

MINUTES
Town Council
Town of East Greenwich
Joint Meeting/Regular Meeting
December 18, 2017 at 6:00 PM
Swift Community Center, 121 Peirce Street, East Greenwich, RI 02818

(1) 6:00 PM Work Session on Town Manager Search - CANCELED

(2) 7:00 PM Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag

Town Council Present (5/5): S. Cienki, S. Todd, A. Deutsch, N. Granatiero, M. Schwager

Town Staff Present: G. Corrigan, D. D'Agostino, L. Carney, L. Dykeman, W. Schmidle, J. Duarte, E. McAndrew, C. Olsen, L. Bourbonnais, C. Bradley, S. Brown, S. Cirella

School Committee Present: C. Mark, M. Winters, M. Fain, M. Plain, J. Dronzek, L. McEwen, Y. Sun

Others: V. Mercurio, M. Oliverio, K. Bourque

President Cienki called the Town Council meeting to order at 7:03 pm, followed by Carolyn Mark who called the School Committee to order.

The East Greenwich Chorus Club sang the Star-Spangled Banner which was followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

(3) Joint Meeting with School Committee

- (a) Statutory pre-budget consultation between East Greenwich School Committee and East Greenwich Town Council pursuant to RIGL 16-2-21 and a review of revenue and expenditure projections.

Town and School exchanged estimations of projected revenues and proposed expenditures on November 1, 2017. Chairwoman Mark explained that the projected expenditures were produced by the Finance Department and have not been vetted by the School Committee. Ms. Corrigan explained that the Town's estimated revenues were calculated based on input from the Tax Assessor and Planning Director. On average, home values have increased 4%. The tax rate can only be increased by 4%. Revenues other than taxes remain stable.

- (b) Discussion and possible vote to approve Cisco telecommunications contract.

Ms. Corrigan referred to a handout that reflected the cost allocation history of duplicate phone systems on both the Town and School sides dating back to 2004. Consolidation occurred in 2013 after an RFP was put out for a joint system which included first year maintenance. In 2017, maintenance costs were prorated between the Town and School. Costs for a new three year agreement were significantly reduced based on State MPA pricing and vendor discounts. Attorney Oliverio requested more time before signing the document and received further clarification on numbers from Ms. Corrigan. There are no issues with the system becoming obsolete during the term of the agreement. Chairwoman Mark stated that the cost is an unanticipated expense which Ms. Corrigan questioned.

Motion to approve the Cisco telecommunications contract made by Sean Todd, seconded by Mark Schwager

Discussion ensued on cost allocations for budgeting purposes. It was noted that the school district agreed with the cost sharing percentages.

Ayes: Cienki, Deutsch, Granatiero, Schwager, Todd

Motion Carried

Mr. Plain advocated for more time to review the agreement. Ms. Corrigan clarified the cost percentages allocated to the School.

- (c) Update, discussion and consideration of potential resolution of school sewer bill issues.

Ms. Corrigan recommended meeting with the Superintendent and both attorneys to continue negotiations and draw up an agreement. Chairwoman Mark agreed.

- (d) Discussion regarding demonstrated need requirement for supplemental appropriation requests.

Ms. Corrigan defined demonstrated need as unforeseen needs that the School Committee can present to the Town Manager and ask for a supplemental appropriation. If all requirements are met, the Town Manager would then review the Town's budget and make a recommendation to the Council for approval of the supplemental appropriation.

Mr. Plain was opposed to the Town's evaluation of the School's budget based on categories of programmatic services. He explained the district's responsibility to meet pre-K enrollment numbers which are typically received after the budget is approved. They are also obligated to educate students as young as age three that require special education services. This was the context behind the request for supplemental appropriations earlier this year. He asserted that the special education curriculum requirements are being met, despite shortfalls in other areas. Ms. Corrigan disagreed and stated that this scenario does not fall into one of the five categories identified in meetings with Dr. Mercurio as unpredictable. Mr. Plain retorted that the Town's allocation has negatively impacted the District's ability to provide basic education requirements. Chairwoman Mark added that they received a letter from NEASC saying that the District is at risk of losing accreditation. Mr. Dronzek asked for clarification as to why the extra classroom was not a demonstrated need to which Ms. Corrigan explained that more information is needed to make a recommendation. Discussion ensued on the timing of the request and the Town Manager's arbiter status. Lengthy debate followed on the length of time the Town took to respond to the School's request, determination of need and the allocation of monies to fund the request. Town funds set aside from capital expenditures remain intact as previously discussed. Chairwoman Mark requested further consideration at the next Town Council meeting when they have budget to actual data. Mr. Fain disputed comments that specific line items were not identified by the Town and discussion ensued on the hiring of a Director of Curriculum. Dr. Mercurio spoke about current staffing issues within the district. Councilor Schwager received clarification from Ms. Corrigan on what demonstrated needs are and the Town's reserve of capital expenditures for such needs. Dr. Mercurio explained what NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) is and that the School must demonstrate a resolution of issues to avoid the potential for adverse reactions. Dr. McEwen noted there are different types of warnings and standards. Discussion followed on the notice given to the high school which was for a lack of community resources. They are not currently at risk of losing accreditation. Funding the Director of Curriculum position was discussed at great length. Councilor Granatiero had concerns about the position being looked at as a cost rather than an investment. Mr. Dronzek addressed the risks associated with the investment and the misconception of surpluses on the school side based on reporting requirements. Enrollment's effect on the budgeting process was discussed. Conversation followed on analyzing structural changes on the school's side such as transportation, special education, etc. Mr. Plain spoke at length about the evolution of education.

Councilor Granatiero pressed his inquiry about finding meaningful changes to adjust to a level funded budget. Dr. Mercurio replied the senior project coordinator position is being rolled back but operating costs are status quo. Discussion ensued. Mr. Oliverio added that major structural changes would require a programmatic fiscal audit and spoke confidently about meeting basic education programs. VP Todd was assured that budget to actual numbers show the district is right where they should be. More accurate financial information will be presented in January.

- (e) Discussion regarding municipal/school finance functions and potential next steps, including discussion of 2005 consolidation.

Ms. Corrigan provided details on the reasons for the 2005 consolidation of certain financial functions with the School Department which resulted from an independent audit that uncovered twenty-eight deficiencies. Control has shifted too much on the Town side. She suggested two options to rectify the situation; one option is to disentangle and separate (divorce) or two is to do a full consolidation (marriage). An expeditious decision is crucial to be ready for FY 2019. She proposed to meet with the Superintendent, Chairwoman Mark, President Cienki and both attorneys and present their decision with the timeline and implementation strategy by February 12, 2017.

Dr. McEwen and Ms. Corrigan discussed the relocation of school employees to Town Hall and the consolidation and control of certain financial functions. Mr. Dronzek was open to other options. Ms. Dykeman provided her insight and reasons on why the current situation is not working. Chairwoman Mark recommended benchmarking on both scenarios and including Finance Chairperson Dronzek in the discussion. Mr. Plain requested that hiring, supervising, evaluating and decision making about employment is included in the discussions.

(4) Public Comments (30 minute time limit)

Sharon Siedliski, 28 Great Road, commended the chorus students and thanked them for working together in the face of adversity.

Anthony Soscia, 576 South Road, advocated for financial support of music and arts education.

Rob Vespia, Shippeetown Road, commented on how the decisions of the Town Council effect the School Committee, work load in the Finance Department and flexibility in the budget to allow for changes in enrollment.

Carla Swanson, 38 Greene Street, took issue with comments made by Councilor Granatiero about School Committee decisions to handle level funding and comments made by Ms. Corrigan about the Town's influence on the School's budget. She requested that revenue and expenditure projections are made public and questioned the One Town concept.

Andrea Hamlin, 55 Oakwood Drive, reminded Council that her daughter Anna (photo) would benefit from the service provided in the new pre-K classroom.

Gene Quinn, 260 Middle Road, commented that growth in tax bills was overstated and suggested it is an analysis problem not a spending problem.

Sheri White, 20 Graham Way, voiced her dismay with cuts to the choral program and spoke in favor of its reinstatement.

Motion for School Committee to adjourn made by Matt Plain, seconded by Mary Ellen Winters

Ayes: Mark, Plain, Winters, Dronzek, Sun, McEwen, Fain

Motion Carried

Council took a brief recess.

(5) Town Council Minutes

(a) December 4, 2017 (Regular Session)

Motion to approve made by Sean Todd, seconded by Mark Schwager.

Ayes: Cienki, Deutsch, Granatiero, Schwager, Todd

Motion Carried

(6) Consent Calendar

(a) Re-appointments to Planning Board:

- Michael Donegan for a three-year term to expire January 1, 2021
- Jason Gomez for a three-year term to expire January 1, 2021

Motion to approve made by Sean Todd, seconded by Nino Granatiero.

Ayes: Cienki, Deutsch, Granatiero, Schwager, Todd

Motion Carried

(7) New Business (Discussion/Action)

- (a) Ratification of tax appeal settlement agreement for Tibaldi Properties, LLC and civil action no. KC-2016-054.

Motion to approve made by Sean Todd, seconded by Nino Granatiero.

Solicitor D'Agostino provided some history on the claim.

Ayes: Cienki, Deutsch, Granatiero, Schwager, Todd

Motion Carried

(8) Council Comments

None

(9) Executive Session

- (a) Closed pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2), sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, specifically to discuss the matter, IAFF Local 3328 and James Perry v. East Greenwich, KC-2017-0898.
- (b) Closed pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2), sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, specifically to discuss on going labor relations matters concerning East Greenwich Firefighters Local 3328, IAFF.

Motion to go in to Executive Session per RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2) made by Sean Todd, seconded by Andrew Deutsch

Ayes: Cienki, Todd, Deutsch, Granatiero, Schwager

Motion Carried

Motion to close the Executive Session made by Sean Todd, seconded by Mark Schwager

Ayes: Cienki, Todd, Deutsch, Granatiero, Schwager

Motion Carried

Motion to seal the Executive Session minutes and reconvene in to Open Session made by Sean Todd, seconded by Andrew Deutsch

Ayes: Cienki, Todd, Deutsch, Granatiero, Schwager

Motion Carried

Motion to adjourn made by Sean Todd, seconded by Mark Schwager

Ayes: Cienki, Todd, Deutsch, Granatiero, Schwager

Motion Carried

Submitted By:

Leigh A. Carney, CMC
Town Clerk

Approved By Town Council:
(pending)