

Approve 05/13/2014.

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**NEWPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, March 25, 2014, 7:00 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**1.0 OPENING ITEMS.**

- 1.1 Call to Order.** Chairperson Charles P. Shoemaker, M.D., called the special meeting of the Newport School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m., at the Newport Public Schools' Administration Center, in room 924.
- 1.2 Roll Call.** Attendance was as follows: School Committee Members: Chairperson Charles P. Shoemaker, M.D., Vice Chairperson Jo Eva Gaines, Rebecca Bolan, Sandra J. Flowers, Ph.D., Robert J. Leary, Thomas S. Phelan, and Robert B. Power, Ed.D.; and School Department: Superintendent of Schools Colleen B. Jermain and Director of Administrative Services Joan Tracey.
- 1.3 Pledge of Allegiance.** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**2.0 ACTION ITEMS.**

- 2.1 Fiscal Year 2014 Budget.** Superintendent Jermain reviewed the budget documentation forwarded to the council, highlighting the district's need to request an additional \$754,932 to balance this year's budget. To date, she stated that no response had been received from the city regarding the committee's request for a joint meeting. She also stated that the letter requesting city funds to conduct the school department's forensic audit had been forwarded to the council.

Mrs. Gaines made a motion to approve the request to the Newport City Council of an additional appropriation of \$754,932 for the 2013-2014 school budget. Dr. Flowers seconded the motion. Discussion followed regarding revenues and expenditures. Mr. Leary stated that he could not support the motion. He questioned the accuracy of this year's projected deficit, reviewing line items such as arbitration, catering, and conferences/workshops, to name a few. He stated that the district's delivery system must be changed given that both enrollment and funding levels were decreasing. Dr. Shoemaker re-iterated that previous years' budget surpluses were due to the need to prepare the next year's budget in the spring before funding sources could be confirmed. Should the

request for additional funding not be appropriated by the city, Mr. Leary indicated that budget cuts would need to be made. Mr. Phelan stated that he could not support the motion. His reasoning was that continued focus had been given at the elementary level with little or no focus on the middle school and high school for potential budget cuts. Dr. Power was not in agreement with Mr. Phelan's position, indicating that all levels were in fact considered for potential budget cuts.

The motion carried (5-2). Dr. Shoemaker congratulated Superintendent Jermain and Director of Administrative Services Joan Tracey for their diligence and ability in projecting the district's budgetary needs.

**3.0 DISCUSSION ITEMS.**

**3.1 Early Learning Center—Update.** Superintendent Jermain updated the committee on the progress made in discussions for the creation of an Early Learning Center. She informed the committee that ongoing meetings with administrators from Newport and Middletown Public Schools and community partners were moving forward to create a plan and cost analysis should the Early Learning Center become a reality.

**3.2 School Calendar—Update.** Superintendent Jermain reviewed the draft school calendar for the next school year, informing the committee that she and her administrative team were reviewing options, such as parent/teacher conferences, late dismissals/early starts, transportation impact, and the expansion of in-house professional development.

**4.0 EXECUTIVE SESSION.** No Executive Session was held.

**5.0 ADJOURNMENT.**

At 7:53 p.m., Mrs. Gaines made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Power seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (7-0).

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**Charles P. Shoemaker, M.D.**  
Chairperson

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**Colleen B. Jermain**  
Clerk

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**Colleen B. Jermain**  
Clerk



NEWPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Colleen Burns Jermain  
*Superintendent of Schools*

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March 12, 2014

Ms. Jane Howington, City Manager  
Newport City Hall  
43 Broadway  
Newport, RI 02840

Dear Jane:

At the February 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Newport School Committee, the NSC voted unanimously to request a forensic audit for the Newport School Department and accept the offer to have it paid by the Newport City Council. I appreciate the time you and your Finance Director, Laura Sitrin, have provided me and my Finance Director, Joan Tracey. I know our goal was and still is to work together to solve the present school department deficit. It is unfortunate that we are, at this time, unable to reach a viable resolution upon which both sides can agree. It is with great hope that once this audit has been completed by an independent third party, everyone will have more confidence regarding the financial situation of the school department, and the City Council will have the information it needs to support our budget request now and in the future.

I respectfully request a meeting with you or the appropriate parties to further discuss this and what next steps need to be taken to proceed.

Sincerely,

Colleen Burns Jermain  
Superintendent of Schools

CBJ:wjg

Cc: Mayor Henry F. Winthrop and Newport City Council Members  
Chairperson Charles P. Shoemaker, M.D., Newport School Committee  
Newport School Committee Members

*Providing Quality Education That Makes A Difference In Each Student's Life*