

Mayor Solomon announces that City will extend negotiations with School Committee

WARWICK – Mayor Joseph J. Solomon announced today that he is willing to extend negotiations with the School Committee as part of his ongoing efforts to improve the relationship between the City and the School Department and address issues of critical concern in Warwick’s educational system.

“I am hereby extending to the School Department a continued mediation process that can assist us in determining how best to provide for the students, teachers and staff of our City and balance our ability to do so financially,” the Mayor said.

School funding has been of primary concern. On Friday, the City Council approved the FY20 budget, which calls for an additional \$508,000 allocation to schools and \$1.7 million in school principal and interest payments that the City will absorb as well as \$6 million for infrastructure improvements. The School Committee’s original request was for an additional \$7.7 million.

However, in this fiscal year, the School Committee initially claimed a shortfall of more than \$8 million, an amount that was subsequently reduced. In April, an independent mediator (who has been retained by the School Committee in the past) ruled in favor of the City, relieving it of any additional obligation to fund the schools in the present fiscal year. A \$3.5 million surplus in the school budget was identified by an accounting firm hired during the mediation process.

The Mayor noted that, by City Charter, the City must appropriate money to the School Department, but cannot specify to the School Department how funds are spent.

“For all of these reasons, I found the City’s appropriation to the School Department to be appropriate at this time,” the Mayor said. “We must work in the same manner to obtain the same level of understanding in the upcoming fiscal year. When the new School Committee took office in January, they showed a good faith effort to work cooperatively with my administration by agreeing to binding mediation instead of costly legal action. I remain committed to working with them to ensure that our children are receiving a good education in a safe learning environment and with the resources they need to excel.”