

Approved 03/08/2005.

5.1

**NEWPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL
Special Joint Meeting
Wednesday, March 2, 2005**

MINUTES

Call to Order. Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker called the Special Joint Meeting of the Newport School Committee and Newport City Council to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Thompson Middle School Beatrice Berman Bazarsky Performing Arts Center and Cafeteria. Attendance was as follows: School Committee Members: Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker, Vice Chairperson Robert J. Leary, David R. Carlin (absent), Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr., Jo Eva Gaines, Dr. O. William Hilton, Jr., and Thomas S. Phelan; City Council: Mayor John Trifero; City Councilors: Vice Chairperson Jeanne-Marie Napolitano, Mary C. Connolly, Stephen Coyne, Charles Y. Duncan, Colleen A. McGrath, and Stephen C. Waluk (absent); City Administration: City Manager James Smith, Finance Director Laura Sitrin, and City Solicitor Joseph Nicholson; School Department: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mary C. Canole, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Robert B. Power, Ed.D., Director of Special Education Linda Martin, Director of Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development Judith M. Droitcour (absent), Business Manager Bruce Alexander, Director of Property Services Paul Fagan, Coordinator of Human Resources and Information Services Fran Eames (absent), School Building Principals (absent), Administrators (absent), and School Committee Counsel Neil P. Galvin.

ROLL CALL.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

1.0 Budget.

School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker facilitated and opened the meeting.

- Items for discussion: Caruolo Process, Lenthal School, and the Fiscal Year 2006 Budget.
- Explains January 11, 2005, Sweeney & Edge Report—shortfall of \$1,075,101.
- Request for Waivers Denied.
- Last year's deficit--\$1.5 Million.
- Deficit Reduction Plan must be developed.
- A Program Audit is mandated by Caruolo and endorsed by the School Committee.

Mayor John Trifero.

- City Council has asked for a Proposal from Berkshire Advisors, Inc.
- Program Audit will identify areas for savings.
- The City Commissions the Audit under the Caruolo Process.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mary C. Canole. Raises issues of:

- Steering Committee Composition.
- RIDE to be interviewed during the process.
- Parent input is critical.

Mayor John Trifero.

- Clarifies that a Program Audit includes a management study, financial audit, and cost accounting approach.

School Committee Vice Chairperson Robert J. Leary.

- In October, my top priority was a performance audit as per the October 28, 2004, Newport This Week Questionnaire.
- The money is a concern. The performance audit will show many things—one that sticks out is we only need half day kindergartens by state law.
- Are we going to follow what the audit concludes, or is it going to sit on a shelf?

Mayor John Trifero.

- It is up to the community.

City Councilor Mayor Connolly.

- To decide which cost saving recommendations should be implemented.

City Council Vice Chairperson Jeanne Napolitano.

- The audit will provide us with a blueprint for the future of a school.
- We need to find a way to become more efficient.

School Committee Member Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr.

- There is a category of unnecessary items.
- Will City send Newport Public Schools a copy of the Cranston Report?

School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker.

- How should we address the Deficit Reduction Plan?

School Committee Member Jo Eva Gaines.

- I suggest \$300,000 for each of five years.

School Committee Member Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr.

- What is the actual dollar amount of last year's deficit?

City Manager James Smith.

- Deficit for Fiscal Year 2005--\$1,506,305.

School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker.

- Is taking the Fiscal Year 2004 deficit out of the surplus a possibility?

City Manager James Smith.

- The money to pay that back to the General Fund would have to come out of the fund balance and so would the \$1.1 Million deficit for Fiscal Year 2005.
- City must hold 10 percent in fund balance=\$6.9 Million.
- \$1.5 Million last year.
- \$1.6 Million this year.
- You have to raise additional taxes to replenish the fund balance.
- Recommends \$500,000 over three years.

City Council Vice Chairperson Jeanne Napolitano.

- Why did we have a deficit last year?

School Committee Vice Chairperson Robert J. Leary.

- We don't have a funding problem, we have a spending problem.

Business Manager Bruce Alexander.

- Severance costs charged to prior year.
- Lunch Aides.
- Special Education Out-of-District Tuition.
- \$800,000—Unanticipated Special Needs' Students.

School Committee Counsel Neil P. Galvin.

- School Committee will send request to Council for the money.

School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker.

- Introduces Lenthal School vote to surplus to the City.
- Three Contingency:
 - \$220,000 to move the kitchen.
 - Sale proceeds will go to future school capital costs.

School Committee Member Dr. O. William Hilton, Jr.

- Where will \$220,000 come out of?

Business Manager Bruce Alexander.

- It will be charged to the Food Services Program.

School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker.

- March 15, 2005, Newport School Committee Special Meeting on Health Care.

- We'll bring representatives from United Health Care to attend.
- We'd like to invite the City.
- We'd like a letter of agreement from the City regarding Lenthal School.
- Mutual problems:
 - Financial departments—Can they be combined?

School Committee Member Dr. O. William Hilton, Jr.

- Is there no software that's compatible?

Business Manager Bruce Alexander.

- The City needs new financial hardware and software.

City Manager James Smith.

- The Accounting Staff does the best they can with the existing software.
- New software is \$2M expense.

Newport School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker.

- Please keep us informed about new financial software.

Mayor John Trifero.

- What else can we combine?

Business Manager Bruce Alexander.

- One School Business Office Employee floats between the School Department and the City.

Mayor John Trifero.

- Program Audit will look at City/School Department inefficiencies.
- Shared services will be reviewed.

School Committee Member Hugo J. DeAscentis, Jr.

- When we share, we need to decide who will have the authority. You can't have responsibility without authority.

School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker.

- Liaison Subcommittee should look at more shared services.

School Committee Member Jo Eva Gaines.

- **We'd like an accounting of the services that we already share with the City.
- There are certain parameters of law that we have to abide by.

School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker.

- Fiscal Year 2006 Budget:
 - Refers to Sheet 2.
 - Refers to Summary.

Mayor John Trifero.

- Berkshire Advisors can provide some input that will provide cost savings.
- We'll refer to your projections.

School Committee Vice Chairperson Robert J. Leary.

- "We have spent too much money on our present alternative program"—I can't support another alternative program set up.

Public Input: Frank Landry.

- What will the Steering Committee do?—Who will be on It?
- There's a significant mismanagement of funds in the School Department.
- The public doesn't get a whole lot of information.

Public Input: Patrick Kelley.

- The audience is asking for quality education in the City.

Public Input: Becky Bolan.

- Why not do a program audit of the City, as well?

City Manager James Smith.

- City has made a commitment to program audits of the Police and Fire Departments.

Public Input: Eleanor Elabida.

- Don't control spending at the cost of education.
- A parent's voice needs to be involved in the education program audit. (We know what our children need; no one listens to parents.)

Public Input: Cathy Campbell.

- We have put a basic education standard in our classrooms.
- We can't just look at just the fiscal side.
- We want quality education.
- It needs to be the legacy of this Council to improve education.

Public Input: Naomi Ingersol.

- You're trying to squeeze water from a rock.
- Is the City cutting expenses?

All elected officials gave concluding remarks. All were pleased with the opportunity the School Committee and City Council took to try to find common ground and solutions.

Mayor John Trifero.

- Make decisions based on educational models.

School Committee Chairperson Dr. Charles P. Shoemaker.

- We made some small steps here tonight.

2.0 Executive Session. No Executive Session was held.

Adjournment. At 8:45 p.m., Mr. DeAscentis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Gaines seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (6-0).

Charles P. Shoemaker, M.D.
Chairperson

Mary C. Canole, Ed.D.
Clerk