

**THE CITY OF WARWICK
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

NO.....R-25-12..... DATE 1-23-25.....

APPROVED .....MAYOR

**A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO
ENACT LEGISLATION TO CREATE A WARWICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUDGET COMMISSION**

Resolved that,

WHEREAS, the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the City of Warwick are matters of paramount importance to the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the School Superintendent requested a school budget for Fiscal Year 2025 of \$190,582,392; and

WHEREAS, the City Council approved a school budget for FY 2025 on the recommendation of the Mayor of \$189,700,392; and

WHEREAS, after additions of state aid that were realized after passage of the budget by the City, the School Committee approved a final budget on July 9, 2024 for FY 2025 of \$191,497,050, or over \$900,000 more than the Superintendent's original request; and

WHEREAS, in December of 2024, the School Department informed the Mayor, City Council, and State Auditor General that projected expenditures for FY 2025 were \$200,498,199, resulting in a deficit of \$9,000,000; and

WHEREAS, the School Committee has worked to reduce the projected deficit without the participation of city officials and has been unsuccessful in formulating a long-term plan; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and the City Council have concerns in the ability and capacity of the Warwick Public School Administration to produce a workable deficit reduction plan without detrimental impacts to the City taxpayers.

WHEREAS, the Mayor and the City Council desire that the Rhode Island General Assembly enact legislation to create a budget commission to manage Warwick Public Schools' fiscal challenges.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Warwick City Council hereby petitions and respectfully requests the Rhode Island General Assembly to enact legislation as follows:

Section 1. Title 45 of the General Laws entitled "Towns and Cities" is hereby amended by addition thereto the following chapter:

CHAPTER 9.1

WARWICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS BUDGET COMMISSION

45-9.1-1. Establishment.

(a) There is hereby created the Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission.

(b) The Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 2 of title 36 entitled "Access to Public Records," chapter 14 of title 36 entitled "Code of Ethics", and chapter 46 of title 42 entitled "Open Meetings".

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, action by the Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission under this chapter shall constitute action by the school district for all purposes under the general laws, under any special law, and under the Warwick City charter.

45-9.1-2. Composition.

The Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission shall consist of five (5) members: three (3) of whom shall be designees of the Mayor with advice and consent of the City Council; one of whom shall be the designee of the Warwick Superintendent of Schools; and one of whom shall be the designee of the Chair of the Warwick School Committee. One of the Mayoral designees shall serve as the Chairperson by a vote of the entire Commission. No member of the Commission shall be an appointor or a Warwick elected official. Any vacancy that occurs in the Commission membership shall be filled in the same manner and process as which the person creating the vacancy was appointed.

45-9.1-3. Authority; powers; duties.

(a) During the term of the Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission, no school spending shall occur unless approved by the Commission, or in the case of an emergency, by the City Finance Director only to the extent to cure such emergency.

(b) The Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission shall have the power to:

(1) Amend, formulate, and execute the annual school budget.

(2) Implement and maintain uniform budget guidelines and procedures for the school system as a whole;

(3) Amortize operational deficits in an amount as the City Finance Director approves and for a term not longer than five (5) years;

(4) Develop and maintain a uniform system for all financial planning for the Warwick Public Schools District;

(5) Employ, retain, and supervise such managerial, professional, and clerical staff as are necessary to carry out its responsibilities; provided, however, that such employment, retention and supervisory decisions are subject to the approval of the City Finance Director;

(6) Adopt rules and regulations governing the operation and administration of the school district that permit the budget commission to effectively carry out its duties; and

(7) Compel operational, financial performance, or forensic audits, or any other similar assessments.

(c) Within one hundred twenty (120) days of being appointed, the Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission shall develop a three-year (3) operating and capital financial plan to achieve fiscal stability in the Warwick Public Schools District. The plan shall include a preliminary analysis of the school district's financial situation and the Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission's initial recommendations to immediately begin to address the operating and structural deficits.

45-9.1-4. Expiration.

(a) The Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission shall cease to exist upon completion of two events as follows:

(1) Approval of the FY 2025 - 2026 Warwick School Budget as recommended by the Mayor and approved by the City Council; and

(2) Adoption of a deficit reduction plan by the Commission as approved by the Auditor General.

45-9.1-5. Exemptions.

(a) Nothing in this chapter shall authorize the Warwick Public Schools Budget Commission to:

(1) Reject or alter any collective bargaining agreement.

(2) Eliminate the duty to bargain, as provided in chapter 9.3 of Title 28.

(3) Hire or terminate School Department personnel.

(4) Impact projects funded by bond proceeds or make any decisions related thereto, including but not limited to construction of new high schools.

Section 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

The City Clerk is hereby directed to forward a copy of this Resolution to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, the Representatives and Senators from the City of Warwick, and the Chairpersons and Clerks of the House Committee on Finance, Senate Committee on Finance, House Committee on Education, Senate Committee on Education, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing, and Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government.

This Resolution shall take effect upon passage.

SPONSORED BY: COUNCIL PRESIDENT SINAPI
ON BEHALF OF MAYOR PICOZZI

COMMITTEE: INTERGOVERNMENTAL