

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Rev. John W. Olson, Co-Chair; Alfredo Castillo, Co-Chair; Jose Casco; Scott Burns; Nessah Smith; Aidee Nieves

OTHER: Jeanette Herron, Councilwoman; John Cottell, Public Facilities

CALL TO ORDER

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

03-15

**GRANT SUBMISSION: RE PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR SCHOOL
CONSTRUCTION PROJECT APPLICATION REGARDING STATE GRANTS AND
INITIATION OF DESIGN FOR HOOKER SCHOOL PARTIAL ROOF
REPLACEMENT PROJECT**

John Cottell, Deputy Director of Public Facilities, came forward. He stated that the grant submission relates to the replacement of a portion of the Hooker School roof. He stated that the roofing will only be covered on the original section of the building and not the addition, per a grant requirement. Mr. Cottell stated that the roof was constructed in the 1940s, and that it has never been replaced, with the city making repairs and doing upkeep instead. He displayed a portion rendering of the building and indicated the hash-marked portions are to be replaced. Mr. Cottell stated that the amount is already in the budget and appropriations of the City's 5 Year Plan. He stated that there is usually an 80:20 cost split between the state and the city to fund the replacement. Mr. Cottell stated that if they receive the committee's approval, they will then submit to the state, hire an architect and then send out an RFP for pricing. In addition, he stated that they hope to begin the replacement once Hooker School lets out for summer break, and finish before the children return in the fall.

Co-Chair Olson asked about the cost of the project, and Mr. Cottell stated that it would be roughly \$900,000. Co-Chair Olson asked what percentage of that would be city money, and Mr. Cottell stated it would be roughly \$180,000 to \$200,000, but that no firm number can be determined until the project goes out for bid. Co-Chair Olson asked about their confidence in receiving the grant and if the City's share is bonded. Mr. Cottell stated that they are fairly confident they will receive the grant, and that the City's share is not out to bond yet. Mr. Cottell

stated that the former administration stated they had the money to cover the cost, but in order to be certain, they are bringing it to the current administration.

Committee Member Scott asked when the decision was made that the City's share would be bonded. Mr. Cottell stated that it was done sometime prior to the current administration, and that they were told there would be enough money to cover it by OPM Director Sherwood. Mr. Cottell stated, at this point in time, the money will have to go through the Board of Education Capital. He further stated that he was told the City is going to refinance their bonds, which would successfully generate some extra income.

Committee Member Scott asked inquired about documentation. Mr. Cottell stated that they do have documentation of when the item was on the consent calendar. Mr. Cottell stated that the item went through the committee on October 13th, was approved that night, and the meeting it would have been discussed at was on October 27th. Mr. Cottell further stated that they have a letter from the superintendent postmarked after that meeting, requesting a meeting in this subcommittee.

Co-Chair Olson asked for a scenario of how things may proceed. Mr. Cottell stated that if the item is approved in the sub-committee, with will go on the consent calendar and the whole Council will vote on it. If the item is approved, the approval letter will go to ONG and the application will be sent to the state for funding. At that point, they will hire an architect and do an RFP.

Co-Chair Olson asked if replacement is standard for roofs over 20 years old, and Mr. Cottell stated that the roof will not consider roofs less than 20 years old.

Councilwoman Herron clarified for the committee that nothing would be approved until the matter made it through the city council, and without the sub-committee's approval, they would be unable to present the matter in order to attempt to secure funding.

Mr. Cottell stated that the matter was approved in the budget sub-committee during the previous administration, and that the step after that would be presenting to the full Council.

Committee Member Casco asked, should the item be approved, at what point the City's portion of the funding will need to be supplied. Mr. Cottell stated that it would be necessary once the bills begin coming in, though he clarified that they typically use the state's funds first, and use the City match for final costs. Committee Member Casco asked how long the project duration should be, and Mr. Cottell stated that they estimate it will take three months.

Committee Member Smith asked for a copy of the approval they received in October 2015. Mr. Cottell stated that he had not brought copies, but cited the item numbers 171-14 and 172-14.

Co-Chair Castillo asked for copies for the committee members, and Mr. Cottell agreed to produce them.

**** COMMITTEE MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ACCEPT ITEM 03-15 RE: GRANT SUBMISSION: RE PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT APPLICATION REGARDING STATE GRANTS AND INITIATION OF DESIGN FOR HOOKER SCHOOL PARTIAL ROOF REPLACEMENT PROJECT AND PLACE IT ON THE CONSENT AGENDA.**

**** COMMITTEE MEMBER NIEVES SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OTHER BUSINESS

Co-Chair Olson stated that for the New Year, he aimed to give the Education & Social Services committee a well-defined goal and purpose. He urged the committee members to brainstorm prior to the next meeting, in order to come with ideas of how to best assist the children of Bridgeport and the schools. He stated that he hopes to galvanize the community to aid them in helping the schools as well, in order to support the current efforts already in place.

Co-Chair Olson cited a segment on Newsweek with Charlene Hunter-Galt called Race Matters, which discussed raising the level of performance in urban schools. A professor on the program stated "We should not have to wait until we solve the problem of poverty to advance the children." The program cited two cities- Tulsa, OK and Brockton, MA- that have found success in maintaining and encouraging student achievement despite stressful home environments. Co-Chair Olson stated that the problem has nothing to do with the intelligence of the children, nor does their concern come from a place of judgment regarding the children's home lives. He further stated that these two cities found success by focusing on literacy, which can also increase performance in other subject areas. Co-Chair Olson stated that the success of the children as students, eventual adults, and contributing members of society is the responsibility of the government as well as the community, and without this, the aging population will soon find their security in jeopardy as well. He stated that there appears to be too much blame and too few solutions at hand presently.

Co-Chair Olson stated that he will meet with the superintendent in February, and suggested the idea of the committee adopting a school and becoming involved there. He also expressed his desire to eventually visit schools in Brockton or Tulsa in order to confer with them on their educational methods.

Committee Member Burns suggested they retrieve a list of current programs from the Board of Education, so as not to invent the wheel when they brainstorm new programs. Co-Chair Olson stated that he will speak to the superintendent in regards to the list.

Co-Chair Castillo stated that he is involved with the reconstruction of the Boys & Girls Club. He stated that the people helming the reconstruction are a branch out of Southport, and that he hopes to get more Bridgeport residents involved with the project. He stated that the Orchid Boys Club on Park Street is currently helmed by Bob Keeler, and that he offered his support on the reconstruction project. Co-Chair Castillo further stated that one of the issues they should focus on is providing the children somewhere to go after school hours, from 3 PM to 9 PM, and incentivizing them to succeed academically. He further stated that they already have support from the Governor.

Committee Member Nieves stated that, during the future meeting with the Board of Education, they should ask for data regarding city-wide literacy. She stated that there should be a comparison between national percentiles and city percentiles, as well as scores and current programs. Committee Member Nieves stated that they should focus on raising nonfiction reading levels, as these are the hardest to understand, and many of the federal tests involve questions relating to just that. Co-Chair Olson suggested she also attend the meeting.

Committee Member Nieves asked if the transition committees are still in place, and if it would be possible to get their input. Committee Member Casco stated that they still meet, are headed by Scott Hughes (Director of the East Main Library), and meet every Monday at 5:30 PM.

Committee Member Casco stated, as a veteran committee member of over a year, that the previous committee met only twice in 8 months. He stated that he liked the idea of adopting one of the schools as a personal goal, and suggested they ask the superintendent to one of the sub-committee's meetings. Committee Member Casco stated that they have to create job opportunities for students as well as activities, in order to teach them skills and responsibility.

Councilwoman Herron stated that she is currently meeting with community leaders regarding idea for after school programs, particularly for students in grades 8 through 12. She stated that it is difficult to have a successful program when the older children mix with the younger age groups. She further stated that it would be helpful for the committee members to frequent the schools they plan to help, as it would give them more plausibility in their efforts on the ground. Councilwoman Herron further encouraged the committee to stop into community schools they would not normally frequent.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COMMITTEE MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** COMMITTEE MEMBER CASCO SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Ramos
Telesco Secretarial Services