

Norwich City Council/Board of Education Ad Hoc Committee
Wednesday, May 4, 2022
6:00 PM, Kelly STEAM Middle School Community Room
SPECIAL MEETING

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

Ex-Officio Members Present: City Manager John Salomone, Comptroller Josh Pothier (via phone), Business Manager Robert Sirpenski, Director of Student Services Jamie Bender, Mayor Peter Nystrom (arrived at 6:17 PM) and Assistant Superintendent Tamara Gloster (arrived at 6:25 PM)

Committee Members Absent: BOE Member Christine DiStasio and Superintendent Kirstin Stringfellow

1. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum: Alderman Joe DeLucia called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

2. Review of Committee Scope and Purpose:

Alderman DeLucia reviewed the scope and purpose of the committee to promote transparency with collaboration on the school budget 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. Adoption of Meeting Dates

Alderman DeLucia noted that all members had been emailed the proposed meeting dates prior to the meeting. He reviewed the suggested dates and informed the committee that all of the meetings would be Special Meetings since there was less than 30 days' notice given for posting the meetings on the city's website.

On a motion by Al Daniels, seconded by Swarnjit Singh, the meeting schedule was approved with all meetings listed as Special Meetings.

b. Discussion and Possible Action: City Council Budget for FY 2022 – 2023

Alderman DeLucia brought committee members' attention to the presentation being displayed. The presentation, prepared by NPS Business Manager Robert Sirpenski, had been emailed to members prior to the meeting.

Mr. Sirpenski noted that his presentation was in response to the City Manager's budget and the City Council's Zero Mil Reduction Target. The BOE had proposed a budget of \$88,346,890. To accommodate the City Manager's Budget and the Zero Mil Target, the BOE had been asked to reduce the proposed budget by \$1,543,132. He told the committee that the BOE budget is need-based so a cut that large will impact programs, students, staff and facilities. He proceeded

to demonstrate potential cuts and alternative methods of funding other items. Unemployment, temporary employees and health insurance could all be cut based on updated information since the budget was developed. Grant funding options under the ESSER and Alliance programs were also possibilities to fund other items. The non-lapsing fund could be utilized, as well as current year surplus.

Mr. Sirpenski reported that the state legislature sent their budget to the Governor today. City Manager John Salomone stated that there is a review process that will occur before the Governor signs the budget. He also confirmed that the Alliance funding for Norwich was the expected \$914,000 amount.

All capital equipment items and IT hardware in the FY23 budget could be paid with this year's surplus. Additional targeted line-item cuts of \$270,482 would bring the BOE budget to the City Manager and CC target. The non-lapsing account could be used for necessary purchases in these line-items.

Detailed discussion ensued. It was established that three School Resource Officers would be funded for the schools.

Alderman DeLucia noted that the agenda item is entitled Discussion and Possible Action. Since the state budget is not finalized, the committee could hold off on any action until the state budget is final. The CC has until early June to adopt a budget. He expressed great appreciation to the committee members who have universally handled the budget coordination very well. BOE Chair Aldi asked if the BOE had met the CC expectations with the proposed budget revisions. Alderman DeLucia responded that this is exactly what had been envisioned when the CC/BOE Ad Hoc Committee was created.

Alderman DeLucia went on to say that the success of the budget talks was the result of hard work by good people making good decisions. Alderwoman Gould agreed and spoke to her appreciation while working with Mr. Sirpenski. BOE Chair Aldi stated that going forward the CC can expect the continued cooperation and collaboration of the BOE.

5. Agenda Items for Future Meetings: Alderman DeLucia noted the next meeting will be Wednesday May 18, 2022, in the Kelly STEAM Middle School Community Room at 6 PM. If committee members have agenda items or documents to be shared at the next meeting, please reach out to him.

6. Adjournment: On a motion by Bob Aldi, seconded by Charlene Charmelus, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.