

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: John Olson, Co-Chair; Nessah Smith, Scott Burns,
Kathryn Bukovsky, Jose Casco

OTHERS: Bill Walker, BOE Secretary
Joseph Sokolovic, Bridgeport resident and parent

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Olson called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. A quorum was present.

He reviewed the procedures of the meeting to those present.

AGENDA

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 13, 2016

Co-Chair Olson stated that he had two corrections on page 10, paragraph 2:

- line 6: "... the item had sailed." should be corrected to read "... the item had failed."
- line 22: "... then there is the Saden-fund of \$1,000,000 which could be cut off..." should be corrected to read "... then there are the proceeds of the Saden-fund which could be cut off"

Council Member Smith stated that she was not sure if she had another correction and, if so, would bring it up at the next meeting.

- ** **COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO TABLE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 13, 2016 PENDING CORRECTIONS.**
- ** **COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH SECONDED.**
- ** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**GENERAL DISCUSSION WITH MR. TOMAS RAMIREZ, PRINCIPAL,
BASSICK HIGH SCHOOL**

Co-Chair Olson stated that Mr. Ramirez could not attend the meeting.

ITEM 206-15
PROPOSED RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF
EDUCATION MEMBERS MEET TOGETHER TO FULFILL THEIR DULY SWORN
MISSION TO SERVE THE STUDENTS, FACULTY AND EMPLOYEES OF THE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Co-Chair Olson introduced the item by stating that Mr. Walker had asked to speak and saying that, the general practice is that speaking is not allowed during the meetings, but that it would be up to the Committee to approve this.

Council Member Bukovsky stated that she would like to discuss the resolution first which was agreed to by Co-Chair Olson, and she continued to say that she was having a hard time understanding how this was a resolution in the sense of any action being taken. She said she agreed with the premise and perhaps an editorial letter or press release could serve the purpose. Co-Chair Olson stated that the Committee had had an extensive discussion at the previous meeting and that this is a matter, not of legal action, but of gentle persuasion and will be an opportunity for the Council to make a statement on the issue. Council Member Bukovsky questioned Co-Chair Olson as to what route this item would take to which Co-Chair Olson answered that it would go to the Council and be voted on and, if approved, copies would be sent to the Board of Education.

Council Member Burns commented on the previous meeting's discussion on the same issue and offered two statements which he had drawn up to reflect his ideas about Mrs. Rabinowitz's resignation and he asked to share it with the Committee as possible submissions for the resolution. He distributed one statement and one resolution to the members.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BUKOVSKY MOVED TO ENTER THE STATEMENT FROM THE BRIDGEPORT CITY COUNCIL, NOVEMBER 9, 2016 AS EXHIBIT 11.09.16-A TO ITEM 206-15, PROPOSED RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS MEET TOGETHER TO FULFILL THEIR DULY SWORN MISSION TO SERVE THE STUDENTS, FACULTY AND EMPLOYEES OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BUKOVSKY MOVED TO ENTER THE RESOLUTION BY THE BRIDGEPORT CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE, NOVEMBER 9, 2016 AS EXHIBIT 11.09.16-B TO ITEM 206-15, PROPOSED RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS MEET TOGETHER TO FULFILL THEIR DULY SWORN MISSION TO SERVE THE STUDENTS, FACULTY AND EMPLOYEES OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Co-Chair Olson asked Council Member Burns if he had a favorite, since both expressed good sentiments to which Council Member Burns answered that it was up to the Committee to choose one of his or Co-Chair Olson's. Council Member Bukovsky recommended making a proclamation and organizing a ceremony to honor Mrs. Rabinowitz in front of the City Council, saying they could use Exhibit B as a proclamation at a Council meeting before December. She said, as a Committee, they could vote to do this and then just add it to the Council agenda, and also suggested drafting a letter to the editor of a press release on combining Council Member Burns' and Co-Chair Olson's issues. Co-Chair Olson stated that he would prefer the Council send

a letter rather than the Committee. He then asked the members how they felt about using Exhibit B to honor Mrs. Rabinowitz at the end of the years to which they answered in the affirmative.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BUKOVSKY MOVED TO USE EXHIBIT 11.09.16-B AS A PROPOSED PROCLAMATION TO BE DELIVERED TO FRAN RABINOWITZ DURING AN UNCOMING CITY COUNCIL MEETING THAT DATE TO BE DETERMINED.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Smith asked what they were going to do with the agenda item and Co-Chair Olson asked the members whether to proceed with it or drop it. No answer was provided. Council Member Burns then offered into the record an email from Mr. Larcheveque, the BOE Vice-Chair, who had expressed concern about the meeting's agenda.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BUKOVSKY MOVED TO ENTER EMAIL FROM JOE LARCHEVEQUE AS EXHIBIT 11.09.2016-C TO ITEM 206-15, PROPOSED RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS MEET TOGETHER TO FULFILL THEIR DULY SWORN MISSION TO SERVE THE STUDENTS, FACULTY AND EMPLOYEES OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

With the Committee's consent, Co-Chair Olson asked Mr. Walker to come forward to speak about the Board of Education issue. Mr. Walker said he had a couple of points of clarification:

1. He stated that the members are meeting together and that Chair Bradley had been scheduling special meetings which all members have been attending and the meetings have been cordial and consensus have been reached. However, he said, due to the limited scope of a special meeting, agenda items cannot be introduced and speaking is limited.
2. They have not been able to conduct the bi-monthly meetings and, due to Mr. Bradley's boycott, they are unable to get Mrs. Rabinowitz to staff the meetings. Therefore, cannot get the information they need to do the work of the Board of Education. He added that his Board of Education Committee does not have the ability to present their issues and solutions to the Board as a whole.

Mr. Walker recommended that Co-Chair Olson's resolution be rewritten to reflect general meetings. Noting that he holds no political aspirations and his goal is solely to help children, he also stated that there needs to be a public outcry for the boycott to go away and he is very saddened for the children due to the situation. He stated that the Board does not meet as a whole which means that some other entity is making decisions on the Board's behalf and without its input which he noted goes against the democratic process. He said he was seeking the help of the Committee and was encouraging them to put forth their resolution, characterizing the situation at the Board of Education as being a squabble between two adults and saying that he sided with neither.

Mr. Walker stated that the Board of Education was in the process of trying to find a superintendent and that it was a travesty that the pool of candidates was being limited by the childish actions of the Board of Education.

Council Member Burns used the word “factions” to describe the two sides at the Board of Education and asked Mr. Walker what efforts have been made to reconcile the factions. Mr. Walker described a situation where Ms. Pereira, Ms. Baraka, Mr. Gardener and himself had tried to attend every meeting and had even had the police called on them, but stated that they go to every one of their Committee meetings. However, to Council Member Burns' question, Mr. Walker stated that he did not know the answer, and did not know if the Council was the parent, adding that he did not see a good end result if the boycott remains intact.

The Committee thanked Mr. Walker and he left the meeting.

Council Member Bukovsky offered her idea that, at the very least, they could submit a letter to Mr. Bradley to urge a resolution to the situation, showing that the Committee members were concerned. Council Member Smith stated that there must be somebody in the situation who could put forth some kind of a statement which would explain the root problem of the conflict.

Mr. Sokolovic asked if he could speak to which Council Member Burns answered that the Committee does not usually allow the public to speak because of fairness of opportunity to speak, saying that Mr. Walker was an elected official and therefore, a courtesy had been extended to him. Co-Chair Olson allowed Mr. Sokolovic five minutes of the Committee's time.

Mr. Sokolovic introduced himself as a parent of a third grader in the City schools and remarked that Mr. Walker had given a concise breakdown of the situation. He stated, however, that Mr. Walker had failed to mention that, with the Board not having met, it had also locked out parents from speaking and having their voices heard. Mr. Sokolovic noted that he had attended meetings for the past year-and-a-half and, referring to the meeting Mr. Walker had spoken about, he stated that he had been under fear of arrest just for attending that Board meeting to speak up for his child. He continued that the person who could possibly resolve the situation was the Mayor, saying that the Mayor's last two appointees had not joined the Board, but had joined the boycott and did not show up. Mr. Sokolovic noted that the Mayor has another appointee in mind and he wondered whether the vote was set-up to go in a certain direction. He remarked that the Mayor has been silent on this issue and he stressed the importance of the 22,000 kids whose funds are being stolen by the state.

The Committee thanked Mr. Sokolovic for his comments.

Council Member Casco commented that everything that has been going on with the Board of Education is really unacceptable, saying that they have to find state statutes which could help parents to attend the meetings and express themselves without having to witness bad manners from Board members. Co-Chair Olson suggested inviting Mr. Bradley to an executive session to which Council Member Casco agreed, taking it a step further and suggesting that Mr. Bradley appear before the full Council. Co-Chair Olson, while respecting Council Member Casco's opinion, opposed that idea as being too explosive. Council Member Smith suggested inviting

Mr. Bradley to one of the Committee meetings to hear his view, and then seeing where it goes from there. Council Member Burns said that the governance of the City was divided and that he was not sure that putting out a statement would produce a good result, but said that he liked Council Member Smith's idea.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BUKOVSKY MOVED TO TABLE JOHN'S RESOLUTION.
** COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH SECONDED.**

Council Member Casco remarked that the name of this resolution was not John's Resolution, and pointed to the actual name of the resolution.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BUKOVSKY MOVED TO WITHDRAW HER PREVIOUS MOTION TO TABLE JOHN'S RESOLUTION.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BUKOVSKY MOVED TO TABLE ITEM 206-15, PROPOSED RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS MEET TOGETHER TO FULFILL THEIR DULY SWORN MISSION TO SERVE THE STUDENTS, FACULTY AND EMPLOYEES OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CASCO MOVED TO INVITE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, DENNIS BRADLEY, TO ATTEND THE NEXT EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Co-Chair Olson thanked Council Member Burns for his excellent resolution and said he would confer with President McCarthy regarding the correct procedures to follow.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CASCO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Co-Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nerina Kagan
Telesco Secretarial Services