

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 25, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Jorge Cruz, Co-chair; Marcus Brown, Michelle Lyons, Maria Pereira, Avelino Silva, Co-chair, Michael DeFilippo (6:16 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): J. Herron & E. Newton; T. Gaudett, Mayoral Aide; Jodi Ann Green; T. Papa, School Readiness Council Co-chair; Jake Green, Lee Helmerich, School Readiness Coordinator

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Silva called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. A quorum was present.

32-20 Grant Submission: re: State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood – School Readiness Preschool Grant-Priority and Quality Enhancement Grant Program.

Ms. Papa greeted everyone and introduced Ms. Green and Ms. Lee Helmerich. She said that Ms. Green and Ms. Helmerich would be presenting on the School Readiness program.

Council Member Cruz asked how much the grants were and what the funding would be used for.

Ms. Helmerich spoke about the \$12.5 million School Readiness Grant. She gave a brief overview of all the services that the grant provides Ms. Helmerich said that they have a grant deadline that has a short turnaround time.

Ms. Helmerich also spoke about the Quality Enhancement grant and gave a brief listing of the 14 different categories the grant can be applied to including professional development, CPR Training including epi-pen training, hiring a health care professional and a variety of other things. There are 1,400 children served by this. Ms. Helmerich said that there were 38 different School Readiness sites throughout the City. They are trying to be accessible for those who may not have access to private transportation.

Ms. Helmerich gave an overview of the two part grant, which is spread over a two year period. The second grant focuses on compliance and quality improvement metrics.

Council Member DeFilippo and Council Member Silva joined the meeting at 6:16 p.m.

Council Member Pereira said that Ms. Papa was serving as the Acting Deputy Director of Health, the Director of Youth Services and now was Co-chair of the School Readiness Council. She questioned how Ms. Papa could adequately handle these three major roles.

Council Member Cruz reminded everyone that they were present to discuss the Early Childhood Grant.

Ms. Papa said that she had been involved with the School Readiness program for a number of years and had been the Co-chair for about three years.

Council Member Pereira asked who Natisha Vidal was because she is the Co-chair of the School Readiness Council. Ms. Papa replied that Ms. Vidal was the assistant principal of Columbus School.

Council Member Lyons asked where the site was in the North End. Ms. Helmerich said that the program had two classrooms at Blackham.

Council Member Cruz asked for clarification on the funding. Ms. Helmerich said that Ms. DeLauro was very instrumental in allocating \$50 million for the CARES Act. She said that they want to do as much as possible to touch as many children as possible with their portion. They will be focusing on professional training, CPR training and medication training. It will be important to listen to what the community says their needs are.

Council Member Pereira asked how many slots the program had currently. Ms. Helmerich said that they had the same number of slots, but Johnson School was overcrowded and they were moving it to Madison. She explained that the school administration had requested the classroom back for their regular classes. The program is moving to Madison.

Council Member Pereira said that she was shocked to hear that they were moving the 18 slots from an impoverished neighborhood and placing them in a location with a more affluent neighborhood.

Council Member Pereira said that she was shocked to see that they had not included a list of what the School Readiness Council had voted on regarding the slot allocation.

Ms. Helmerich explained that the school administration had submitted their request to the School Readiness Council regarding the relocation of the 18 preschool slots. The School Readiness Council voted to approve the request. There are several preschool programs available in the neighborhood.

Council Member Pereira said that this was \$12 million dollar grant and they had no idea where the allocations were. Ms. Papa said that the slot allocation listing was not required for the application and is a separate document. That list was sent to Hartford. However, they can provide the information without a problem. Ms. Helmerich explained that because of the pandemic, the State had truncated the application to reduce the stress levels.

Council Member Pereira said that she wanted a listing of where the slots were allocated this year and where they would be allocated next year.

Ms. Helmerich said that some schools only allow 18 students in a classroom and other schools allow more students per classroom.

Council Member Newton asked if the BOE was aware of the request for the pre-school classroom usage. Ms. Helmerich said that the request came to the School Readiness Council via the BOE liaison. She explained that the BOE made the decision to utilize the classroom and they followed the protocol for the School Readiness Council. The request was presented to the School Readiness Council and subsequently approved by them.

Council Member Newton pointed out that the City Council has no say in the Board of Education operations. The BOE has been receiving the grants for many years and the City Council has no say in the matter.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOVED AGENDA ITEM 32-20 GRANT SUBMISSION: RE: STATE OF CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD – SCHOOL READINESS PRESCHOOL GRANT-PRIORITY AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT GRANT PROGRAM.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira said that the BOE does not allocate School Readiness slots. The School Readiness Council has the authority to do that.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 32-20 GRANT SUBMISSION: RE: STATE OF CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD – SCHOOL READINESS PRESCHOOL GRANT-PRIORITY AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT GRANT PROGRAM PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (BROWN, LYONS, SILVA, AND DEFILIPPO) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (PEREIRA).**

Council Member Pereira said that she was abstaining because she had not received a listing of the slot assignments with the application.

Ms. Helmerich thanked everyone for taking their time to consider these grant applications.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SILVA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services