

立法會
Legislative Council

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Finance Committee of the Legislative Council

Minutes of the 4th meeting
held at Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex
on Friday, 15 November 2019, from 4:00 pm to 6:18 pm

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP

Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Dennis KWOK Wing-hang
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon LAM Cheuk-ting
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon HUI Chi-fung
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon KWONG Chun-yu
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
Hon AU Nok-hin
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan

Members absent:

Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP

Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding

Public officers attending:

Ms Alice LAU Yim, JP	Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Mr Raistlin LAU Chun, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1
Mr Mike CHENG Wai-man	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)
Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP	Under Secretary for Food and Health
Mr Chris FUNG Pan-chung	Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Health)3
Mr Derek LAI Chi-kin	Principal Assistant Secretary for Education (Higher Education)
Mr Louis LEUNG Sze-ho	Deputy Secretary-General (1), University Grants Committee Secretariat
Mr Stephen IP Shing-tak	Chief Technical Adviser (Subvented Projects), Architectural Services Department

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT	Assistant Secretary General 1
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Staff in attendance:

Miss Bowie LAM	Council Secretary (1)1
Miss Queenie LAM	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)2
Mr Frankie WOO	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)3
Miss Mandy POON	Legislative Assistant (1)1

Action

The Chairman reminded members of the requirements under Rule 83A and Rule 84 of the Rules of Procedure.

**Item 1 — FCR(2019-20)32
RECOMMENDATION OF THE PUBLIC WORKS
SUBCOMMITTEE MADE ON 19 JUNE 2019**

**PWSC(2019-20)17
HEAD 708 — CAPITAL SUBVENTIONS AND MAJOR SYSTEMS
AND EQUIPMENT**

Universities

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

30EK — Campus Expansion at Ho Man Tin Slope

2. The Chairman advised that this item sought the approval of the Finance Committee ("FC") for the recommendation on PWSC(2019-20)17 made by the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") at its meeting held on 19 June 2019, i.e. upgrading 30EK to Category A at an estimated cost of \$1,418 million in money-of-the-day prices for campus expansion at Ho Man Tin Slope. The time spent by PWSC on the deliberation of the above proposal was about 53 minutes.

3. The Chairman declared that he was an Executive Director and the Chief Executive Officer of Well Link Insurance Group Holdings Limited. Mr Jimmy NG declared that he was a Council member of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("PolyU"). Mr SHIU Ka-chun declared that he was currently teaching at a local university. Dr Helena WONG said that she was a former PolyU lecturer. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he was a retired staff member of PolyU.

4. When Dr KWOK Ka-ki was about to speak on item FCR(2019-20)32, Under Secretary for Food and Health advised that given the diverse views expressed by the community on this item, the Government had decided to withdraw this item from the agenda for today's FC meeting with a view to sparing more time on conducting consultations. Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) ("PS(Tsy)), on behalf of the Financial Secretary, confirmed the withdrawal of item FCR(2019-20)32 for the time being.

5. Ms Claudia MO, Mr James TO, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Mr Alvin YEUNG, Ms Tanya CHAN, Mr Dennis KWOK, Mr KWONG Chun-yu, Mr Jeremy TAM, Mr AU Nok-hin, Mr LAM Cheuk-ting, Mr Kenneth LEUNG, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr Gary FAN, Mr SHIU Ka-chun, Dr Pierre CHAN, Dr Helena WONG, Dr CHENG Chung-tai, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr IP Kin-yuen spoke one after the other. They were very surprised at and dissatisfied with the Administration's sudden act of notifying FC of its decision to withdraw

item FCR(2019-20)32 at the meeting when FC had not started discussing the relevant proposal. They also expressed the following views/questions:

- (a) this was a livelihood-related item which aimed to provide additional teaching and research facilities for students of the Department of Rehabilitation Science and the School of Optometry of PolyU, which would help increase the manpower of healthcare professionals. If the granting of approval for the funding proposal was delayed, the waiting time for persons in need of these rehabilitation and specialist treatment services would be affected;
- (b) according to paragraphs 15 and 16 of PWSC(2019-20)17, no adverse comment on the project had been received by PolyU and the project was generally supported by the University community, while members of the Panel on Health Services and Panel on Education of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") supported submitting the funding proposal to PWSC for consideration. The item had not attracted much controversy during the subsequent discussion at a meeting of PWSC. The Government should explain clearly the specific reasons for having to conduct further consultations, and the reasons why its consultations could not be completed before the commencement of the FC meeting held today;
- (c) it seemed that the Government's sudden act of notifying FC of its decision to withdraw the agenda item when FC was about to proceed to discuss the relevant item was not only out of order, but had also set a very undesirable precedent;
- (d) whether the Government had, prior to the meeting, notified members belonging to the pro-establishment camp of its decision to withdraw the agenda item, as well as the time when the decision was brought to the knowledge of the PolyU representatives attending the meeting;
- (e) if the PolyU representatives attending the meeting came to know about the withdrawal of the agenda item only at the meeting, the arrangement was a great disrespect for them. PolyU representatives should be given a chance to express their views on the withdrawal of the agenda item at the meeting;

- (f) a lot of pre-meeting efforts had been made by members to raise questions on the item, such as the project cost and the implementation timetable of the proposed campus expansion project for PolyU, as well as whether and how the provision of additional teaching and research facilities of the School of Optometry of PolyU might improve the waiting time for ophthalmologic patients and increase the number of student places for optometrists;
- (g) if the Government's withdrawal of the agenda item was based on consideration of the participation of university students in the recent social incidents, it was tantamount to politicizing livelihood-related items, which was not appropriate. The Government should also state categorically whether it intended to withdraw other university-related public works projects (such as item 3 relating to the public works projects for the construction of teaching facilities for the University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong ("CUHK")), or even change its policy on universities and the resources committed to the sector;
- (h) whether the Government's withdrawal of item FCR(2019-20)32 was aimed at advancing the discussion of other items on the agenda (such as the item relating to the 2019-2020 civil service pay adjustment); if so, it was tantamount to seeking FC's swift approval for controversial items by means of hijacking the livelihood-related items; and
- (i) the time when the Government intended to submit the agenda item to FC afresh.

6. The Chairman advised that according to paragraph 26 of the Finance Committee Procedure ("FCP"), at a committee meeting, the Financial Secretary or, in his absence, the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, the Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) or a Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) might withdraw an item: (a) at any time before it was put to the vote; or (b) by unanimous consent of the Committee after it had been put to the vote but the result was not yet declared by the Chairman. For the present case, the Administration withdrew item FCR(2019-20)32 under FCP 26(a), which was in order.

7. Mr Steven HO said that he had no particular comments on the Administration's withdrawal of item FCR(2019-20)32. However,

according to his observations, in the social incidents that occurred in recent months, some students occupied university premises and blocked the strategic transport links in the vicinity. These developments had actually given him new thoughts about the proposed campus expansion project for PolyU. Mr HO Kai-ming said that it was incumbent upon the Government to consider afresh whether the academic and administration building to be constructed adjacent to the East Rail Line under the proposed project would pose safety hazards to local traffic and the public. Referring to the demonstrations in recent months, Mr LUK Chung-hung said that the footbridge connecting CUHK's premises was occupied by university students and mobsters to block roads. The Government, therefore, must review the planning of and the traffic management measures for university campus facilities situated in the vicinity of strategic transport links. Mr WONG Ting-kwong said that while it was important to inject resources into the development of education, it was equally important for the Administration to ensure the prudent use of public money. Given that a lot of university facilities had been vandalized in the recent social incidents, university management owed an explanation to the public as to how it could ensure that campus facilities to be built in future would not be vandalized likewise.

8. Mr Junius HO expressed regret that the Administration had withdrawn the agenda item. He was of the view that the Administration should explain clearly the reasons for withdrawing the agenda item. He was concerned whether the recent social incidents would affect the admission of Mainland or overseas students by local universities. Mr KWOK Wai-keung considered that the Administration should state clearly whether its decision to withdraw the item for the time being was made in response to the recent social incidents.

9. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that the Administration's withdrawal of the agenda item in accordance with FCP was in order. Given that some members had prepared to raise a number of questions on the item, it was indeed necessary for the Administration to offer further explanations to relieve the worries of these members.

10. Expressing disappointment at the Administration's withdrawal of the agenda item, Mr Jimmy NG considered it necessary that university facilities should be planned and developed according to schedules. Members should put aside political issues and consider the proposed campus expansion project for PolyU in light of the development of universities and education.

11. The meeting was suspended at 4:36 pm. During the suspension of the meeting, the Chairman discussed with representatives of the Government on the handling of members' views on the withdrawal of the agenda item. The meeting resumed at 5:50 pm.

12. Upon the resumption of the meeting, at the invitation of the Chairman, PS(Tsy) advised that:

- (a) she, on behalf of the two relevant policy bureaux (i.e. the Food and Health Bureau and the Education Bureau), confirmed that the Government was sincere in taking forward the proposed campus expansion project for PolyU (item FCR(2019-20)32). The Government, in response to the development of recent social incidents and members' latest views on and voting preferences for the item, withdrew the agenda item for the time being. The Government had no intention to shelve the item after the withdrawal. Subsequent to the withdrawal of the item, the relevant policy bureaux would explain to and lobby for support from members with a view to submitting the item to FC for approval afresh as early as possible;
- (b) the Government noted the considerable pre-meeting efforts made by members who had studied the papers concerned and had prepared to raise questions on the paper. She thanked members for their concerns on the item. Although the item had not been discussed at the meeting, members might raise questions or views with the Government via other channels, which might be conducive to raising FC's efficiency in discussing the item in future; and
- (c) shortly before the commencement of the meeting, the two policy bureaux concerned had, after taking into account the latest situation, decided to withdraw item FCR(2019-20)32 for the time being. There was no question of "political considerations" as alleged by some members, and the Administration had no intention to affect the conduct of business on the agenda.

13. Having regard to the above responses provided by the Administration, Ms Claudia MO, Mr LAM Cheuk-ting, Mr AU Nok-hin, Dr Helena WONG, Mr Alvin YEUNG, Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr CHU Hoi-dick, Mr KWONG Chun-yu, Mr IP Kin-yuen, Mr HUI Chi-fung, Mr SHIU Ka-chun, Mr WU Chi-wai, Mr Charles Peter MOK, Mr Kenneth

LEUNG, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Ms Tanya CHAN and Mr Jeremy TAM further expressed the following views:

- (a) members belonging to the pro-establishment camp had all along stressed that politics should not override people's livelihood. They should understand that the proposed campus expansion project for PolyU costing more than \$1.4 billion would create a lot of employment opportunities. This was also an important livelihood-related project that involved major public interests as it would increase medical training places in universities in such areas as nursing, physiotherapy and optometry, which would increase the manpower of healthcare professionals. If the agenda item was withdrawn, the construction sector, as well as the healthcare and education sectors, would be affected;
- (b) as university students had, in the recent social incidents, expressed political stances that were different from those of the Government and members belonging to the pro-establishment camp imposed political pressure on the Government by not supporting the proposed campus expansion project for PolyU in an attempt to force the Government to tighten its control over universities for the purpose of pursuing political retaliation. The Government, having regard to the views and voting preferences of these members, retracted and withdrew the agenda item which was not controversial at all. By allowing political considerations to take hostage of livelihood-related items and undermining the autonomy of universities, the Government had relinquished its governance ability and integrity;
- (c) if members belonging to the pro-establishment camp intended to object to this item, they could vote against the item after discussion, and there was no need for the Government to withdraw the item altogether; and
- (d) some members queried whether the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region had exercised behind-the-scene influence over the voting preferences of members belonging to the pro-establishment camp.

14. Dr CHENG Chung-tai said that as the incapable Administration had failed to properly respond to the recent social incidents by addressing the

public's demands, he objected to the granting of FC's approval for any funding proposals at the present stage. He considered that in respect of funding applications made by the Government, members belonging to the pro-establishment camp should scrutinize each application with independent thinking, instead of blindly supporting the proposals.

15. Mr HO Kai-ming reiterated that in light of the recent social incidents, members of the public were worried about the potential safety hazards posed by the new facilities constructed by the side of rail links and expressways on the traffic situation in the vicinity and on members of the public. They were also concerned whether the Government could minimize such hazards.

16. At 6:12 pm, the Deputy Chairman said that he was concerned that the situation surrounding the LegCo Complex had become tense, and a number of public transport operators had been successively announcing their service suspension arrangements. For the sake of protecting the safety of all persons present at the meeting, he proposed that the Chairman should consider ending the meeting before the scheduled end time as appropriate.

17. Prof Joseph LEE said that regarding the Administration's withdrawal of the agenda item, while most members belonging to the pro-establishment camp were not present at the meeting, the Deputy Chairman had also proposed that the meeting should end earlier. It seemed that they were seeking to "disband" FC and to achieve "mutual destruction".

18. Mr Jeremy TAM proposed that members present at the meeting should raise hands to indicate their support or otherwise for the proposed campus expansion project for PolyU. A number of members belonging to the pan-democratic camp present at the meeting raised hands to express support. He was of the view that the majority of members present at the meeting at the moment supported this livelihood-related item, while most members belonging to the pro-establishment camp not present at the meeting chose to defy the public's will by not supporting this item.

19. At 6:18 pm, the Chairman invited PS(Tsy) to provide a consolidated reply to the views expressed by members. Prior to PS(Tsy)'s reply, the Chairman said that as he had received messages regarding the situation outside the LegCo Complex, he considered it necessary to end the meeting immediately so that all persons present at the meeting might leave the Complex expeditiously.

20. The meeting ended at 6:18 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

14 August 2020