

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2014  
6:00 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Co-chair Taylor-Moye; Council Members: Feliciano, Halstead

NON-COMMITTEE: Council Member Martinez-Walker

REPRESENTATIVE(s): Board of Education: Sauda Baraka, Hernan Illingworth, Joe Larcheveque, Andre Baker

Informational Session with Sauda Baraka, President Board of Education re: Brief Update on the vision for the Board of Education.

Ms. Baraka stated that they had an election for the new board and their first retreat to put together goals and objectives. Overall, the goal is to improve student achievement. The goals were put together a year ago and they will be tweaked for the upcoming year. She noted there were five (5) bullet points that were discussed. She reviewed the **Mission Statement** and highlighted the Board of Education's mission to provide the best education possible for all students. **Vision** that speaks to the needs of children in the district. **Goals and Objectives** they will do their own evaluations to ensure that they meet the goals and objectives. They will work with parents; work for a strong government council and they are looking to work with the state delegation. She went on to say that there was initially a \$3.3 million budget and an agreement between the State Board of Education. It was reduced by \$1.6 million, so the amount available now is \$2.4 million. She explained that for 2014-2015, they are talking about approximately \$238 million and are expecting an increase from the district of an additional \$3.9 million. She explained that when you look at the 2014-2015 budgets, they need to look at different aspects of each individual school to determine the outcomes that need to be achieved. They need to ask what changes that need to be made, based on different elements in each school and fund based on that.

Mr. Baker stated that coming from serving on the city council, in the past he looked at the Board of Education in terms of a big number; but the funding and requirements are changing and they need to stay within a specific parameter, so it's becoming a little more difficult for the board in terms of what they want to do. He said they are trying to

be more creative and take things slow to accomplish putting programs in place. They will need to track what the outcome will be in the next five years. Overall, he emphasized that everyone has to work together and be on the forefront to understand what is taking place. He suggested bringing together ideas and what the citizens are saying and not have it become a battle and butting of heads.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye agreed the presentation was on the mark. She stated that certain aspects of the goals and objectives, such as the self-esteem and self-worth values that will be implemented. She expressed that she was happy to hear that these characteristics are part of the curriculum to help students achieve.

Co-chair Taylor Moye shared her and Co-chair McBride-Lee's hope to sit down and form a coalition between the committee and the Board of Education for the good of the children and educational system. She further stated that they hope to bring more issues to the table for discussion.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye asked if they found a replacement yet for Superintendent of Schools. Ms. Baraka stated that they have an interim Superintendent, Fran Lebowitz who will be in place until the search committee applications are reviewed to begin the process. She commented and briefly explained that it's a very involved process; inclusive of an interview process where varied groups will have an opportunity to talk to them. She said they are hoping to have the new Superintendent on board by Fall 2014; she stated that is the goal, but it's not definite. She further reviewed Interim Superintendent Fran Lebowitz's credentials, noting her background of teaching, learning and curriculum. She emphasized that this is about the children and their needs and the goal is to meet those needs and close the achievement gap. She estimated that results should be seen within one year.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye mentioned that Co-chair McBride-Lee was ill tonight and the reason she wasn't in attendance.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye stated that they will all they can as co-chairs to bring issues to the committee and requests to receive updates from the Board of Education.

Ms. Baraka noted that all their meetings are open to the public. She noted that Dr. Ed Jones, a retired professor from Sacred Heart University will speak at the next scheduled meeting.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye stated that Co-chair McBride-Lee asked her to address the following questions in her absence. She wanted to know how much involvement the Board of Education has in the building of the new Harding High School. The Chairman of School Facilities John was present and stated that they met last night and a lot of information was provided. However, there are still some issues related to contamination of the site and they are trying to find out the action plan to make good decisions based on sound information.

Mr. Baker stated that he was always under the impression that there was a working relationship between the Board of Education and City Council, but he realized that it's not like that. And in talking to board members, he found there's a total disconnect and no consideration whatsoever as to what's being done. He said he thought it was unfair to be asked certain things, when they aren't fully aware of what's going on.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye recalled that she previously served on the School Building Committee and she found it to be complex. Ms. Baraka stated that the Board of Education is 100% behind the building of Harding High School; however, where it's being built is a problem. She noted that the DEP doesn't have all the information and she felt it was premature to approve anything until they find out if and how the property can be remediated. She spoke about the importance of knowing the impact it could have to the students. Overall, she said there were many issues related to the new school and they need to ensure that the best and safest location is sought. She mentioned other problems that she didn't think have been properly addressed yet, such as the architecture.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye asked about problems with the district PACT. She asked what part the Board of Education plays with the organization. Ms. Baraka said they don't have any direct control over the parents and the PACT, although they have to make sure that the organization stays active. She said they had elections and they now have a functioning PACT. Co-chair Taylor-Moye said what she was getting from parents in the community is that they aren't happy with the district PACT leaders, because there is no follow up with many of the concerns. She emphasized that if they want to have an effective PACT, it's crucial to have the parents involved. Ms. Baraka said there have been issues all along with PACT. Co-chair Taylor-Moye mentioned that PACT representatives will be present at the next meeting.

Council member Halstead asked about the building of Harding High School. He stated that many aspects of the new school will affect taxes and he thought the project presents a problem of what was done and how it was done. He said he wouldn't vote for the project.

Mr. Baker suggested that a Board of Education liaison should attend the next committee meeting to address issues and clear up any questions there may be. He said it's important to have that level of communication.

Ms. Baraka attempted to address Council member Halstead's comments. She stated that before they make a decision, the site has to be a safe place to be; however, she didn't have any information to date from the School Building Committee.

Council member Halstead asked if there was any concern that the school shouldn't be built due to the environmental issues. Ms. Baraka stated that they definitely need a new building, however; she mentioned that there may be other sites in Bridgeport that are less toxic. She reiterated that they need a new school that is high tech and has all the necessary Information Technology (IT) and other components up to date with the new

millennium. She said that she personally didn't feel that the school should be built at the GE site due to the various problems plaguing the site. She felt the students and the parents could be subjected to whatever is happening on the property.

Council member Feliciano asked about funding and if they will receive it, in respect to the common core new standard the Board of Education has to implement and if it will affect the budget. Ms. Baraka said there will have a big affect. She explained that there are unfunded mandates, meaning they will have to take certain programs and fund them. They need to determine what does work or the best method and then they have to hone programming and put it toward that resource. They also need to look at data to determine where deficiencies lay and when they're found, she thought they will then need to put the money in that area. She added that they need the budget designed based on the needs of the students. Overall, she said they need to come up with a strategy to make it work for our children.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye stated that even if it's not the right thing to build the new school at the GE site, she was emphatic that we still need a school.

Council member Feliciano thanked the Board of Education representatives for attending the meeting. She mentioned that they attend another meeting. Co-chair Taylor-Moye suggested that maybe a BOE representative could attend a meeting on a quarterly basis if possible. Council member Feliciano said she agreed with Mr. Baker to have a BOE representative attend meetings to stay involved in what's going on.

#### Approval of Committee Minutes of January 8, 2014

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

*There was a brief open discussion among Ms. Baraka and Council member Martinez-Walker daughter that was present. The following questions were asked:*

- Would it be effective for the BOE to go to the students for input about the concerns they have about what's going in the schools. Ms. Baraka stated that was the purpose of the PTSO-Parent Teacher Student Organization. She relayed that she attends those meetings regularly and receives a lot of information.
- Would they consider having students actually attend BOE meetings to speak about their concerns? Ms. Baraka suggested that she attends the PTSO meetings that will allow her to have a role in what's going on in the schools.

**ADJOURNED**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR-MOYE MOVED TO ADJOURN  
\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO SECONDED  
\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham  
Telesco Secretarial Services