

NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

IT'S YOUR TOWN. READ ALL ABOUT IT.

Plowing, at \$175/Hour

BY ALLAN APPEL | MARCH 18, 2008 1:14 PM | [PERMALINK](#) | [COMMENTS \(0\)](#)



Allan Appel Photo

A jaw dropped when it was learned that the schools are paying \$175 an hour to plow snow.

The jaw belongs to Board of Education Member Michael Nast (at right in photo). It dropped Monday night at a meeting of the board's Finance and Administration Committee.

The jaw-dropping occurred during a presentation by **Aramark, the controversial** company hired to oversee custodial and grounds maintenance work in city schools.

Steve Percival (on the right, with longtime school construction project manager Claude Watt), Aramark's man in charge of custodial and grounds maintenance, came before the committee to clarify a contract item: It was line item 7 in change order #1 to Contract #2062 for snow removal services to All American, LLC, of Peck Street in New Haven.

Nast hadn't heard about this one. "\$175 and hour for snow plowing?" he exclaimed.

"Why so much! That's more than we pay our lawyers!"

"It's the bid price, the going rate," said Percival.

Then Nast wanted to know why it had to be

by the hour, as opposed to the job.

Percival's boss, Andrew Butler (pictured below) clarified, that Aramark has contracted with a number of companies on a unit pricing basis, and on responsibility for different zones within the school system for plowing and sanding in the case of snow.

"This contract," he said, "is for stand-by services and in the case of, for example, when we have a storm that affects only one school or two. It's for when we don't need to do the whole system, when we need to sand or plough just a certain area."



"The price," Percival added, "includes the driver, truck, sand, and other needed equipment."

Was Nast mollified? His facial expression seemed suggest that "resigned" might be a better description.

Then another item came up on the agenda: Claude Watt requested \$40,840 for audio visual upgrades at the auditorium of the Wexler/Grant School.

"Doesn't this ever end?" Nast was heard to murmur. He might have been referring to the fact that Wexler Grant opened in 2002.

And fellow committee member Frances Padilla asked, "Why so expensive for a projector?"

Staffers like Watt, BOE Chief Operating Officer Clark, and school construction coordinator Sue Weisselberg are always prepared with detailed answers. It turns out Wexler Grant is one of the few schools in the system with a genuine auditorium, as opposed to a cafetorium, or space that doubles as cafeteria, gym, and auditorium.

Accordingly, said Clark, the entire community uses the fine space for meetings and many musical and theatrical performances. When the auditorium was built, there was a screen, but no built-in projection facilities. The upgrade, which will include a modified "rear view" projection to enable, for example, the illusion of scenery to projected onto the stage, will be integrated into the current system and in the few of staffers be a real plus not only for the school but the whole community.

Weisselberg said Watt had been working with engineers and Wexler/Grant officials to find a way for this upgrade that was doable without punching holes in any walls. She said the proposed cost does the trick and is cost-effective.

Where does the money come from? It's still in the capital construction budget for the building of the school, unspent. And that's the hitch; if it's not spent, it risks being turned over to the city for reallocation. The money can be spent only for Wexler, and so why not?

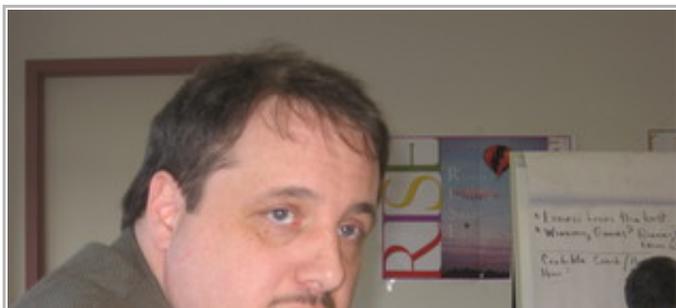
The committee voted to approve and send to the full BOE.

There was one more possible hitch, Watt explained: Because the projection system is not a repair, it just might be considered an "ineligible" cost by the state, which, as usual, gives the lion's share of the money for school construction. Ineligibles are gray areas, lately changing, of costs considered not reimbursable.

Another hitch is that the closing out of the project has been formally done through submission of the EDO49F form, although a final audit is still pending. An expense after a close-out might be considered non reimbursable.

If the state considers the projection system ineligible, then who foots the bill?

Claude Watt suggests that there are fund already set aside for this in the roughly 20 percent of the cost of Wexler Grant, which the city pays for through bonds. (The state covered approximately 80 percent.)



As to the Aramark \$175 for snow plouwing, the conversation will likely continue for that one in a bigger arena as the Board of Aldermen's Education Committee has a public hearing scheduled on food and facilities maintenance services Tuesday night at 6.



Comments

Post a comment

If you have a TypeKey identity, you can [sign in](#) to use it here.