

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 20, 2010**

ATTENDANCE

- Education & Social Services:** Denise Taylor-Moye; Chair; Martin McCarthy, Richard Bonney, Andre Baker, Robert Walsh, Lydia Martinez (7:00 p.m.), Evette Brantley (7:00 p.m.),
- Board of Education:** Barbara Bellinger, BOE Chair; Maria Pereira; Bob Simmons, Sauda Efia Baraka, Delores Fuller, Pat Crossin
- Gibson Consulting Group:** Greg Gibson, Project Director; Lon Heuer, Project Manager
- Others:** Ben Barnes, Director of Board of Education Business; Tom Coble, Paul Timpanelli, Bridgeport Regional Business Council President; Council Member Michelle Lyons (7:00 p.m.), Council Member Robert Curwen (7:00 p.m.), Council Member Angel dePara(7:00 p.m.); Council Member Anderson Ayala (7:20 p.m.)

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Taylor-Moye called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. Everyone present introduced themselves.

Information Session: Status Gibson Report from Bridgeport Regional Business Council on Partnership for Bridgeport Education Accountability and Transparency Project

Mr. Timpanelli, president of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC) said that the group was present tonight to give an overview of the Gibson Report as was requested at a previous meeting between the BOE and the Budget and Appropriations Committee.

EFFICIENCY STUDY OF THE BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. Gibson said that he would be presenting the final report on the Efficiency Study of the Bridgeport Public Schools. His firm specializes in analyzing K-12 schools all over the United States. His consulting group was awarded the contract by a joint selection process of the City of Bridgeport, the Bridgeport Public Schools and the Bridgeport Regional Business Council in October of 2009.

His report will include a summery of the BRBC Involvement to Date, project Objectives and Approach for Phase III, Bridgeport Public School Efficient Practices, Major Cost Savings, Additional Areas for Further Study and Phase IV Considerations. All of these were included in a PowerPoint handout that was distributed to those present.

Mr. Gibson said that Ms. Cherrington, the Gibson Transportation Consultant, was not able to be present at the meeting, but that he and Mr. Heuer would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Timpanelli said that the BRBC had made a presentation to the Board of Education four years ago as a result of their desire to have a defined goal by the Business community to improve public education in Bridgeport. The goal was to create some additional accountability and transparency within the District. A four phased plan was proposed and the Gibson report is Phase III. This is a brief overview of the efficiencies in the District.

Mr. Timpanelli said that the Mayor had wanted to know how much money had been spent on this and where the source of the funding for this project was. Mr. Timpanelli said that the first three phases of the project have cost the BRBC approximately \$430,000. The City has contributed approximately \$100,000, the Board of Education has contributed \$120,000, the State of Connecticut has contributed \$60,000 and the BRBC has contributed approximately \$150,000.

In May or June, the BRBC will formally met with the Board of Education to request their permission to implement Phase IV. This will be a complete operational review of all management and operational systems. Hopefully, there will be some resources to assist the Board in implementation of services.

Mr. Gibson explained that the Consulting Group did not review every department but followed the data to find areas where there could be cost savings. A list of areas that the group feels should be investigated further for additional cost savings is included in the report.

Mr. Gibson said that there was a major review of the available data, such as site data, before the team visited the schools to obtain a better understanding of what the project

would encompass. The site work involved campus and district level interviews, but also stake holder interviews, such as members of the Educational Foundation.

The group noticed that there were already some efficient practices in Bridgeport, such as the efficient grade level configuration; the substitute teacher management system, the auto-dialer system for attendance management, the Food Service Operations and the State Internet Service.

Mr. Gibson said that previously, the schools were configured differently with fewer grade levels in the schools, but with the K-8 grades in an individual building and then 9-12 in the high schools, it requires fewer administrators and is less fragmented.

The software programs that the school uses for the substitute management system and the auto dialer for attendance management is a major asset. This is a significant savings in terms of staff resources.

The Food Service Operation is very well run. In many school systems across the country there are food services that are well run, but it is particularly well run in Bridgeport. This was analyzed in terms of economics and site visits at five schools.

Council Member Walsh said that he had heard in the past that the BOE had privatized the services. Mr. Gibson said that a few years ago, the food service operation was in a deficit, but is not now. Mr. Gibson said that he felt it was a good practice to outsource and evaluate the feasibility. Obviously, the District kept the operation in house, and the schools are doing it efficiently. Mr. Gibson then gave a brief overview of what one would look for in comparing outsource services to in house provision. Mr. Heuer said that there were a few recommendations for the food service, but overall, it was a well run organization.

Mr. Gibson said that the District used the State Internet Service, which saves the District quite a bit of money.

Mr. Gibson pointed out that there was a potential of 7 million dollars in annual savings possible. He cautioned everyone that these may take several years to realize. The Gibson group has worked in the past with various school system managements to implement these kinds of changes and make them a success.

Some of the opportunities that have been identified have been previously recommended by the District, but not yet implemented.

Separate from the cost savings is an item that relates to indirect cost recovery. The school system receives approximately \$60 million dollars a year from State and Federal

categorical funding programs. These grant funds are used for various programs in the District, such as tutors or books. Most of the programs, like Title 1, allows for the District to use a portion to cover the administrative cost of running a program. Currently, none of those indirect costs are being allocated to the funding. Approximately 6 million of administrative cost of running the program could be transferred to the General Fund. Mr. Gibson then reviewed the details of how this could be done. Discussion followed about the details of this.

CUSTODIAL COST SAVINGS

Mr. Gibson then reviewed the savings opportunities, which could add up to just under 7 million dollars. He then directed everyone's attention to the next page that contained a scatter chart showing the Custodial Costs Savings. Each dot on the page represents a school, and the gray line indicates an industry standard for acceptable levels of cleanliness. There are a large number of schools that are below that standard and only four or five schools that are above the line. Charts like this should be used by the District in subsequent years to analyze the efficiency of the schools. There were several questions about what would contribute to the low scores. Mr. Gibson said that it would be important to look at each of the schools to evaluate what could be done to increase efficiency in each facility.

Council Member Walsh asked about the custodial staffing. He then reviewed the square footage of two of the high schools and recommended reductions in custodial staffing. Mr. Heuer explained that some of the numbers are rounded up or down, depending on the facility, but that the chart was actually a general target chart. Council Member Walsh said that if the performance was as below the standard, then it was clear to him that there were management issues. He asked what kind of management was over the work force. Mr. Gibson said that there was a manager at Central Office that oversees all the schools. Some schools have strong leadership and other schools do not. Training and consistent application are key for better performance. Council Member Walsh then pointed out that there was a break down of the various schools that have tile floors while others have rugs. He then asked if there were things that could be done to standardize the cleaning. Mr. Gibson said that one thing that could be done would be to minimize carpet because it increases the demands on the workforce of the school and is harder to clean and maintain. This is why it is important to evaluate each school individually.

Council Member Walsh asked about the graffiti that was mentioned in the report. It was explained that it is not legal to put cameras in the bathrooms. Mr. Gibson said that he was not sure how many cameras were on the exterior of the building. The amount of graffiti that was in the bathrooms at Harding, which Mr. Gibson visited, was awful. He also pointed out that removing graffiti requires a different skill set than what the custodial staff is trained to do. He recommended that the District create a graffiti team that would rotate around the District.

Council Member Walsh asked about the union contracts and whether the custodial staff would be working during the summer. He pointed out that currently the Mayor and the Superintendent were looking for give backs from the unions and said he did not believe that this would be possible in the coming year. He also asked if the Gibson team had considered that if the District laid off an employee, the City would be paying for the unemployment. Mr. Heuer said that the team had considered this and that they had realized that the first year, there may not be any significant savings. The benefit savings would not include salaries. He added that the team had spoken with Labor Relations regarding the recommendations before they were finalized because their input was important. The summer schedule would basically be converting some 12 month positions to 10 month positions, which could be done through attrition. After looking at the union agreement, it allows the administration to define the number of positions. It is also important to remember that the work rules need to be changed, but that the work rules need to be more consistent and supervised because some schools are achieving the acceptable standard cleanliness levels. There are no suggestions of changing the rate per hour. Mr. Gibson went on to explain how the analysis was done. Council Member Walsh expressed concerns about the upcoming budget reconciliation.

Mr. Timpanelli pointed out that in response to Council Member Walsh's concerns about the administration and supervision, a number of very significant questions had been asked the previous evening at another meeting regarding the administration. If the Mayor and the Superintendent had not been concerned about the inefficiencies in the District, the Gibson report would never had been done.

IN-SERVICE BUS REDUCTION

Mr. Gibson then moved on to the issue of In-Service Bus transportation. Currently, the District has an outside contract to provide transportation. There are two routes in the morning and two in the afternoon in order to transport all the students on a staggered schedule. Mr. Gibson said that there was additional staggering that could be done, which would have three routes. That would reduce the number of buses and the costs would not increase because the buses are already available for that five hour time slot.

A second recommendation is the implementation of automated software for routing. The District has purchased software to do this, but it is not fully implemented yet. By having a more automated system, the efficiency would increase.

Council Member Walsh asked how much change in scheduling was being considered. Mr. Gibson said that it would be possible to schedule half of the K-8 schools start at 8:00 a.m. and the other half start at 8:20 a.m. Some school systems have elementary, middle and high, and start each level at different times. This would be a bit more difficult

because families could have children starting at different times. While there is traffic, it is not a massively sized District. Currently, a parent with a 7th grader and a 10th grader, the students would not be starting at the same time. Council Member Walsh expressed concerns about students who attend Charter Schools or magnet schools. Mr. Gibson said that there were ways to handle this. The routing software would be particularly valuable in this kind of situation. Council Member Walsh asked if changing the start time for a school would involve the union. Mr. Gibson said that it would.

Council Member Baker asked about monitoring the students on the buses and insuring the students got off at the appropriate stop. Mr. Heuer explained that all that was being done was adding another layer of routes.

Council Member Baker asked about the additional time to load and unload the students. Mr. Gibson said that this would be part of the routing software considerations. Each student's needs to be considered. Council Member Baker asked if existing routes would be eliminated. Mr. Gibson said that there was no suggestion to change the routes. The students still have to be transported to school.

Council Member Taylor-Moye asked about the special needs children on the buses. She was concerned about having the children get on and off. Another concern was whether the team had spoken to the special education drivers about the child. Mr. Gibson, said that the team member who had worked on this portion of the report had. Council Member Taylor-Moye said that she would like to see the report on this because she works as a special education monitor on the buses. Due to various reasons, sometimes the students are late and there are problems because of behavioral issues. She said that it would not make sense to her to add more routes. She said that the drivers are running late and don't want to wait or want to return to certain stops. Council Member Taylor-Moye said that there are management issues with this.

Mr. Gibson explained that the wider that the routes were staggered, the more time that the drivers have to do their jobs. Since the drivers would be transporting fewer students, it might be easier. If the drivers are not waiting for the student for the required two minutes, then that is a management issue, not a routing issue. The literal interpretation of the contract requires the drivers to perform certain duties. It's an issue of accountability.

Council Member Taylor-Moye stated that Council Member Martinez, Brantley, Curwen and Lyons had joined the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

OVERTIME

Mr. Gibson then directed the Committee's attention to the overtime. He said that he felt this was a management issue and more controls need to be in place. He said that there

was not a recommendation that all overtime be eliminated but that there had been a 165% increase in overtime over the past three years.

Council Member Walsh asked if this was based on union contracts. Mr. Gibson said that he did not believe it was because the increase in overtime did not exist three years earlier.

CROSSING GUARDS

The City operated the Crossing Guard and the school reimburses the City for them. The District has no input in how many crossing guards are hired, where they are located or any direct communication with the guards. Mr. Gibson pointed out that the staff levels are considerably higher than most urban schools and the guards are located further into the neighborhoods than most. He suggested that there be an assessment exercise to look at traffic patterns, hazardous routes, student traffic patterns and an overall evaluation of the number of crossing guards. There doesn't seem to be a link between the number of crossing guards with the number of students at any given school. He suggested that since the last time this was done, traffic and student populations may have changed.

Council Member Lyons asked why the report looked at lower staffing rather than starting at the Central Office. Mr. Gibson explained that the staff looked at where the most money was being spent. 13 million dollars was being spent on transportation, so it was analyzed. Regarding the senior positions, there was no accurate count. The Human Resources Department is in the process of assembling a list of senior. Mr. Gibson said that the team had also focused on non-teaching staff.

Council Member Lyons asked whether the grants department was going to be reviewed and whether or not the Gibson team would be part of that. Mr. Gibson said that this would be part of Phase IV. He said that another aspect would be how the grant reporting was done.

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

Mr. Gibson explained that this was a well run operation and that the in-class breakfast program be expanded. There are logistical issues, which have been worked out with the schools that already initiated the program. There are Federal reimbursements available, so the District would only be out of pocket for the food costs. However, this would increase the Title One reimbursement and could result in additional net revenue of \$750,000 annually.

Council Member Lyons said that she had a question regarding the student eating in the classroom. She asked if the team had personally visited the classrooms when the program was in progress. Mr. Gibson said that the team had visited five campuses. Council Member Lyons said that she wasn't referring to campuses, but classrooms. Mr.

Gibson explained that the team refers to schools as campuses. He then said that the team had visited five schools in operation and observed operations in all the areas that report address. However, he said that while he had visited classrooms, he was not there to observe the classroom operations because that was not what the team was there to do. Mr. Heuer said that he was in the schools during lunch, but not the Bridgeport schools while the breakfast program was underway. However, he had been in other classrooms in other Districts while the breakfast programs were underway. Council Member Lyons said that she was part of the system and it would be helpful to spend time with the staff that deals with these types of situations on a daily report. Mr. Gibson said that there were six schools that had the program running already and were managing it well.

Mr. Gibson was asked how the six schools were selected for review. Mr. Gibson said that there was some geographic considerations because the team wanted to have a complete picture of the City. There was also some schools selected because of grade level. One magnet school, three K-8 and one high school, so there were five schools that were visited. Council Member Bonney asked if the schools were identified. Mr. Gibson said that they were in the full report in Appendix 1. Mr. Heuer said that he visited the Central Kitchen where the food was prepared along with a number of schools.

Council Member Walsh asked about a statement in the handout about the Food and Nutrition Department absorbing \$500,000 of allocated General Fund costs annually. Mr. Heuer said that this would be moving the costs from the General Fund into the Food and Nutrition Department. Discussion followed about the accounting practices involved.

Council Member Taylor-Moye asked about the clean up of having breakfast in the classrooms. Mr. Gibson said that the teachers who are doing this currently could speak to this and particularly the types of foods that work best. The custodial staff comes and removes the trash bags immediately. The goal is to have as little food and trash falling on the floor as possible. Some teachers prefer to have items like cereal with milk, but generally the goal is to have self contained breakfasts.

Council Member Taylor-Moye said that she had spoken to one classroom teacher who said that this was not being done because of mice. Mr. Gibson said that he had not been told about this.

Council Member Baker asked about the parent volunteers who come into the schools to help with the lunch programs. Mr. Gibson said that the only monitor he saw was in the cafeteria and it was a food service person.

CENTRAL OFFICE CLERICAL STAFFING

Mr. Gibson said that this relates to many of the processes that were in place. He said that there was a new computer system that should allow the District to manage the administration and paperwork. He then outlined the various steps that someone requesting something would have to do. The District has identified what needs to be done, but had not had the chance to do it yet. He pointed out that some of the staff that was involved in this process were grant funded and that once the process is streamlined, the grant funding would be able to be used elsewhere. Discussion followed about the staffing details and how this process would work.

Mr. Gibson said that areas like Purchasing, the District was not having the leverage they needed to purchase the textbooks with serious discounts. It is important to have someone with that level of expertise.

Council Member Lyons said that she agreed with the issues around bulk purchases. She added that the schools go through a lot of paper and trying to purchase it at a good price was difficult. Now that the District was transferring to the MUNIS system, she wanted to know if it would help the District. Mr. Gibson said that if a lot of paper is being consumed, that it would be noted. Once the process is re-engineered, it will be easier.

Council Member Lyons asked if the staff would be training in MUNIS. Mr. Gibson said that the point of training was to teach people how to enter the proper information into the system and how to retrieve it. The other half of the process is reworking the system to eliminate duplicate steps and processes.

Council Member Curwen said that he had been on the Council for 15 years and that the efficiencies that were being discussed had been talked about many years ago, and then the City and the BOE had to run separate systems. Now, it seems like the Board is moving back towards sharing resources with the City. Mr. Gibson said that there were some tasks that would be shared with the City and these types of opportunities should be examined as they become obvious. Some of the attributes of the schools will not be able to shared, such as the bus services and the focus of the special education programs.

Council Member Lyons asked if the group would be looking into using outside services. She then gave an example of an area that the BOE was responsible for maintaining. She said that she found out that the person from Parks and Receptions discovered an outside service was supposed to have done the work. She then reminded everyone that there were many employees already in house and using those employees rather than outsourcing the jobs. Mr. Gibson explained that there were management issues, such as someone determining whether or not the project would be less expensive by having the in house or outside vendor handle the issue. If the project is contracted out, an RFP should be done. Mr. Gibson added that some of maintenance issues would be a good example.

It is important to insure that the District is competitively bidding. This includes holding every school accountable regarding their purchases.

Council Member Martinez asked about the MUNIS system and whether or not the cost of training of the staff. Mr. Gibson said that the training has already been done and that there have been some redefinitions of jobs.

FACILITY USE FEES

Mr. Gibson said that there were a number of times that the fees were waived. Currently, if an outside organization wishes to use the facilities, it incurs extra costs in terms of utilities, custodial costs and other items. Mr. Gibson said that by codifying the policy for fees and waivers, it takes the guess work out of the process. Council Member Martinez expressed some concerns about certain groups who provide a service to the community, like the English as a Second Language classes would be blocked out. Mr. Gibson said that some groups, depending on the criteria, would very like have permanent waiver status.

PURCHASING

There was a discussion about the various points of the purchasing process.

ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Mr. Gibson said that charts similar to the custodial charts could be created for other department like the budget. He then reviewed the six other points (Central Office Organization Structure; School Staffing; Technology Investments, Facility Needs, Legal Fees and Grant Developments) and gave a brief overview of some resources and ideas that could be explored in the future.

Council Member Lyons asked about the Central Office Staffing and the School Staffing. She said that one issue was administrators retiring and then returning to the system as consultants. She said that the Council had enacted an ordinance that a City employee could not retire and then return to a City position as a consultant. Mr. Gibson said that this should be considered and that it was a management decision. It was also pointed out that auditing the HR process would be something to consider.

Mr. Gibson explained that before renovations were made, it would be important to evaluate what the future enrollment would be and whether it would be more cost effective to do repairs rather than renovations. He added that he had seen the list of Capital projects and that it was very thorough, but that there were some projects that he would like to see the projects re-evaluated.

Council Member Baker asked about the take home vehicles. Mr. Heuer said that most of the vehicles were very old and many people were using their personal vehicles. Having more vehicles would give the District more control over the vehicle than paying people to use their vehicles.

Council Member Walsh said that he would like to reiterate the issues regarding retired personnel coming back as consultants. Council Member Walsh said that there had been times when a principal had been out for a few months and an “acting principal” had been brought in. He said that he and fellow Council Members hear from the parents and the constituents about this.

Mr. Timpanelli said that with the submission of this report, the contract with Gibson Consultants was now concluded. He said that it would be important to provide input for Phase IV to BRBC. Mr. Gibson said that the major focus should be on helping the District implement the recommended changes, and the remainder of the energy spent on identifying additional efficiencies.

Council Member Lyons said that she did not totally agree because she felt that there were more areas to be examined. She said that when evaluating an organization, it is important to consider the entire organization. She said that the location of where the students are is critical. Personally, she believes that without finishing the project, it would not be using the report to the fullest.

Council Member Bonney asked whether the BOE had agreed to the recommendations made in the findings. Mr. Gibson said that funding for Phase IV would be up to the BRBC, the Council and the BOE. Mr. Gibson said that when the project was given to the consultant, they determined which areas of the District to examine. Mr. Timpanelli said that he was looking to the Council and the BOE to provide the direction for Phase IV. Council Member McCarthy said that it appeared that most of the recommendations had to do with management, and also wondered how much Phase IV would enhance the project. Mr. Gibson said that his company could help with determining the impact of the recommendations but could not help with the implementation of them.

Council Member Baker said that he appreciated the work Gibson Consultant Group had done, and hoped that the BOE would implement some of the recommendations that were in the report.

Council Member Taylor-Moye said that she would like to thank Mr. Timpanelli and the Gibson Consulting Group for bringing this report forward. She said that this was about the students in Bridgeport and their schools. She said that she was looking forward to good things coming from this report.

Council Member Walsh said that there were Board members present and that it was pointed out in the report where there were savings. He said that by using some of the recommendations, the Board could have some savings and then there might be more help from the City about this.

Board Member Crossin asked when the last time the Board of Education Finance Director was present in a meeting. He said that on ten years on the Board, this is the first time it has happened. Board Member Crossin said that it would be important to overcome the hurdles and work together.

Council Member Bonney left the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Board Member Simmons said that there had been a discussion about the 7 million dollars at another meeting last night. He added that there were issues of overtime and user fees that should be revisited by the Board. Mr. Gibson said that his understanding at the previous meeting was how much could be implemented in the remaining years. Board Member Simmons then reviewed some of the details of the funding and said that there were administrators hired to manage the projects. Board Member Simmons said that he did not believe that there should be more managers hired to manage overtime. Mr. Gibson agreed. Board Member Simmons said that the focus should be on helping the staff implement the recommendations.

Council Member Lyons thanked everyone for their work on this project. She then reiterated that stopping at this point would end the project. She also asked how much the complete project and the implementation of the project would cost. Mr. Timpanelli explained that the Gibson Consultant Group had fulfilled their contractual obligation.

Council Member Brantley said that Board Member Simmons would like to comment that the Board had looked at Legal, Grants and perhaps one other issue that would need to be audited. Council Member Taylor-Moye asked about whether the Board had decided to move on any of the areas. A brief discussion followed.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BAKER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Sharon L. Soltes

Telesco Secretarial Services

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