



**APPROVED 5-22-2018**

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**MEMBERS**

John Vieau, Chairman  
Shane Brooks, Vice Chairman  
Fred Krampits  
Frank Laflamme  
Gary Labrie  
James Tillotson  
Jerry Roy

**MINUTES**

The following are the minutes of a public hearing held Thursday, February 22, 2018 at 6:30 PM in the City Council Chambers, Fourth Floor, City Hall Annex, 274 Front Street, Chicopee, MA 01013.

**Members Present**

Vieau, Brooks, Krampits, Laflamme, Labrie, Tillotson, Roy

**Also Present**

Daniel Garvey (Associate City Solicitor), Councilor Labrie, Councilor Balakier, Mayor Richard Kos, Councilor Zygarowski, Councilor Brooks, Councilor Walczak, Councilor Courchesne, Marie Laflamme (City Treasurer), William Jebb, (Police Chief), Dean Desmarais (Fire Chief), Bob Liswell (IT Project Manager), Jeff Neece (Superintendent DPW), Elle Soja (DPW Assistant), Allan Ryczek (Superintendent Central Maintenance), Richard Rege (Superintendent of Schools), Marge Wojcik (School Committee), James Tanhauser (School Committee), David Schryver (School Committee), John Beaulieu (Mayors Chief of Staff), Sharon Riley (City Auditor), John Miarecki (Director of Budget & Finance Schools)

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 PM

In compliance with the Open Meeting Law the Chairman asked if anyone in the audience was recording the meeting.

**ITEM #1**

REQUEST THAT the Mayor and John Mruk, Chairman of the Chicopee Advisory Task Force attend the Finance Committee meeting to review the recommendations of the task force (which was formed to review the operation and budget of the school department).

**John Mruk** stated that the Chicopee Advisory Task Force met for five meetings over a two month period. After much research and in depth discussions, we passed thirty six recommendations.

**John Mruk** read the recommendations. Recommendations attached.

**Councilor Laflamme** stated that you've read thirty six recommendations, how do we come up with answers. The recommendations are there but there's no clear answer to me. He stated that when the budget moves forward I want to do my homework and have the answers.

**John Mruk** stated that these are recommendations that we would like to investigate to see if there is a savings or something concrete. He stated that as a committee we have only met five times.

**Councilor Laflamme** stated that you are exploring hiring a fulltime grant writer.

**John Mruk** stated his recommendation was for the school system.

**Councilor Laflamme** stated that we need a fulltime grant writer.

**John Mruk** stated that he believes there are a lot of grants out there. He stated that the MMSI grant was out there and it was never applied for.

**Councilor Vieau** stated that one thing that stood out was the Creative Continuous Improvement Program. He asked the Mayor if this would be something that the School Department would consider doing.

**Mayor Kos** stated the School Committee has not met with John Mruk; it is scheduled for March 14, 2018.

**Marge Wojcik** stated that they have not looked at this as a whole body. She stated that they have a meeting scheduled and then we can sit down and meet with the City Council.

**Councilor Vieau** stated that these are great recommendations and he applauds the Advisory Task Force. He stated that the spending priorities of the City of Chicopee are in line with state averages. The City of Chicopee takes a lot of pride in doing things that are in the best interest of the people who live here and pay taxes. We certainly don't want to shortchange students but provide the best education that we can. He stated that there are some positive recommendations that I think would benefit and hopefully be some cost savings that could help balance the schools budget.

**Councilor Tillotson** stated he watched the School Committee meeting last night and he listened to them give their report and it does not look good in his opinion. Every little reserve is gone to balance off last year's work. He stated you set some money aside for raises but I feel we're going to wind up with a three or four million dollar request. I think you need to save as much as you can. He stated merging those departments would be helpful but I don't think you could get it done by fiscal year July 1, 2018 that's going to take a little more planning. He stated that you have a Lawyer to represent the school that is paid ninety three thousand dollars a year. He stated that maybe hire one of our Lawyers to work out of the Law Department that would bring continuity between the City Hall and the School Department. He stated he does not believe you need to pay someone that kind of money.

**Councilor Tillotson** stated that the School Committee needs to try to eliminate some of these positions or reduce their budget automatically so you're not coming to us for an extravagant figure. He stated that this community is not ready to take a four or five hundred dollar increase in their tax bill.

**Councilor Tillotson** stated if we work together to come up with a budget that is fair and you have done all you can do for fiscal year 2019, then we can figure this out.

**Councilor Brooks** stated that there are some fixed costs that the school cannot control. He stated the Government funding for free or reduced lunch alone is significantly less. He stated the numbers of children are the same. Even though our whole student body qualifies for free and reduced lunch, the amount of reimbursements we get back is significantly less. He stated that there insurance costs are going up. The narrative may need to change on how we fund our school department. He stated that when our report comes back from the Collins Center that will shed some light on whether or not we can affectively merge inter-city departments.

**Mayor Kos** stated part of it is just working together better. One of the things that he finds frustrating is that we have different labor pools and they are treated differently throughout the city. He stated even if there is not savings there will be uniformity. There are different wage scales and different duties for very similar jobs. He stated sometimes these financial difficulties are a way in the public sector making us work together when we wouldn't have tried to normally.

**Mayor Kos** stated that he looks at this as an opportunity to help make us more effective and efficient. He stated that we are going to have to work together and both sides are going to have to show some effort in terms of making adjustments and commitments.

**Councilor Walczak** stated that there were several invoices from FY 2017 without purchase orders totaling one hundred and ninety two thousand dollars. He asked what safeguards and budget controls are in place so this doesn't happen again.

**John Miarecki** stated that in the case of many of our department schools purchasing things later in the year; that won't happen. He stated that won't stop utilities from being paid. He stated that that there won't be purchases in the middle of June for next fiscal year.

**Councilor Walczak** asked if unused salary money can be used for other expenses.

**John Miarecki** stated yes it has to be approved by the school authority.

**Councilor Walczak** stated that he hopes there are some controls on the spending.

**Councilor Walczak** stated that some of the line items are hard to follow. For example on page 60 you have Coaches, three hundred and ninety two thousand dollars' worth of money. He asked how many Coaches for what sports. He stated that it makes no sense to have line items with no backup on it.

**Sharon Riley** stated the budget is set up by location for the yearend report for the school.

**John Miarecki** stated that we have a budget book and it will break them down by names.

**Councilor Vieau** suggested giving the City Council a copy of the School's budget book.

**Councilor Walczak** asked how much you market your facilities for revenue generation regarding the high school fields and auditoriums.

**John Miarecki** stated that Maintenance keeps track of all the rentals. It's not necessarily a money making thing, it's covering our overtime with custodians.

**John Mruk** stated that he brought up four recommendations for cuts on the administration building and they were defeated. He stated that the reason why was the members that voted against it felt that we didn't have enough information on those positions; they were so old and we really didn't have a job description.

**Councilor Zygarowski** stated what the Maintenance of Effort means.

**Councilor Tillotson** stated it is what the State requires us to come up with. He stated that in the last two or three years we have come up above the Maintenance of Effort.

**Councilor Zygarowski** stated that we want to keep our schools the best way we can. He stated that it's not that our school isn't being run properly; people think we have the greatest school system such as athletics. He stated that the biggest complaint we have is that there are too many consultants and too many Vice Principals. He stated that I don't know if they are all necessary. He doesn't want to see jobs eliminated but on the same token we have to keep our schools running and operating. He stated that the recommendations are great and we can't do them all but certainly work on some of them.

**Jim Tanhouser** stated that after reviewing the recommendations he thinks they should be looked into with more detail. He stated they are excellent ideas to save our city money. He stated he will elaborate on this in the next month's school meeting. He stated the school department budget has already suffered cuts. He stated the purchases that were made by our city in 2018; one point two eight million for a new areal platform fire truck, nearly five hundred thousand for a new pumper

truck for the Fire Department, over five hundred and thirty thousand to replace Chicopee High's turf field and a seven figure investment in the Uniroyal cleanup project. He stressed that these are essential projects for our city. He stated he respectfully asks Mayor Kos to look into allocating more funds for our school department to alleviate many of the issues facing our schools.

Councilor Laflamme motion to place on file – Councilor Vieau 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion - motion passed

Unanimous vote favorable

Councilor Tillotson motion to take Item #2 out of order – Councilor Vieau 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion – motion passed.

## **ITEM #2**

BE IT ORDERED that the Finance Committee meet to discuss fiscal year 2018 Capital Planning Committee update

**Councilor Laflamme** stated that the truck will be used for much more than just forestry. We had talked about using it for when the dump closes and to move other things throughout the City of Chicopee. He stated tonight I will be in favor of this. He stated the truck driven by Bob Liswell, he knows the truck itself is bad but the box on the truck is still good. He asked if the box could be removed and used by someone in any department.

**Alan Ryczek** answered yes. We can use it on an old trailer or we could put it on the ground in one of the City of Chicopee parks and use it as an outside storage.

**Councilor Laflamme** asked why they are going with this particular car.

**Alan Ryczek** stated the explorer is the same vehicle as the Police and Fire chiefs. It has the same parts as all the police cruisers use. We have a lot of those parts readily available for us in stock.

**Councilor Tillotson** stated that the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Chicopee should be entitled to a vehicle equal to the Fire and Police chief.

**Bob Liswell** stated that we were given a budget of five thousand dollars and we basically stretched that five thousand dollars with that utility body that we got in the city. We turned that truck into a utility style body to prove the concept that; I would need to do service, run jobs, installations so on and so forth.

**Councilor Laflamme** stated that it seems that you do ninety percent of the work for the city side. How much do you do for the Chicopee Electric Light.

**Bob Liswell** stated that he doesn't have a position with the Chicopee Electric Light they just work together with the Technology Project Manager position. It's been working out very well.

**Councilor Labrie** stated that we're going to have a lot of surplus older vehicles. Is that part of the trading prices that we were getting.

**Alan Ryczek** answered no it's not included. He stated that we didn't have those available at the time so we price them out as though we weren't trading in. He stated the City of Chicopee is getting five thousand dollars give or take for two of the cruisers that we're trading in. The other amount we're getting is approximately thirty five hundred per car. Every two years they put the junk cars out to bid.

**Councilor Walczak** spoke regarding the parks courts repaving priorities. He stated that Szot Park tennis court is considered number one priority because the high school plays their tennis matches there.

**Councilor Laflamme** stated if we don't repair that field it will not be able to be used. This creates liability for the city. He stated the City Council has a good relationship with the Mayor. He's done his homework and whatever he brings forward we will look at and review it. He stated that we're looking at a bonded deal for the future. It should be done by the summer time for the schools to be able to use. He stated that he is getting complaints that the field is not up to code to be used for football.

**Councilor Tillotson** stated that we have had artificial turf for fourteen years. If we were to re-do it, the average cost with the money we appropriated for the artificial turf would equal about thirty eight thousand dollars a year. He stated if we went back to grass with the labor, the water and the fertilizer, it would cost more than thirty eight thousand dollars a year.

Councilor Laflamme motion to place on file – Councilor Vieau 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion - motion passed

Unanimous vote favorable

### **ITEM #3**

Councilor Labrie motion to approve the minutes of June 7, 2017 - Councilor Vieau 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion – motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM