

## SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**December 17, 2012**

**5:30 p.m.**

The Clerk called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: School Committee Member Ambrogi, Alderman Craig,  
School Committee Member Connors, Alderman Corriveau,  
School Committee Member Staub, Alderman Shaw

The Clerk advised that the purpose of the meeting is organizational in nature and requests nominations for Co-Chairs of the Committee, one from each board.

*On motion of Alderman Craig, duly seconded by Alderman Shaw, it was voted to nominate Alderman Corriveau as the Aldermanic co-chair.*

Alderman Corriveau stated I proudly accept. As the only man on the committee, I feel that I should be the secretary. Thank you, aldermen.

*On motion of School Committee Member Staub, duly seconded by School Committee Member Connors, it was voted to nominate School Committee Member Ambrogi as the School Board co-chair.*

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated I accept.

*On motion of Alderman Shaw, duly seconded by School Committee Member Ambrogi, it was voted to close nominations.*

*The clerk called for a vote on the motion to nominate Alderman Corriveau as the Aldermanic co-chair and School Committee Member Ambrogi as the School Board co-chair. There being none opposed, the motion carried.*

The Clerk addressed item 5 of the agenda:

5. Discussion regarding the purview of the committee and future discussion items.

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated I think this is something that is obviously going to develop over time. I think we are very anxious to use this committee as an opportunity to work on areas where the two boards can productively work together to solve school issues. I know there have been some examples, particularly where City services are provided in the schools, that may be something that we can use this committee for. We are very anxious to use this committee and an opportunity to share information and try to have a good working relationship between the two boards.

Alderman Corriveau stated I certainly agree with those sentiments. Obviously, I believe there are a couple big issues that we can begin talking about over the course of the year. I think from the aldermanic perspective, a very valuable tool and hopefully from the School Committee's as well, would be a dialogue about the school budget throughout the course of the next year particularly in the next few months. As the mayor prepares a budget and we look at what he will be allocating towards the schools, what the aldermen can also allocate, I think it is very important to have some sort of budget dialogue every meeting. I would add to that that having spoken with a couple aldermen, they would really like to hear information, whether it is from principals or people through the district saying here is what we do, really just information, but here is what is working well, here

is what isn't, here is how, hopefully, the aldermen and the School Committee can do to help. I don't know if that would involve every meeting having five minutes of testimony from a school principal or various stakeholders in our educational community, but I think that would provide us with a very valuable perspective on moving forward. Finally, I agree that City services, everything from chargeback to security issues to any number of things, I think it is important to have that dialogue and bring joint proposals forward in terms of services we can render. I know it is important for the aldermen to clearly state to the School Committee that we are not looking to usurp anything. This is hopefully going to be a dialogue for 2013 between the two boards so we can begin working in a more cooperative and collaborative fashion. I don't know what everyone else on the committee thinks of those approaches, but I was happy to share them with you.

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated I would just add that I think that makes a lot of sense, Alderman Corriveau, and I think that one of the things I have observed in past budget processes has been a lack of, not that you are not given the same numbers that we are, but to have a better understanding of what those numbers really mean and what it means in terms of programs we are supporting and what we hope to achieve in the future with the next budget, what the School District is looking at, and that really ties into the committee that School Committee Member Staub is on concerning strategic planning and that is something I would think that would be a nice way to dovetail that information in here as well.

School Committee Member Staub stated going forward I think the strategic planning process is going to give us a blueprint for where we are spending out money, where we need to spend our money and what kind of return on investment we are going to get. We are in the process now, we are garnering information from stakeholders. As a public school system we work for the public so we need

to understand what the expectations are from the public for the service that we provide. We are in that process now. We will be going forward with the audit, hopefully, so we will have a good idea of where we are compared to other school districts, where the public would like us to be and then when the new superintendent arrives, we will go forward and figure out and plan our course for getting to where we need to be. Next year when we do our budget I think that will play a much larger role. This year we will have some input from the public and I think we need to be responsive to the public. I really am looking forward to having a conversation face to face between people who respect one another and are willing to listen to one another and not just at the public level, but at the in depth level. Some times we have to say things that other people don't want to hear and I think we all have enough respect for one another that we are going to be willing to do that and work through that. I am looking forward to that too.

Alderman Corriveau stated I agree with School Committee Member Staub. I think this committee hearing from the public would be really insightful for both boards. Alderman Craig and I had a discussion about this. It is very rare that the public can address both boards or at least representatives of the board of aldermen and the school committee. I think that that is something that we should consider periodically, having meetings where we just listen to the public as opposed to just taking testimony or moving on school and City issues. I don't know what anybody else thinks about that, but obviously at this current time there are a lot of people from the public who want to address and come to both meetings of the boards and provide testimony. If there are people interested in addressing members of both boards I think that is something we maybe should consider, especially for our next meeting, our first non-organizational meeting maybe consider taking three minute testimony from the public.

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated certainly. I think that would be a good way. One of the most important things about our way forward, we have to listen to all of our constituents and be responsive to what the community is looking for. I think that is a good idea.

Alderman Shaw stated I also feel that it is important that we hear suggestions from the public, suggestions from principals, suggestions from teachers as to how we could improve. We all know that money doesn't grow on trees. We all know that we are not going to get tons of money where we can say here is all that you need. There is more to this than just money; it is all about working together to fund ways to implement change to bring about cooperative efforts between the schools and the aldermen, finding out ways that we can help to improve the way that we deliver education in this city. We have a great city. We have great teachers. We have great kids. We have a lot of very positive things that occur. We all know the negative sides, and we need some suggestions as to what might work, what might be implemented, what might be something that we could look at and present to our boards and say this might work. I think that is what this committee is all about: instead of all of a sudden you have a presentation by someone and here is the bottom line, here is the top line, find somewhere in between and we will do what we are going to do with the money. That is old, we can't do it that way anymore because it hurts the School Board, it hurts the mayor and aldermen and it hurts our city, and our teachers and our kids. The most important thing that I want to see come out of this committee is the dialogue and the cooperative efforts of bringing back to our boards, suggestions that might work for improving the way we deliver education with funding that is adequate.

Alderman Corriveau stated perhaps, right now, we should have a discussion about what we would like to do for our first meeting; maybe some topics we would like to address; who we would like to have address them. Maybe we should start off,

as I said, every meeting having a discussion about the budget. I know that both boards should feel free to invite the finance officers from the School District and the City to forecast some of the numbers we are going to be looking at later on in the next few months. I don't know if anyone has any particular suggestions.

Alderman Craig stated I would really like to discuss and talk though the chargeback situation, as one of the topics right away, if that is possible.

Alderman Corriveau stated sure. Is there anyone who we should be forward?

Alderman Craig replied that would be Mr. Sanders.

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated I would think that if we are going to get into any kind of detailed discussion of the budget we ought to invite Ms. DeFrancis to join us. She is really the person who knows the budget inside and out.

Alderman Corriveau stated we will ask the clerk to request that Mr. Sanders and Ms. DeFrancis be available for our next meeting. What do the School Committee Members think of having periodic or brief testimony from principals?

School Committee Member Ambrogi replied my suggestion, Alderman Corriveau, would be that we start first with having the central office administration here to address us in terms of priorities and overall vision and then certainly it would be appropriate following that, but I would like to give the superintendent and his designees the opportunity to begin that process and then go forward. We could maybe invite one from each level of school, depending on what we were going to specifically discuss. I think we have to start at the top line.

Alderman Corriveau stated I don't want to just talk about our first meeting. I do think that starting off with chargebacks right away, talking about what we probably will be looking at in terms of budget numbers. I think those are two very important topics of conversation to begin with. I don't know if we want to begin talking about any other; whether it might be security issues or infrastructure issues. Obviously this is a dialogue we can have throughout the course of a year, but if there is any particularly pressing issues any members of this committee would like to have addressed, starting right way in 2013, we can. I'll leave that open.

Alderman Shaw stated I think Alderman Craig's idea of learning about the chargebacks would be a good thing. That way, by having Karen DeFrancis and Bill Sanders, we have representation from both sides and we can generally find out what the chargebacks are and some information about them. I think that is a good place to start.

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated one practical matter I would like to raise, I think it is important to figure out a way that these meetings get noticed at the same time when the School Board packet goes out because sometimes, because it is coming from the City side, I want to make sure that all the members of the School Board, if they were interested in joining us, would be aware of the meeting time. It is just a housekeeping matter.

Alderman Shaw stated that is a very good idea; have the notice go out both weeks.

School Committee Member Connors stated I would just like to echo that we do start with the finance and chargebacks. I don't think it was a secret that this committee was formed based on what the results were of the budget and the discussions that came out of that. I think once we start going through finance and

the chargebacks, we will see other issues emerge and you have mentioned infrastructure and other things like that. I think those will start coming forward as well. I think for our next meeting, if that is where we are going to start, I would begin there. I don't know that we would go any further in-depth on any of the other topics.

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated we can learn from the two finance officers and then go from there.

Alderman Craig asked on the School Board side, do you receive financials on a monthly basis?

School Committee Member Ambrogi replied yes.

Alderman Craig asked so is that something that can be included in the packet prior to our meetings?

School Committee Member Ambrogi replied yes. School Committee Member Staub sits on the finance committee. At our first monthly meeting there is generally a packet so I don't see any reason why that material couldn't be included in the preparation material for our next meeting.

Alderman Shaw asked are we going to choose a specific date or a specific time that might work so that we know ahead of time? How are we going to work that?

School Committee Member Ambrogi replied I don't know. I think it is a good idea, Alderman Shaw, in terms of picking a set part of the month where we would be meeting. I don't know the best way to go about that. I know when our meetings are, but I don't know when your meetings are.

Alderman Corriveau asked Matt, is there anything that might help on your end in terms of scheduling?

City Clerk Matthew Normand replied I think that generally the third Monday, like tonight, but I don't know how that works for everyone. It works well for the aldermen, but I don't know about the School Committee Members.

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated we usually don't have Monday meetings on the third week. We happen to have one tonight, but that is a special meeting because of the holiday schedule.

School Committee Member Staub asked didn't we decide we were going to have two meetings a month?

School Committee Member Ambrogi replied that would be the second and fourth Mondays of the month so this would be the alternative night.

Alderman Shaw asked are we going to limit the time to an hour or an hour and a half or play it by ear? How is that going to go?

School Committee Member Ambrogi asked Matt, are there meetings that follow this one?

City Clerk Normand replied there are. That is really the main issue with scheduling in the chambers; finding a night that works for the room. Mondays, as I said, generally, are better just because there are fewer later meetings going on. Again, maybe we could try the third Monday next month and then if that doesn't work we could try a different night.

School Committee Member Ambrogi asked if we tried for the third Monday of next month at this same time as a starting point and if there is anything else that we need to work out, I think we could figure it out offline.

Alderman Shaw stated Mondays are the worst day of the week for me, but if we could meet from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.... My commitment is from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. so if we could meet 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. maybe that would work out. I don't think it will interfere too much with the other committees.

School Committee Member Ambrogi stated okay, let's try that. I think if we were going to be holding public hearings we might want to have it set later, but for next month that perhaps is a good place to start.

Alderman Corriveau stated I think we are all in agreement that our first meeting will be January 21, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. We will invite Mr. Sanders and Ms. DeFrancis to provide testimony in terms of budget numbers they are looking at going forward and talk about the chargeback issues, if they have any recommendations ready to come forward with them, but if not, I think just starting the dialogue in that first meeting will be very valuable. Maybe we also have an agenda item for every meeting where any member of this committee can say here is what I would like to talk about, a suggestion for an agenda item for our next meeting. Obviously we have a range of issues that we are going to try to address. Maybe at some point in January, or February, March and April, when the budget discussions really get going, that is when we start asking the public to weigh in with what they see and their ideas and their suggestions.

*There being no further business, on motion of Alderman Craig, duly seconded by School Committee Member Connors, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Clerk of Committee