

MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMISSION OF THE SCHOOL BOARD AND CITY COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
March 20, 2018, 5:30pm

Committee Members present: Councilor Martin Dumont
Councilor Nancie Cameron
Councilor Jonathan McCallion
Matthew Hanlon
Donald Austin

Administration/Staff present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
Interim Superintendent Lori Lane
Assessing/Code Clerk, Christien DuBois

Others Present: Mayor Dana S. Hilliard

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Dumont at 5:43pm

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: The approval of the February 13th minutes was moved by Austin, seconded by Hanlon, motion carried 4-0-1. Councilor McCallion abstained.

UPDATES: Superintendent Lane provided an overview of the impact the weather has had on the school calendar.

Austin updated the Committee on the progress of using the schools as community centers. Austin stated this item had been moved back to Committee to work on the specifics. Superintendent Lane stated that the current policy views the schools as community assets rather than community centers and provided an overview of the challenges that the Committee faces to move forward with the proposal.

McCallion stated that when the proposal was drafted, if an organization could profit by using the school as a community center, they ought to be charged for using the facility. A discussion occurred about what the possible fee structure would look like, and who the use of the facility would be geared towards.

Hilliard stated that it does not make sense to invest in a separate community center when each school can serve as one and has the resources to provide the services a community center would need.

McCallion asked who was originally tasked with drafting the guidelines. Belmore stated he thought it was the Superintendent and the Building and Grounds Professional for the schools.

Dumont suggested that the most important part of the policy is the insurance liability for the groups who use the facilities. Dumont stated that another goal of this project is to expose the public to the Somersworth schools more. Belmore suggested sending the proposal to Primex for review, the City and School insurance carrier who provides advice on insurance and liability language. Superintendent Lane agreed that sending the proposal to Primex for review was a good idea and stated once the proposal is clearer, enforcing the policies would be easier. A discussion occurred about the hours of which the schools could be open as a community center.

Dumont asked if there had been any response as to the letter Austin had sent the State regarding SB-193. Hilliard stated that Senator Watters had stated that he had received it.

McCallion asked if there was a facility the SAU could provide that would allow parents to send their kids to instead of the regular public school. Austin stated he believed that the concept being described was a Charter school. Hanlon stated that someone truly interested in homeschooling their child would not be interested in a Charter school. Hilliard stated that several years ago New Hampshire went from a heavily regulated State for homeschooling to a State with next to no regulation for homeschooling. McCallion stated that the City should do its best to utilize any bill that passes to its advantage. A discussion occurred about Charter schools within City Schools in other communities and the financial impacts.

Austin provided an update of the progress that School Board had made with its budget and stated that the School Board would like to extend the deadline for their budget proposal to the first week in May.

McCallion asked if this years' budget had been frozen yet. Austin stated that they were discussing freezing certain line items. Austin provided a history of what the School has done this year to maximize the use of its budget and provided an overview of next year's budget projections. McCallion had asked if it was possible to have the School's budget format like the City's.

Dumont stated that there has been a strong effort by the School to implement good business practices and the school ought to be afforded the opportunity to implement their own practices.

Hilliard stated that some of McCallion's concerns had come to fruition last year. There has been a stronger relationship between the Council and School Board and out of this relationship better business practices have been implemented.

Lane told the Committee that staff had discovered \$75,000 in a separate account that was energy savings incentive funds from Eversource received as part of the Idlehurst building construction, Austin stated the School Board was going to consider appropriating some of these funds for the HVAC unit needed. After discussion, the commission consensus was to seek legal counsel on how to utilize these funds and to appropriate and spend the funds.

Hilliard stated that he would ask if the extended date would be acceptable for the School to submit its proposed budget. Belmore stated that they can work with the School to provide an extra week or so to submit its budget and asked what deadline they would be looking for? After discussion, Hilliard stated he would pose this question to the Government Operation Committee for further review as there are certain timelines that need to be met by City Charter.

Dumont set the next meeting date for April 7, 2018. McCallion moved to adjourn, seconded by Hanlon, motion carried 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Christien DuBois Assessing/Code Clerk