

APPROVED
STATE OF CONNECTICUT
MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD (MARB)

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Hartford Subcommittee of the MARB

Meeting Date and Time: Thursday, January 28, 2021 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting Location: This was a virtual meeting. Meeting materials may be accessed at the following website:
<https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Marb/West-Haven-Committee-Meetings-and-Materials>

Call-In Instructions:

Telephone Number: (860) 840-2075

Meeting ID: 936 309 40

Members in Attendance: Kimberly Kennison (OPM Secretary designee), Christine Shaw (State Treasurer designee), Mark Waxenberg, Robert White, Matthew Brokman, Stephen Falcigno

Municipal Officials in Attendance: Mayor Bronin, Leigh Ann Ralls, Jennifer Hockenhull, Jolita Lazauskas, Superintendent Torres-Rodriguez, David Fleig, Vanessa Rossitto (Clifton Larson Associates), Leslie Zoll (Clifton Larson Associates), Dan Smith (Clifton Larson Associates)

OPM Staff in Attendance: Julian Freund

I. Call to Order & Opening Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM.

II. Approval of Minutes:

a. October 22, 2020 regular meeting

Mr. White made a motion with a second by Ms. Shaw to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

b. December 10, 2020 special meeting

Mr. White made a motion with a second by Mr. Waxenberg to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Review and Discussion: FY 2020 Audit and Financial Results

Leigh Ann Ralls acknowledged the work of her staff in completing the audit on time in difficult circumstances. Ms. Rossitto began the presentation of the audit results. An unmodified opinion on the financial statements, the Federal Single Audit, and State Single Audit was presented with no findings reported on internal control or compliance. Ms. Zoll reviewed the financial highlights from the financial statements. The City's total net position on a full accrual basis for governmental activities as of June 30, 2020 was \$559.1 million. Total net position on a full accrual basis for business type activities was \$18.9 million. General Fund Balance (modified

accrual basis) increased by \$17.2 million to \$29.8 million. Net position in the Enterprise Funds (modified accrual basis) was \$585 thousand for the Hartford Stadium Authority, \$14.7 million for Hartford Parking Facilities and \$3.7 million for the Golf Course. Internal Service Funds had a combined negative Net Position of (\$17.5) million. Net OPEB liability is \$395 million for the City and \$22 million for the Board of Education. The City's pension plan is 66.88% funded. The Management Letter recommended annual cybersecurity assessments and strengthening employee cybersecurity awareness and training. The prior year's comment regarding the Board of Education end of year closing process was not included in this year's letter because of improvements made by the Board of Education.

IV. Update: Status of Board of Education Special Education Study

Superintendent Torres-Rodriguez provided an overview of the status of special education programming and organizational initiatives and the RFP for a comprehensive study. Several programs are under consideration that would help to moderate the number of outplacements or bring students back within district for services. These include a transition program for students 18 to 22 years old which is currently provided out-of-district, higher tiered support as part of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTTS) program, a transitioning program to help students return to in-district programming from outplacements, and services to address school avoidance. In addition, several departmental restructuring efforts recommended in the previous Civic Solutions Group report are being implemented. The Superintendent reported that a number of students have not been reporting to their outplacements during the pandemic, making it problematic to project how many would transition back to in-district. The extent of learning loss during the pandemic has also not been determined. Because of this, the issuance of the comprehensive RFP is currently on hold.

Mr. Waxenberg noted that he has a number of questions that deal with data that could inform systemic changes in special education services. He will provide the questions in writing. He added that the district may need legislative help to smooth some of their efforts to transition more students to in-district programming and to build in transparency and fiscal accountability around special education placements into the open choice model.

Ms. Shaw asked if the district had estimated the potential cost savings from each of the programmatic proposals. Superintendent Torres-Rodriguez responded that given the uncertainty in the current environment, those kinds of projections would be difficult. Ms. Shaw asked about the potential cost-benefit for various combinations of the programming options. She also expressed concern with delaying the issuance of the RFP. Discussion continued regarding the ability to accurately project numbers of future special education placements. Transiency in the district's population, further compounded by the pandemic, makes forecasting special education placements particularly difficult. Subcommittee members suggested that a consultant hired through an RFP process may have the expertise to make these kinds of forecasts. Superintendent Torres-Rodriguez raised the possibility of re-engaging with the School Finance Project.

V. Other Related Business

Ms. Kennison noted the 2021 calendar dates.

VI. Adjourn

Mr. Brokman made a motion with a second by Mr. Waxenberg, to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:42 AM.