

BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Administration & Education Subcommittee

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

Present were: Deputy Mayor Hypolite, Councilors Leon Rivers, Robert Berman, Joseph Washington, Donna Banks and Joan Gamble. Also present were: Louie Chapman, Jr., Town Manager, Wayne Casper, Donald Harris, Chair of Board of Education, Naomi Cohen and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council. Absent were: and Councilor Joseph Merritt

Guests present were: Deborah Lord, Executive Director of the Bloomfield Early Learning Center (BELC), Claudia Bell, President – Board of Directors for BELC, Joseph Suggs and BELC supporters.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

Update on all School Building Committees

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

High School – Mr. Casper submitted a bid summary report to the subcommittee outlining the need for Council approval of an additional expenditure of \$73,871.00 to do the remaining areas for re-roofing. The high school building committee approved Silktown Roofing Company as the vendor for this project. The committee awarded this vendor with the base bid as well as Alternates #1 & #2 sections that need to be completed. (see attached)

When the project initially went to bid the estimate was \$880,000. However, the project was separated into three parts to ensure most if not all the work could be completed. The discrepancy with the figures is due to increased prices in oil which is used to produce roofing materials. All of the re-roofing costs are reimbursable by the State of Connecticut.

It was moved by Councilor Gamble, seconded by Councilor Berman and voted unanimously to approve the recommendation to add an additional expenditure of \$73,871.00 to complete the remaining roof work at Bloomfield High School.

The other additional projects are currently in the design phase for more generator capacity and bid specifications for bathrooms. It is anticipated that the package will be issued by the end of March, 2012.

Carmen Arace – Mr. Casper reported that there are still a few punch items that need to be completed. Mr. Casper has also re-filed paperwork with the State of Connecticut for ineligible costs and is optimistic that the reduction will be significant.

Elementary Schools

Metacomet Elementary

Mrs. Naomi Cohen, Chair for the Elementary School Building Committee reported that the procedures to closeout the project will be ongoing with the State and respective contractors. Wall murals are on order and will be installed by the end of July, 2012. This renovation project was also under budget.

It was noted briefly, that the building committee will attend several Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meeting in March, 2012 to discuss concerns regarding the implementation of playground equipment at the school. The committee will also conduct an exercise with the children and community regarding the actual design layout. A Request for Proposal will be issued and three contractors will be interviewed to construct the playground. The goal is to have the area be 100% accessible with the appropriate surfacing and to install suitable equipment for age range.

Laurel Elementary

The project schedule, construction and budget are on target for opening September, 2012. The school is slated for completion by the end of June, 2012 due to the mild winter weather. This timeframe will give staff ample time to move in and set up for next school year.

Councilor Berman expressed concern regarding the use of the Laurel Elementary School site for primary elections in August, 2012. Mr. Casper seemed optimistic that the school may be able for use if a Certificate of Occupancy is obtained and all paperwork has been official approved by the town to occupy the building.

Administrative Report from the Town Manager

Board of Education – J.P. Vincent Elementary School

Mr. Louie Chapman, Jr., Town Manager informed the subcommittee that the Board of Education has been approached by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) for the use of J.P. Vincent as a temporary site for one of their magnet schools. CREC operates a magnet school at Hartford College for Women, in which is slated for permanent construction of resident quarters. The lease will be for 2 years with the town option for a 3rd year. CREC will pay \$6.50 per

square foot and are also responsible for repairs under \$5,000. The town will be responsible for any repairs over \$5,000 with a stop loss limit at \$50,000 per year. They would also incur some additional transportation costs. The net income to the town for this agreement would be approximately \$200,000.

In approximately 2 years, the Bloomfield Board of Education will open a Global Magnet Academy with grades K-5 at the J.P. Vincent Elementary School site. The Board of Education currently has partnerships with five other districts. In addition for future plans at J.P. Vincent, the portable classrooms on the site will be used to relocate the Alternative Education Program to conserve money.

The Board is also in the process of restructuring Big Picture High School into a new Magnet Global Experience Academy expanding to 6th-12th grades.

Public Works

Mr. Chapman, Jr. is currently interviewing four candidates for the Director of Public Works. A decision for appointment will be made in the near future.

Finance – FY 2012-2013 Budget Season

The FY 2012/2013 budget will be printed this week in preparation for budget discussions beginning on March 13, 2012.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be completed for Early Learning in the next few weeks.

Discussion regarding the Bloomfield Early Learning Center (BELC)

Mrs. Deborah Lord, Executive Director for Bloomfield Early Learning Center (BELC) and Mrs. Claudia Bell, President of the Board of Directors for BELC presented a progress report and tentative proposal (see attached) regarding the necessary steps in obtaining self-sufficiency has an independent organization.

Mrs. Bell spoke on the progress in the restoration of BELC's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. It was noted that the organization never filed any IRS-990 forms and BELC administration assumed the town auditors would normally file the IRS 990 due to BELC being a fund vested in town finances.

Mrs. Bell has been in contacted with Senator Richard Blumenthal's office which has committed to assisting BELC in the restoration of their tax-exempt status. They have also consulted Certified Public Accountants (CPA's) would assist with gathering the necessary information for filing.

Mr. Louie Chapman, Jr., Town Manager stated that he received an updated budget from BELC dated March 1, 2012, accounting for expenses and an update on current enrollment of 39 children.

Based on the progress report submitted, the organization did not present a timetable to assume responsibility for fiscal operations nor is there a formal business plan in place. Mrs. Bell expressed that a timetable could not be established due to a lack of clear and concise communication between the organization and the Town. BELC also noted that there are no funds available to support the hiring of a bookkeeper/payroll staffer. The current budget only consists of salaries and other mandated state and federal financial obligations, i.e. taxes, FICA, etc. The list of items included in the progress report is pending to be tailored to the needs of the organization.

At this time, the eviction order is still in place and the Town has expressed concern regarding the need for the temporary space, currently utilized by BELC for summer programming.

Councilor Gamble expressed discontentment with the lack of planning and timeframes for BELC in becoming self-sufficient.

Deputy Mayor Hypolite stated that BELC has provided a good faith effort to prove self-sufficiency. The organization needs time to further develop their business plan as well as work with the town to request available DECD funding to rehab the site at 73 Rockwell Avenue.

Mr. Joseph Suggs, interested party and avid supporter of BELC expressed that the line of communication is very valid to move this process forward. The initial concept of discussion regarding the proposed strategy for BELC to purchase the property at 73 Rockwell Avenue for a nominal amount is the first step. Presently, BELC could possibly handle the daily maintenance and operational costs for building, based on actual data that was received. Secondly, they would like for the town to request a waiver letter from the DECD to clean the facility and perform basic and fundamental work needed to re-open the program at this site. In addition, BELC would like for the town to apply for additional state aid in subsequent years to repair and maintain the building as needed.

Mrs. Bell indicated that through fundraising, BELC could possibly receive private contributions to assist with operational costs once their 501(c) (3) status is renewed. Mr. Suggs stated that the State Legislature may have additional funding available for operational costs as well. He expressed that he is willing to advocate for funding on the organization's behalf.

Mr. Chapman, Jr., informed the subcommittee of the process in which the town could request the reprogramming of funding from the DECD. The request for these funds must meet statutory mandates for benefitting low to moderate income persons. To utilize the funds in a different manner than its intended use would require two public hearings and written approval from DECD. BELC could not apply for these funds directly due to the requirement under the Small Cities Grant program, in which the town must be the fiduciary agent.

Councilor Rivers voiced concerns regarding the issues with current space at 330 Park Avenue. This site is temporary and will need to be available for the summer camp by May, 2012. If the eviction is granted and no grant funds are available for rehab of the old site at 73 Rockwell Avenue, what will be the status of the BELC program?

Mrs. Bell stated that BELC does not have an alternative plan for relocation and the program would not be in existence if a suitable site cannot be found. The current survival of the program is based on a contingent proposal.

Councilor Banks commented on the lack of commitment and effort of BELC to move the process forward for sustainability.

Councilor Washington advocated for assisting BELC in their efforts for transition and successful progress thus far.

Councilor Berman requested BELC administration to list request for approval of Council on a plan of transition.

BELC administration outlined the following requests:

- 1. To purchase the building for a nominal fee.**
- 2. Apply for the reprogramming of existing grant funds from DECD.**
- 3. Apply for future funding through the DECD for continue maintenance.**
- 4. Plan for clear and concise communications.**

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Hypolite, seconded by Councilor Rivers to direct the Town Manager to immediately apply for reprogramming of Small Cities grant funds and further direct to apply if applicable on an annual basis to the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for additional program costs for BELC.

VOTE: AYE: W. Hypolite

NAY: J. Gamble, R. Berman, L. Rivers

ABSTAIN: None

The motion fails.

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Hypolite to recommended Mayor Schulman to appoint a bi-partisan ad hoc committee to act as a liaison with BELC.

This motion was withdrawn, noting that the forum for discussion can take place at the Administration & Education Subcommittee meetings. Councilor Rivers also extended the courtesy to be the direct liaison with the BELC administration and board members.

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Hypolite, seconded by Councilor Berman to direct the Town Attorney to draft a written proposal with the President of the Board of Directors for BELC outlining a purchase and/or lease of 73 Rockwell Avenue for a nominal fee and length of time to be determined.

VOTE: AYE: W. Hypolite, R. Berman, L. Rivers

NAY: J. Gamble

ABSTAIN: None

The motion passes.

It was moved by Deputy Mayor Hypolite in good faith to temporarily suspend the eviction notice for the next 60 days.

There was no second of the motion. The motion fails.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Berman proposed amending the Council Rules of Procedure to change the public comment time allotment from 3 minutes to 5 minutes for one time only.

It was moved by Councilor Berman, seconded by Councilor Gamble and voted unanimously to amend Section 11 of the Town Council Rules and Procedures as follows,

“Statements by members of the public may be oral or written and shall start with the speaker’s name and address and shall continue for no longer than 5 minutes. The Mayor or Councilor presiding may permit statements at other times during agenda of Council meetings as he or she deems appropriate, subject to being overruled by a majority of the Council.”

Deputy Mayor Hypolite stated that this change should also allow the Mayor some discretion.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Councilor Gamble, seconded by Councilor Rivers and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

