



Schools and Communities United

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March 9, 2016

Glenn Steinbrecher
Office of the City Comptroller
City of Milwaukee
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mr. Steinbrecher:

As the appointee of the City Comptroller to the Charter School Review Committee (CSRC), you are there to provide the committee a wise fiscal eye. We look in your direction for that kind of counsel. We are addressing you as a paid officer of the City of Milwaukee, and as such, we assume that you are not required to get permission from the CSRC or the Institute for the Transformation of Learning (ITL) before providing us answers to our questions. We are, however, sending a cc to CSRC Chair Kevin Ingram.

At the August 13, 2015 meeting of the CSRC, the contract proposed by ITL for 2015-16 and each of the two following years was on the agenda. (The contract and an accompanying memo were and are available in file #150544 at links titled “MU Contract Summary” and “MU Contract Update” respectively.) The yearly cost of the contracts was to be \$211,649 – well over half a million dollars for the three year period. According to the audio file (#141678) of the meeting, for the agenda item concerning ITL’s contract, there was a lengthy presentation describing aspects of the contract and attempting to justify an increase in the cost from \$175,000 – an increase of 21 percent.

The minutes state that “the memo does detail the costs of the contract.” Indeed the memo lists the types of tasks to be carried out. But it does not include a budget or summary budget stating how the costs that ITL expects to incur in carrying out those contractual tasks would be reflected by their fee – whether as staff compensation, travel costs, etc. The contract was accepted at the increased amount by a committee vote of 4-0. You voted “Aye.” You neither commented on any aspect of the contract nor asked any questions about it during the meeting. Notably, there was no mention of ITL’s budget for the contract by you or any other member.

As concerned citizens, we have the following questions for you:

1. Does the City require – or at least urge – its committees to examine the budgets that its contractors or contract applicants use to develop their bids?
2. Prior to voting to accept ITL’s 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 contracts with the CSRC, did you receive a copy of ITL’s proposed budget for carrying them out?

3. Prior to voting to accept ITL's 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 contracts with the CSRC, did each member of the CSRC received a copy of ITL's proposed budget for carrying them out?

4. For which of ITL's past contracts, dating back at least to 2009-10, have you examined the budgets and compared them with the budget for their current contract?

5. If you have not examined ITL's proposed budget for the three contracts considered during the August 13, 2015 meeting, will you now (a) obtain it and examine it; (b) request copies of their budgets for past contracts to compare with the latest one; and (c) reconsider your vote if you find the latest budget less than excellent?

6. If you have access to any of the ITL budgets referred to above, would you please provide us a copy of each as soon as possible so that we may begin to do our own comparison?

Previous request for contract information. You may or may not be aware that on February 11, 2015 we requested from the City copies of all ITL contracts with the CSRC and related memos from January 1, 2009 through that date. The Procurement Services Division immediately complied. However, they were only in possession of the documents for 2009-10 and 2010-11. They informed us that the remaining documents were in the possession of ITL.

On March 2, 2015, we requested that Dr. Jeanette Mitchell, then Chair of the CSRC, obtain the documents for us from ITL. She replied later that day, "We will review your request and reply with it as soon as practical. I will work with the appropriate personnel to determine when and how to reply." In a follow-up email on March 24, Jarett Fields, CSRC staff and ITL employee, stated, "Your request for information is being worked on and we thank you for your patience. As we progress, we will offer more updates." In the year since then, we have received no further correspondence on the matter and no documents from ITL.

We look forward to your responses as soon as possible, certainly prior to the March 17 meeting of the Steering and Rules Committee.

Sincerely,

Jenni Hofschulte

Ingrid Henry



Co-Chairs, Schools and Communities United

Cc: City Comptroller Martin Matson, Common Council President Michael Murphy, Steering and Rules Committee, CSRC Chair Kevin Ingram, City Clerk Jim Owczarski, Assistant City Clerk Linda Elmer, Sarah Zarate