

City of East Providence Budget Commission

City Hall

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, RI 02914

(401) 435-7500

Meeting Minutes

January 17, 2012, 2:00 PM

Members:

Michael O’Keefe – present

Steve Bannon – unavailable for meeting

Diane Brennan – present

City Manager, Peter Graczykowski – present

Mayor Bruce Rogers – present

Other Attendees:

Ellen Eggeman – City Finance Director

Mary King – School District Finance Director

Edward Daft – Interim Superintendent

Christy Healey, Budget Commission Fiscal Advisor

David Eaton, Budget Commission Fiscal Advisor

Charles Tsonos, School Committee Chair

Chrissy Rossi, School Committee

Steven Furtado, School Committee

Luisa Abbatecola, School Committee

Ryan Tellier, School Committee

Bob Silva, School Committee Legal Counsel

Thomas Sweeney, B&E Consulting

Members of the Public

The meeting commenced at 2:01 pm. Agenda item #1 was the continuation of Thomas

Sweeney's presentation from January 10, 2012 on the B&E long term recommendations. Mr.

Sweeney explained the RTI, Response to Intervention, recommendation. He noted that the

School District had implemented several recommendations from a report in September 2010

by John M. Verre, which led to savings in the special education budget. RTI is a federal

program under IDEA which is required of all states. It was created because the federal

government was concerned with the number of students with IEPs.

The theory behind RTI is

that students will respond to intervention, reducing the likelihood that they will require IEPs.

The concern was the increase in the special education census. There were also huge

differences between the states regarding special education issues

such as classroom size and staffing levels. The intervention was that reading or math specialists, or aides would work directly with students with the goal avoiding the student being classified as special education. Mr. Sweeney stated that RTI needs greater emphasis in East Providence, and that the School District needed a dedicated administrator of RTI who had power to control actions in each school building. He estimated that increasing RTI could save the district \$1.5 million per year. He noted that the current administration had been working to control special education

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costs. In particular the district should look at resource teachers, who are well below 90% efficiency.

With regard to facilities, in addition to closing Oldham, Watters school should be given back to the City and a study should be undertaken to determine if the administration staff could be moved to Martin Middle School, allowing for the closing of the

administration building.

Michael O’Keefe questioned if the School Committee had any concerns or comments.

Chairman Tsonos noted that the School Committee met on January 10th for the first time to review the recommendations. The Committee had already addressed many of the items.

Some items need more study and the Committee has asked Superintendent Daft to look into them. He noted that the Committee did agree with the policy manual update and hoped

funding could be allocated. Mr. O’Keefe stated that it was important to have Mr. Daft and

Mary King at the meetings to represent the School Committee during the meetings.

Ryan Tellier stated that the Committee felt it important to keep full-day Kindergarten. He handed out documents to the Committee that he felt justified the positive impact of full-day

K. He noted that he was a huge supporter of full-day K. Mayor Rogers asked if the

Committee had identified any alternative savings. Mr. Tellier stated that the Committee had

made cuts last year to fund the full-day K. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the district overspent its appropriation, so the cuts did not in fact finance the program. The Budget Commission needs to formulate a budget that works for both the taxpayers and the City and School District because the alternative is a substantial tax increase. Chrissy Rossi stated that the City had only had the benefit of full-day K for one year, and that it did not make sense to revert to all ½ day K.

The Commission moved to Agenda Item #2, which was a presentation on the Budget Commission goals and targets. See addendum #1 for a copy of the presentation.

Item #3 was the School District Procurement and Payment Policy, which was approved by the Budget Commission.

Item #4 was a resolution to the Director of Revenue certifying the need to advance basic education aid, in anticipation of the passage of the legislation. The resolution was unanimously approved, see addendum #2 for signed copy.

Item #5 related to the plan to incentivize tax payers to pay early. Mr. O’Keefe noted that this was still a work in progress and that the Commission would need a list of those taxpayers that paid early, ranked by dollar amount if possible. The Commission would also need the list of large vendors from the City for the next meeting.

Under Item #6, Other Commission items, Mr. Graczykowski provided the Commission with a copy of his 100 day report, detailing his goals in the City Manager position and the progress toward the goals. The report would be presented to the City Council at its meeting tonight. Chairman Tsonos asked about the Superintendent search and Mr. O’Keefe stated that the Commission could not address this issue until consulting with Commissioner Gist, which he was scheduled to do on Friday. Ms. Rossi asked if the District was allowed to hire, and noted that they needed a Human Resources Director and an Assistant Superintendent

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because the positions needed to be filled. Mr. O’Keefe stated that

there was no available

funding and that the City needs to be sure it can pay its current employees before hiring any additional staff.

Item #7, minutes from January 10th and January 12th, was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 PM.

Approved by East Providence Budget Commission on January 19, 2012.

EPBC/ceh