

MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Municipality Review Board (MARB)

FROM: Robert Dakers, OPM

SUBJECT: Status of October 4, 2018 MARB Motions Regarding Hartford Public Schools

DATE: November 30, 2018

Included below are the motions approved by the MARB at its October 4, 2018 meeting as well as the status of MARB staff action on these motions. The motions are in *italics* followed by the **status report**.

October 4, 2018 Approved Motions & Status

- 1. Recommend that the MARB, with the assistance of the State Office of Policy and Management (OPM), work with the Hartford Board of Education and State Department of Education to analyze and make recommendations, with the assistance of outside experts as needed, to do a programmatic and fiscal examination of the services and costs associated with education of the special education students in the Hartford school district. Such examination shall include but shall not be limited to outplacements of student identification, and related agreements for services, program recommendations, IEP structure, etc.*

Recommend further that the MARB Committee and the Staff report back to the full MARB by December 31, 2018 as to the scope, status and potential cost of such study.

Current Status: MARB staff has met with and has also been exchanging information and questions with staff with the Hartford Public School System (HPS) and the State Department of Education (SDE) regarding these issues. In regard to information from HPS, it largely involves the number of special education students, costs and placements by HPS, magnet, charter and choice schools. The information from the State Department of Education includes school profile data regarding student counts and costs and performance reporting required by the federal government regarding special education services. This information will be used to analyze issues for Hartford and to further benchmark Hartford with other urban school systems. This information should help to gain a clearer understanding of areas for further study and possible improvements. MARB staff is working to complete a report, in continued consultation with HPS and SDE, on the preliminary findings and suggested next steps by **December 31, 2018**

2. *Recommend to the MARB that the Superintendent of the Hartford Public Schools be requested to provide to it any analysis done by Segal Consulting (Segal) with respect to a cost analysis of the existing Board of Education health insurance benefit program(s) including any comparison of the benefits and cost with other options (partnership program, new carrier, etc.) and further that OPM, on behalf of the MARB and its Hartford Committee, retain Segal for any additional analysis needed for Segal to submit a report to the MARB in this regard. Such report will be given to MARB by its February meeting.*

Current Status: MARB staff has met with and has had discussions with HPS Finance and Human Resources staff to determine the cost information that HPS has already developed, including cost analysis, including comparisons with any other options, already done by HPS' outside health consultant, Segal Consulting. Board staff is reviewing the available information and, based on the work being done in West Haven, has shared with the City the type of additional analysis that will be needed. MARB staff feels confident that it can provide the report requested in the motion by the MARB's February meeting.

3. *Recommend that the MARB seek legal guidance, perhaps in conjunction with legal counsel of the City and/or BOE, from an attorney having the necessary knowledge and expertise to do an examination of all agreements between the Hartford BOE and the AF charter school to determine whether all the sections and provisions such agreements conform, or not, with existing State statutes or other legal requirements, to determine if any of the terms and conditions of said agreements are currently valid and applicable, and to outline the action or options that may be needed or available in regard to any legal concerns or issues that may be identified.*

Current Status: Once again, MARB staff has met with and discussed this issue with HPS staff. One of the questions at the October 4, 2018 meeting was what are the potential operational and financial issues associated with this agreement. HPS staff has provided additional financial information regarding this contractual arrangement which MARB staff is reviewing. MARB staff will also be reviewing overall financial and performance indicators with HPS staff. The Superintendent has had initial discussions in regard to the requested review with the outside legal firm already retained by the City, which firm has expertise in these matters. In January, MARB staff should be in a position to report back on the result of its review and the status or progress of the requested legal review.

MARB staff looks forward to discussing these matters with you further. Please contact us with any questions you may have in this regard.

Cc: Superintendent Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, HPS
David Fleig, CFO, HPS
Julian Freund
Alison Fisher