

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
EDUCATION and SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2011**

**6:00 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Taylor-Moye; Co-chair, Baker, Bonney, Martinez, M. McCarthy

NON-COMMITTEE: Council members: dePara, Holloway, Silva

OTHER(s): City Attorney Anastasi, Dawn Norton

Co-chair Taylor-Moye called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

She stated that they were waiting for Lisa Jones, Director of the Public & Private Grant Program to speak about the grants.

She also stated that the representative from O&G wouldn't be in attendance.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye announced that Lisa Jones arrived to speak about the grants.

Informational Session with Lisa Jones, Director, Public & Private Grant Program re: Distribution of Grants

Ms. Jones stated that she asked to attend the meeting tonight to speak to the committee regarding grants for the Board of Education. She said she wasn't sure how knowledgeable they were about the grants process, or how much details they required. She noted that she would entertain any questions the committee had – *she prepared a brief handout for review and information.*

She went on to say that the grants received come from a few different sources as follows:

- Federal Government
- State Department of Education

- Private funding (that consists of individuals, small and large businesses and non-profit agencies)

She explained that grants at the federal level are considered federal grants and there is a ranking system to determine which grants to award; this is open to agencies in the United States, but they vary. She further explained that the agency submits an applicable program to apply for a particular grant. The money flows from the U.S. Department of Education, it's then submitted to the State Department of Education and they still have to submit an application to the state to determine how they will use the funds. Then it has to be approved the U.S. Department of Education.

Ms. Jones relayed that the grants are supplemental in nature and discretion is used as to how the grant will be used. If a grant is applied for directly from the state, the respondent has to apply for a specific program to be funded. Private grants vary and there is a little more leniency for the use; such as classroom materials. The amount of the grant varies from \$500.00 up to \$5,000.00. She explained that when a grant is awarded, they don't receive a check for the amount of the grant, they received an award letter indicating the amount. She stated that a G5 disbursement system is used to electronically request funding. She noted that they can't pull cash down and have it sit in the coffers. The grant is processed, coded and then it's deposited in the account and direct federal grants are reimbursed through the G5 system.

She spoke about the estimation of dollars that range upwards of \$10 million and as low as \$1,000.00; last year they received over \$86 million in grant funds. She mentioned that for this year, they received notice of the grants awarded later than they normally would, however; she anticipated that they will receive approximately \$44 million in grant funds and she thought the amount could be between \$46 million to \$48 million. She recalled that they received a lot of stimulus last year for school improvement funding, but the amount will be less this year. She stated that they received a Title-1 grant for \$10.9 million for this fiscal year, which is less than what was received last year. She explained that there is one high school (Harding High School) that is in the final funding phase from that particular source.

Ms. Jones explained that most state grants are for a period of one year. And by year end, all the expenditures have to be incurred. She noted that the state pass throughs, usually last for two years and they consist of the larger grants. She said in the past, they were able to carry some funding over, but the duration of doing that has been greatly reduced and expenditures are generally exhausted within the first year.

Council member dePara asked about the private grants and he questioned if the Board of Education applied to the Gates Foundation for funds. Ms. Jones said she wasn't aware of any Gates Foundation grants awarded. She relayed that they don't have a grant writing department, noting that they are limited in the resources available to the district to research various grants. She explained that when a grant comes out, there's a short time span to submit an application.

Council member applauded and commended Ms. Jones efforts to bring in \$86 million last year; as well as the \$40 million to \$48 million she expects to receive this year. He commented that it's good that greater reporting is required and scrutinized. He urged her to keep up the good work.

Council member Holloway said the budget for the school year was sent to the city council, but the grants have no bearing on what happens. Ms. Jones said there were two separate funding sources, so the money appropriated through the Board of Education has no bearing on the budget. Ms. Jones commented that while \$215 million is a huge amount, the amount doesn't support the district in its entirety.

Council member Holloway said that even though they received \$215 million and possibly an additional \$40 million, he asked if that would save positions, due to the funds being funneled. Ms. Jones replied no, because of the incremental costs created, they end up doing less with the grants because the funding is not there.

Council member Baker asked if Title-1 covers the literacy coaches. Ms. Jones said yes, there are supplemental components put into the grant to help teachers in the classroom.

Council member Baker said he appreciated Ms. Jones time to come and speak to the committee. He asked what percentage of grants was missed out on, due to not having a grant writer. Ms. Jones said she wasn't sure about the percentage. She stated that they previously had two grant writers that were beneficial in researching grants that were available. She emphasized that having someone to understand the language of grant writing was crucial.

Council member Martinez asked about the parent involvement component. Ms. Jones said parent involvement equates to 1% of the funding or \$109k that goes directly to the school to assist parent involvement. The amount they receive is calculated by the number of students in the school.

Council member Martinez asked Ms. Jones who pays for the home school coordinator. Ms. Jones said it's funded out of the Title-1 grant. Ms. Jones said they currently had twenty-five (25) home school coordinators and five (5) are retired, so they don't have as many as they previously did and they haven't been replaced due to lack of funding.

Council member Martinez asked how the parents make a decision on how to spend the funding. Ms. Jones said they make the decision with the assistance of the school leadership team and the principal; who considers the goals of the school. They are encouraged to come up with activities to meet their goals. She added that the decision of how to spend the money depends on the discussions they have. The decisions are made collaboratively and determined how it ties into the educational plan, to increase activities and math scores.

Ms. Jones clarified that the parents should be a part of the school team. She stated this in response to Council member Martinez's concern of hearing complaints that parents aren't as involved as they would like to be, in determining how to use the funds. Co-chair Taylor-Moye stated that she also has heard complaints regarding the issue. She noted that she would like to follow up with Ms. Jones at a later time to discuss the matter further.

Council member Holloway mentioned block grants that specify the use. He clarified that the funds are just like block grant money and they can't be used arbitrarily for any reason. He stressed that there are guidelines to follow.

The President of the Board of Education, Bob Trefry made a comment about the grants department. He stated that a request was submitted to bring in a grants writer that will bring additional revenue in.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye thanked Ms. Jones for her time. She stated that the information was very vital and she repeated that she would like to follow up with her in the future.

Ms. Jones thanked the committee for inviting her to speak. She stated that she would be glad to meet and speak with them, to offer more details at a later time. She commented that she was dedicated to securing grants.

**140-10** Resolution concerning the project status and remediation plans regarding the presence of PCB at Columbus School

Co-chair Taylor-Moye recalled that she was notified that the representative from O&G wouldn't be attending the meeting tonight.

It was noted that Alan Wallack from the Board of Education was present to address the committee.

Co-chair Taylor asked the maker of the resolution to address the committee.

Council member dePara explained the reason for submitting the resolution was to bring key players around the table, to avoid the fanfare and emotion that is sometimes seen during the Board of Education meetings. He said the purpose is to get the information out and ask questions, not to point the finger or lay blame. He stated that the information is important for him and the city council to be kept apprised of what is going on.

City Attorney Anastasi stated that in view of the fact that they have select representation and the expectation of hearing O&G and the chair persons from the Schools Building Committee, he didn't feel it was fair to ask the representatives from the Board of Education to address the matter. He recommended that a report should be requested from the Schools Building Committee to address the issue. He reiterated that he didn't feel it was fair or appropriate, due to the nature of discussing who is accountable and responsible. He said it was fair to say that if there things of immediate need, the Schools Building Committee will request them. He further stated that he met with O&G and the environmental experts to assure that they are providing a safe environment as quickly as possible. He said he didn't feel that piecemeal information would be thorough enough to shed light on the matter.

Council member Holloway stated that he was advised that a report would be submitted to the city council in the very near future regarding PCB at Columbus School.

Council member Bonney questioned if the report will really address the issue. He asked if they could expect a monthly or quarterly report form the Schools Building Committee. City Attorney Anastasi said he was certain they would receive a comprehensive report, due to the notoriety surrounding the issue. He felt that a quarterly report would be sufficient and he said the committee liaisons could decide what's appropriate and if the issues require environmental expertise. He said those resources of information could be brought before the committee at a meeting.

Council member Baker commended Council member dePara on submitting the resolution. He said he understood his position bringing the item forward. However, he

thought the purpose of the liaison was to receive a report of what's going on and he didn't feel a resolution had to be drafted to solicit the information.

Council member Holloway reiterated that a report would be submitted to the committee.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye said she has been informed of what's going on with the school. She suggested that perhaps the Schools Building Committee could attend the meetings in the future to keep them updated.

Council member Martinez stated that as a member of the Schools Building Committee, she offered to bring her packet of information to share with the committee. Council member Holloway said he didn't think that all the information from the Schools Building Committee was necessary. He repeated that a report will definitely be submitted to the Education and Social Services Committee shortly.

City Attorney Anastasi said he was certain there was a limited amount of confusion on the part of the environmental team, as to what the cause was. A lot of research and funding was put into addressing the issue and the cost will be reimbursed to the city. He stressed that it was important to get the school functioning as soon as possible.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye commented that everyone was aware of the problem at the school. She asked if they could discuss details about the students and how they're getting to school. She asked if it was possible to consider splitting the students among other schools and she asked to address the educational component. City Attorney Anastasi stated the transportation issues rested solely with the Board of Education. He assured them that they are also concerned and it's been a challenge, but everyone is doing all they can to address the matter.

Alan Wallack, Board of Education Facilities Department and Karen Braccio asked to address the committee.

Mr. Wallack stated that at the eleventh hour, they found out they couldn't open the school and they had to place (729) students. He expressed that they wanted to have a successful school year opening, so they dispersed the students to nine (9) other locations. He added that they had to make sure lunches were served and other needs were addressed. They have approximately (17) classes divided among:

- The New Discovery School and Museum on Park Avenue
- Dunbar School
- Barnum School
- Blackham School

He said they also had to address the need for furniture. He spoke about transportation and he said the buses were picking up kids in their neighborhood, but this was frowned upon. He said currently, they are in agreement with Zion Lutheran School that is located

two blocks from Columbus School. They will put the pre-kindergarten and the kindergarten students at Zion Lutheran School and they have to get appropriate furniture to put in. He said they were in the final stages of doing that and he hoped that by the end of next week they will be ready to move in. He stressed that there was a concern about putting three year olds on the bus, noting that they are currently at the New Discovery School, but it's difficult to get there.

Mr. Wallack said as far as education material, they tapped into resources to get as much materials that are required. Right now, lunches are being served and special needs are being addressed. He felt the problem with the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students will be resolved soon.

Ms. Braccio commented that children are very resilient and they're adjusting. She further commented that it has helped them being with their own grade level with the 4<sup>th</sup> grade being schooled at Blackham School and the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Barnum School.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye asked Ms. Braccio if she traveled to the school sites to ensure that all is running well. Ms. Braccio said yes. Mr. Wallack added that it's a priority for them to do that.

Council member dePara commented that although he supported by Council member Baker's comments, he said the resolution was done to elicit information and he didn't mean to convey that he didn't have confidence in the Schools Board Committee members. He emphasized that the purpose was to get the information in an objective setting and there was no intentional slight directed at the board members.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye stated that all the information was vital to have to ensure that the students were placed and to find out what's being done. She emphasized that she was glad she's now aware of all the issues. She thanked Council member dePara again for bringing the matter forward.

Council member Brannelly commented and thanked the Board of Education representatives for attending the meeting. She expressed that she was grateful that they are committed and serious about addressing the issue. She recalled that as the former chair of the Education and Social Services Committee, they were always at odds with the Board of Education. However, the city council always felt that together, they could conquer anything. She expressed her confidence in them and she prayed that all goes well.

Mr. Trefry expressed that he was praying all goes well also. He noted that he would like to schedule a date to address the Education and Social Services Committee to share details of what's planned in the future. Co-chair Taylor noted that they will be placed on the next meeting agenda or a presentation.

Mr. Illingworth also from the Board of Education commented that they were committed to do all they can to help the schools succeed.

Mr. Wallack clarified that they will be brining all the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students from the New Discovery Museum site to Zion Lutheran School, per Council member Martinez's question about everything being coordinated and set to go.

Mr. Wallack stated that the Board of Education has done everything possible to make a bad situation better. He emphasized that it has been a collaborative effort.

## ADJOURNMENT

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR-MOYE MOVED TO ADJOURN  
\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BONNEY SECONDED  
\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham  
Telesco Secretarial Services