

The Committee of the Whole met on Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 7pm remotely through the Zoom web application

Members present were Councilor Rosa DiFlorio, presiding, Councilors Gerly Adrien, Fred Capone, Anthony DiPierro, Jimmy Le, Michael Marchese, Stephanie Martins and Wayne Matewsky .

Members absent were Councilors John Hanlon and Michael Mclaughlin.

Communication received from Councilor Mclaughlin that he had surgery and would be unable to attend.

The Committee considered a Resolution offered by Councilor Gerly Adrien: That the City Council in support of the favorable vote of the School Committee requests the sum of \$471,140 be transferred and appropriated from the Budgetary Fund Balance to the applicable School Department line items. The requested amount is the school districts PPE and chromebook reimbursement through FEMA and the CARES Act.

Mayor Carlo DeMaria, Mayor's Chief of Staff Erin Deveny, CFO Eric Demas, City Solicitor Colleen Mejia, School Superintendent Priya Tahiliani, School CFO Anu Jayanth, School Committee member Frank Parker were also present

Councilor Adrien stated that she introduced the resolution in the hope that the City Council would show support for the schools in having the amount listed reimbursed back to the schools which she felt was very important for the students. The Mayor, Superintendent and CFO Demas all concurred that the schools did indeed purchase the PPE and chromebook items and that the schools did get reimbursed however the funds were returned to the City from the Schools along with an additional \$426,000 in unspent funds. Superintendent Tahiliani indicated once the schools realized it was inadvertently returned to City they sought the reimbursement which would be helpful to the Schools. Councilor DiPierro noted that the City Council does not have the authority to pass this unless the administration presents an appropriation that would require the City Council to do so. Councilor DiPierro suggested that the School Department could come up with cost savings to cover the amount in question with the schools still being closed and no sports programs being allowed. Superintendent Tahiliani responded that hybrid teaching was very expensive and that there wasn't as much savings with schools closed as everyone thinks. Mr. Demas stated that funds from FEMA were still in play and that he expected Federal Aid to continue to City and Towns under the new Presidential Administration. Councilor Martins remarked that there appeared to be a lot of animosity between both legislative bodies and asked the Mayor to place the reimbursed amount requested on the City Council agenda. Councilor Capone noted that the City Council does not get involved in school funding issues. Mr. Demas informed the Committee that the Superintendent did provide the Mayor with a spending plan for the reimbursed amount and that the Mayor was currently reviewing. Councilor Capone recommended that the Administration provide the requested funds to the school. Mr. Demas reminded him that the City Council would need to appropriate. Mayor DeMaria asked the Committee to allow his Administration to do its due diligence to work with the Schools on this issue. The Mayor stated that he would do anything to help the Schools but reminded the Committee that there were many pressing issues within the community such as providing rental/mortgage assistance – food assistance – while also dealing with the loss of business

revenues to the City. Councilor DiPierro requested that the matter be referred back to Sponsor as requested by the Mayor. Separate motions to support the reimbursed funds and another to refer to Mayor did not receive a second. The Committee vote 5 to 3 to refer back to Sponsor - - Councilors DiFlorio, DiPierro, Le, Marchese and Matewsky were in favor and Councilors Adrien, Capone and Martins were in opposition.

The Committee voted: To report back to the City Council with a recommendation to refer back to sponsor.

Respectfully Submitted,

John W. Burley
Clerk of Committees