

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Minutes of the Meeting

October 2, 2017

1. Vice-President Logan called the meeting to Order at 8:00 pm
2. Vice-President Logan requested that a roll call be taken to record the attendance for the meeting. The Clerk called the roll – Councillors Brasco, Darcy, Fowler, Giordano, D. Leblanc, R. LeBlanc, Marchese, McLaughlin, McMenimen, Romard, Rourke, Vidal, Waddick and Logan were present. Councillor O'Brien was absent.
3. A motion by President LeBlanc to approve the minutes of the COW meeting held on September 18, 2017 was adopted on a voice vote and the minutes of September 18, 2017 were approved.
4. Councillor McMenimen rose to present a resolution concerning an award to the City as a recipient of the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. Councillor McMenimen congratulated the Auditor, Paul Centofanti and his staff for the achievement. Mr. Centofanti stated his appreciation for the recognition, but explained the award is for the City and it represents the collaborative effort of many individuals, starting with the leadership of the Mayor, the financial oversight and prudent decisions of the City Council, especially those members on the Finance Committee.
5. A request was received from the Mayor to appoint Jennie Scafidi, 3 Pearl Street, Waltham as a member of the Recreation Board. Councillor Giordano spoke in favor of the applicant and moved approval of the confirmation. The motion was adopted on a roll call vote of 14 in favor (Brasco, Darcy, Fowler, Giordano, D. Leblanc, R. LeBlanc, Marchese, McLaughlin, McMenimen, Romard, Rourke, Vidal, Waddick and Logan) and 1 absent (O'Brien) and the appointment of Jennie Scafidi to the Recreation Board was confirmed.
6. A resolution was submitted by Councillor Giordano pertaining to the bomb threats that have occurred in the Waltham Public Schools. President LeBlanc moved to hear from the Police Chief, Keith MacPherson. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. The Chief was asked what information he could share about the investigation. The Chief replied that he could not answer specific questions about an ongoing investigation. Councillor Giordano moved to hear from the Superintendent of Schools, Drew Echelson. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. Councillor Giordano asked about the delay in scheduling the citywide meeting with parents until October 11. Councillor Giordano also asked about the decision to evacuate versus lockdown children in the schools.

Superintendent Echelson stated it depended on the level of the threat and his priority is to maintain the safety of all the children. Councillor Giordano questioned Chief MacPherson about the search protocol, including why school teachers and other staff were being utilized. The Chief explained that those individuals are familiar with the school surroundings and would be better able to identify any object/item that looked out of place. Superintendent Echelson re-iterated that securing the safety of the children was the priority and the communication to parents would follow. Chief MacPherson stated the City has great resources to deal with this situation. Councillor Randy LeBlanc asked about the type of conversation parents should be having with their children. Councillor Brasco spoke about the level of anxiety that children have been experiencing concerning the "shelter in place" and what children are or are not being told. Councillor Brasco asked if the FBI or the Department of Homeland Security is involved. Chief MacPherson stated that he could not answer. Councillor Brasco asked about the policy if children were afraid and kept home from school. Superintendent Echelson stated the absence would be excused. Councillor Romard asked about the nature and the timing of threats that have been received. Chief MacPherson stated he could not comment. Councillor Romard asked about the protocol for communication to parents and would it be possible to include City Councillors on the communication list. Councillor Romard requested the Clerk's Office provide the e-mail and /or cell number to the Superintendent's Office for the purpose of being included on the communication list. Councillor Vidal asked if any communities in other parts of the country were being targeted. Chief MacPherson stated he could not comment on an ongoing investigation. Councillor Waddick questioned the reason for the October 11 meeting being held so far in the future. Superintendent Echelson stated we may be in better position to share more information. Councillor McLaughlin asked is there is anything the City Council could do to help with the investigation. Chief MacPherson stated the offer was appreciated but respectfully declined the assistance. Vice-President Logan re-iterated the City Council's willingness to help and assist with the communication to parents. Councillor Giordano thanked Superintendent Echelson and Chief MacPherson for their appearance before the Committee. Councillor Giordano moved to place the matter of the resolution on the table. The motion was adopted on a voice vote and the matter was tabled.

7. Councillor Marchese moved to take the matter of the acquisition of the property located at 101R Elm Street from the table. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. Councillor Marchese stated that the Committee has received the Phase 1 environmental report. Councillor moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of negotiation of the land acquisition, invite Assistant Solicitor Patricia Azadi, Planning Director Catherine Cagle, environmental consultant Frank Vetere to the Executive Session, and appoint Paul Centofanti as Clerk of the Executive Session and to reconvene in Open Session. The motion was adopted on a roll call vote of 13 in favor (Brasco, Darcy, Fowler, Giordano,

D. Leblanc, R. LeBlanc, Marchese, McLaughlin, McMenimen, Romard, Rourke, Vidal and Logan) and 2 absent (O'Brien and Waddick) at 9:05pm.

8. Open session was reconvened at 10:05pm. Councillor Marchese moved to place the matter of the acquisition of the property located at 101R Elm Street back on the table. The motion was adopted on a voice vote and the matter was tabled.
9. A motion by Councillor Marchese to adjourn was adopted on a voice vote, and the Chair declared the Committee adjourned at 10:10pm.

Paul G. Centofanti – Clerk to the Committee of the Whole