

Norwich City Council/Board of Education Ad Hoc Committee
Wednesday, May 18, 2022
6:00 PM, Kelly STEAM Middle School Community Room
SPECIAL MEETING

Committee Members Present: Chair Alderman Joseph DeLucia, Vice Chair Alderwoman Stacy Gould, Alderman Swarnjit Singh, BOE Chair Bob Aldi, BOE Member Kevin Saythany, BOE Member Aaron Daniels, BOE Member Christine DiStasio and BOE Member Mark Kulos

Ex-Officio Members Present: Superintendent Kirstin Stringfellow, Comptroller Josh Pothier, Business Manager Robert Sirpenski and Assistant Superintendent Tamara Gloster

Committee Members Absent: BOE Member Charlene Charmelus, City Manager John Salomone, Director of Student Services Jamie Bender and Mayor Peter Nystrom

1. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum: Alderman Joe DeLucia called the meeting to order at 6:11 PM.

2. Review of Committee Scope and Purpose: Alderman DeLucia reviewed the scope and purpose of the committee: To create a working relationship between the City Council (CC) and the Board of Education (BOE) with the goal of making a recommendation to the CC regarding the BOE funding request for the next fiscal year.

3. Public Comment: None given.

4. New Business:

a. On a motion by Mark Kulos, seconded by Al Daniels, the minutes of May 4, 2022 were unanimously approved as presented.

b. Discussion and Possible Action: City Council Budget for FY 2022 – 2023
Alderman DeLucia summarized the last meeting. The CC/BOE Ad Hoc Committee reviewed a document laying out the BOE's response to the City Manager's request for a cut to the BOE proposed budget. He opened the floor to comments.

Mark Kulos reported Governor Lamont did sign the state budget. No amendments were proposed so the state budget was adopted without changes from the legislature's version. The Alliance grant will be \$914,000 for the fiscal year. This was the amount used in the budget discussed at the last meeting.

Alderman DeLucia expressed an opinion that the BOE and administrators of the Norwich Public Schools (NPS) system had done everything the city asked by lowering the budget request by the dollar amount in the City Manager's budget. This will have a positive impact on the school system and Norwich taxpayers. He reported he received some emails about small concerns such as questions about school staffing and administrative staffing. He will address the question with school officials outside of this committee's work. The nature of questions did not impact the budget presented at the last meeting.

Alderman Swarnjit Singh made a motion to forward a favorable recommendation on the BOE's budget to the City Council. The motion was seconded by Alderwoman Stacy Gould. Discussion ensued.

Alderwoman Gould directed a question to Bob Sirpenski. She asked if anything had come up since May 4, 2022, that will impact the cuts presented. Mr. Sirpenski stated that inflationary concerns and stressed supply chains could make the budget tighter. For example, copy paper was \$24/case last week, yet is \$48/case this week. W.B. Mason, NPS' office supply company, will only sell a limited amount of paper to the school system. Similarly, fuel for the busses is becoming more expensive. There will have to be offsets in other areas if prices continue to rise. Superintendent Kristin Stringfellow pointed out that NPS has several unresolved collective bargaining unit negotiations which will present variables. She also noted that the City faces the same inflationary and union variables.

Discussion ensued on the timing of approvals of the budget by the CC and the BOE. It was generally agreed that the CC would vote on the budget first then the BOE would vote. Superintendent Stringfellow noted that a majority of the BOE was present and in agreement.

Alderman DeLucia noted that the committee was charged with coming to some consensus over final bottom line number.

Alderman Swarnjit Singh amended his motion to add the final budget amount of \$86,803,758 to his motion. Alderwoman Gould seconded the amended motion. The CC/BOE Ad Hoc Committee unanimously voted to forward a favorable recommendation on the Norwich Public Schools' Board of Education's \$86,803,758 budget to the City Council.

Alderman DeLucia declared Norwich had the right people in the right spots in the city.

On a motion by Bob Aldi, seconded by Mark Kulos, the CC/BOE Ad Hoc Committee unanimously voted to cancel its next two meetings.

5. Agenda Items for Future Meetings: Agenda item not addressed.

6. Adjournment: On a motion by Al Daniels, seconded by Alderwoman Stacy Gould, the meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.