

## **MINUTES**

### **SPECIAL JOINT MEETING**

#### **CITY COUNCIL & WPC AUTHORITY, BOARD OF EDUCATION, BOARD OF FINANCE**

**AUGUST 7, 2017**

A **SPECIAL JOINT MEETING** of the City Council & WPC Authority, Board of Education and Board of Finance was held in the City Hall Auditorium on Monday, July 17, 2017. Present were Mayor Elinor Carbone, City Councilors Paul Cavagnero , Gregg Cogswell, Anne Ruwet, Daniel Farley and Drake Waldron. City Councilor Luisa Noujaim was absent. Board of Education Members Fiona Cappabianca, Ellen Hoehne, Wendy Pataky, Kenneth Traub, William Knight, Armand Maniccia and Peter Vergaro were present. Members Joanne Brogis, Jessica Richardson and Daniel Thibault were absent. Board of Finance Members Christopher Anderson, Frank Rubino and Joshua Ferreira were present; Members JoAnn Fenty, Laurene Pesce and Mark Bushka were absent. Superintendent of Schools Denise Clemons was also present, along with Jeffrey Ziplow and Lindsay Donato of Blum Shapiro.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. starting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **CONSOLIDATION OF FINANCE DEPTS.**

Mayor Carbone said that through the cooperation and shared vision of the office of the Superintendent of Schools and the joint Finance Departments, she feels confident that this move will reap the benefits identified by the Blum Shapiro team. Ms. Clemons said she experienced this concept in a prior superintendency in Massachusetts, and that this is easy for her to comprehend. She noted that with limited resources and a lot of transition, shared services will stabilize both departments on the Board of Education side. Ms. Clemons said that collaboration can be most effective when good planning takes place, egos are set aside and planners are united in the mindset of public service first. She noted that some people are afraid the city will take all the money, but CGS §10-222 states that the money appropriated by any municipality for the maintenance of public schools shall be by, and at the discretion of, the Board of Education. Joining of services will not usurp the Board of Education rights, she said.

Mr. Ziplow summarized the feasibility study, saying both departments are headed together for the right reasons, to bring together the financial operations, including payroll and human resources, between the School District and the City to see if it makes sense. He said that his company performed analyses, interviewed 27 personnel, reviewed the process, technology, and even the space. They tried to identify issues and concerns, and evaluated positions, job descriptions, and experience. They looked at how the personnel do things to see if they could blend and work together in a cooperative environment. They looked at workflow to create an operational and organizational framework for a shared services model, and determined that they believe it will be successful. We have a group of people that want to work together, he said. Mr. Ziplow said that Blum Shapiro does recommend a shared services environment for Torrington.

Ms. Donato reviewed the differences and similarities in staffing, cross-training levels, overtime, pay rates, benefits, software, and noted a key finding of turnover in leadership positions on Board of Education side. She pointed out the benefits of the recommended shared services environment, saying there will be some immediate back-up support, increased efficiencies and long-term cost savings. Ms. Donato reviewed the recommended five-phase approach over a three-year timeline.

Mayor Carbone explained that the real advantage of mapping this out over the first year is that there will be both ongoing joint meetings of the boards and of the staff members. She said this is a good map but we have to build this ourselves in order for this to be successful. Mayor Carbone said she is committed to doing so, and the Superintendent as well.

Mayor Carbone emphasized that the importance of consolidation is not the CFO position, but rather the co-location of these teams and developing a new team where we will be one organization. She said the co-location and teamwork development will be reviewed before a recommendation is made as to how that CFO position would be defined.

Mr. Ziplow said there might be some cost savings on joint purchasing, as better purchasing power might be able to produce cost savings, but nothing of major significance. Mayor Carbone said this consolidation is not seen as a cost saving measure, but rather one of efficiencies.

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Ms. Donato clarified that the purchasing agent position will not be eliminated but will play a huge part in the consolidation. Mayor Carbone added that the need for the Board of Education Director of Business Services will not be eliminated.

Mayor Carbone said she is committed to this consolidation, and the benefits are the efficiencies of working together and having a real-time flow of information, as well as having back-up and cross training. Personnel will gain a better understanding of how things are done and why, she said.

Councilor Cavagnero said the goal should be for cost-savings to put teachers in front of students and money back in taxpayers' pockets. He said the timeline is too long and should be accelerated. He questioned the costs of the proposed CFO position. Mayor Carbone explained that the plan is not to look at the CFO position at this time, but rather, to work with the Comptroller and Director of Business Services to co-locate by July 1, 2018. In the second phase, shared services for HR would then be identified, she said, and the co-location and teamwork that is developed would determine the need for the CFO position.

Ms. Cappabianca said that a Memorandum of Understanding needs to be drafted to indicate that the decisions will be made jointly by both Boards. Mayor Carbone agreed that clear expectations should be established.

On behalf of the Board of Finance, Mr. Anderson noted that this consolidation is exactly what the Boards should be doing for our town. He thanked the Mayor and Superintendent for giving the Boards the data and the opportunity to say yes, this can be done.

On a motion by Councilor Ruwet, seconded by Councilor Cavagnero, the City Council voted unanimously to authorize the Mayor to implement the consolidation of City and Board of Education Finance Departments.

On a motion by Mr. Vergaro, seconded by Mr. Maniccia, the Board of Education voted 4/2 with Mr. Traub and Mr. Knight opposed, to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to implement the consolidation of City and Board of Education Finance Departments provided an MOU is drafted and approved by the Board to clearly outline the process.

**Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Knight, seconded by Councilor Waldron, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:52 p.m.

ATTEST: JOSEPH L. QUARTIERO, CMC  
CITY CLERK

Carol L. Anderson, MMC, MCTC  
Asst. City Clerk