



CHICOPEE CITY COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

MaryBeth Pniak-Costello Chairman
Delmarina Lopez, Vice Chairman
James Tillotson
Robert J. Zygarowski
Bill Courchesne

APPROVED 10-13-2022

MINUTES
February 28, 2022

The following are the minutes of a public hearing held Thursday, February 11, 2021 at 6:30 PM in the Aldermanic Chambers, Fourth Floor, City Hall Annex, 274 Front Street, Chicopee, MA 01013.

Members Present Pniak-Costello, Zygarowski, Tillotson,

Members Absent Lopez, Courchesne

Also Present Councilor Laflamme, Dan Garvey (Associate City Solicitor), Scott Chapdelaine (Director of Maintenance), Lynne Clark (Superintendent of Schools), Sandra Perret (Ward 4 Representative Schools), Councilor Krampits (zoom), Councilor Brooks (zoom), Timothy Wagner (Ward 1 Representative Schools), Grace Shofield (Ward 5 Representative Schools), Samuel Shumsky (Ward 6 Representative Schools), Chester Szetela (At-Large School Committee), Ronald Benard (Ward 9 Representative Schools), Laura Demakis (Schools), Councilor Labrie

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

In compliance with the Open Meeting Law the Chairman asked if anyone in the audience was recording the meeting. Hearing none the meeting continued.

BE IT ORDERED THAT the Education Committee meet with School Department Officials to discuss involving finance, capital improvement plan, and update on School Department issues.

Lynne Clark stated that they recently received preliminary budget for FY23 and the School Department is at one hundred and twelve million. She stated that is up about nine million from where we were last year. The eight of the million is coming from the state and the eight hundred and seventy would come through the local district. She stated that they are in the process of forming the budget and each department receives a budget packet and once those meetings are done with the financial team, we all meet to put the budget together. She stated they are running on fifty one million of grants. She stated due to the increase and students needs with academic apps, with the pandemic and social emotional needs we have begun to implement our plan for the student opportunity act. She stated that we have a declining birthrate in Chicopee every year so our kindergarten is about one hundred and fifty students less than our sophomore class. She stated that we are in the second highest funding that the state has so it brought in additional funding for next year.

Councilor Tillotson stated what are you planning on doing with the rest of the Covid-19 funds.

Lynne Clark stated that we have a three year plan and it had to fit in a certain category from the state. It's from closing the academic app, summer school to acceleration academies, it is the mental and emotional health of staff and students, we are doing retention of staff, stipends and some capital improvements. She stated that we're increasing the amount Counselors and the hours and the expansion of preschool as well.

Councilor Ti llotson stated what is being spent on the School Department and City Hall.

Councilor Laflamme stated that the City Auditor is reviewing that.

Councilor Laflamme stated that the Director of Maintenance has taken on a lot of responsibility especially with the schools, City Hall and Covid-19. He stated that now we have to look at getting our own Director of Maintenance for the City side. He stated that he would like to know more about why this happened.

Councilor Tillotson stated that we need to have more opportunity for young people to become machinist.

Lynne Clark stated that this is in our plan but this won't start until the following year.

Samuel Shumsky stated that he is in the process of starting a program with a local machine shop in Chicopee and he has a meeting with the Director of Career. He stated that we can expand their opportunities outside the school.

Councilor Tillotson stated that this is where you need to go. You have an opportunity with the money you have in order to create some kind of job training that we wouldn't be able to do under ordinary circumstances.

Councilor Tillotson stated that he had concerns of how we are going to maintain all of our buildings. For the School Department to break away at this time he doesn't recommend it. He stated that he was not aware of it and we need to communicate better.

Lynne Clark stated there will be a transition period and plan assisting with the job description. She stated that the Director of Maintenance will assist in interviewing and the transition over.

Sandra Perret stated it was the volume and responsibility that Mr. Chapdelaine had that brought about the discussion of not continuing in that contract. It wasn't a dissatisfaction anyone had.

Councilor Pniak-Costello stated that Scott Chapdelaine always responded well to any question and he got us through this pandemic. She stated that she appreciates his honesty and his hard work.

Councilor Laflamme stated how the work order system was put in place that gives you the authority to prioritize public safety versus a light bulb out. How did that work out on the City side.

Scott Chapdelaine stated that we keep one hundred work orders with eight craftsmen. He stated if you ask me about a particular building he can press a button and tell you all the work that has been done in every single building.

Councilor Laflamme asked about the issues with the Unions, City versus the School side.

Scott Chapdelaine stated that the twelve employees on the city side make about four to six dollars per hour less than the Custodians we have on the School side of the City. He stated that we can't get those unions to merge because they both want the best of both contracts. He stated he can't use the custodians universally because of the difference.

Donald Lamothe stated that there is a shortage of gyms in this city. In Barre School we want a full size gym because we need it for the sports. He stated that it will be an additional cost. He stated that the roof and windows need to be replaced. There is asbestos in the windows and ceiling and we can only patch the parking lot. He stated that we have to do a study and if it comes back and they tell us it's a hundred and fifty million dollars, the City Council can deny but we can't go there until we have a study done. He stated it will take two or three years but we would like to get the ball rolling.

Councilor Pniak-Costello stated that Barre School was built in the middle 1960's. She stated that the custodians did a very good job so it looks good but it's aged.

Councilor Zygarowski inquired about more information on the shops that will be moving out of Comprehensive High School.

Lynne Clark stated that Horticulture will be taking over the maintenance building and we're building another building for the craftsmen. She stated we're not getting rid of a program we are just freeing up space. She stated we will be adding Plumbing and HVAC shops. Daytime students will be working in these shops.

Scott Chapdelaine stated that we pay our top craftsman around seventy thousand dollars a year. He stated that twenty five people he interviewed for plumbing, HVAC and electrical jobs are making one hundred thousand dollars to start in the trades. He stated it's very hard to entice someone even at the seventy thousand dollar mark. It's not that much of a benefit to come here and work after making six figures out in the field.

Scott Chapdelaine stated that he took over the job of City Messenger. He stated that there is unwritten job obligations that he did not know about that he has to be available for. He stated that it has taken away what he used to give the schools. He stated his contract is with the schools and he would like to go back. He stated that the school craftsmen have always helped out every single department in the city no matter what but the difference is we are not on beck and call for every single thing.

Tim Wagner stated that what we should have done and did not do is take a step back and look at the agreement and how it's functioning as a whole. He stated that we adjusted the salaries but never looked at the bigger picture to list all the issues and try to address them.

Councilor Tillotson stated that we should have had a review in the first year to iron out the bugs that were not working well.

Councilor Laflamme asked for an update on the old office building on Broadway Street.

Scott Chapdelaine stated that it's on the agenda for the schools recommending to turn it over to the city.

Donald Lamothe stated that the merger with the IT Department is working and we will continue with that merger. He stated that there is another position that's needed to take care of the educational software.

Councilor Brooks stated that we value trades people and understand what an essential role they play within the school system. He stated when people can seek other employment within the trades to make a livable wage outside of what the city is offering, we need to offer a competitive wage to compete with what the market demands are. He stated that we need to attract people. We want our buildings maintained at a high quality level with a highly qualified craftsmen to address; plumbing, electrical issues and the needs of the city. He stated that we need to take a long look at utilizing ARPA funding to course correct on salaries when it comes to skilled crafts to address the needs of our aging infrastructure.

Councilor Pniak-Costello agreed that we are going to have to be more competitive to get the craftsmen to come to Chicopee either to teach or to preform work in maintenance.

Laura Demakis sated that we all appreciate what Scott did last year. She stated that the short term financial pitch is worth the long term investment

Councilor Tillotson motion to place on file - Councilor Pniak-Costello 2nd the motion - motion passed

Committee vote 3 -0 favorable

ITEM #2

Councilor Zygarowski motion to approve the minutes of February 11, 2021 - Councilor Pniak-Costello 2nd the motion - motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.