope all of you saw the headlines in the Providence Journal mostly related to the pension issues that are facing this state and this city as well. I wanted to try and concentrate on some of those because I think they have a bearing on the discussions we are going to have tonight as well as in the future before we wrap up our budget issues this year. The Providence Journal reported that just to reiterate what

happened on Wednesday is the Pension Board made a decision to reduce the assumed investment returns on the pension funds from 8 ¼% to 7 ½ %. That doesn't sound like much but that has resulted in an additional contribution that all the cities and towns and the state is going to have to make to the pensions in 2013-2014 in the \$300 million dollar range. For this city we're going to see and it remains to be seen how this is going to be allocated but on the district side the pension for the teachers' contribution and I want to add this isn't the fault of anybody that you see sitting here at the table. It's not the fault of the teachers. These are investment decisions and these are decisions that have not been made for a while and put off so I'm not trying to do any bashing here. What I am trying to do is present two facts. Currently right now we have total payroll for the teachers is about \$66 million and the contribution rates currently the district there is a 22.32 contribution rate of which 9 ½ is actually paid by the teachers out of their payroll into the fund. Currently the governor has proposed to raise that 2% and the district pays 13 ¼ %. That is going to 35 ¼% which is going to result in a \$8.5 million dollar increase in pensions just on the teachers' compensation for 2013-2014 and I am having a hard time believing that will be assessed on the teachers but let's assume just for conservatism that they do it 2/3 for the district and 1/3 for is going to come out of the teachers' pockets. That means the city is...the district of \$6 million dollars on its pension in 2013-2014. On the city-side, the city has compensation of about \$40 million and they're looking at about a 10% increase so the city as a whole, before we even start anything, unless there is pension reform

next year, we'll be looking at potentially \$13 to \$14 million dollars in additional monies, and there's not enough taxes to be raising in this city let alone even wanting to to address that. Now why am I bringing this up right now? I would first like to tell you a little story. My wife was shopping at Shaw's on Monday and she ran into an acquaintance and while talking with her another person walked up and asked if you had spoken to Bloom. This acquaintance turned to her and said well, this is his wife and she turned to my wife and said, oh, you're the enemy. Now I want to clarify a couple of things. I have been asking a lot of questions because I want to come to the right decision for the city and that means that as a committee we have to do our due diligence and that means there are a lot of questions that have to be asked and that primarily I am not an advocate for privatization. I am an advocate for the safety and welfare of our children first. I am an advocate for the educational goals providing an education to these students, second, and then third I am an advocate for the taxpayers because we have to do what we can particularly in an environment where we are going to face, as a city, \$14 million dollars in potential additional pension costs to find the right decision here. So Mr. Jordan is here today to make a presentation. I haven't made up my mind on what to do here. I am still trying to sort through the facts and I hope that all of you would be supportive of us as we try to sort through the facts to come to the best decision for the city and the district so that we can meet these objectives.

At 7:05 p.m. Ms. Iannazzi stated – for the record I am recusing from a

**vote relative to privatization of transportation based on my father's employment.**

**Mr. Lombardi stated – Mr. Traficante is not here tonight because he is out of town on personal business. His wife is in a health battle; she is doing fine but needs all our good thoughts and prayers.**

## **Public Hearing**

**a. Students (agenda/non-agenda matters)**

**b. Members of the Public (agenda matters only)**

**Arthur Jordan –Business Manager Local 1322**

**Mr. Jordan made a power point presentation; attached for the record.**

**Mr. Jordan spoke in favor of not privatizing the buses. He also turned in 3,400 signatures from Cranston residents requesting that we do not privatize the Transportation Department.**

**Mr. Lombardi announced that the Council Vice-President Pelletier and Council President Lupino are in the room.**

**Jacky Vient – Montgomery Avenue**

**Ms. Vient stated – I am a parent at Edgewood Highland School, also the PTO President, a CASA advocate for school for Foster Parenting of Rhode Island, and Edgewood Softball. My main concern here is my bus drivers. I have five children; five different buses. These drivers go**

**well beyond the call of duty. We should keep the Cranston buses drivers just the way it is and we should not even think about going to First Student.**

**Matt Motta – Fringe Tree Drive**

**Mr. Motta spoke in favor of not privatizing Transportation. (Speech on record).**

**Bob Brown – Carmina Circle**

**Mr. Brown spoke in favor of not privatizing Transportation. (Speech on record).**

**George Nee – Welfare Avenue/President – AFL-CIO of Rhode Island**

**Mr. Nee stated – I am here in two capacities – first I will speak on behalf of the Labor Movement. I am here tonight in support of our brothers and sisters, the bus drivers and the aides who work very hard every day to let them know that the entire Rhode Island Labor Movement is behind their effort to stop privatization in Cranston. They are part of our family and when our family members have their job jeopardized and their lives altered we think it is important for people to know that we stand together and we stick together and we believe in solidarity. I also believe that the decision tonight is actually not a very difficult one. There are a lot of facts and figures and I would also like to compliment my brother Arthur Jordan. I have been around for a long time, gone to a lot of hearings, and that is the best presentation I have seen in a long time. I think that the word we have**

**to think about tonight is what is your definition of the word loyalty? Is it throwing these people who have worked hard for the city under the very buses they drive by privatizing their job or is loyalty a recognition of their dedicated service, of their hard work of respect for them as individuals and workers to the city they serve and I think it is important that if you see them in that capacity, which I hope you will, that you will vote down this proposal and end the economic anxiety and the personal anxiety that these people have been going through as people decide their fate. I think you could look at the facts and I think you will be smart enough and far-sighted enough to know that when you privatize these jobs, particularly with the proposal that is before you, it's buying a pig in a poke and you are too smart to do that so I would ask you as a labor leader and as a resident of the city of Cranston please show your loyalty and your respect to these hardworking people by voting down this proposal tonight.**

**Kim Moretti – Oriole Avenue**

**Ms. Moretti stated – I am extremely happy with the services in Cranston. I love my teachers, the administration at Western Hills, I love my bus drivers, their aides, I count on them on a daily basis. Two times this year I have received a phone call from my bus driver who would not let my daughter off the bus because “there was a strange man in front of your house.” Both times they were friends but they looked strange. I thank you Tony Lima who is part of my family who did not let my daughter off the bus. I also thank Tony Lima was**

saving my cat. My cat got lose and my daughter who is in a wheelchair could not get the cat in the house by herself. Tony Lima saved the cat. I was told when Katherine (her daughter) was four months old and had to have a VP shunt put into her brain...the first person who will notice something is wrong with Katherine, if something is off, is going to be me or her teacher. The two people who are closest to her brain. It was Jane Dunn (bus driver) 4th grade. Nothing wrong with her brain; something wrong with her day at school. Jane told me. Jane is family.

**Katherine Moretti – student**

**Miss Moretti stated – my bus drivers, from Jane to Tony are the best to me. Tony for helping me out with my cat and Jane for making sure I am okay when I get on the bus in the afternoon and they are the best to me. I was always happy when I came on the bus.**

**Mari Megrdochian – student (Speech on record).**

**Miss Megrdochian stated - it would be very sad if you took away our bus drivers. They help and care about all the kids on the bus. They have gotten to know each student very well and respect us for who we are as individuals. Please consider keeping our bus drivers. We are not giving up.**

**Charlene Ekelund – Potter Street (Speech on record).**

**Mr. Ekelund spoke in favor of not privatizing Transportation.**

**Don Roach – Denver Avenue**

**Mr. Roach stated – my son is 7 years old and attends Stone Hill. He is a special needs child and takes the bus every day. I am really proud to be standing before you in front of the folks behind me and our bus driver and our aides to ask you to please consider not going with First Student and keeping our drivers.**

**Jackie White, Wain Street**

**Ms. White stated – I was a sixteen year member of the Cranston School Committee. Over those sixteen years, we as a School Committee and many members sat with me over those sixteen years, many different members, three different times we looked into privatizing buses, custodians, lunch programs and other things, even as far as administrators we looked at. Three times we went out; three times we heard the same message, in Connecticut, in Massachusetts, and as far as Iowa. Dot McDonough and I went there interviewing for a superintendent. While we were there we decided to look at their bus services and custodial services they had and they were privatized and they were not First Student but they are all the same. They are out there to make profit, they not out there to service our children. They are out there to make money and that comes first to them; everything else is secondary. The group that you got sitting here tonight, (the bus drivers and aides) yes they make a salary but they have a vested interest because the majority of them live in Cranston, bring their children up in Cranston and stay here in Cranston. They care. When I negotiated contracts while on the School Committee this**

group was one of the more reasonable groups to ever negotiate a contract with. They weren't there just for their salary; they actually loved their job and they wanted to keep it at whatever cost. We were fair to them and they were fair to us. We never asked to be unfair to them either because they are just as important as Superintendent Nero in their capacity. It is very important that you folks, please, I know that some of you do have political ambitions and that's okay as long as you do your job while you're here but don't sell the city of Cranston down the drain to get to where you want to go because what's happening across this state, in fact across the whole country, the politicians are union busting, they don't care about the people that work for us; they don't care what is going on in the community and they don't care about public education because all their kids are in private schools. You have to care about public education, that's your job. I really think you guys have done a fairly good job and it's not because I agree with everything you do but I agree with a lot of what you do. But I am begging you; public education is taking a turn down the tubes because the politicians are ruining it. We are all taxpayers, so are you. If it wasn't for the public schools many of our children would not be going on to college and getting educated so that they can compete in the world they are living in. We're going to go back to the days of my parents when my brother and I went to college it was a big deal. They gave me a better life. That's what these folks are trying to do. They are trying to give their kids a better life. Please, don't get on the political bandwagon. The more I read of it the sicker I get; they are killing our public education systems across the

**country. Do not privatize.**

**Lizbeth Larkin – CTA President**

**Ms. Larkin stated – I have had a very interesting several months and I've got to say I am going to sound like a broken record, however, in defense of the people sitting on the stage, they have been trying for a very long time to overcome the shackles of the Consent Order that has been imposed upon us and in the past we have been underfunded and level funded because it is a fact, a proven fact, and out of that we ended up not having enough funds to run our schools and our school department. All of a sudden all the public employees became public enemy number one because somehow we are just responsible for every single economic crisis in the world. But I am going to say that they are shackled by a Consent Order and we've been working very closely. Now, Mr. Lombardi had quite a soliloquy tonight because he's just as upset as I am with the events and I got permission because we are in a contract and so are the bus aides. I represent 38 of the bus aides that ride the buses every single day and I am president of Cranston Teachers' Alliance and I am very proud to say that. However, I just feel that everyone here is kind of getting a bum rap because they were ordered to look into privatization and they were ordered to get demonstrable savings in which they have to send that letter out to every single union, every single year and so therefore we had entered into discussions and my executive board gave me permission to enter into a contract opener and we were**

trying to find a resolution for Cranston Public Schools to go forward. I have had a very interesting week. A lot of people do not think that I teach or work but I have been living this morning, noon and night. I have been working with Arthur Jordan for the bus drivers, for our teachers, custodians, secretaries, TA's, everyone because Peter Nero and the people sitting on the stage are committed to Cranston Public Schools. I am committed to Cranston Public Schools. Arthur is committed to Cranston Public Schools and we have been trying to get a resolution. However, all the naysayers that are in the paper saying, those public employees, and I lost my job, and this and that and everything else, why don't you think out of the box. Basically all of those sayings, they don't want you to do that. Because what they want is chaos and destruction. That's what they want and we cannot let that happen. As Mr. Lombardi has said, the big NO came for helping Cranston Public Schools. In the past week I have taught 7th grade social studies and we finished up Latin America and dictators and it was very interesting because you see in the 7th grade curriculum, which I am sure a lot of people at City Hall might not know about it's an actual fact we have quite a rigorous curriculum in the city of Cranston. In 7th grade social studies we have slices of information. Every quarter we introduce a piece of something that the students are going to go on and study. So we literally focus on certain things. We have a very diverse curriculum so I went from Latin America and the dictators and the students did wanted posters and they did what they were most wanted for and I heard their oral reports and they were discussing global issues of all the people that are still

living under dictators and how people want to literally destroy their own places because they are the sole power. They have such a personal agenda that they destroy the very people that they are supposed to serve so then I went from there and I started a brand new quarter and went from there to the middle ages. That's a big jump but then you begin talking about the peasant class and the development of the middle class and how at one time the peasant class was 90% of the people and that is what these people want. They want us to have nothing, do nothing, go nowhere, have no personal contact so I awaited the big YES and got the big NO. I talked about dictators, I talked about the peasant class, I went on Monday to the Biltmore where we were recognized because we are working on teacher evaluation where Cranston was asked to meet today with Jennifer Jordan from the Providence Journal. I was sitting there, I went from, "my gosh, you people have such a great system here; everyone works together, you have such a rigorous teacher evaluation, your teachers engage in academic conversations, you just don't know going around the state how great this school system is." In the interim Mr. Nero gets called out the meeting and comes back with an attack on every single person by our mayor. Every single employee, every single person, we send children through school, we educate them well, they go to the finest colleges, they have great opportunities. It has been the Consent Order and all the orders from City Hall that have really tied our hands and I am really hoping that we can continue to work together because we are not the enemy and neither are you. I hope you do keep the bus drivers, the bus aides and

that personal meaningful relationships we have in Cranston because that is what people all over the state recognize us by and it's a wonderful thing. Oh, the other thing is on Tuesday when I was in class, my students after talking about that they wouldn't want to be peasants, they much rather be a king or a queen, that basically somebody had left something on the bus and as the kids were packing up their things, one young woman said to the other, "don't worry, the bus driver will have it, you know she looks at the whole bus and she will return it to you, it will be on the bus when you get on the bus this afternoon." We all work together and we all make a difference and I want to thank you for your support because you have been very supportive of all of us.

**Colonel Marco Palumbo – Cranston Police Department**

Chief Palumbo stated – I received a call from a member of my staff tonight about this meeting and I am here...both of my children attend Cranston Public Schools and they use the school buses but I am here as a matter of public safety. That is my function and I am duty bound to address the committee on issues I have concerns with. In light of all the great stories that we have heard this evening many people may not know approximately one year ago the Cranston Police Department initiated a program called Operation Vigilance. Operation Vigilance came about over concerns from Cranston residents about sex offenders living in our community. As part of this program the Police Department in conjunction with the School Department monitor the school bus stops and times and ages of children in

real-time relative to where offenders live so there can be a police presence. As part of this program Cranston school bus drivers came to us for training and updates that they get regularly though email about offenders that may be on the routes that they drive. I am happy to report in 2010 we received no reports of any incidents of suspicious activity of offenders living in our city. Now, perhaps we are lucky but I can tell you that the school bus drivers are an instrumental part of that program which is the first of its' kind in the country and will be a template for the rest of the state and certainly the country in years to come. So I stand here before you tonight again as a matter of public safety and also to respectfully request the safety history of current drivers and whoever may replace them because that's what really is important and I know the budget is very difficult, it is difficult for everyone but public safety is what is paramount. I would ask you to consider those things respectfully and please do share that information with the Police Department when you receive it.

**John Cronin, Curtis Street**

Mr. Cronin stated – my wife is a bus driver but before I get into that I can first hand speak of RFP's and privatization. I work for Computer Rail in Boston, provides commuter rail from Warwick to Boston and also throughout other branches throughout Massachusetts. The RFP between the MBTA who subs out to my company (Computer Rail Service) are constantly being debated. Over my 37 years working in Commuter Rail and through four different contractors and they

constantly come in with this offer, this is in the RFP, this will be included and then down the road a year, a year and a half, no, no, that's not part of preventative maintenance, that's extra, that will cost this amount, that amount. It constantly happens. It's a joke when they tell you they are going to do it cheaper because once they get their hands on it, and I work for the company, they got their hands on it the price just keeps going up and up because they bring in their big corporate lawyers against your little town lawyer and they debate that RFP and they basically win time and time again and they got more money and more money and I don't want my tax money going to that company who could give two you know what's about the children of this city.

## **Consent Calendar/Consent Agenda**

### **RESOLUTIONS**

**Sponsored by Mr. Lombardi**

**NO. 11-5-01 – WHEREAS, the Cranston City Council has passed a resolution requesting that the Cranston School Committee conduct various studies prior to voting on the privatization of its school bus operations;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Cranston School Committee undertake the studies requested in the Cranston City Council resolution prior to voting on the privatization of its school bus operations;**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Cranston School Committee continue to negotiate with Local Union 1322 of the Laborers'**

**International Union of North America, AFL-CIO and seek major concessions in any contract renewal with that Union; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be conditioned upon the School Committee of the City of Cranston, the Cranston City Council and the Mayor of the City of Cranston executing an amendment to that certain Consent Order filed in Providence County Superior Court, C.A. No. PC08-3474 and C.A. No. PC08-4133, which amended Consent Order will state that the Cranston School Committee is not required to outsource its bus transportation services at this time.**

**Moved by Mrs. McFarland; seconded by Mrs. Culhane. Discussion.**

**Mr. Lombardi stated – If I may set forward the basis for my resolution to let you know. I think it is pretty self-explanatory although I would admit that one portion of it has become mute since the issue regarding the mayor agreeing to a Consent Order change is mute, however, as you know the Cranston City Council came to us with a resolution or passed a resolution and while the resolution requested that the Cranston School Committee carefully study and examine the long-term cost implications of the proposed privatization of the city school bus operation. They passed such a resolution. In light of that resolution I put forth our resolution because our discussions are still ongoing with the City Council we still have our due diligence to negotiate in good faith with all of our bargaining units including but not limited to Transportation. It mirrored that resolution requesting a definitive and detailed study on the actual savings with a view**

**towards what the consent decree calls demonstrable savings.**

**Mrs. Ruggieri stated – I just had a few concerns with the resolution as it was written. One of them is that without us knowing what type of commitment the city is going to make towards replenishing our dated fleet I find it really difficult to consider this study. I know that we need to address that issue and I believe that without knowing right now what the city's commitment is that it would be difficult to get a complete study done. I also think that we need to have some pretty strict deadlines on this study if it is going to move forward. I think that we may to make sure that this study is complete and accurate to the point that we will be able to make a decision when this comes up again. I think that with regards to the Consent Order, if it's not going to be amended, this was required in the Consent Order for us to examine any demonstrable savings and that's what we have tried to do but I think if you actually want to do this study I think there needs to be some stricter guidelines.**

**Mrs. Culhane stated – I think that it is...I agree with Mrs. Ruggieri, I think it's prudent that we set a time limit on a study going forward and I think we also need to include language that would address what commitment the city and/or the mayor would make to providing us, or helping us to purchase a new fleet because everyone here tonight has talked about the number one concern obviously is the children and it something that frustrates me a lot because when we talk about the Consent Order or the mayor's talking about schools, who is**

**talking about the kids? Everything we do here is about the kids. It's not about the unions, respectfully, it's not about the politicians, it's about the kids. I think that in order to provide for their safety we can't move forward without addressing what the city's commitment would be to our children's safety in providing a new fleet or partially replacing at least the fleet that is 15-16 years old. I think we need to include some language in this study that would investigate that.**

**Mrs. McFarland stated – While I appreciate the fact that the committee members are concerned that this may come up again and we do need to address the fleet and I do think that we need to...while the city passed a resolution we do need to have a committee that would consist of not only the city, school committee, as well as the administration both on the city and the school side and report out no later than December 2011. Personally, taking a look at this, while I don't enjoy sitting around listening to presentations or renegotiating contracts three times and hearing presentations that really don't make a lot of sense to me and that really effects the decision making power for Cranstonians and our children of course because that is the most important thing. I really think maybe First Student might want to contact Mr. Jordan because this is what we should have gotten in the first place (Mrs. McFarland held up the power point presentation packet). It's always best to do it right once and the numbers tonight, what we saw, proves the point that I have sat here all along and wasted by time when I could have spent my time with my family because I do do this for free. I do this because I care about**

**my city, I care about the kids that go to school here and I care about the people who live and work here. So they are number one to me so I think whatever we do, all I know is that tonight my vote is let's all go home and all our workers go back to work tomorrow morning and thank you very much.**

**Mr. Bloom stated – A couple of comments. First of all the resolution that was passed by the City Council has asked us not to just do a study but to do a ten year study. If anybody in this room can tell me what the price of gasoline is going to be seven years from now I think a ten year study is a little bit outrageous for us to be trying to forecast for the city and the district. That being said, I think we need to continue our due diligence here. There is a proposal on the table, people may be tired tonight but we have a responsibility as School Committee members to complete our due diligence and then make a decision. Mr. Jordan made a fine presentation tonight and there is a lot of information that Mr. Jordan has presented that is in disagreement with some of the information that has been presented to the School Committee. We need to sort that out so when this School Committee makes a decision it's the right decision. Lastly, the fleet replacement is a serious issue and needs to be considered by this School Committee. I asked and received copies of all the inspection reports for the bus fleet. We have 94 buses, not 85.**

**Mr. Jordan stated – you disposed of at least two of them since March so to be fair and you wouldn't argue numbers with me so if you look at our numbers Mr. Bloom we saved you more money. There is no**

**demonstrable savings; we think we have proven it.**

**Mr. Bloom stated – we'll sort those out. Of the 94 buses, 50 of them are in excess of 15 years old and 150,000 miles so we have a safety issue we have to address with the children being on the buses so financing and replacing the buses is a serious issue which we have no information on today. It has been presented to the City Council and we have no information so Frank I would respectfully move that we table this resolution pending additional information.....**

**Mr. Lombardi stated – the resolution still on the floor for discussion and the motion has been seconded and it's on the floor for discussion. Is there any further discussion on the resolution? I have a couple of comments if I may, Mrs. McFarland if you just take the chair temporarily so I can speak.**

**At 9:07 p.m. Mrs. McFarland assumed the chair.**

**Mr. Lombardi stated – being one of two lawyers and the only lawyer that can participate in this I think first of all the Consent Order and what the decree that emanated from the Superior Court action said was that we consider privatization much akin to the way we consider negotiating with all our bargaining units to get what is a quantifiable demonstrable savings. Part of my problem was eloquently articulated by Mrs. McFarland is that I am left here asking myself a lot of questions. Now, when we privatized food service I have to say Sodexo put on a performance, a very informative performance and a very informative presentation. With all due respect to the folks at First Student, we had one meeting, a work session, which ended up being**

a question and answer period. We then had a second presentation that I must say paled in comparison to what Sodexo had to say. All I am saying in my resolution is I need to find demonstrable savings, that's my obligation to the city of Cranston. Right now, based on what I have I have a lot of questions. I think we have seen one document that shows us \$3.4 million dollars with privatization, there's another document, I think it's your document Steve that talks about \$3 million dollars in privatization of which \$2 million goes over into the city side and isn't realized by the School Committee or School Department and then I have Mr. Jordan's presentation that talks about the savings not being demonstrable at all and perhaps not being any savings at all. Then we have our partner in all of this, the City Council. The City Council has asked us, not so much to give them a ten year study but to give them a thorough study of the economic consequences of privatizing and also our weakened bargaining position in light of disposing of our fleet. What they have asked us to do is to analyze the experience and economic consequences not only of the potential five to ten year savings here but also what's happened in other district and to go out into the other districts and do our due diligence. This resolution isn't intended to say to Arthur Jordan, Arthur you're safe and move on and First Student go away. That's not it at all. What it is doing, I think, our obligation is as School Committee members and that is to do our due diligence to make sure that the demonstrable savings will be the demonstrable savings. Superimposed upon that is my concern, my primary concern and that is the safety of the children. That is first and foremost. There is no

dollar figure that you can put on Mr. Roche's child or Kim Moretti's daughter or any of that without putting them in the hands of responsible, committed, loyal long-term serving employees. So I introduced the resolution, I don't intend to table anything. I intend to request that we move forward with this resolution with the necessary amendments to form a committee to have the City Council people on there, to have the mayor's representative on there, and look to the savings, do what we're supposed to do and report back and articulate what's going to happen in all of this and that's what I intend to do and that's what my reasoning is. I don't think there is a reason to table anything. I think we need to do our due diligence.

Mrs. McFarland stated – and while I still have the chair, I just want to add quickly that I really think that if we were really even going to discuss a new fleet in the future you still have to get bonding authority from your General Assembly so we're still not talking until next year and we're talking about the next City Council budget so that discussion is mute at this point, it's not even up for discussion if we were even going to go through that avenue.

Mr. Lombardi reassumed the chair.

Mrs. Culhane stated – while I think Mrs. McFarland, the whole point of my intention for the study is to be able to do those things, to dot those I's to cross those t's because the drivers obviously we want them to be providing and we know they provide safety for our

children and friendly faces and the safety of the children are the utmost importance but that only goes so far with a bus that is aging if we can't replace the fleet. So I think that is one of the most integral parts of an amendment that needs to be added to this resolution in sourcing out what kind of commitment we are going to get from the city in helping us to do that.

Mrs. McFarland stated – I would just say I offer at the end of the bus operations with the committee consisting of the city, the school, the administration from both the city and school side and a report out no later than December 31, 2011 so we can be prepared and ready to go to the General Assembly when the new session starts and the City Council can be working into putting that into their budget for capital improvement.

Mr. Lombardi asked – is that in form of a motion?

Mrs. McFarland stated yes.

Seconded by Mrs. Ruggieri. Discussion.

Mr. Bloom asked – just clarification, can you please repeat what we are voting on and what are the dates....

Mr. Lombardi stated – the resolution for purposes of ease I think the resolution 11-5-01 as amended should read as follows:

**NO. 11-5-01 – WHEREAS, the Cranston City Council has passed a resolution requesting that the Cranston School Committee conduct various studies prior to voting on the privatization of its school bus operations;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Cranston School Committee undertake the studies requested in the Cranston City Council resolution prior to voting on the privatization of its school bus operations;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Cranston School Committee continue to negotiate with Local Union 1322 of the Laborers' International Union of North America, AFL-CIO and seek major concessions in any contract renewal with that Union; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution be conditioned upon the School Committee of the City of Cranston, the Cranston City Council and the Mayor of the City of Cranston executing an amendment to that certain Consent Order filed in Providence County Superior Court, C.A. No. PC08-3474 and C.A. No. PC08-4133, which amended Consent Order will state that the Cranston School Committee is not required to outsource its bus transportation services at this time.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution be conditioned upon a study to be conducted through a sub-committee consisting of members of the School Committee and the City Council and the Administration and members of the Local Union 1322 to report out no later than December 31, 2011.

**Mr. Bloom had a question on the amendment and asked – so then that means we are going to continue to operate with these existing buses and not consider anything else until completion of this study**

for 2011.

Mr. Lombardi stated – yes, and Arthur, I think we are going to continue to negotiate with the local union to get major concessions from them.

Mr. Bloom stated – but the existing fleet stays in place for the 2011-2012 school year.

Mr. Lombardi stated – right, I think it would be impossible to change the fleet that quickly.

Mr. Bloom stated – it would be impossible to change the fleet if we continue to study.

Mr. Lombardi stated – that's right.

Mr. Lombardi asked for further questions on the resolution as amended.

Mr. Bloom asked - let me ask these questions because I want to play the devil's advocate here. If we continue to hold discussions we can still come back to this am I correct? There was certainly in the presentation tonight discrepancy between numbers and things that have been presented and I certainly would prefer, because I don't like having a fleet on the road that is in excess of 15 years, I would like to consider to sort this out.

Mr. Lombardi stated – The intent of my resolution and the intent, I certainly don't want to speak for Mrs. McFarland is to do our due diligence on the study and then come back after December 31 and determine what the findings of that committee are and if the findings

**suggest that privatization may be in place so be it but if the finding indicate that we want to work with our current bus drivers and meet with the City Council and the mayor's office to discuss the potential for bonding of a fleet so be it, we can do that as well. I don't think we are in any danger of going forward with the current situation because our bus drivers' track records speak for themselves.**

**Mr. Bloom stated – I am not concerned about the bus drivers. With all due respect, we have an aged fleet on the road. If you want to be responsible for...excuse me I am well aware that they go twice a month.... (at this point Mr. Lombardi had to ask the audience to quiet down).**

**I think we need to continue our due diligence right now and see if we can resolve these issues. We have an aged fleet. I don't want to be responsible if there is a problem that occurs in between the inspections, the reliability of vehicles that are 15+ years old of which over 50% of them are so I think we need to continue with our due diligence to the best that we can and if we come to an impasse then we can start bringing other people in but I think this committee has a responsibility to continue to move forward regardless of what is going on with privatization. The real issue here is the age of the fleet and addressing that which is one of the benefits of the proposal that is on it but it needs to be taken into the context of everything. So I am not comfortable just tabling this discussion today, particularly because we have identified this, I think we have a responsibility to continue to move forward and identify the feasibility of these issues and if we find we can't make a decision then at that point in time we**

can make the decision to vote and bring in additional and create a sub-committee....let me just resummairize. For us to pass this responsibility of an ageing fleet onto a subcommittee I think is a failure upon our responsibility.

Mrs. Culhane stated – my question is this. I'm not so uncomfortable. I understand the points you are trying to make Mr. Bloom and I agree with them but only to the extent that I think that having a committee that is committed to looking at all of the issues that we've discussed including the aging fleet gives us an opportunity, not to just do it in a couple of meetings and not to take just one person's word over somebody else's word but to really have a full scale investigation very much like we did with the redistricting committee. We met many, many times and did lots of investigations insofar as going out to schools and things like that so I think by enabling us to do a study like this over a course of a period of time that's not just in a couple of meetings like we have had here will give us a better opportunity to finally at this December 2011 date say one way or another can we make a commitment to replace the fleet or can't we and then we have a decision to make. So I am comfortable moving forward with this but my question is when we talk about we are going to go forward with negotiations, does that mean we will enter into an agreement before this study was done because I don't see how we could do that before we have all the information from the study.

Mr. Lombardi stated – I think it is our obligation to try and save money for the coming years so whatever path we chose in the future I

think we owe it to the bargaining unit to bargain in good faith with them and to get the concessions that we need and to recognize savings in the event that something down the road requires that awful C word if we have to go to court again and I think we still have to negotiate it. I think that is clear and I happen to be on that transportation negotiation team but that being said I think we need to sit with the administration and the negotiation team and reach some sort of agreement going forward because we still have to realize savings into the next year at the very least.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – I did just want to add – I am also on the transportation negotiating team and this has been a very long and very frustrating process. If I was fighting any fight I think I would want Arthur Jordan in my corner to be honest with you. That does not mean that I am for privatization and it doesn't mean I am against privatization. I was trying to vote on this issue based on the merits of each program and sitting here and I almost feel bad. First Student has kind of been vilified and we invited them, we asked them. We sent out an RFP and said come back and see what you can do for us and we did ask them to come here. I have to say that I don't have an attachment to any union or private company; I don't have anybody in my family that works for the Laborers or who is attached to any of the unions, not interested in political grandstanding, that's not why I sit up here. What I try to do was really make a decision based on fact and I cannot sit here and tell you tonight that I have all the facts. I feel like this is a moving target and it has been from the very beginning. I

think that we do need to look at this because I do think there might be some merit somewhere down the line but I think that I had kind of a dollar amount in my head that I could live with and the aging fleet is definitely something I am looking at because it is an issue, it's going to be an issue moving forward but I just really feel like this has probably been one of the most frustrating processes that I have ever been involved in and I have been on other negotiating things and I was here for the food service privatization but this one is just so all over the place it's certainly not how I would ever want to make a decision on anything never mind something as important as safety of our kids and education and things like that this is just too all over the place.

Mr. Lombardi asked if there was any further discussion on the resolution as amended.

Mr. Bloom stated – I believe having a subcommittee and getting involved at some point I think there is a lot of benefit to that. I am uncomfortable with the duration of leaving this out until December which is 8 ½ months from right now. I don't believe it is going to take us 8 ½ months to sort through the issues that we have here and I think we owe it to the students to be more expeditious. Would the committee be...would a four month time frame be acceptable?

Mrs. McFarland stated – Mr. Bloom I respect the fact that you want to do your due diligence, I really, really do but I spent ten years on the

other side, the City Council. It isn't going to get done in four months. I've been on the other side. I've sat and listened to presentations, it's not the first RFP, it's not the first privatization that I have been involved in, it takes a very long time and I am trying to make sure that we can meet our requirements for both the next budget cycle, the General Assembly, and making sure that we review all of the documentation and make sure we don't have things that say, to be announced, to be discussed, to be negotiated, to find out later. Whether or not you feel one side about privatization or the other side about privatization, it works for some things, it may not work for other things and I really think, in this case from what I have seen, it doesn't work here and we need to do our work but I have been on the other side and I know how long the process takes and how long it takes to get all the same people in the same room to discuss the issue. It's going to take some time.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated –I just have to kind of disagree a little bit because we've already had a lot of this work done. It's just a matter of sitting down, getting the actuals based on the information that we have right now and moving forward and getting some kind of commitment for fleet replacement or coming out with an actual comparison of the two and I think we have a lot of that work right now done so I can't image it would take 8 months. I know that you're saying these things take a long time but I don't think it's necessary for it to take a long time. I think we have a lot of this stuff done already.

**Mr. Lombardi stated – on the floor right now there is an amendment that has been brought forth and it's been seconded and we're having a discussion on that amendment. Is there any further discussion on that amendment? There being none the roll was called on the amendment:**

**Mr. Bloom No Mrs. Culhane Yes**

**Mrs. McFarland Yes Mrs. Ruggieri Yes**

**Mr. Lombardi Yes**

**Passed.**

**The roll was called on the resolution as amended:**

**Mr. Bloom No Mrs. Culhane Yes**

**Mrs. McFarland Yes Mrs. Ruggieri Yes**

**Mr. Lombardi Yes**

**Passed.**

**Action Calendar/Action Agenda**

**Approve or disapprove of contract with First Student for bus transportation services.**

**Mr. Lombardi stated this matter is now mute.**

**There was no new business.**

**Announcement of Future Meetings – May 26, 2011**

**A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Bloom, seconded by Mrs. Culhane. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Frank S. Lombardi**

**Clerk**