

## **MINUTES**

**Town Council  
Town of East Greenwich  
Regular Meeting & Joint Meeting w/School Committee  
January 14, 2019 at 7:00 PM  
Swift Community Center, 121 Peirce Street, East Greenwich, RI 02818**

(1) Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag

Town Council (5/5): Mark Schwager, President; Michael Donegan, Vice President; Renu Englehart, Caryn Corenthall and Michael Zarrella

Town Staff: Joseph Duarte, Acting Town Manager; Leigh Carney, Town Clerk; Andrew Teitz, Esq., Solicitor; Peter Skwirz, Esq. Assistant Solicitor; Wendy Schmidle, IT Director; Catherine Bradley, Community Services and Parks Director; Michael D'Amico, Consultant to the Town Manager; Col. Steve Brown, Chief of Police; Capt. Stanley Cirella, Deputy Chief of Police; Capt. Thomas Mears, Acting Fire Chief

School Committee (7/7): Carolyn Mark, Chairwoman; Dr. Lori McEwen, Vice Chairwoman; Matthew Plain, Alyson Powell, Eugene Quinn, Anne Musella, Jeff Dronzek

Others: Matthew Oliverio, Esq., Attorney for School Committee; Dr. Victor Mercurio, Superintendent; Alexis Meyer, Director of Curriculum

President Schwager called the meeting to order. Following introductions, he led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

(2) Council President Announcements

President Schwager stated that the search for a new Fire Chief closed on Friday and applications are being reviewed. He encouraged residents to sign-up on the Notify Me section on the Town's website.

(3) Public Comments (15 minute time limit for items NOT on the agenda)

None

Chairwoman Mark called the School Committee to order.

(4) Joint Meeting with School Committee

(a) Consolidated Finance/Director of Administration

President Schwager provided some background on the recent consolidation of the Finance Director's position between the Town and School and the subsequent resignation of that individual. A consultant was hired to assist in the interim and now the question is whether or not hiring one person or two is best. Chairwoman Mark added they are searching for an

interim finance person and have hired a retired, part-time finance person to assist with the FY2020 budgeting process. Short term and long term plans need to be reflected in both budgets. The Town is preparing to solicit applications for a Finance Director, including school certification as preferred criteria. It was noted that per the existing MOA between the Town/School regarding the consolidated finance position, a 60 day notification period to opt-out would be due by May 1<sup>st</sup> in advance of the next fiscal year.

A lengthy discussion ensued on how to expeditiously put a collective process in place to help make a decision. Councilor Corenthel supported consolidation. Mr. Dronzek supported separation. Councilor Zarrella supported separation. Ms. Musella supported separation. Discussion continued about the administrative oversight needed on the School's side and the budgetary implications of both scenarios. Counselor Oliverio added that Westerly uncoupled their consolidation in 2018 for many of the same reasons. Dr. Mercurio addressed the criteria for certification by RIDE. Mr. Plain suggested opening up the search to individuals who are eligible for certification. He supported consolidation. President Schwager addressed the advantages/disadvantages of adding "eligibility" to the job description. Westerly and East Providence's attempts were briefly noted. Dr. McEwen initiated further debate on hiring based on the role not the individual and the School's role in interviewing eligible candidates. President Schwager acknowledged the competitive nature of the process. It was suggested that applications are shared and collective conversations take place prior to hiring. Dr. McEwen supported consolidation. Ms. Musella questioned the process on how to address the administrative deficiencies from the audit.

Closing comments supported the creation of an ad hoc advisory workgroup consisting of members from both Town/School to review applications, etc. After additional discussion about the structure of the position(s), it was decided that both bodies will discuss the matter at their next meetings to identify members for the workgroup and revisit during joint meeting on February 11, 2019.

#### (b) FY 2018 Unaudited Budget Update

President Schwager spoke about the position of the Town's financial condition and addressed inaccurate comments made by former Town officials related to bankruptcy.

Mr. D'Amico introduced himself and summarized his background and professional credentials. He emphasized the benefit of comparing actuals to actuals. The school's budget was presented first beginning with expenditures followed by revenues. Narratives were provided on most group line items. FY 2017 presented a \$725K deficit considering the use of fund balance. FY 2018 presented a \$437K deficit. He reiterated that the numbers are unaudited and more adjustments are expected. Lengthy discussion ensued on what was presented.

Mr. D'Amico presented the Town's budget beginning with revenues followed by expenditures, capital and school appropriations. Narratives were provided on most group line items. FY17 presented a \$1.1 million surplus including one-time adjustments for bond refunding. FY18 presented a \$986K deficit before one-time adjustments which produced a \$488K surplus. He was concerned about pulling \$1 million from the fund balance for FY19 and will present more on that in two weeks. Discussion ensued.

Mr. D'Amico addressed various questions and concerns posed by both Council members and School Committee members.

President Schwager opened up the floor for public comments or questions for Mr. D'Amico.

Charles Callanan, 30 Eldredge Avenue, commented on the advantages of consistency with consolidation and Chromebook ownership; also outsourcing the Fire Department and maintaining rescue service. Mr. D'Amico replied that outsourcing could be looked at.

Eric Jautais, 184 Hemlock Drive, commented on ambiguous line item descriptions and requested month reports for FY19. Mr. D'Amico suggested using quarterly reports rather than monthly to avoid overkill and confusion.

Mr. D'Amico addressed Councilor Zarrella's concerns with PILOT payments.

Gayle Corrigan, 50 Paterson Avenue, Warwick, commented on PILOT payments, gap reporting to Auditor and re-appropriated fund balance and MOA obligations between departments. Mr. D'Amico debated her points about one-time expenditures.

(c) FY 2019 Budget Timeline Update

Mr. D'Amico commented that he is preparing a forecast for both Town and School and will present within two weeks.

(d) School Committee Supplemental Appropriation Request for FY 2019

Dr. Mercurio provided additional details related to demonstrated needs in Teaching/Learning (\$50,979) and Technology (\$100,285). Additionally, priorities for capital maintenance and improvements needed for school safety, etc. that were submitted to RIDE yet deferred were presented. Other short term needs include ceiling repair at Eldredge (\$350,000) and replacement of Cole tennis courts (\$400,000). Bond money was used for mold remediation and may be used to engage an architect to address future building needs. Universal pre-K is not addressed.

A lengthy and robust discussion followed including the following issues:

- Consolidated maintenance efforts
- Validity of cost estimates
- Availability of FY19 forecast
- Inability to financially meet all School's needs/lesser ask
- Funding effect on future budget
- Trust in the ask
- Methodology and clarity of \$433K
- Second semester needs
- Programmatic needs to satisfy BEP
- IT consolidation
- Clarification of BEP requirements and ADA compliance

- School safety needs to be discussed in Executive Session

Further debate ensued on deciphering and validating priorities to meet legal obligations.

President Schwager asked for a two-week delay to allow time for the FY19 projections to be presented. Meeting jointly on January 28<sup>th</sup> was discussed. Mr. Dronzek pushed for something to go on to gain traction. Councilors voiced their opinions on voting now versus deferring.

Motion to supplement the School Committee's budget by \$260K for FY19 made by Michael Zarrella

Motion Failed

Discussion ensued.

Motion to supplement the School Committee's budget \$262,870 for FY 19 made by Renu Englehart, seconded by Michael Zarrella

Council discussion ensued.

Ayes: Corenthall, Donegan, Englehart, Schwager, Zarrella

Motion Carried 5 – 0

Deliberations on additional supplementations will continue once FY19 projections are released. Funds to be transferred by journal entry from fund balance.

#### (e) Public Comments

Bill Higgins, Greenwich Boulevard, commented that Council should know where the money is going.

Charles Callanan, Eldredge Avenue, commented on his dismay with the deliberations and decision. Councilors Corenthall and Donegan disagreed.

Frederick Tremble, Cindy Ann Drive, commented on the prioritization process.

Eric Jautais, Hemlock Drive, acknowledged a working collaboration and was pleased with the good faith gesture.

Motion to adjourn the School Committee made by Anne Musella, seconded by Alyson Powell

Ayes: Mark, McEwen, Dronzek, Plain, Quinn, Musella, Powell

Motion carried 7 – 0

#### (5) Town Council Minutes

(a) December 14, 2018 (Special Meeting)

Motion to approve made by Michael Zarrella, seconded by Renu Englehart

Ayes: Corenthal, Donegan, Englehart, Schwager, Zarrella

Motion Carried 5 – 0

(6) Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action)

- (a) Annual Renewal of Alcoholic Beverage Licenses with Victualing, Entertainment and Outdoor Sidewalk Service (as applicable) for the period December 1, 2018 through November 30, 2019 for Feast Sandwich, 431 Main Street and Kai Bar, 232 Main Street (continued from November 29, 2018).

Solicitor Teitz recommended postponement for two weeks.

Motion to continue for two weeks to January 28th made by Michael Zarrella, seconded by Mark Schwager

Ayes: Corenthal, Donegan, Englehart, Schwager, Zarrella

Motion Carried 5 – 0

(7) Public Comments (30 minute time limit)

None

(8) Council Comments

None

(9) Executive Session

- (a) Closed pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (1) pertaining to the approval of the Executive Session minutes from November 5, 2018 and December 14, 2018.
- (b) Closed to pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2) pertaining to the review of all pending litigation matters being handled by insurance defense counsel Hanson Curran LLP:

Michael Zalobowski v. Town of EG, et al. Case No. KC-2016-246 Mary Wharton v. Town of EG, et al. Case No. KC-2016-0717

Joseph and Elaine Gelineau v. Town of EG, et al. Case No. KC-2016-0836 Pamela Aveyard v. Town of EG, Case No. KC-2017-1304

Kristen Benoit v. Town of EG, et al. Case No. KC-2017-1302 Sharon L. Kitchin v. Town of EG, Case No. KC-2018-0176 Ryan Grady, et al. v. Town of EG, et al. Case No. KC-2018-0991 David Gorman v. Town of EG, et. al. Case No. KC-2017-1160 Laurie Perry v. Town of EG, et al. Case No. KC-2017-1274 William Perry v. Town of EG, et al. Case No. KC-2018-0830 James Perry v. Town of EG, et al. Case No. KC-2018-1214

Motion to continue the entire Executive Session to a future date made by Michael Zarrella, seconded by Michael Donegan

Ayes: Corenthal, Donegan, Englehart, Schwager, Zarrella

Motion Carried 5 – 0

(10) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 11:10pm made by Michael Donegan, seconded by Michael Zarrella

Ayes: Corenthal, Donegan, Englehart, Schwager, Zarrella

Motion Carried 5 – 0

Submitted By:

Leigh A. Carney, CMC  
Town Clerk

Approved By Town Council:  
(PENDING)