

APPROVED MINUTES of the Joint
Meeting of the City Council of the City of Rye and
the Rye City School Board held in City Hall on April
13, 2013 at 10:00 A.M.

PRESENT:

DOUGLAS FRENCH Mayor
LAURA BRETT
PETER JOVANOVIH
JULIE KILLIAN
CATHERINE F. PARKER
JOSEPH A. SACK
Councilmembers

LAURA SLACK President
KAREN BELANGER
KENDALL EGAN
EDWARD FOX
KATY KEOHANE GLASSBERG
NANCY PASQUALE
Board Members

SCOTT PICKUP, City Manager
FRANK ALVAREZ, Superintendant of Schools
KATHLEEN RYAN, School District Assistant Superintendent for Business
CHRISTIAN MILLER, City Planner
RYAN COYNE, City Engineer
NOREEN WHITTY, City Assessor
KRISTEN WILSON, Corporation Counsel

ABSENT: RICHARD FILIPPI, Councilmember
 CHRIS REPETTO. Board Member

The meeting convened at 9:00 a.m. Board Member Glassberg made a motion, seconded by Board Member Egan and unanimously carried, to immediately adjourn into executive session to discuss tax certiorari matters. Councilwoman Brett made a motion, seconded by Mayor French to adjourn the executive session at 9:55 a.m. The joint meeting convened at 10:00 a.m.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Board President Slack called the meeting to order and invited everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Board President Slack asked the City Clerk to call the roll; a quorum of both boards was present to conduct business.

3. State of the Schools

Superintendent Alvarez said this has been a challenging year for the School District due to outside circumstances such as weather issues and the Newtown tragedy, but said the administration had tried to stay focused on students, the curriculum, and mandates. He reported on five areas: student achievement; teacher effectiveness; culture of caring; fiscal responsibility; and community engagement, which included a report on new and proposed curriculum programs and the proposed School District Budget, which reflects a \$2.3 Million reduction and a \$2.2 Million use of Fund Balance.

There was a discussion among the two boards regarding the State mandated 2% tax levy cap and the impact on the School District going forward due to lack of mandate relief. The necessity of “high performing” school districts such as Rye communicating these impacts to lawmakers in Albany was stressed. There was also a suggestion of updating and reissuing the joint Resolution calling for mandate relief that was adopted by the School District and City Council at their April 2012 joint meeting.

4. Update on the Rye City School District bond project and schedule

Kathleen Ryan, School District Assistant Superintendent for Business, provided a handout showing the proposed plan and discussed changes in traffic patterns that would be in effect during the construction period; the size and location of the construction site; changes to parking areas; and removal of temporary classrooms. The timing of the project is three or four weeks off the original schedule based on State Education Department delays. The bids will be opened in May. The groundbreaking will be in June and the project is expected to be completed prior to school opening in September 2014. City Manager Pickup suggested that the Board begin the process of educating the parents now about any changes that will affect them during the construction period.

5. Discussion of Alarm Fee Waiver for construction period

City Manager Pickup said that during the construction at the school it would be difficult to maintain a normal alarm system so in unusual circumstances, the Council has the ability to waive fees for false alarms. Board President Slack said that she believes that the Council should consider waiving all fees for false alarms for the School District. Councilwoman Parker noted that there was a cost to the City to provide the service that goes along with the false alarms and suggested that the waiver be for false alarms fees greater than the usual annual amount.

6. School Safety – StoneGate - police presence, crossing guards, Safe Routes to Schools

StoneGate – Dr. Alvarez said that the District has begun looking at how safe the schools are in the wake of Newtown. There has been a plan in place but it had not been revisited since 2008. StoneGate Associates has been hired and they have done a facilities update on all school buildings and will provide a recommendation on possible changes or improvements to facilities, which will be discussed at the April 23rd Board meeting. They will provide training for all teachers and are conducting drills in the schools. The District has also been working with Police Commissioner Connors and the Police Department and they have come into the school buildings to run drills. StoneGate will also work with parent groups. The new plan should be state of the art in terms of school safety measures.

Police Presence – City Manager Pickup said that in terms of long-term police presence at schools there is a patrol deficit. The City has looked at Community Service Workers, Peace Officers and other options in the Civil Service process. The people on the civil service lists have not been able to satisfy the City’s requirements. The Council may have to look at a budget item in the 2014 budget to create an assignment within the Police Department.

Crossing Guards – City Manager Pickup said the City has tried a variety of options on the crossing guard issue. There are issues with recruitment and retention. There is now an afternoon crossing guard in place at the High School. The City is looking into a contracting company that provides crossing guard services and would be responsible for replacements when a guard calls out.

Safe Routes to Schools - City Planner Christian Miller made a presentation on pedestrian safety projects that will be undertaken in the next couple of years, some of which are related to the bond referendum approved in November and others to a Safe Routes to School grant received by the YMCA. The projects include:

- Midland Crosswalk – This calls for a new crosswalk at the north playground of Midland School. The City can design the project but there are issues related to programming and operation of the school. The crosswalk would need to be staffed.
- Milton Road Corridor – (1) Improvements on Milton Road down to Oakland Beach Avenue. A crosswalk is proposed near the La Panetiere restaurant which would modify the curbing to provide for a pedestrian signal. (2) Sidewalk improvements, particularly on the east side, to provide for a concrete sidewalk and adequate ramps. The project is currently in the survey/design phase.
- Forest Avenue Improvements – This calls for a series of improvements near Rye Town Park to improve the crosswalks.
- Installation of rapid flash pedestrian-activated beacons at intersections without crossing guards.
- Milton School – Elevation of the sidewalk and installation of a new 6-inch curb.
- Theall/Osborn Crosswalk – Change the curbing to reduce the crossing distance.
- Five Points Intersection – Reduce the crossing distance on Grace Church Street by putting in a larger island to give relief to the pedestrian, or making additional modifications to the intersection that would require County approval.

7. Discussion of a City of Rye proposal for joint communications for emergencies

City Manager Pickup said the City would like to adopt a formal agreement with the School District whereby they can utilize the school's network to contact people in an emergency situation. It was suggested that school parents should be encouraged to sign up to receive Nixle alerts.

8. Civility Initiative

Board Member Glassberg, who is on the Drafting Committee for the Civility Statement, reported that the initiative came from the Rye Youth Council, who wanted to look at values shared among the Rye community. Two community meetings have been held and the issue has been embraced by all the religious organizations in the City, the parent organizations in the schools and the YMCA. The Drafting Committee is trying to model the initiative on a program called "Choose Civility". The goal is for individuals, groups and Boards to sign on to a "Civility Statement", in order for it to become a movement embraced by the community.

9. Communications

Mayor French noted the greater collaboration between the City Council and School Board in the last three years.

Board Member Fox suggested that the City revisit the ideal of conducting a city-wide property revaluation in order to deal with the problems that result from tax certiorari petitions. He said homeowners bear the burden of tax reductions granted to condominiums, co-ops, clubs and businesses. Councilwoman Parker suggested looking into doing a county-wide revaluation.

Board Member Belanger thanked Recreation Superintendent Sally Rogol and Assistant School Superintendent Ryan for looking at alternative opportunities for intramural sports for Middle School students and said she hoped to hear back on what could be offered starting next year.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss Board Member Egan made a motion, seconded by Board Member Pasquale and unanimously carried, to adjourn the meeting at 11.40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn F. Nodarse
City Clerk