

SPECIAL MEETING – CITY COUNCIL

-NOVEMBER 20, 2008-

A special meeting of the City Council was held on Thursday, November 20, 2008 in the Western Hills Middle School Auditorium, 400 Phenix Ave., Cranston, Rhode Island.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by the Council President.

Roll Call showed the following members present: Councilmen Lanni, Lupino, Livingston (appeared at 8:00 P.M.), Navarro, Santamaria, Barone, Council Vice-President McFarland and Council President Garabedian -8.

Absent: Council Member Bucci -1.

Also Present: Mayor Michael Napolitano; Vito Sciolto, City Solicitor; Steve Woerner, City Council Internal Auditor.

Present Representing the School Department: Richard Scherza, Superintendent of Schools; Joseph Balducci, Chief Financial Officer; Ray Votto, Chief Operating Officer; Cheryl Coogan, Executive Director of Pupil Personnel and Curriculum; School Committee Chair Michael Traficante; School Committee Members Deborah Greifer, Andrea Iazzanni, Frank Lombardi, and Paul Archetto; Mayor-Elect Allan Fung; Council Member-Elect Robert Pelletier, Michelle Bergin-Andrews and Mario Aceto; School Committee Member-Elect Janice Ruggieri; State Representative Nicholas Mattiello and State Representative-Elect Michael Marcello.

City Union Representatives: Steve Labrie, Local 251 Teamsters; Steven Antonucci, IBPO Local 301; Paul Valetta, President of Local 1363 Firefighters; Arthur Jordan, Local 1322 Laborers.

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**CITY OF CRANSTON
RHODE ISLAND**

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

In Accordance with Section 3.07 of the Home Rule Charter and Section 2.04.060 of the City Code thereof, we hereby call a special meeting of the City Council to be held on

Thursday, November 20, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.
Western Hills Middle School Auditorium
400 Phenix Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920

Discussion of the City's fiscal situation and the impact of the State's fiscal situation on the City

The Cranston Legislative Delegation, School Committee and Union leaders for the Teamsters, Laborers, Police, Fire and Teacher unions have been invited to attend and participate.

The public is invited to attend but there will be no public comment at this work session.

We hereby request the City Clerk to notify all Council members of the Call of the special meeting.

Executed at Cranston, Rhode Island, this 14th day of November, 2008.

/s/ Mayor Michael T. Napolitano

/s/ Aram G. Garabedian, Council President

Individuals requesting interpreter services for the hearing-impaired must notify the Office of the City Clerk at 461-1000 Ext. 3197 seventy-two (72) hours in advance of the hearing date."

-NOVEMBER 20, 2008-

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that a true copy of the attached Call of a special meeting of the City Council to be held on Thursday, November 20, 2008 at 7:00 P.M. in the Western Hills Middle School Auditorium, 400 Phenix Ave., Cranston, R.I. was delivered via electronic mail on the 14th day of November, 2008 and regular mail, postage prepaid to the addresses listed below.

Council President Aram G. Garabedian
173 Belvedere Dr.
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Council Member Maria A. Bucci
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Cranston, RI 02921
MarBC4@aol.com

Councilman Terence Livingston
28 Tucker Ave.
Cranston, RI 02905
Terry@livingstonlaw.us

Councilman Jeffrey P. Barone
16 Samuel Court
Cranston, RI
Jeffreyb22@cox.net

Councilwoman Paula B. McFarland
100 Pomham St.
Cranston, RI 02910
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Councilman John E. Lanni, Jr.
111 Woodview Dr.
Cranston, RI 02920
john.lanni@yahoo.com

Councilman Anthony J. Lupino
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Cranston, RI 02921
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Councilman Emilio L. Navarro
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Cranston, RI 02910
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Councilman Richard Santamaria
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Councilman-Elect Robert Pelletier
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Rpelletier1@verizon.net

Councilman-Elect Mario Aceto
152 Locust Glen Dr.
Cranston, RI 02920

Councilman-Elect Paul Archetto
359 Princess Ave.
Cranston, RI 02920

Council Member-Elect Michelle Bergin-Andrews
280 Summit Dr.
Cranston, RI 02920
Michelle@andrewslawoffices.com

/s/ Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk

-NOVEMBER 20, 2008-

Mr. Woerner conducted a slide show presentation entitled “Solutions not Blame”

Mr. Trafficante asked what Cranston’s per pupil expenditure is compared to the rest of the State. Mr. Balducci stated \$16,200 per pupil.

Mr. Woerner stated that if every union paid 20% towards their healthcare, it would save the Schools \$3.55 million a year and the City \$1.3 million. The reason for this meeting is so we can all start thinking of a solution to the fiscal status of the Schools and City. The Cullion settlement is not included in this analysis because he does not know how the auditors will treat that and how this settlement is going to be funded.

Mr. Fung questioned the \$4.3 million loan on our fund balance to the Schools and asked how our Auditors are going to treat that. Mr. Woerner stated that he sense is they are just going to show it as a School Department deficit.

Mr. Aceto indicated to the slide presentation, which shows tax dollars from residential and commercial. He asked how that ratio compares to other municipalities. Mr. Woerner stated that it is not as good as Warwick or Lincoln, we are good in residential properties.

Mr. Lombardi asked Mr. Woerner if he budgeted for the current Caruolo Action. Mr. Woerner stated, no, he looks at it together.

Mr. Fung asked how our overall City’s debt ration is. Mr. Woerner stated that it is very good. Mr. Fung asked if we are going to have a dramatic impact in our commercial closings in Garden City. Mr. Woerner stated that the Deputy Assessor has told him that he is finding a lot of vacant business space and businesses no longer there.

Mayor Napolitano asked Mr. Woerner if his analysis takes into consideration cuts of State Aid to Cities and Towns. Mr. Woerner stated that he anticipated \$1 million cut this year.

Council President Garabedian stated that the area of healthcare co-pay is one of the areas we are looking from the Unions and from the City employees.

Council President Garabedian asked Mr. Scherza if there are any new developments on the City side. Mr. Scherza stated that since the last meeting, he met with all Union leadership asking for help especially in the area of co-pay. Today, the School Department received a confirmed date to meet with the Commissioner of Education to discuss the waiver issue.

Mr. Fung asked if the City has done an inventory of all public properties that may be vacant or not occupied. Council Vice-President McFarland stated that Wonderland on Pontiac Ave. has been vacant for some time. Council President Garabedian stated that Sanders School is being given back to the City by the Schools.

Mr. Trafficante stated that as to the waiver or relief request from the Commissioner of Education, we are not very optimistic that that will happen.

Ms. Iannazzi stated that she just left Senator Gallo, who is attending a meeting at the State House and could not attend this meeting, but she wanted to make sure the letter she and Senator Miller and Lanzi sent, was read into the record. Council President Garabedian read this letter for the record.

-NOVEMBER 20, 2008-

Paul Valetta, President of Local 1363 International Firefighters Union, appeared to speak and stated that this is a very good meeting, but he believes that there needs to be a trust between the Administration and the Unions. The Unions are willing to come to the table. Perfect example is the Police and Fire Union coming to the table, at the request of the Administration, and there are two Ordinances on the Docket for Monday's Council meeting. If these Ordinances are not passed Monday night, this will be a telltale sign.

Terence Flynn, Representative of the Cranston Teachers Alliance, appeared to speak and stated that if we are going to solve this problem, there needs to be cooperation between the School and City. They have begun the negotiation process.

Councilman Lupino addressed Representatives Mattiello and Marcello and suggested to them that the area the General Assembly could help the City is to get us some control on the mandates. The General Assembly needs to send a clear and strong message to Rhode Island Department of Education regarding new and current mandates. Representative Mattiello suggested that if there are particular mandates that are a concern, he suggested that a meeting be held to discuss this. He asked that everyone keep in mind that mandates are our education system. Councilman Lupino stated that there is a list that has been a burden on the District.

Council President Garabedian stated that our teachers, Police, Fire and Administrators are not underpaid as compared to other Cities and Towns. He asked that all the Unions take this into consideration when the issue of co-pay comes up.

Councilman Lanni stated that when it comes to solutions, we need to look at bulk purchasing between departments or even between Cities and Towns. He wishes someone would address this on the School side. Ms. Iannazzi stated that when she was first elected to the School Committee, she formed a sub-committee with the City of Warwick. They did purchase with Warwick and shared all transportation.

Council Vice-President McFarland stated that a year and a half ago, Project REDIRECT was formed and she chaired the Healthcare Sub-Committee and the sub-committee met with various Unions and School Committee Chair Traficante chaired the Recreation Sub-committee. They both came back with their respective sub-committees' recommendations. All the work that was done could have been negotiated and worked on. She is very disappointed that nothing was done.

Mr. Lombardi stated that the slide presentation is entitled "Solutions not Blame". We need to look prospectively not retrospectively. The answer to the solution has to start with the State Funding Formula. You really need a State Funding Formula and we have to keep up the fight for this. Mr. Traficante agreed. He stated that he believes Rhode Island is the only State who does not have a State Funding Formula. We can resolve our problems locally. We are not asking for mandates to be eliminated, we are only asking for some relief. We can't afford what we have right now, why keep adding more mandates. He address the issue of consolidation and stated that you have to have the political will to carry out consolidation. Consolidation has been discussed for many years and never been addressed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committee

(See stenographic notes of Ron Ronzio, Stenotypist).