

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence School Committee

East Providence City Hall - Council Chamber - 145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

September 22, 2015

Open Session

Mr. Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Members present: Jessica Beauchaine, Nathan Cahoon, Anthony Ferreira, Joel Monteiro, Charles Tsonos. Also present: Kim Mercer, Superintendent and Andrew Thomas, Esq.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a Moment of Silence were observed.

Motion to Set a Curfew for School Committee Meetings – Motion by Mr. Cahoon to convene in executive session no later than 9:30PM, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0.

PTO/PTA Reports – None

Public Comment I – Agenda Items - None

Facilities Report and Update on Current Projects

Facilities Sub-Committee Report - Mr. Feola provided an update on the September 14th meeting:

 Working on punch list items; Orlo should be all set tomorrow evening for School Committee walk through and review of punch list items at 4:00PM; doors will be in tomorrow or Friday; Martin and Francis now; as soon as the doors arrive; will add Silver Spring. School Department officials met last week with RIDE officials and submitted three proposals: Riverside Middle School sidewalk project was approved and a walk through with the contractor, School Principal and SRO to work out traffic patterns; will work with the Fire Department also; the project will be divided up.

 Martin Middle School boiler repairs estimated to be approximately \$191,000; already started to rip boiler down; parts will be in about 2-3 weeks; heat truck being held by company, so we will be prepared should the temperature change quickly. RI Interlocal Trust (insurer) for both city and schools have been looking into what caused the damage.

 Submitted a proposal for the chiller at Waddington which will be ready for spring; applying to get money back through the Governor's program.

 Fences - Whiteknact fence starting tomorrow morning; Hennessey fence 6-8 weeks.

 Trucks are all in and done with the last one being painted; taking care of the poles on the soccer field at Martin Middle School. Walk through at Francis School; Mr. Ferreira felt that it went well and should be used as a model for other schools; goal is to bring all schools up to that level; Mr. Ferreira wanted to personally thank staff at that school; checked heating system; opened all cupboards; this shows that we can accomplish things that the teachers deserve; Mr. Feola has a list of the items; School Committee would like a copy of the lists of work to be completed.

Discussion regarding school personnel having earlier access to buildings? Mr. Feola stated that the custodians' work day is 7:00AM to 3:00PM by contract and when they come in, they get building ready to go and no one can go in before the school is opened; talked about the alarm shut off; many different doors in some buildings and that is the reason why it is all done at 7:00AM before staff arrives.

Superintendent's Report

Presentation of Amended 2015-2016 Budget – Linda Dykeman, Deputy Finance Director, presented the budget for second passage; as per School Committee's request, \$2 million added in the following

areas:

 10 additional custodians

 1 additional hour per day to the elementary and early childhood school secretaries (9 total employees)

 OPEB contribution

 Accounting/HR software

 Additional funding for cited deficiencies and other capital projects

 Jeep with a plow

 12 snowblowers with trailers and/or enclosures

 11 SmartBoards for kindergarten classes

 Capital to help with deficiencies-add \$2 million per School Committee's request.

Discussion:

Mr. Cahoon –asked for an explanation of the increase in capital

Linda Dykeman – approximately \$417,000; 2.25% maintenance of effort;

Mr. Monteiro– pointed out that this has to be sustained every year by law

Mr. Cahoon – read about poorly maintained buildings, underpaid teachers, etc.

Mr. Monteiro – regarding the teachers' contract across district; we need to be marketable; it is a revolving door with leaves of absence and resignations; pay below other districts and last for teachers; this

effects who is getting hired to teach our kids; if we care about that, we have to become marketable; contract up in 2017; if we wait, money won't be there, if there is a change in their operating structure; of this \$3 million, capital, and the rest is employee based for the future.

Linda Dykeman – small amount for equipment; money available for coming years for the above

Mr. Ferreira - \$30-40 thousand for new hires; asked how many custodians

Linda Dykeman responded ten.

Mr. Monteiro – coaches too; it has been a revolving door; these are our employees also; Superintendent Mercer has been constant from a budgetary stance, and has been clear and up front; best utilization of funds in the district in a long time.

Personnel Report – Update on Administrative and Other Open Positions – Superintendent reported that interviews would be held on Friday for the painter position; physical education teacher interviews scheduled for Monday; pre-engineering applications being reviewed by the Director of the Career and Technical Center.

Personnel Report on Resignation/Leaves of Absence/Retirement

Resignation

Kelly Ferguson-Reading Specialist-MMS-Effective TBD, 2015

Action Items

Waddington Basketball and Play Area Project – Jason Goncalves addressed the School Committee regarding a proposal he has working on with John Carnevale, to do some work at Waddington School and is requesting that the School Committee approve \$2500 to help accomplish that. Mr. Ferreira stated that he would support the \$2500; however, he felt that the court needed a berm around it to raise it; about 2 ½ inches lower than the grade; need to find a way to correct that problem first.

Ms. Beauchaine stated that there are other projects associated with that money; the play area is incorporating the Early Learning Center by using shoe prints and wheelchair prints to the playground for kids to have ownership of the play area; this is a community project which will be done through volunteer efforts. Motion by Mr. Ferreira to support, seconded by Ms. Beauchaine. Vote 5-0.

Approval of Change Order for Riverside Concrete Project – Mr. Feola requested approval of a change order to add stairs at a cost of \$4,000 to the sidewalk and ramp project at Riverside Middle School; it was decided to pull everything out and reset once and for all. Mr. Ferreira requested the date before they start to see what they are going to do. Mr. Feola advised that they are ready to get started.

Mr. Ferreira felt that it was important for the public to know; this is an important job for many years.

Motion by Ms. Beauchaine to approve, seconded by Mr. Cahoon.

Vote 5-0.

Superintendent Interview Committee - Proposed key dates for the team to meet and to work out selection criteria. Mr. Cahoon requested this item be placed on the agenda; first phase will be to review resumes and narrow candidates down to interview five to seven candidates; would like to get together as a selection team sometime after application period closes on 9/30/15; this is the most important thing the School Committee will be doing. Discussion about possible dates.

Superintendent Mercer advised that the applications can be sent to School Committee members on Thursday, October 1, 2015. Discussion regarding holding review and discussion in executive session. Legal Counsel to review and advise if appropriate. It was decided to hold the first meeting on Monday, October 5, 2015.

Field Trip Request – Riverside Middle School – Motion by Mr. Cahoon to approve a field trip request from Riverside Middle School for students to travel to Washington DC in May 2016, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0

Approval of Minutes of School Committee Meetings held on August 12, 2014, August 26, 2014 and August 11, 2015, August 18, 2015, August 27, 2015

Personnel Appointments

SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSONNEL RECOMMENDATIONS:

APPOINTMENTS

Cheryl Sylvia-Human Resources Director-Effective October 4, 2015

Jillian Gesualdi-Reading Specialist-Effective September 28, 2015

Orianne Rodrigues-Social Worker-Effective October 5, 2015

Gary Manchester-Auto Collision Repair-Effective October 5, 2015

Jillian Akerman-Elementary Teacher-KH-Effective September 23, 2015

Nancy Martin-Elementary Teacher-WADD-Effective September 23, 2015

**Alissa Chamberland/Katie Kenahan-Yearbook
Advisors-RMS-Effective 2015/2016 School Year**

**Nichole Federowicz/Jade Sisti-Art Club Advisors-Effective 2015/2016
School Year**

Alexandra Salisbury/Laura Moretti-Freshman Advisors-Effective 2015/2016 School Year

Kerrie Avjian-International Club Advisor-Effective 2015/2016 School Year

Youth Alive Advisor-Paul Amaral-Effective 2015/2016 School Year

Carlos DaPonte-Girls Soccer Coach-RMS-Effective 2015/2016 School Year

Discussion regarding the position of H/R Director appointment:

Mr. Cahoon – noted there was a news article about a \$600,000 proposal to deconsolidate the school department H/R Department.

Mr. Ferreira added that, in reference to the H/R Director position, it was offensive to him that the Mayor called and threatened him and the School Committee about it; he put burden of the explanation about the \$600,000 figure on city; told there was written proof, which

Mr. Ferreira requested before the meeting; also, there was a conversation in public with the Financial Adviser, Mr. Luba, about deconsolidation; now we are being told the City Council will sue us.

Mr. Ferreira said his support was based on the advice of Mr. Luba, the state financial overseer and that he would not be intimidated by the Mayor's comments.

Ms. Beauchaine stated that the meeting where Mr. Luba spoke was not taped; he spoke about deconsolidation and he gave the approval to move forward. The School Department posted this position months ago on School Spring and did not blindsides anyone; it was advertised, applications received; now that it is coming before us tonight for a vote she requested that Mr. Luba speak on this now for the benefit of residents who will watch this on television.

Mr. Monteiro – when discussion took place about deconsolidation of the facilities department; Mayor Rose and Mr. Cunha criticized the compensation paid to City Facilities Director; looked at numbers ball park and still below other districts; he had a conversation with Mr. Cunha; have not heard anything from the City Council; what City Council did was increase compensation of their own facilities director; need communication between the two bodies; he will reach out once again; going behind the back to the press; our relationship is good with teachers and we have access to resources; the contract not up until 2017; he should get facts straight about \$3 million and verify all information; Superintendent's door is open.

Mr. Luba indicated that the state is no longer involved with East Providence and the Budget Commission left to the city to decide on such issues; in his opinion, he cannot say cons or not, even though in favor of consolidation; this has not worked well for a number of reasons; facilities a different story; City Council has had numerous

opportunities to address these issues; the Mayor was asked to put on City Council agenda as has the Superintendent of Schools, to at least discuss this and they have not done so. Mr. Luba does not know if the City Council gets to approve this; cannot find documentation when Budget Commission was here; things written in on certain positions, but he has not seen anything applying to H/R; until he sees something that says City Council has to approve it, this falls to the School Committee.

Mr. Tsonos added that the School Committee stays within a certain budget and how we write it and manage it is still within the rights of the School Committee.

Mr. Monteiro – The Superintendent did request several times for City Council to discuss this; consolidated all salaries 50/50 with powers of School Committee and Title 16 to manage the budget; it is up to the School Committee to move funds as they see fit; if City Council added a position; School Committee would have to vote also; changes in consolidating departments affects others.

Mr. Luba – no requirement that would happen; schools are the larger constituent of Human Resources.

Mr. Monteiro – with the Budget Commission no longer in existence, complete control of the budget belongs to the School Committee.

Mr. Luba – something written on facilities, but he has not seen anything about H/R.

Mr. Ferreira asked if the Superintendent or Chair received anything from the city that we cannot go forward

Mr. Luba – city requesting to put it on hold; City Council did not address it.

Kim Mercer – there was an H/R Manager dedicated to the School Department who left in July and the department ran all summer without any H/R Manager or Director; School Department needs to start putting someone in to support our teachers.

Mr. Luba – get own legal counsel

Ms. Beauchaine – not new issue; it was never discussed by the City Council

Mr. Luba – state has nothing to say; his responsibility is budget and contracts; city has followed the “spirit” of the five-year plan; city about to attain rainy day fund; operating with a surplus; the city accelerated the goals; then can focus on improving services.

Motion by Mr. Monteiro, seconded by Mr. Cahoon. Vote 5-0.

Interim Administrative Appointments: Deputy Superintendent and Middle School Principal

Mr. Tsonos – after looking at the situation at administration with an

excellent Superintendent, we do not have a deep bench; many issues in the School Department going forward and it was his hope this night to appoint an Interim Superintendent to get through a short period and a principal appointment.

Mr. Cahoon – appoint Deputy Superintendent and a Principal – are we at liberty to discuss in this forum or in executive session.

Mr. Monteiro – duties of Central Office for Curriculum Director in that office; why from an operating standpoint, if we are going to look at temporary support; if already at central administration; issue he has if different, more than qualifications; his concern is a Middle School at the beginning of the year that is restructuring itself in a huge positive way and temporarily disrupting that structure.

Mr. Tsonos – talking about the Martin Middle School Principal who has done a great job; has worked at RIDE; bring person up front to administration so if Superintendent Mercer is called away, we have 5600 students; will not leave Martin alone; this is a large district and we need presence at administration going forward; will be up to the selection process; important to the city to have someone in as Assistant Superintendent; Chair understanding the Superintendent position to assist entire district going forward.

Mr. Monteiro – person more than qualified 700+ students with staff right now; new to school and district, with a new Assistant Principal;

take away for couple months then post position for Deputy Superintendent; then Martin will have had three principals in one year; asst. principal capable; he questions reward of two months or so; Superintendent and Dawn August can navigate and let their schools be solid; already potential for mix up at that school.

Mr. Tsonos – circumstances call for some action; Dean at Martin; Principal Forand will spend some time at Martin and he has asked Jack Resendes to step in to assist; he is well acquainted with the school and a city resident

Mr. Monteiro – would rather see someone from outside with Superintendent; let schools remain operational; his concern not the person, but a 700 plus student school

Mr. Tsonos – look at the entire district

Mr. Cahoon – reference made to selection for Assistant Superintendent; how would that appointment affect the competition later?

Mr. Tsonos – draw from our own city; open up the assistant again; try to achieve some preemptive insurance for our city

Mr. Monteiro – do we have anyone else in the district without restricting schools;

Mr. Tsonos – look at the experience of RIDE

Mr. Monteiro – which duties would the person be expected to do with Superintendent Mercer for two months.

Mr. Ferreira – why two months; we cannot get a painter; he looked at the whole realm; 4-5 new contracts coming up and so much on the plate of the School Committee; can it be a wrong decision if only two

months, but that never happens in this district; it will probably be longer.

Mr. Monteiro – barring the Superintendent search and having a replacement by November 26th, if immediate, post it or post it before new Superintendent interviews in December; in January refill the administrative staff; if four months is too long; from an operating stand point, what are the duties and why take a person out of a building?

Mr. Tsonos – with that logic, we do not need an Assistant Superintendent.

Mr. Monteiro – over 2-4 months, there is not anything the Superintendent and Dawn August cannot do to make it worth risking the structure of Martin Middle School; brand new assistant has a learning curve; if Principal Forand or not, another 3 principals in one school year; got to be another administrator in the district; the Superintendent asked not to fill the Assistant Superintendent position and no one ran out the door; what has come up since then?

Mr. Tsonos – elementary report cards; evaluations, RIDE, and unforeseen issues.

Mr. Cahoon – in a competition, everyone gets a fair shot; what is so critical now to circumvent the competition and interrupt the leadership team; the opportunity is there through the competitive process; Superintendent Mercer said to the School Committee that is was not fair to choose an Assistant Superintendent for her successor; we had a competition, did not select someone; now we

pick a person they want.

Mr. Tsonos – call a vote; 5600 students and many issues; better to take previous action now; things go on longer; important to have people in place; have an organizational chart for a reason

Mr. Monteiro – praised the Superintendent for the job she is doing; has this been requested by the Superintendent?

Mr. Tsonos– we have issues; because there is not a deep bench to draw from; does not have this in administration; we need to support reinforcement of administration.

Mr. Monteiro – if he would support this logic, would it make sense for the School Committee to ask who in the district has certification and was not interviewed for the job; looking for a person qualified for the job; gain experience on job; what are our options in the district if adamant about filling

Mr. Tsonos– wealth of retirees; we have an opportunity to bring in a very qualified person to shore up administration.

Mr. Monteiro – who else working in the district.

Ms. Beauchaine - we lost a Human Resources person in July; lost Julie Motta and did not replace her ; J Julie Motta was hired as something else, than we changed the title; lost two people; lot of work and issues in the building workwise; in that sense people are working a lot more; not sure this is the right thing; she agreed with Mr. Monteiro that we should not pull a person out of another position; she does not know what the qualifications would be in administration to take someone from the outside; would like the Superintendent to get some assistance to go out smiling, but not sure this is the right

situation.

Mr. Monteiro – how many principals in the district with this certification; we are going to take someone from one of the larger schools; if we compare two schools; one up and running and interim principal historical knowledge of how the building operates; he is not comfortable with the building which has two new administrators to put that on pause for two to four months.

Mr. Tsonos – the Assistant Superintendent can keep an eye on Martin Middle School, with a dean and Mr. Resendes there.

Mr. Ferreira – going forward with the move; we have the Facilities Director contract, a mechanic at the garage who asked for someone for two months to teach; when do we motion going forward; other issues with facilities if this is a wrong decision.

Mr. Ferreira made a motion to go forward;

Mr. Cahoon – important to have a fair opportunity and competition; talking about roofs and gutters, etc. If he was part of a competition with no selection and then someone put in the position, he would be ticked off; He does not know what is so important about this not to follow competitive procedure.

Mr. Monteiro – why go after the school with the most ability

Mr. Tsonos – person he thinks is qualified; at Martin Middle School, the sun will come up tomorrow

Ms. Beauchaine – would see this again; has questions; No Second to the motion.

Requisitions – Bill List

Warrant #1547 9/16/15 \$794,820.14

Construction Payment Request

SMMA Invoice 43315 & 43366 \$ 14,674.60

Motion to approve by Mr. Cahoon, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Linda Dykeman, Deputy Finance Director advised the School Committee that Chartwells Food Service has a guarantee per their contract of \$165,036.46; Realized a profit of \$66,876.53, which leaves a balance coming back to us in the amount of \$98,159.93. Chartwells requested a \$15,000 reduction in that credit; reason offered was that breakfast program in the classrooms was not fully implemented and was slow to start;

Linda Dykeman requested School Committee decision on the request for reduction

Discussion:

Mr. Monteiro - ask them what about increased productivity; they would be more productive if staff on check out end (paid \$11,000 for cooler); Linda - did discuss it with them, but cannot speak for Chartwells

JB - only for breakfast not snow days? How many schools had breakfast?

LD – it did take a while to get underway

KM – all schools were not doing it last year; this year all six

JM – how did we hinder that process?

Nate - difficult to know how much lost - good relationship?

**LD - agreement executed by them was that they would guarantee us
\$165,000**

Nate - \$165,000 guaranteed profits and they would be doing what?

LD –noted that this is the first year of the contract

**Nate – they did not meet it and now they are asking us – terms of
contract**

**Motion to defer this to Chartwells as to why it should be reduced;
open to hearing from them;**

first year; subsequent years' profit; will have opportunity to recoup,

Seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 4-0. Mr. Ferreira voted nay.

**Passage of 2015-2016 Budget - Motion by Mr. Cahoon to approve the
budget, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0.**

**Mr. Tsonos requested that Linda Dykeman ensure that city officials
receive copies. Mr. Monteiro requested it be placed on our website
when approved.**

Public Comment II – Non Agenda Items

Izelda Treves spoke regarding the discussion about moving the principal at Martin Middle School while we have a school without a full time principal; Whiteknact has a substitute principal; this is not right for parents or the students; there are a lot of issues there and it is a huge concern in her opinion.

Mr. Ferreira advised that all School Committee knew it was an issue; asked if anyone knows when the issues will go away; research could go on the entire year; kids and educators in that building; when will it be coming back on the table.

Kim Mercer – personnel issue and will not address it

Mr. Tsonos advised to take up the matter in executive session.

Ms. Beauchaine would like to discuss how to improve the situation.

Announcements

The Townie Pride Parade will be held on September 25th at Pierce Field.

Ms. Beauchaine questioned the job description for a painter and the length of time we have tried to hire a painter; what could be done to help to get someone for that position.

Mr. Feola – we attempted to fill that position; we now have applications and have narrowed down to six with experience to be interviewed on Friday.

Ms. Beauchaine suggested that the advertisement should state that a background check would be a requirement.

Mr. Ferreira would like to ensure that person would be painting 85% of the time and that they would be strictly a full time painter; productivity would be reduced if pulled away for emergencies. Mr. Feola stated that the painting position is on the night shift, so it is unlikely that a painter would be pulled away from painting; if a day position, person could be called away for an emergency because things happen during day when school is open.

Mr. Ferreira stated that he did not want professional staff pulled off for other jobs because it is impossible to hold anyone accountable and impossible to track; he has support on how we can look at one professional way of doing business; this is the wrong way to conduct facilities and maintenance; guys get in truck and drive across city; his professional opinion is to go on a task and stick to it

Mr. Monteiro - great endorsement for adding custodians

Mr. Ferreira – need man hours of work done

Motion by Mr. Cahoon that the committee convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing:

Personnel – R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1); Collective Bargaining R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2);

Litigation//Pending Litigation-R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2) and return

no later than one hour, seconded by Ms. Beauchaine. Vote 5-0.

Motion by Mr. Cahoon to return to Public Session, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0.

Report Executive Session Votes – None taken

Motion by Mr. Cahoon to seal the minutes of the executive session, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Motion by Mr. Cahoon to adjourn at 10:00PM, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Nathan Cahoon, Clerk of the Committee