

Item 25-0298: Resolution #3-R-25 Truancy Ordinance

Safety and Licensing Committee

Wed, May 14, 2025 5:30PM

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 01:26

Okay, moving on to—we have no scheduled public hearings or appearances, so we'll move right into our action items, and we'll take these in order tonight, starting with resolution 3-r-25 which is the truancy ordinance resolution. It's item number 25-0298. This was previously at this committee back on March 26, and we—the action that we took at that time was to hold it until a future meeting. That future meeting is tonight.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 01:57

We do have as part of our packets the original resolution and a—I'll call it a letter or a memo from the school district, and it is from Superintendent Greg Hartjes, and he will be addressing the committee in a minute here. Just want to kind of recap where we've been and where we're going with this. So, as I mentioned, it was here at Committee. It was a resolution submitted by an alderman who is no longer on the council, Mr. Bill Siebers, but we still take up that action even after a member's no longer part of the committee because it was submitted while he was a member. So it's back to the committee after holding it.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 02:35

You'll see in the memo that the Appleton Area School District is requesting a delay in action to this, and I'll let Superintendent Hartjes comment on that. One thing that I'm going to ask the committee to do after Superintendent Hartjes speaks is to make a motion on this, and would request the motion to be to hold this at committee indefinitely. What that will allow us to do is bring it back at the appropriate time. That might be a couple months from now, depending on how things progress with the stakeholders that meet on occasion. So, we don't have to set a date. I—at call of the chair, or the chair can bring it back if we hold it at committee indefinitely.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 03:20

One thing that we're going to try to do, and I want to thank Superintendent Hartjes for his time and his answers to some of my questions. What we're going to try to do between now and the next time this comes before committee is, on our agendas you will find, from time to time, maybe every two weeks, some sort of an update or an informational session where the school district will present information to the committee for consideration as we go down this path or down this road towards ultimately voting on the resolution or doing some sort of formal action on the resolution itself.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 03:57

So, with that all said, I will invite Superintendent Hartjes to address the committee and speak to the attached memo, and maybe talk a little bit, Greg, about anything that has happened between when this committee met the first time on this and where we are today. Thank you.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 04:14

Okay, thank you. Are there questions for Superintendent Hartjes at this point from committee members? I do want to give anyone that wants to speak on this an opportunity to speak because public input—I'm sure I share this with Superintendent Hartjes is public input is always welcomed and encouraged. We want to hear from the community on all items, but especially an item like this, as we move down this path. So are there any questions

for Superintendent Hartjes, or I'll open it up for other public comment. Supervisor Fenton—or Alder Fenton? No? Okay. All right, thanks.

Greg Hartjes (Superintendent - AASD) 04:14

Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. As I wrote in the letter that was submitted for tonight's meeting, since Stephanie Marta and I presented to the full Common Council on March 19, we have continued to provide information and gather input from Council members and community members. In addition, we took part in a productive meeting on April 15 with city staff, city elected officials, county staff, county elected officials. At that meeting, we discussed several items, but at the conclusion of the meeting, there were questions that remained, so we agreed to meet again this summer, hoping to get a meeting together of this stakeholder group sometime in June. And there remain questions that we still need to answer regarding the support we provide students who are struggling with consistent attendance and input we would like to gather from Common Council members and community members. So, we are asking for time for all of this to happen. Thank you for your consideration. Are there questions?

Greg Hartjes (Superintendent - AASD) 05:54

Thank you.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 05:55

Okay, we did have a sign-up sheet, but it won't be limited to this. So, first on the sign-up sheet is Scott Cornish. If you could, use the microphone and give your name and address for the record. I know we have it on here, but if there's anyone else that wants to say anything regarding this, please come after Mr. Kornish.

Scott Kornish (Manager Youth and Family Services - Outagamie County) 06:15

Thank you. Scott Kornish, [XXXXX] Appleton, Wisconsin. I spoke at the last meeting on this. I've worked 36 years with Outagamie County Health and Human Services and over that time, have worked with thousands of truants and have worked closely with the Appleton school district. And tonight, I would just encourage you very much to keep this on the agenda, keep that moving forward. I believe that the District has made a lot of effort to work with the youth who are struggling with their attendance and work with community partners. And I think that a great plan can come out of this, and it can lead to another tool for the school district to help these youth attend on a more regular basis. So, I would just encourage you to please keep it open and keep it moving forward.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 06:56

Okay.

Scott Kornish (Manager Youth and Family Services - Outagamie County) 06:56

Thank you.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 06:56

Thank you, Mr. Kornish, and that is the intent with the updates, the regular, occasional updates, and then ultimately bringing it back for some sort of action. So, to keep it moving, as you said. Anyone else that wants to say anything? Yes, please, name and address for the record.

Jacqueline Anderson (Greenville Resident) 07:18

My name is Jax Anderson, [XXXXX] Greenville, Wisconsin. I am a mother of an Appleton Area School District and a professional psychotherapist in the Appleton area. I have some concerns with Appleton Area School District's commitment to hearing from stakeholders. Although they talk about having heard from stakeholders, parents, etc., people in the community, they've only done really two meetings since—in two years. The other concern I

have is when these programs like Track were enacted, the truancy reduction assessment with Boys and Girls Club. How has Track been involved? Because I have not seen them at the table or invited to some of these meetings with AASD, and I'm also concerned about these new programs that they've had going on, which are great, and I love that they're doing that, and I want to give them credit where credit's due, but they're still pretty new, only like a year and a half, two years old. So, we're already pursuing truancy enforcement with tickets. Have we given enough time for these programs to work? Thank you.

Aldersonperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 08:35

Okay. Thank you. Superintendent Hartjes, do you want to talk at all about opportunities for members of the public to speak? I know school board meetings is one opportunity. I don't know if you want to add to that or not as far as where—what opportunities might be available in the future.

Greg Hartjes (Superintendent - AASD) 08:52

Yeah, I can. So certainly, school board meetings. We have public input at every board meeting, regardless of whether a topic's on the agenda or not. We also—we are working with the city on putting together a listening session that we would jointly host sometime this summer. We're hoping in June. And you know, the genesis for this request was a large committee that was made up of community members, staff members, and parents. And so that committee met during the 2023-2024 school year, and what came out of that was four recommendations, four priorities. Having an ordinance reinstated was the top priority from that committee, which was made up of community members like I said.

Aldersonperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 09:38

Okay, thank you. All right. Is there anyone else in the audience that would like to speak tonight? If not, we're going to bring it to the committee and get something on the table for a motion and then have some additional discussion. So, no one else? No one else? Okay, all right.

Aldersonperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 09:55

Move to hold indefinitely.

Aldersonperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 09:57

Second.

Aldersonperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 09:57

Okay, motion and a hold indefinitely. Thank you. We will bring this back at some point, most likely after the next stakeholders meeting, and we will get those occasional, regular updates slash information slash, you know, sharing of knowledge sessions. So, watch the agenda for an information item. It won't be listed under action. It'll be listed under information. And I'm sure there will be at least a couple times when the school district will be coming before us and presenting some information. Anything else from anyone? Aldersonperson Hartzheim.

Aldersonperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 10:31

Thank you, Chair. My only concern about holding this indefinitely is that we lose sight of it, and as long as we follow what you are presenting as a as the chair of this committee, and you are taking some action on a regular basis, I feel that this is a fair way to move forward.

Aldersonperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 10:50

Yep, thank you, and I appreciate that. I'm one that would like to put a date on this, but we could put a date of mid to late August on this, but we may have to move it to September. So, if it's okay with the committee and the attorney's office. Attorney Buruin, did you want to comment? District Four? Go ahead.

Zak Buruin (Assistant City Attorney) 11:10

Just to be clear, the committee does have the ability to hold it or postpone it indefinitely is the way it's termed in the handbook. I'm not quite sure of the mechanism for bringing it back up. The chair is comfortable with it. Obviously, it ends up being your call. I will advise, as far as putting a date on, it goes, tentatively, the next meeting is scheduled for August, so for it to be put on sometime after that, it should be after the next meeting.

Aldersonperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 11:32

Right, the stakeholders meeting that was referenced.

Zak Buruin (Assistant City Attorney) 11:35

Yes.

Aldersonperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 11:35

Yeah, because we're meeting several times before that.

Zak Buruin (Assistant City Attorney) 11:38

Yes.

Aldersonperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 11:38

Okay, all right. Yeah, if there's no issues with you know, from a legal perspective, or Roberts perspective, or statute perspective, I'd like to do the indefinitely and just be confident that we're going to bring it back after the stakeholders meeting takes place and after we hear from the school district on these regular sessions. So, anyone else? Alder Fenton.

Aldersonperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 12:00

Thank you, Chair. Just in terms of the second stakeholders meeting, if I can make a request. I looked at—I mean, it was a really good cross section of folks included, but I'd like to ask that some parents who are not affiliated with the other groups, be included in the stakeholder meeting, and then further in terms of listening sessions, I'm just hoping that, A, there may be more than one scheduled, and, B, that care is taken to make sure that those are accessible to a really wide range of folks because parents work different shifts and so, you know, so make sure that that those are available to people who maybe can't physically attend or have something at different times. So, to get as wide a range of input as possible as we move forward.

Aldersonperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 13:06

Okay, all right. Good, good feedback. Thanks. Anyone else? Any Alders present? Anything else? No? Okay, we have a motion and a second to hold this indefinitely with the intent of bringing it back in late August, early September. That could change, but that's the current scenario. If there's no other comments or questions, we'll take the vote. All those in favor of holding indefinitely signify by saying aye. All opposed? Any abstentions? Four zero. It's held. You were an aye? Okay. We will hold that. Okay. So, thank you all for coming and thank you for your interest in following this. Please continue to follow it. Watch this agenda. Watch the school district's meeting agendas.