

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLIC WORK SESSION

NOVEMBER 14, 2012

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:00 P.M.

PUBLIC SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION

**PUBLIC SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PUBLIC WORK
SESSION**

MINUTES

The meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the above date with the following members present: Chairperson Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Traficante, Mrs. Culhane, Mrs. McFarland and Mrs. Ruggieri. Mr. Bloom was absent. Attorney Ronald Cascione was also present.

This meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and convened to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws –

1. PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel
2. PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation:
 - A. (Contract Negotiations' Update – Secretaries),

Call to Order – Public Session was called to order at 6:28 p.m.

The roll was called; a quorum was present. No votes were taken

during Executive Session.

Public Work Session:

a. Bain Elevator Repairs

Mr. Zisseron stated – as you well know the elevator at Bain is extremely old and we have been notified by the chief elevator inspector for the state that we need a fire-fighter service meaning that in case there is a fire the elevator shuts down. It usually goes down to the bottom floor so you cannot get on the elevator. The cost from Otis which is our vendor, through a bid, the cost would be an even \$10,000. If we do not do it then the elevator will be shut down by the state. Ramification – any youngster that has some kind of a disability but does not need a school like Western Hills, we would have to look at sending him to a different school. Youngster breaks their leg, we might have to start looking at rescheduling the entire building so the youngster doesn't have to cope with stairs or send them to another school. Also the elevator is used to bring up a lot of the food product for the cafeteria; this means going up four flights of stairs. There are a lot of ramifications involved with this. We don't want to spend \$10,000 but if you don't do it the elevator will be shut down by the state.

The question was asked where the money will be coming from. Mr. Balducci stated – the committee budgeted \$50,000 for asset protection so we will look to see what is available in that area and if there are insufficient funds, again these things happen and we will

just monitor it as the year goes on.

Mrs. McFarland asked – in asset protection how much money has been spent thus far this year? Mr. Zisseron stated - \$35,000-\$38,000. Mr. Balducci stated - \$30,000. The repairs will be done to the elevator.

b. Monthly Review of Year-to-Date Expenditures/Monthly Financial Reports – Mr. Balducci

Mr. Balducci went over the year-to-date expenditures with some of the following points made:

- Special education tuitions change from week to week.**
- We do have \$370,000 in the bank with the city.**
- Going forward, in terms of our accountability, we will let city hall know we are keeping tabs on this.**
- Mr. Strom has been sent a communication by Mr. Balducci re: this situation. We have not heard back but Mr. Balducci will send a follow-up communication with the minutes from the City Council meeting where Mr. Strom indicated that the city would make good on a special ed deficit.**
- Revenue – we just completed sending the information to the University of Massachusetts to have them bill for the first quarter (July to September) Medicaid. Four weeks thereafter we should see the reimbursement come in for the first quarter.**
- Additional adjustments will be made in November regarding the \$1.4. The city's financial department has been transitioning a couple of new people and therefore we have a delay in the transferring of**

funds.

- **\$1.4 vocational school tuition – on Monday evening there is a resolution before you to adopt this years' tuition rates. Once that happens, Tuesday morning, the business office will start sending out the bills to the sending districts. Small increases have been made to the tuition rates, somewhere around 12%.**

- **Mr. Balducci explained the Sodexo relationship whereas the district continues to be responsible for certain expenditures such as annual inspection of the fire extinguishers, the currier that travels around the district to pick up the monies. These expenditures need to be shown on our books but we have no revenue to off-set that because the revenue is part of the Sodexo piece of the equation. But when you combine the Sodexo operations and Cranston Public Schools' operations, at the end of the year combined, will still show a surplus.**

- **Explanation of overtime accounts – Dr. Lundsten stated a freeze has been implemented and any overtime must be approved by the superintendent. Mr. Balducci stated – the overtime in the accounts (an example was the Eden Park account) is still a product of UCOA system with the budgeting. In the past we had the luxury of having a few district-wide overtime budgets that had let's say \$140,000 budgeted. Now I just have to allocate it down to the school-level and unfortunately from a budget to actual standpoint, in some cases it makes no sense. I'll run a query on that particular account and say okay, in total we budgeted \$140,000 and as of today we're okay but if you look individually it may be different. We could add that to the executive summary page of the summary report for future reference.**

It was also suggested that we add substitutes to that too.

- **Postage, office equipment overage – Mr. Balducci stated – same situation, UCOA accounts format. Once we get a couple of years under our belt we will be more able to make comparisons which will help us with future budgets.**

- **Demographics in Cranston have changed. Orchard Farms – 33%. It was noted by Dr. Lundsten that we had to cluster students from Gladstone/Arlington to Orchard Farms because of overages in classrooms but the demographics in Cranston have changed as they have in the nation.**

c. Memorandum of Agreement, Cranston School Committee, Cranston Public Schools Administration and the Cranston Teachers' Alliance

Dr. Lundsten explained as you know we have a new teacher evaluation process. Part of that agreement is we need to have a memorandum of understanding as to who is responsible and where it lies. We are using the modified version; this has been a collaborative effort between the American Federation of Teachers, the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, administrators, including myself, Mr. Nero was the original one, as well as principals on this committee and we are using a scoring rubric. This is an agreement that we are saying we are going to implement this evaluation and support system for teachers which includes professional development. They have already started it. We are part of a consortium that paid for a great deal of this as well as brought in the researchers. It is embedded; it is rigorous.

Examples of professional development were discussed. A manual will be brought back to this committee at a future date.

d. Administrator Evaluations- Dr. Lundsten

Dr. Lundsten gave an overview of this process and explained who would be doing these evaluations.

e. AEP – Jeannine Nota-Masse

Ms. Nota-Masse stated – our current program for AEP (Alternate Education Program), while what we have now has been adequate over the past decade or more, since 1997, with new regulations, the new BEP, we realize it needs to be increased in scope, in offerings, in amount of kids serviced. Right now our graduation rates at East, Charter and West need improvement; especially at East and Charter. Part of the reason is with the new graduation requirements, the new rigor that is here from the state and has been for many years, many students are struggling to graduate and while we are trying very hard to put programs in place, interventions and supports, there is a real need for our alternate ed to be expanded for kids. Right now we are in the mid to high 70's of the graduation rate at East and that is not good enough for us. It's in the high 80's for West and that is great but that's still not good enough for us. At the Charter School we are in the 60's actually so those three groups, and those are the kids at risk and we know they are at risk probably from about the 4th grade which is where we need to start looking at students and giving them some support more intensively than we currently offer. So that being said

and I brought the BEP with me for your review. Tonight was merely to have a conversation with you to alert you to our needs here that if we want to increase our graduation rates and we are looking at starting at the ground level with how many kids do we need to service? We believe we need to start at the middle school level by identifying kids coming out of elementary school who may have struggled in math and English in elementary school who could potentially not pass their core content classes in middle school and how can we help those kids? Frankly, what we are seeing is that by the child enters high school, if they haven't mastered or become proficient in math and English, there is no way they are going to pass NECAP or whatever the test may be and we are dooming them to failure. We are putting them in high school with a boatload of academic issues. The AEP needs to be expanded and put in a facility where it can accommodate many more students. Right now we have about 80 kids and that has been a pretty significant number historically but I am sure if we expanded the program we could accommodate a lot more kids and help our graduation rates. If you look at our four, five and six year rates they increase steadily but the state looks at a four year cohort, who started in 9th grade and who is finishing by 12th grade. Even though we have kids who may take an extra year, we are judged on the four year rate. We maybe need to reallocate some of our FTE's; look at physical space which is always a challenge but just so you know changes are coming with that.

Mr. Balducci stated – just to conclude the conversation on the AEP –

from a budget standpoint – RIDE has now required that the AEP be shown on Cranston Public Schools’ budget on a going forward basis. Currently it is part of the charter school budget. Just for historical purposes a couple of years back the charter school took over the operations of the AEP but again in their last review that was one of the recommendations as part of the visit. So what we are doing this year to make it budget neutral to both sides, I have sat down with Carol Corcelli the business manager for the charter school. We have identified those expenditures that are AEP related and so I will shift those expenditure dollars onto our books and then also bring the same dollar amount in state aid that they are currently receiving for those students onto our books. Both sides will be budget neutral and ongoing. On a forward basis when we develop next years’ budget you will then see this year, the AEP showing up on our books so from a current year to the subsequent year it’s not going from zero to \$500,000. I will make the internal budget adjustment and what we do with our October 1 student enrollment – the AEP students are no longer showing up on the charter school roles so they are removed from their account and they are included in our account. That gives RIDE the information they need. That will be noted in the budget book.

Mr. Traficante stated – just for clarification purposes, we are not talking about the adult education program.

f. Volunteer Policy – Attorney Cascione

Mr. Cascione explained the changes in the volunteer policy. The only update from the prior policy was two-fold. One is the actual RI General Law was changed. The one that requires background checks for teachers, that has now been amended to include mentors and volunteers. Under safety and security on the second page, that language now mirrors the statute and it really requires that they have not only a state but a national records check and fingerprinting is required. The cost for that now is \$35.00. The other change as has been discussed by us was to give the school committee some leeway rather than it being cut and dry, disqualifying you for this and you're out. Now it lets you look at the timeframe of the conviction and what rehabilitation efforts the applicant has made, community involvement etc. So, again, rather than just have it black and white you have that ability under this new policy.

Unless the person had volunteered twelve months prior, they have to go through this. If someone continues to volunteer they don't have to go through this every year. The current volunteers are 'grandfathered' in. It was suggested that Mr. Cascione write a letter to the principals and PTO leaders explaining this change in the state law. It was also suggested that Mr. Cascione send an email to Dr. Lundsten that she would in turn forward to the principals and PTO leaders. Dr. Lundsten suggested several different ways to introduce this information to the public.

Mr. Cascione stated a policy takes two months to go into effect for

Cranston Public Schools but this law is in effect now and any new applicants for volunteering will have to abide by this new law.

Mrs. Culhane suggested that Meg from the Cranston Herald be contacted and be informed of this new law.

g. Student Birthday Celebration Policy

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – the history on this is the Wellness Committee looked at all the issues regarding food and bringing food into the school and the distraction in the educational day and there are a lot of health issues that are attached to people bringing food in and notwithstanding allergies, celiac disease, cleanliness of homes that there are other ways to celebrate a child’s birthday. Other options would be a birthday board in the hallway, announcements over the loudspeaker in the morning. Moving forward we wanted to make this a policy so that principals weren’t constantly dealing with people bringing in food. By extension the birthday party invitation thing has always been an issue. A very lengthy discussion ensued. It was suggested that because the school year has already started it would be more prudent to start a policy of this nature at the beginning of a new school year. Mrs. McFarland stated Ms. Nota did such a great job on the dress code policy and maybe she could take this policy, look at other communities, and reword it to something similar to the dress code policy. Dr. Lundsten stated she could also survey the principals. Another suggestion was to amend the Wellness policy to include this policy.

Dr. Lundsten stated – the last paragraph, where every child except for one gets invited and that is bullying and would prefer this be handled at the building. The other flip side to this is if you have to invite every child that could be a big expense. Mrs. Ruggieri stated she was fine with leaving out the last paragraph and taking the rest of the document and incorporating that (through an amendment) with the Wellness policy.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated what she was going to do was reword it and add it on to the current Wellness policy.

h. Public Records Request Guidelines Policy 8360.1

Mr. Cascione stated – under the Public Records Act you have to have a policy and that policy has to be on your website. This policy is taken from the Attorney General’s policy and has been reworded to fit out needs. The request form that is attached to it also mirrors the Attorney General’s form. This is just to comply with the new law.

3. Adjourn Public Work Session to Public Meeting.

4. Executive Session Minutes Sealed – November 14, 2012

A motion to seal these minutes was made by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Ruggieri. All were in favor.

5. Adjournment.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned with a motion by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Ruggieri.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank S. Lombardi

Clerk