

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

School Committee/City Council Meeting

East Providence City Hall, Room 306

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

April 7, 2008

The joint School Committee/City Council Workshop convened at 7:00 PM.

Members Present:

School Department: Dr. J. Forbes, M. Morris, R. Faria, S. DeCastro, S. Santos, A. Carcieri, R. Silva, A. Thomas, E. Daft, L. Barham, W. Capron, L. Fox, R. Linneman, D. Rodericks, R. Rodericks, J. Tavares, S. Waterman

City: R. Brown, I. Ramos, V. Perry, B. DiTraglia, B. Silva, R. Cusack, W. Conley

Guests: Lee Arnold, Robert Palumbo, Dr. Michael Hall (RWU Public Policy Department)

A discussion of agenda items of note is as follows:

Welcome/Overview:

Mayor Ramos/Richard Brown; Introduction of guests and agenda; Roger Williams University Consolidation Feasibility Study conducted

by Lee Arnold and Robert Palumbo; Power Point Presentation to discuss findings and recommendations; Recognized Dr. Michael Hall – Head of RWU Public Policy Department

Presentation:

Lee Arnold: Read e-mail communication from person outside East Providence stating that the East Providence School Department and city should be commended for their effort; while most cities and towns are facing fiscal issues, only East Providence has taken a leadership role; additionally, the recommendations in the RWU study complement the recommendations of the recent city study.

Agenda:

City overview; current budget year information; sample development activities,

Project process; recommendations and conclusions

City Overview:

Facts for the city of East Providence; Date incorporated; land and area; population 3600 persons/sq mi.; information from 2000 census; 2nd largest proportion of elderly in state; in 2006 EP had 5.3% rate of unemployment; 5th lowest household income in state.

FY 2008 Budget:

142,041,391.00 proposed budget for 07-08; largest share of budget to education; Areas of spending on schools in East Providence is on

average the same as other communities in state.

Sample Development Activities:

Phillipsdale; Chevron; Tockwatton, etc...

Project process:

Credible process; executive summary for reference; July/August 2007 began process; September/December conducted interviews; February report completed.

Recommendations/Conclusions:

15 recommendations in 8 areas

Consolidation; technology; purchasing

Consolidation:

- **All non instructional services should be consolidated**
- **Need for school specialist under auspices of municipal director**
- **Caveat: Consolidation alone is not effective unless done properly; union issues must be addressed in open and transparent manner.**
- **Financial pressures; 5 year phase out of custodial/maintenance staff**
- **Lean Office Training for service areas ex: U.P.S. right turn study for efficiency**
- **Facilitated meetings with city and school department for consolidation; Must use an outside facilitator someone who does not have a “dog in the fight”**
- **Examine individual contracts**

Technology:

- **Employees struggling to keep pace**
- **Consider technology audit to determine efficiencies**

Purchasing:

- **Leads itself to chunking/streamlining**
- **Examine creative uses for East Bay Education Collaborative and use to fullest extent**
- **Explore changing fiscal year from November 1 start to July 1 start**
- **Seek and make use of waivers for relief from unfunded mandates**
- **Inventory city and school owned buildings**
- **Develop options for personnel actions such as early retirement incentives and furlough days**

Potential Savings:

- **Health care reductions 1.5 million**
- **School transportation costs 20% approximately \$400,000.00**
- **Purchasing costs \$500,000.00**
- **Interest on tax anticipation notes \$400,000.00**
- **Personnel – TBD**
- **Efficiency – TBD**

Conclusions:

See report

Discussion/Comments:

Steven DeCastro

Rank items in order of importance

- **Facilitated discussion should be first step in process**

- **Report is not a deficit reduction plan for East Providence**
 - **“Absence of technology is astounding and distressing”**
 - **Obviously technology is important piece but need to commit to move forward first**
 - **Gist of process was to examine East Providence process; structured hiring on municipal side when compared to school side; need to look at processes**
- School specialist wage gap minimal savings – need same number of people**
- **Study not only cost saving, but efficiency – may not lose people but use more effectively**

Isadore Ramos

- Only one area that discusses privatization; custodians; costs escalate after 1st year of privatization**
- **Costs escalate either way; again look at efficiencies**

Steven DeCastro

Issue of cutting grass; Whiteknact as example of where city and school services overlap

Isadore Ramos

How come study did not look at number of cars/vehicles in city?

- **Hope not to talk about 2 sides but one body (not we vs. they; about us)**
- **Do things better for less**
- **Made recommendations to start the discussion; did not offer all recommendations**

Mildred Morris

The word facilitator never mentioned; now we need to spend more money

- **Was mentioned in report due to we v. they; RWU has “no dog in the fight”**
- **Need outsider to move sides together – sensed suspicions on both sides**

Anthony Carcieri

- **Question re: Qualifications of facilitator**
- **Typically bring with them a technique to have others work together**
- **May use multiple facilitators; recommendations from peers**
- **What do parties agree to?**
- **Starting point and end point for implementation; commonalities**
- **Intricacies and point of intersection/overlap**
- **Parameters and process agreement**

Steve Santos

- **Has RWU done similar studies in RI/MA?**
- **1st done in East Providence by this group; waiting with consortium to wait with communities in this capacity**
- **Can really learn from other East Bay communities**
- **RWU and institution of public policy are relatively new**

Jacqueline B. Forbes, Ph.D.

- **Clarification on transportation; past 3-4 years testimony at state level. Does RWU have any new information re: transportation/opportunities**
- **EP not missing anything; state still working on statewide transportation law**

- **Clarification: waivers – understood that process is lighting: Is EP missing something?**
- **RWU will arrange meeting with Commissioner and Superintendent re: waivers**

Robert Cusack

- **Dr. Forbes frustrating items in report have been addressed by school dept. legislative relief; transportation is shift of money from local to state, shift not to state but parents of private school children**
- **In re: facilitation ex: Fleet bank/Feet focus – implementation team from different departments. If goal not to spend on getting somewhere; we won't get anywhere**
- **Why is private cleaning services cheaper?**
- **Cleaning company not yours forever no longer term costs**
- **Question: RIMES and services/best practices**

Robert Cusack

- **Counter some inefficient problematic with same services. We need to do more with less**
- **Mentioned because people working hard but up against the wall**

Valerie Perry

- **Warwick change of Fiscal Year – how long did process take?**
- **Several options 13 month budgets; one bundled budget; many ways. Takes time to catch up – took a “couple of years”**

Jacqueline B. Forbes, Ph.D.

- **One of seven districts in state waiting on uniform on Chart of Accounts**

Richard Brown

- **Warwick completed 30 years ago during Boon period. Pawtucket last city to do this floated 40 million dollar bond. EP would be looking at 40 million bond; Number is prohibitive**
- **Two schools of thought at state level, all communities must go on same schedule**

Bruce DiTraglia

- **Thanks for study; did RWU realize 3 million dollar deficit at beginning of study?**
- **New to city was in deficit crisis; report not designed to cover deficit but look at efficiencies**
- **Without deficit would recommend same issues**

Robert Faria

- **Moving forward, will have discussions as a group**
- **Yes, at a later date Richard Brown will conduct.**

Isadore Ramos

- **Adjournment 9:00 PM**

Respectfully Submitted,

Steven Santos, Clerk of the Committee

***Notes recorded by Edward Daft**