

TOWN COUNCIL
Town of Trumbull
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TOWN HALL
Trumbull

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 8, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: The Chair called the virtual meeting to order at 8:03 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Thomas Whitmoyer, Chairman, Joanne Glasser-Orenstein, Vice Chairman, Kevin Shively, Donna Seidell, Lori Rosasco-Schwartz, Michael Miller, Alternate, Carl A. Massaro, Jr., Alternate

ABSENT: Lisa Valenti

ALSO

PRESENT: First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro, Chief Administrative Officers Cynthia Katske and Kathleen McGannon, Town Attorney Daniel Schopick, Town Council Chairman Mary Beth Thornton, Town Council members Joy Colon, Tony Scinto, Ashley Gaudiano, Eric Paulson, Dawn Cantafio

1. The scope of the Education Committee and; 2. Current Budget

The Chair explained this was an organizational meeting of the Education Committee. It was his understanding the BOE audit was not complete and it would be another 4-6. When he called for the resolution for the reestablishment of this committee, the audit was the number one topic. Since then there has been discussion on opening up a dialogue with the BOE.

The Council had not been apprised of the fact that the BOE had a \$1 million budget shortfall in the previous fiscal year. He is not aware that the BOE is publicizing their financial reports anymore and believes a dialogue needs to be started to see where their needs are falling and what they might presume the budget numbers might be before the last presentation. He was dismayed by people thinking the BOE didn't get enough, this was the only district that got anything above a 0% or money taken away. A discussion needs to be opened up on budget as well as general operation, financials, COVID-19 response and protocols, facilities and technology.

The Chair would like the committee to brainstorm to come up with questions in these areas and possibly more. The committee could follow up on these once the audit is looked at. They could then ask those that are directly related how we could be doing better and where do we stand as a school district compared to what others are doing. The Chair invited the committee to address a question they might have or their constituent has communicated to them. This committee could be the go-between.

2. Discussion Items:

- Covid Protocol

Ms. Glasser-Orenstein noted there has been a question of whether there has been enough PPE supplied to the schools, classrooms and teachers. She knows they don't have purview over the BOE administration or curriculum and suggested partnering with the BOE curriculum developers to make suggestions to make it more equitable and diverse, i.e. American History.

The Chair noted that the Town will be getting funding for COVID-19 related items and that could be something the committee could look at and how it will be spent. The committee can oversee and suggest but they can't tell them what to do, that is not the intention of the committee. This is to start a dialogue of what their needs are in all the areas, not just the budget.

The Chair would like the BOE to make a presentation to them on what they view is diversity in the curriculum and let people decide if it's enough, not enough or too much. Let's see where it is happening and if it's a consistent message k-12.

The Chair confirmed he hopes and it's his intention the audit will come to this committee first and then to the full Town Council.

- Financial and Operations

Mr. Shively suggested there may be some cost sharing and cooperative efforts offered from both the Town and BOE. This may be an area where this committee could be helpful and serve the Town and the BOE.

Mr. Shively noted this committee could be a further voice of communication to the community. The BOE is overwhelmed at this time with the current extreme circumstances. None of which could have been predicted or fully prepared for. The Chair noted it's a fine line and doesn't want to overstep, but in reverse the committee can be a group that the community comes with their concerns that the committee can share. It would be a smaller setting and with the people who need to hear but while still not being a voice of the BOE. Mr. Shively agreed.

Mr. Miller echoed Mr. Shively's comments and added it's a matter of financials and operations. They are not funded to fully communicate the changes for this year, or moving forward with regular communications. He asked if the town has seen the

same struggles. Communication has been a struggle and sees it as a town wide initiative. He thinks the way most people get their information is from those who watch the meetings and post the information on social media, that shouldn't be the primary way. Mr. Shively noted this may be a cost sharing opportunity.

First Selectman Tesoro noted her concern with regard to communication, she has made at least 60 robo-calls during the last 6 months dealing with COVID-19 and the most recent storm. We do have the mechanism, the Alert system in place for all citizens of the Town to be in communication with them. The Town has sent post cards out to the residents encouraging them to sign up for the Alert system. They would get an immediate email, text or call notification depending on how they have signed up. They continue to encourage the public to use this system, because it works very well, but we do need the community to sign up. They always want to improve communication, she ran on that with her campaign, she believes in transparency and communication at all times. Mr. Miller agreed and noted that it's incumbent upon them as Council members to make people aware. The Town has done very well with notifications and information on the website and should continue from there. Ms. Glasser-Orenstein stated the Town does a great job with emergency notifications, the communications they are referring to are what is the BOE planning, and what are their concerns? This would bring people more into the process.

The Chair stated the BOE has made moves for more transparency, however when being transparent and finding a deficit in the last budget it just seems there is a disconnect. That is where the committee needs to figure this out so they are not surprised and suggested a representative of this committee attend the BOE meetings so they have someone who always knows what is going on.

- Facilities & Technology

Mr. Shively noted that Trumbull TV falls under the purview of the BOE not the Town even though it has taken on the responsibilities of a full government channel. Initially it was an education channel. There might be more opportunities of cross over and/or grants that the committee could look at.

The Chair stated as opportunity to outreach he suggested they meet with their state representatives to tell them their concerns with regard to state mandates on schools with no follow up funding. This would be to make sure the Town gets the funding needed and noted we need help in Hartford as well.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to discuss and upon motion made by Miller, seconded by Glasser-Orenstein the Education Committee adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Margaret D. Mastroni, Town Council Clerk