

From: [Quiñones, Matt](#)
To: [Pollack, Maureen](#)
Cc: [BOR_OfficeStaff](#); [LoBalbo, Katherine](#)
Subject: CHESS32.005
Date: Thursday, April 30, 2026 2:34:14 PM
Attachments: [Bid Overrun Phase 3.pdf](#)

Chair Pollack,

I am writing to provide responses to the questions submitted by members of the Board regarding the proposed Project Labor Agreement (PLA) and related considerations.

Below lists a detailed responses to the inquiries received. These responses are intended to provide clarity on the City's experience with PLAs, procurement considerations, workforce development strategies, legal constraints, and the operational implications associated with various project delivery approaches.

Additionally, I have included a supporting attachment that provides documentation related to a prior PLA bid outcome (Strawberry Hill) and identified contributing factors, which may be helpful in providing additional context to the Board's questions

Where appropriate, the responses draw on Stamford's prior capital project experience, industry practices, and input from our construction management and advisory partners. The goal is to ensure that the Board has a clear and comprehensive understanding of the factors informing the Administration's approach, including cost considerations, workforce availability, project delivery risk, and long-term value.

As outlined, the Administration remains focused on advancing project outcomes that balance fiscal responsibility, timely delivery, workforce opportunity, and quality construction for the City of Stamford. We look forward to discussing any of these responses in greater detail and to provide any additional information that may assist the Board in its deliberations.

Thank you for your continued engagement and thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Matthew Quinones
Director of Operations
City of Stamford

- **4/14 Rep Virgil De La Cruz:**

As discussed during Steering, below are questions for Director Quiñones.

BACKGROUND EXPERIENCE:

How many Stamford projects in the last 10 or more years have attempted to or used a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) and with what results?

The City has not proceeded with a PLA in the past ten years. The most frequently referenced attempted use of a PLA was for the Rogers Interdistrict Magnet Extension (Strawberry Hill).

In 2015 Rogers Interdistrict Magnet Extension (Strawberry Hill) was authorized for a total project budget of \$61,849,908 and reauthorized in 2016 at \$77,312,385. In 2015 the City took steps to use a PLA for the construction of Strawberry Hill School, an expansion renovation project, which was bid in 2017. The City solicited a General Contractor (GC) via public procurement in 2017 once construction documents were completed rather than engaging a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) early and throughout the preconstruction process.

The bids for the received in 2017 were reported to be approximately \$16 million above the construction document cost estimate. The City with the assistance of a third-party estimator input concluded in a 2017 summary document that “*there is no single factor that can be pointed to, instead that the following all seem to be contributing factors*” citing little to no competition, aggressive project construction schedule, large and late addenda, missed or underestimated items, and geographic location. Numerous respondents identified their preference for a construction manager delivery model over a general contractor while others identified the project labor agreement (PLA) and current volume of work.

Significant value engineering was performed including redesign of the auditorium building and ed specification revisions. The project was rebid, awarded and executed within the \$77 million project authorization.

THIRD PARTY APRENTISHIP ENTITY:

The Resolution requires hiring a company with demonstrated experience in recruiting Stamford construction workers and delivering apprenticeship programs.

Which are the two or three leading firms in this field? Is any based in Stamford? Estimated cost of this engagement? Is the Construction Manager at Risk obligated to hire the candidates submitted by the third-party entity?

The City of Stamford and Stamford Public School works closely with many community-based organizations posing a mission of workforce readiness. These organizations target and support Stamford residents therefore the PLA has outlined this approach of the Administration to leverage the local network of pre-existing relationships to strategically enhance generationally local workforce opportunities.

Have options been explored to independently, outside of the Roxbury contract, pursue PLA goals through the Trades Council and other nonprofits to deliver the requirements in items 3, 4, and 5 of the Resolution?

No other options have been explored at this time to achieve these goals as the Project Labor Agreement (PLA) is the most widely accepted efficient method for delivery of the goals outlined in 3, 4, and 5 including recruitment, apprenticeship, pre apprenticeship and on-site experience. As the goals inherently require partnership with contractors performing the work the PLAs leverage expertise currently retained by the City, ie. O&G, rather than increase operational overhead for coordination and retainage of additional independent resources.

- **4/19 Rep Noah Lapine:**

Modified PLA proposal

See below.

- **4/25 Rep Carl Weinberg:**

Here's a question for Director Quinones (and probably someone from the Legal Department) to chew on:

In lieu of a PLA, can the City provide other favorable treatment to a bid that utilizes union labor? For example, in determining lowest bid, could a union-shop bid be reduced by a few percentage points for purposes of comparison with other bids?

Legal has opined that Connecticut statute explicitly prohibits discrimination between bidders based on labor organization affiliation. The PLA must permit the selection of the lowest responsible qualified bidder without regard to labor organization affiliation. The successful non-union bidder can use non-union employees to perform 100% of the work. However, if they need to hire employees to perform the work they must go to the union hiring hall.

Example: Union-shop bid receives a 5% "credit", i.e., for comparison purposes its bid is counted as 95% of the actual amount. Union shop bids \$50mm, lowest bid is \$48mm. Union-shop bid is counted as \$47.5mm and wins the contract.

- **4/26 Rep Steven Shore**

I have a few questions for Director Quiñones:

1. When opponents cite a cost premium for PLAs, are they accounting for the full lifecycle costs of the building — including warranty enforcement, punch list completion, and post-construction remediation? Does the administration have data on how union versus non-union projects in Connecticut have performed on those measures? What is the source of that data? Is it unbiased? And when the criteria for a low bid, non PLA project is 'lowest responsible bidder,' how is 'responsible' defined?

A) The city is building a school that will serve Stamford children for 50 or more years. How does the administration weigh a potentially modest upfront cost difference against the long-term value of quality construction, and is pure bid price the right metric for a decision of this magnitude?

The administration does not have data on building performance across Connecticut. However, the lists below illustrate the experience that O&G and Arcadis have had with

Connecticut PLA projects over the last 10 years. At the Platt High School project in Meriden, Arcadis was the OPM and O&G the CM at Risk for this expansion-renovation project.

O&G Connecticut PLA projects (Construction value listed):

1. **Orville H. Platt High School - Meriden: \$96,352,174. Completed 2017**
2. **Beman Middle School - Middletown: \$77,691,979. Completed 2022.**
3. **Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School: \$39,329,694. Completed 2024.**
4. **Bowers Elementary School: \$28,200,000. Completed 2023.**
5. **Keeney Elementary School: \$37,500,000. Completed 2024.**
6. **Manchester Public Library: \$49,856,000. Expected Completion 2026.**
7. **Torrington Middle/High School & Central Administration Building: \$168,186,586. Expected Completion 2026.**

Arcadis Connecticut PLA projects (Total project value listed):

Orville H. Platt High School - Meriden: \$111,800,000. Completed 2017

Hartford Schools Program:

8. **Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy \$29.4 million. Completed 2016**
9. **West Middle School \$54.6 million. Completed 2016**
10. **Weaver High School \$142.0 million. Completed 2020**
11. **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Campus \$111.4 million. Completed 2021**
12. **Central Administration at Bulkeley \$34.8 million. Completed 2025**
13. **Bulkeley High School \$210.3 million. Expected Completion June 2026**
14. **Burns School \$64.4 million. Expected Completion June 2026**

2. School construction projects carry real consequences for delays — students displaced, academic calendars disrupted, costs escalating. Can the Director speak to what contractual guarantees exist in a standard low-bid contract against work stoppages or labor shortages, and how those compare to the labor stability provisions a PLA would provide?

City contracts consistently carry liquidated or real damages or both.

A) Union halls maintain dispatching systems that can rapidly respond to labor demand fluctuations on large projects. Has the administration assessed the risk of workforce gaps mid-project under an open-bid scenario, particularly given current construction labor market conditions in Fairfield County?

The Project Labor Agreement is one answer to the demands created by the current construction volume not only generated by the school construction program but throughout the City of Stamford.

3. Union apprenticeship programs are registered with the U.S. Department of Labor and require multi-year, structured training. Can the Director speak to how the city currently evaluates the training credentials and safety records of workers on non-union bids — and whether that evaluation is as

rigorous?

Owners are passed benefits from the structured, defined, benchmarked, and regulated investment in the workforce via the union programs as noted above.

The City does not evaluate bids based on 'union and non-union labor', for school construction projects often a statement of qualifications is required of bidders requiring the contractor to provide confirmation that they understand the requirements of working within an occupied school environment and are prepared to execute the work safely, efficiently, and with minimal disruption to building operations. Additionally, contractors are required to certify their construction project managers and field personnel are experienced in coordinating with multiple trades, adhering to strict schedules, maintaining compliance with all applicable codes and specifications and high-quality workmanship and expertise to successfully complete a project in accordance with the contract documents.

It is the Construction Manager at Risk's responsibility and liability for the physical condition or safety of the project site or any improvements. The construction manager is the sole party responsible for providing a safe place to perform the work. Furthermore, the construction manager is exclusively responsible for overseeing the conduct of the people performing the work. However, the City requires Safety Officers dedicated on-site which further ensure compliance with NFPA, OSHA, and insurance requirements or other contractual.