

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 13, 2013**

ATTENDANCE: Denese Taylor Moye, Chair; Andre Baker;

OTHERS: Council Member Angel dePara (6:05 p.m.)

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Taylor Moye called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

INFORMATION SESSION WITH JOSHUA THOMPSON

Ms. Taylor-Moye introduced Mr. Joshua Thompson, Director of Education and Youth Policy for the City of Bridgeport.

Mr. Thompson said he has been on the job for 6 months and it has been a very interesting ½ year. He thanked the committee for asking him to speak. He gave a brief review of his resume.

He was raised in Newark NJ and was lucky enough to meet a number of wonderful mentors. He attended St. Benedicts Prep School in Newark where he met Cory Booker, presently Mayor of Newark. He met Mrs. Jackie Robinson, widow of Jackie Robinson, and he later worked for the Jackie Robinson Foundation. After undergraduate and law school he returned to Newark and worked for an education foundation.

When the City of Newark received a \$100 Million dollar education grant from Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, Mayor Booker recruited him as Education Team Leader for the City of Newark and he worked to guide the spending of those funds.

He then returned to St. Benedict's Prep to teach, and on to Washington DC, to work as a liaison between the City of DC and the Deputy Mayor of Education.

While doing an education analysis of cities he started following the City of Bridgeport. That is what brought him to this city.

He discussed the areas he has been working on since he arrived. He is working on improving and increasing outreach to the families, the Lighthouse Program, a 'Cradle to Career' initiative, funding mechanisms for our severely underfunded education program and School Choice.

Increasing Outreach - they have added a help-desk online for parents, and are preparing booklets for distribution to all parents. 5,000 surveys were distributed asking people to prioritize their needs, over 4,000 have been returned and they are summarizing that info.

The Mayor has embarked on a Listening Tour around the City to give people an opportunity to speak about what is important to them. The events are being recorded and public comments are being recorded.

They are designing a booklet communicating all education options in the City including public private, parochial, tuition costs, financial aid available, etc.

Lighthouse Program – he is working with Tammy Papa and her office to expand the afterschool and summer youth employment programs. Also working on external funding opportunities for these programs.

This shortly will become the Office of Education and Youth.

Funding - There was no mechanism in the City for private external funds to be received and then dispersed in the school system. They have created the Good School Bridgeport Fund, which is housed at the Fairfield County Community Foundation. To date they have raised \$1,000,000 in the six months in existence.

He has identified a number of external organizations that have agreed to support the education initiative in Bridgeport. Some of these are BCAC, Bridgeport Education Fund, and Education Pioneers.

Cradle to Career Initiative - recognizing the need to start early in children's lives they are working on an Early Childhood intervention Program grant and have partnered with Bridgeport Hospital, Optimus and Child and Family Guidance Center as a commitment to early childhood literacy and health.

They are also participating in the National 3rd Grade Reading Campaign, collaboration between the City and the Board of Education.

They recognize the city has an inventory of disconnected youth ages 8 – 14 and they will be documenting the issues and develop a program, "Bridgeport Pathways", that will intervene before they drop out of school, a truancy task force, and will be looking for partners in the City to assist.

School Choice Initiative – school choices are expanding and he will be working with the Superintendent’s office to work on Phase II – Reform. This will include recruitment of local and state Charter School. Two institutions already expressing an interest are Montessori Schools and Great Oaks Charter Schools.

Council member Baker asked where they were in the establishment of a Youth Office. Mr. Thompson said they are close to kicking off the establishment of this office. Literature is just about ready for distribution.

Mr. Baker asked how it will tie-in with the variety of after-school programs in the city.

Mr. Thompson said they will attempt to tie in all organizations and start working together to make sure progress is being made.

Mr. Baker asked if the Lighthouse Program will fall under him and stated he is the link between the Mayor and Superintendent Vallas.

Mr. Thompson replied yes.

Mr. Baker asked his opinion on Charter vs. Public Schools.

Mr. Thompson said the City has some great Magnets Schools, and some great Charter Schools. He said the correct answer to the question is doing whatever works the best for the City, using and sharing what works well in one school in another.

Mr. Baker asked how the outside funding money will be allocated.

Mr. Thompson said he could provide the detailed guidelines to the committee. He said the Superintendent’s Office will document requests with a budget, the Board of Education needs to approve it and then it goes to the Fairfield County Community Foundation.

Council Member A. dePara joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Council Member dePara asked his duties and responsibilities and his accomplishments to date.

Mr. Thompson summarized his presentation for Mr. dePara.

Mr. dePara asked him how much money will it take to implement these programs and how do we measure his success and progress.

Mr. Thompson said they have raised \$1MM already through the Good School Bridgeport Fund, and suggested they set a fundraising benchmark to work towards.

Mr. dePara said new initiatives cost money and will they make education in the City better.

Mr. Thompson said his experience in Washington, DC taught him to engage lots of external partners who are personally committed to institutionalizing these programs.

Mr. dePara said he had more questions on the financial aspect but he would e-mail his questions to Mr. Thompson.

Ms. Taylor-Moye asked based on his experience if the grants are stable, will the funds leave the city.

Mr. Thompson said the Good School Bridgeport Fund will remain at the Fairfield County Community Foundation in perpetuity.

Ms. Taylor-Moye asked if he has visited all the schools.

Mr. Thompson said he has visited 24 traditional public schools, all the charter schools and 4 catholic schools.

Ms. Taylor-Moye asked if any of the charter schools will get Good School Bridgeport Funds.

Mr. Thompson said the Good School Bridgeport Fund only goes to traditional Bridgeport Schools.

Ms. Taylor-Moye said the PAC Moms are happy with him and wondered if they are working together in all the schools.

Mr. Thompson said there is a PAC election coming up March 20, 2013 and that Andrea is working hard. He said they were relieved to see the Superintendent will be staying.

Ms. Taylor-Moye said the after school programs operate from 3 – 6 PM and asked if the hours could be extended to 8 PM with supervision. She also said summertime is coming and it is always a challenge for the youth and idle time. She asked if there was funding available to put more of the youth to work in the summer. YouthWorks got 2,000 applications last summer and only 300 were hired.

Mr. dePara agreed and asked what could be done to prepare for the summertime, create productive opportunities for the youth, something to better their lives right now.

Ms. Taylor-Moye said she feels the Council people should be provided YouthWorks applications that they could distribute to their constituents. More communication is needed.

Mr. Baker said they are the front line in their districts.

Mr. dePara suggested that Mr. Thompson, as the liaison, should be the hub for these types' communications.

Mr. Thompson said 3 young people from Bridgeport will be attending UCONN Summer Conservation Camp for 6 weeks paid for by UConn.

Ms. Taylor-Moye asked Mr. Thompson to return in 2-3 months to update on his progress and opportunities.

Information session closed at 6:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Kuzmich
Telesco Secretarial Services