

APPROVED

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD (MARB)

SPECIAL MEETING Minutes
MARB Hartford Committee

Date: Friday, August 10, 2018
Time: 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM
Location: Hartford Public Library, 500 Main Street, Classroom 141 (Main Floor) Hartford, CT

Agenda & Minutes

Members in Attendance: Mark Waxenberg, Bill Cochran

Other MARB Representatives: Bob Dakers, Riju Das

Hartford Public Schools: Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, David Fleig, Natasha Banks

City Representatives: Leigh-Ann Ralls,

- I. Call to Order **The meeting was called to order at 10:10AM**
- II. Review and Approval of Minutes from May 10, 2018 and May 18, 2018 Meetings **Mr. Cochran moved, seconded by Mr. Waxenberg, approval of the two sets of minutes. Approved unanimously.**
- III. Presentation, Review, and Possible Action re City's Board of Education Budget for Fiscal Year19

Mr. Dakers noted that the MARB, approves the overall City budget of which the Hartford Public Schools are a part. In Tier III, the MARB does not have specific approval authority of the education budget or its line items. Given the importance of the education budget to the City budget and its finances, the committee wanted to get a better understanding of the education budget and its current and projected status. Mr. Waxenberg indicated that education policy is generally not the purview of the MARB, but that he had an interested in finding out more about certain areas of expenses and the potential for efficiencies.

Dr. Torres-Rodriguez thanks the committee for the opportunity to meet with the committee and gave a presentation (*on MARB's website*) that included information about the Hartford Public Schools and its budget, including both historical and projected information. She and her staff answered questions from the committee.

During the presentation, the committee had requests for further information including:

- 1) There was much discussion regarding the Hartford BOE's rapidly growing special education tuition and other costs. The potential to undertake a study, together with the State SDE, to review these costs and new ways to deliver services that may be more cost effective in achieving better outcomes for students was raised. Requests and potential next steps in this regard include:
 - Further breakdown of the number of Special Education students in the following categories: neighborhood schools, out of district, magnets, etc (*David Fleig*)
 - Further benchmarking Hartford's costs with other cities by number/types of placements (out-of-home) and services (*David Fleig*)
 - Include as agenda topic for upcoming MARB Hartford Committee meeting.
- 2) The BOE reports they have 54 non-union employees that were unilaterally moved into HDHP/HSA health plan and they were mandated to take 5 furlough days to reduce costs (*Natasha Banks to verify*). It was requested to have the City report back on how non-union City employees are being handled in this regard and who has the authority to make or approve such changes (i.e. the Mayor, Common Council, etc). (*Melissa McCaw*).
- 3) The BOE is to send to us a copy of the MOU with the Achievement First charter school with the specific services and costs associated with that MOU. (*David Fleig*)
- 4) The BOE has just completed health insurance dependent care audit and is working with Segal to review health insurance plan and design options as part of its labor negotiations. The options reviewed include potential movement to the State Partnership Plan. The MARB will work with the City BOE and Segal, similar to work being done in West Haven, to obtain this analysis (*Bob D., Natasha Banks*)
- 5) Page 11 of presentation-5 year enrollment chart- break down by neighborhood schools, magnets, out of district (*David Fleig*)
- 6) Does the approximately \$10.1 million in State excess-cost grant funds get sent directly to City BOE as pass through? (*Leigh-Ann Ralls, City*)? Why has the \$10.1 million remained flat? (*Bob D*)
- 7) How much of the BOE's \$13.4 million (page 22) in transportation costs get reimbursed by the State? (*Bob D, David Fleig*)
- 8) Additional information in terms of liabilities and projections for BOE severance payments was requested (*David Fleig*)

IV. Discussion of Future Agenda Items and Topics

The members then discussed topics for future agenda items for the committee meetings, with Mr. Dakers noting that the plan is to have the City Treasurer, other City officials and the City's actuaries at the October committee meeting to pension the most recent valuation reports and other information related to the city's pension and OPEB plans. For the September meeting potential topics include a discussion of the list of revenue and operational efficiency options, initiatives and strategic goals the City provided in relation to its 5-Year plan. For some of these items, the MARB's role would be to monitor their progress while for others, the MARB and the City could partner in their review and implementation.

V. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:05PM.