

BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

ADMINISTRATION & EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

There was a regular meeting for the above-referenced subcommittee held at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, February 6, 2012 in Conference Room #5, Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

Present were: Mayor Sydney Schulman, Deputy Mayor Wayne Hypolite, Councilors Leon Rivers, Joan Gamble, Robert Berman, Donna Banks, Joseph Washington and Joseph Merritt. Also present were: Louie Chapman, Jr., Town Manager, Wayne Casper, Naomi Cohen, Susan True and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council.

Guests present were: Deborah Lord, Executive Director of the Bloomfield Early Learning Center (BELC), Joseph Suggs, Gus Walek and Roger Bunker.

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

UPDATE ON ALL SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEES

Mr. Wayne Casper reported on the following School Building Committees:

High School – The status of the high school renovations remain status quo. The remaining roof work went out to bid on January 5, 2012 and final bids are due on February 9, 2012. There was a pre-bid walk through of which 10 firms were present and showed interest in the project. A meeting with the architect will take place to discuss final renovations of the additional projects including the bathrooms, emergency generator and gym divider. The work should be completed during the summer months.

In addition to the approval of the Town Council to complete these additional projects listed above in connection with the Bloomfield High School renovations, a request was also submitted to construct additional storage closets in the Gymnasium lobby was denied. A large portion of that request was for the removal of asbestos floor tile and the installation of new flooring.

Mr. Casper also presented a memorandum to the Education Subcommittee requesting the Town Council reconsider the request to authorize the removal of the asbestos floor tile and install new flooring. The area in consideration is the only area remaining section in the school to be renovated, which is the gym lobby and two exits from the gym. The budgetary costs estimates for the abatement work total \$80,500. These costs are fully reimbursable by the State of Connecticut.

The Building Committee is also interested in replacing the glass block in the upper portion of the Auxiliary Gym with translucent wall panels. The budgetary costs estimates for this replacement and design fees total \$140,000. However, these costs are not considered a reimbursable item by the State of Connecticut.

It was moved by Councilor Gamble, seconded by Councilor Berman and voted unanimously to accept the proposed request and recommend to the Town Council subject to the approval by the Bloomfield Board of Education.

In addition to the projects list above, Mr. Casper mentioned that there was a mechanical failure on one of the air handling units. A sensor mount of the unit vibrated loose and caused damage to the blower. Parts were ordered to repair the unit. There will be a cost associated with the repair, due to the fact that the unit is out of warranty.

Carmen Arace Middle School – The project is 100% completed on construction and almost ready for closeout. There are two outstanding issues that remain including:

1. Dual System for fuel source due to the school being designated as an emergency shelter. Initially, the school was charged for a new tank that utilizes natural gas as well as being able to convert propane gas to a natural gas composition. Upon completion of renovation of the school, it was discovered that the tank installed was refurbished. Mr. Casper is scheduled to meet with the contractor to discuss the durability and safety of this tank.

There was some brief discussion regarding the formal dedication of all renovated school buildings once they are completed.

Elementary Schools

Metacomet Elementary – Mrs. Naomi Cohen, Chair of the Elementary School Building Committee gave a brief report indicating that wall panels will be installed by the end of the school year, June 2012. There are minor punch list items that need to be completed and then the project will be ready for closeout. An outstanding issue of concern for the committee has been discussion involving playground equipment replacement. The committee surveyed parents about their opinion regarding equipment. A meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2012 to obtain feedback and suggestions from parents and interested parties.

Laurel Elementary – Mrs. Cohen stated that the project is fully underway, the schedule and budget are on target for completion by the end of July, 2012. There will also be a consideration of playground equipment considered for this school as well.

REPORT FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

Mr. Louie Chapman, Jr., Town Manager briefed the committee on the following personnel updates:

Police

The Human Resources Department is currently recruiting for vacancies in the department due to retirement and attrition for the position of Captain and Lieutenant. The position of Captain was posted externally and the position of Lieutenant was posted to promote internally. The ripple effect of filling these vacancies will follow by rank. The Police Department is also close to obtaining a staffing level of 48 police personnel.

Public Works

This department is actively recruiting for a vacancy for the Director of Public Works was also posted externally. There are is a vacancy for a Facilities Director that will not be posted until the Director position is filled as well as two custodial positions due to retirement.

Human Resources

This department is actively recruiting for a vacancy of a Human Resources Assistant.

Administrative Updates

Mr. Chapman, Jr., informed the committee that the accrued time line item has exceeded the original budgeted amount of \$140,000 to approximately \$500,000. This increase is due to retirements and attrition within several departments.

Mr. Chapman, Jr., is also in discussions with the Board of Education regarding the hiring of a new benefits consultant. A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been issued and interviews of potential providers are being conducted by Mr. Christopher Leone, Chief Operating Officer of the Board of Education and Mr. William Hogan, Director of Finance.

A Request for Proposal was also issued for a consultant to conduct a Town Center Market Analysis. The consultant would be charged in identifying the needs of the Town as well as developing strategic plans of attracting new businesses to town.

The Prosser Library analysis is completed. Some discussion evolved around including renovations in the capital budget or possible bonding.

The Lisa Lane Farm Acquisition has not been a very easy task to settle. There are several issues that plague with closing out on this property such as: failed septic system, improperly subdividing the land, junk and debris removal. The town may approach the current owner of this property to discuss a plan of action to resolve these issues.

Bloomfield Early Learning Center (BELC)

Councilor Merritt expressed concerns regarding grants for early childhood education in town. He stated that the town seemed very reluctant to obtain grant funds that are available for building renovations. He is also concerned about the town's failure to apply for other sources of funding versus the utilization of tax payer dollars.

Councilor Berman and Rivers stated that they are willing to fund a grant writer in the upcoming FY 2012-2013 budget to obtain grant funds for early childhood education.

Councilor Gamble expressed some discontentment among the BELC administration regarding their pursuit in obtaining grant funds.

Deputy Mayor Hypolite requested a brief status of the current level of funding to support BELC from the State Department of Education regarding contracts versus grants.

Mayor Schulman gave a brief overview of the reconstructing of grants and contracts from the Department of Social Services to the Department of Education in respect to the current agreement with the Town of Bloomfield. Currently, there is a performance contract with BELC for a fee for service. These funds are received on a quarterly basis based on student enrollment. The Department of Education is in the process of

changing the contract to a grant as of June 30, 2012. As of July 1, 2012, the grant could be issued to BELC; however as of July 1, 2013, School Readiness will serve as a governance model for all early childhood education funds.

Approximately, \$600,000 is granted to the Town of Bloomfield for preschool education. There is no specific entity that these funds are issued to. However, as of July 1, 2012, the town could consider 3 options to the issuance of funds for preschool education:

1. The town could continue the current business model
2. Seek out a qualified agency by issuing a RFP
3. The town could self administer a program

Mrs. Susan True, Board of Education member expressed concern regarding the qualifications of teachers and the need for children to be equitable once they enter into kindergarten at the public school level.

Mayor Schulman stated that the teachers who teach preschool education programs do not have to be certified teachers by the State of Connecticut.

Mrs. Deborah Lord, Executive Director of BELC thanked the Council and town administration for a meeting that was held on February 6, 2012 regarding the future of the program. Mrs. Lord assured the committee that all four teachers have four-year degrees and years of experience in overall childhood development. The short term plan that was discussed at that meeting focused on self-sufficiency and the long term plan focus was on becoming a sustainable entity.

After obtaining financial information regarding the maintenance costs of the former site of the program located at 73 Rockwell Avenue, Mrs. Lord is confident that the BELC administration is committed to being fiscally responsible to maintain building and program costs.

Mayor Schulman stated that the meeting was productive and an action plan needs to be in place in order for self sufficiency and sustainability to occur. There were several key discussion points during the meeting held on February 6, 2012:

1. BELC administration must identify a budget shortfall, projected needs for the program by the end of the contract year (June 30, 2012) and a financial plan to the town to request plans on a monthly basis.
2. The town will no longer to provide administrative support, i.e. payroll, insurance, etc. A plan of action needs to be presented by the end of February 2012 indicating the ability to pay for these services.
3. Discussions regarding long term planning. The town cannot commit to any negotiations without Town Council authorization regarding suggestions about Rockwell Avenue and/or suggestions of placement outside of town buildings.
4. Current litigation regarding these issues will continue as set forth. Possible suggestions will be recommended by town administration to determine what is best for the Town of Bloomfield.

Mayor Schulman also made reference to renovation funds available through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Any funds obtained through Small Cities Grant are not guaranteed. The Town of Bloomfield does not have a census tract to determine low to moderate income persons that are categorized as a requirement to obtain these funds.

Mrs. Lord reiterated and stated the commitment of her administration and Board of Directors to:

1. Develop a budget and submit to Mr. William Hogan, Director of Finance
2. Obtain estimated figures from the State of Connecticut of possible grant funding
3. BELC will go to the Department of Economic Community Development(DECED) to clarify application process and renovation guidelines of future grants
4. Follow up with vendors regarding payroll, insurance and retaining personnel to handle these tasks.

Mr. Joseph Suggs, an interested party and supporter of BELC stated that the Board of Directors is considering a strategic plan to move forward. There is support amongst the Board to possibly reconsider the proposal to purchase the building at 73 Rockwell Avenue and request the town to apply for available funds of \$300,000 to repair the HVAC system.

In addition to this request, BELC administration is currently working on steps to develop a viable plan considering:

- 330 Park Avenue location is temporary
- Possibly locating another suitable site
- Historical costs to maintain building utilities and custodial duties
- Utilizing a 3rd party fundraising firm to assist with obtaining private donor resources to offset costs
- Desire to become completely independent from the town

It was agreed by the committee and BELC administration submit the budget by the end of February, 2012, indicating dates of completion for other tasks.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Berman requested that the Town Council should possibly consider completed evaluations for all direct reports to Council such as the Town Manager, Town Attorney, Town Treasurer and Clerk of Council. He also suggested a review of the evaluation form regarding the section of how the Town Manager evaluates his personnel, which may not be germane to the Town Council prevue.

Councilor Berman also suggested that Rules & Procedures regarding public comment of Citizens Statements & Petitions should be revised from 3 minutes to 5 minutes as well as limiting Town Council comments to 10 minutes on any particular topic according to the Roberts Rules of Order.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Councilor Gamble, seconded by Councilor Berman to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m.