

**CITY of BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SPEAKING SESSION
MONDAY, MAY 7, 2012
6:30 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Brannelly, M. McCarthy, Colon, Taylor-Moye, T. McCarthy, Austin, Lyons, Vizzo-Paniccia, Bonney, dePara, Silva, Paoletto, Martinez, Paoletto, Curwen, Baker, Holloway

ABSENT: Council members: Olson, Brantley, Blunt, Ayala

Council President McCarthy called the public speaking session to order at 6:44 pm.

Roll Call – the city clerk took the roll call and announced there was a quorum.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSON HAS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, MAY 7, 2012, AT 6:30 P.M., IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 45 LYON TERRACE, BRIDGEPORT, CT.

NAME

SUBJECT

Helen Olga Losak
304 Bradley Street
Bridgeport, CT 06610

Mayor's Proposed Tax Increase.

Ms. Losak spoke about the Mayor's proposed tax increase. She said she was concerned about people in her neighborhood (the Upper East Side area) who are on a fixed income, unemployed and can't afford the tax increase. She stressed that the increase would be an immense burden and hardship. *She had a petition with (100) signatures* and she made a request that taxes not be increased. She mentioned that the city council should research other ways to finance the Board of Education system.

John Marshall Lee
30 Beacon Street
Bridgeport, CT 06605

Fiscal Governance of the City.

below is the statement that John Marshall Lee read during the public speaking session:

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – May 7, 2012: Budget Vote

Tonight the City Council will vote on a budget for 2013. The Mayor presented you a short time ago his budget. He prioritized: education, retirement plan funding and Lighthouse program. Since he is a declared 'budget cutter' and claims to be an award winning practitioner of 'budget transparency' your work would appear to have been simple. The only problem was that this budget exceeded the current budget by \$24 Million. That represented an increase of 7% because the Net Grand List has not grown that dramatically, so you had 'cutting' of your own to accomplish.

You knew that City taxpayers are not happy; in fact many are suffering from loss of real estate value. You have probably not heard one taxpaying constituent express happiness with the Mayor's budget. In the past six weeks you have dealt with the CDBG Federal funds where the requests from different parts of the community are much greater in total than Federal funds available. You also have reviewed and approved Capital funds for 2013 where large blocks of the \$91 Million approved of the \$113 Million requested are for Park Improvements, rather than focused on efforts at improving our economic development potential.

You have heard comments about the 60 or 80 "ghost positions" in current and proposed budgets. Your B&A co-chair has said you will monitor vacant positions in the new year, but you have failed to ask the Administration to modify your monthly fiscal reports to include department employment info so that you can easily do that regular monitoring. More importantly, if those monthly fiscal reports are put on line every fourth Friday of each month of the year, the taxpayer can see that too. Let's finally take off the watchdog blindfolds this year!!

I attended only a portion of your B&A review meetings, perhaps 30 hours, but this was more than most Council members. Because I do not get the special information requested of Tom Sherwood as you do, I am not as informed as I wish. However, I will offer several comments to remind you that a far better fiscal review process is necessary in Bridgeport:

- Why are we funding Sikorsky Airport with a proposed operating deficit of \$300,000 when as recently as 5 years ago that budget was balanced? Has anyone directed the Manager to come back with a balanced budget, or is that too novel an idea? Not one question was raised in that hearing as to why the Bridgeport taxpayer must fund a \$300,000 loss where revenues have dropped and expenses increased. Why is that?
- This budget hides many administration plans and projects that have only a price tag listed in nice round numbers. It's a neat way to keep secrets. Let's look at the Harbormaster department where Line Item 7390SC showed \$100,000 but the narrative offered no clue as to how this requested new amount was to be spent. Council folks detected that it was intended, at least partly, for a "pooper pumper" to assist people with

watercraft. You voted to cut the amount approved down to \$30,000 as a City share to leverage grant funds elsewhere for an \$110,000 purchase. But the average Bridgeport taxpayer has neither a plane nor a boat with a toilet that needs pumping, so, why spend these funds at taxpayer expense? Are they priorities?

- How about your own Legislative budget that exhibits \$200,000 of “ghost items” for 2013 again? What are you doing to reduce the amount of money admittedly going to ‘slush’? And will you demand a 12th month report this year as a Charter right so that you can see how the “ghost items” in the 2012 budget have been spent as “slush” in the current year? We all know that the Comprehensive Annual Financial Review does not provide the detail necessary to take you to the level of finding a “pooper pumper” regretfully.

You need to spend some of your Other Expense funds in the coming year to assist you in routine monitoring. You are not doing it in a meaningful manner A Finance Board would. And a Finance Board would deliver the City from the “conflict of interest “issues caused by City employees or family members with overlapping elected responsibilities. Specifically, you need assistance in fiscal matters, municipal accounting and auditing advice. My neighbor, David Walker, could be of tremendous assistance in outlining activities that will help you improve your process and results. (I am submitting his letter as he is out of town tonight to be entered into the public record.) We need better results from defense and offense activity including focused efforts on economic development to increase the Grand List faster than City expenses. You need to see these as your primary tasks. Time will tell.

John Marshall Lee, 30 Beacon Street, Bridgeport, CT 06605

The following persons signed up to speak prior to the session:

Mark Trojanowski

Mr. Trojanowski spoke about sending the city further down the hole by increasing taxes. He said it will create a spiral of more loss of business. He further stated that the city was dependent on the revenue from taxpayers and he stressed that they needed to look at other options to raise revenue and stabilize the rate. He mentioned the overall competitive tax rate among other municipalities and he emphasized that the city needs businesses coming to Bridgeport; however, every time the taxes are raised, it becomes a burden on the business owner.

John Slater

Mr. Slater spoke about being named the chairman of the Republican Town Committee. He mentioned the struggle that thousands are facing trying to decide which bill(s) to pay and having to decide which ones take priority. He emphasized that the last thing people need is a tax increase. He said many people feel that they aren’t being properly represented by the city council and the he reiterated that the last thing they want is a raise in taxes that

they can't afford. He mentioned a website that people have commented about the tax increase (*he read a couple of the comments from residents regarding the increase*). He urged that the city council vote down the tax increase.

Clyde Nicholson

Mr. Nicholson stated that they needed to decrease taxes. He mentioned that the streets are very dangerous and something needed to be done. He stated that the Mayor owed the entire city an apology as he recalled when the mayor came out to speak about the shooting of the 3-year old. He expressed that "*we are all to blame*". Mr. Nicholson said the way he sees it, the Mayor is to blame because we don't need new taxes. He felt that the city needed a new leader.

He went on to say that closing the second city hall won't do and he emphasized that now is the time for a new set of rules. He stated that the council members that work for the city should not serve on the city council because he thought it presented a conflict. He asked that a monetary pledge be made for the 3-year old that was shot and he challenged the city council to match his pledge of \$200.00 as a reward that might lead to information about the person that shot the girl. He stressed that when you put up money, you will get results.

Amos Brown

Mr. Brown spoke about the proposed curfew. He said he had more questions how the curfew will be structured. He further spoke about the violence that is taking place during the day. He stressed that not all kids are bad and he questioned why most of the violence that is happening occurs in the suburbs. He emphasized that the gangs need to be stopped. He compared the capture of Osama Bin Laden, Momar Quadaffi and others to the gang violence to make the point that if those persons could be stopped, then gang violence could be stopped. He quoted from the bible that reads "*If I ask not, I do not!*" Overall he thought that drastic measure should be taken to immediately address the violence.

The public hearing session closed at 7:10 pm.

Council President McCarthy called for a brief caucus prior to the city council meeting.

The caucus ended at 7:15 pm.

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 7, 2012
7:00 PM**

**City Council Chambers, City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, Connecticut**

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Brannelly, M. McCarthy, Colon, Taylor-Moye, Brantley, T. McCarthy, Austin, Lyons, Vizzo-Paniccia, Bonney, Blunt, dePara, Silva, Paoletto, Martinez, Paoletto, Curwen, Baker, Holloway

ABSENT: Council members: Olson, Ayala

Mayor Finch called the meeting to order at 7:20 pm.

Prayer - Council member Brantley offered the prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance - Council member Curwen led the pledge of allegiance.

Roll Call - The City Clerk took the roll call and announced there was a quorum.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

Approval of City Council Minutes: April 2, 2012

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER COLON SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Council President McCarthy called for a caucus for the purpose of discussing the sign off for the conflict of interest forms pertaining to non-CDBG allocations.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT McCARTHY MOVED TO ENTER INTO CAUCUS**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AUSTIN SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The council members entered into caucus at 7:25 pm.

The caucus ended at 7:42 p.m.

Mayor Finch reconvened the meeting at 7:45 pm.

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES:

- 80-11** Communication from Central Grants and Community Development re: Grant Submission: 2012-2014 Ryan White Program Services, referred to Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee.
- 81-11** Communication from Health & Social Services re: Grant Submission: 2012 Neighborhood Assistance Act, referred to Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee.
- 83-11** Communication from Mayor re: Approval of General Obligation Bonds – To Fund Certain Capital Improvement Projects, referred to Budget and Appropriations Committee.
- 84-11** Communication from Mayor re: Approval of the De-Authorization of Projects Previously Approved for Bonding Authority, referred to Budget and Appropriations Committee.
- 85-11** Communication from OPED re: Proposed Resolution regarding the Fixing of the Assessment on Personal Property 400 Megawatt UTC Fuel Cell Webster Bank Arena at Harbor Yard, referred to Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO REFER COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

PETITIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES:

- 82-11** Petition from Pullman & Comley, LLC re: Discontinuance of a portion of Grant Street between Mill Hill Avenue and Central Avenue, referred to Public Safety and Transportation Committee.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO REFER PETITIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER M. McCARTHY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON:

77-11 Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Appointment of Patrick M. Dower (R) to the Historic Commission #1 District.

There was no discussion.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER COLON SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

ADDED:

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON (CONSENT CALENDAR):

Council member Brantley requested to remove items *53-11 and *79-11 from the consent calendar.

**It was noted that the items would broken into (5) sections and voted upon separately as *53-11 A, B, C, D, E.*

***53-11** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Consolidated Plan 2008-2013 PY 38 Annual Action Plan: Community Development Block Grant Program (CDGB), Homeless Emergency Solutions Grant Program (HESG), HOME Investment Partnership Program, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program (HOPWA).

***53-11-A - CDBG PUBLIC SERVICE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER T. McCARTHY SECONDED**

Council President McCarthy explained that HUD has specific rules when voting on the allocations and the areas of what is considered to be a conflict as follows:

- Serving on the board of directors of a program
- A family member that serves on the board of one of the programs
- Employed by any one of the entities or program awarded the allocation

- Receives any financial gain
- If they give money to a specific program

He clarified that all the areas present a conflict according to the federal law per HUD's guidelines.

He further noted that the nature of the conflict would be stated by each council member upon the roll call vote.

The following abstentions were stated:

- Council member Brannelly on the board of Mutual Housing
- Council member Colon on the board of Mutual Housing
- Council member Taylor-Moye on the board of Bridgeport Housing Authority
- Council Vizzo-Paniccia one of the entities is a business customer

A roll call vote was taken:

**** MOTION PASSED WITH THIRTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND FOUR ABSTENTIONS**
****It was noted that two council members were absent from the roll call vote***

***53-11-B - HOUSING**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN SECONDED**

The following abstention was stated:

- Council member Colon is a resident of Mutual Housing

**** MOTION PASSED WITH SEVENTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND ONE ABSTENTION**

***53-11-C - PUBLIC FACILITIES**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER COLON SECONDED**

The following abstention was stated:

- Council member Martinez - *conflict wasn't stated for the abstention*

**** MOTION PASSED WITH SEVENTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND ONE ABSTENTION**

***53-11-D - OTHER CATEGORIES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
ADMINISTRATION
SECTION-108**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

****There were no abstentions stated***

***53-11-E - ESG**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN SECONDED**

The following abstentions were stated:

- Council member Brannelly is a volunteer for Frank Ubansky Food Pantry
- Council member Brantley is a volunteer for the Bridgeport Community Development Corporation
- Council member T. McCarthy is on the board of the United Way
- Council member dePara has a family member employed at ABCD
- Council member Martinez is an employee of ABCD

A roll call vote was taken:

**** MOTION PASSED WITH THIRTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND FIVE ABSTENTIONS**

***53-11-F - HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER BLUNT SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

****There were no abstentions stated***

***53-11-G - HOPWA**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

****There were no abstentions stated***

***79-11** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee
(Ref. #35-10) Report re: Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development
Program Year 37 Annual Action Plan: ESG Substantial Amendment.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO APPROVE**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER COLON SECONDED**

The following abstentions were stated:

- o Council member Brantley is a volunteer at Bridgeport Tabernacle Community Development
- o Council member T. McCarthy is on the board of United Way
- o Council member dePara family member is employed at ABCD
- o Council member Martinez is employed at ABCD

**** MOTION PASSED WITH FOURTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND FOUR ABSTENTIONS**

Council member Brantley thanked the Citizens Union, the ECDE Committee and the City staff for all their help and hard work. And for taking all the recommendations into consideration.

Mayor Finch thanked council member Brantley for the good job she did.

New business:

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADDING A TIME SENSITIVE ITEM TO THE AGENDA**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE 70-11 FY2012 – 2013 GENERAL FUND BUDGET BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY SECONDED**

Council member Curwen read a statement on behalf of the Budget & Appropriations Committee. He acknowledged the committee members and Council President McCarthy for all their hard work and dedication working on the budget. He highlighted key issues regarding the new budget as it pertained to pension and education.

He emphasized that the budget contained the single largest investment in education in the city's history. He stressed that education needs to be invested in and although it may be a burden to the taxpayers, the investment is necessary for the future good of the city. He further relayed the Superintendent of Schools commitment to improving the education system. He went on to clarify that they should ensure that the funds are specifically used to invest in the improvement of the school system.

He mentioned the bond rating and he said he hoped it remained stabilized for the remainder of the year.

Council member Curwen expressed that there were many compromises that were made to put forth the budget. And he noted that education/dedication and overtime should be addressed for the police department and other city departments.

It was stated that the fund balance budget equated to a \$1.4 million increase or 3.1%; compared to the \$2.7 million increase that was initially proposed.

He thanked the Budget & Appropriations Committee for the countless hours the spent working on the budget.

Comments from council members:

- Council member dePara mentioned the aggressive budget that was initially proposed. He emphasized that it was a daunting task when they spoke to residents and he stated how they held all the city departments to stick to their goals and statements for the past year. He commended the council members who attended all the meetings, noting that their efforts and assistance was appreciated. He stated that the budget process was discouraging at times because it involved a number of issues to address. However, through their collective synergy, they were able to identify revenue and cost savings measures that resulted in \$1.4 million as opposed to the \$2.7 million that was originally proposed by the Mayor. He expressed that it was a difficult journey, but it was a fruitful. He asked his colleagues to join in the ongoing endeavor to maintain fiscal responsibility for the residents of the city.
- Council President McCarthy thanked the Budget & Appropriations Committee members that worked very hard to dedicate their time to the budget process. He stated that it was a significant commitment and they did a good job to find a way to put the budget together. He stated that although the budget doesn't make everyone happy, they managed to make accommodations in certain areas. He emphasized the importance of the city council moving with the times and keeping the budget going.

He further thanked the constituents who attended meetings. He stated that the entire city council recognizes that they have an obligation to the community. Overall, he felt they did the best they could to make allocations to the police pension and education. He stated that he was in full support of the item.

- Council member Baker thanked the co-chairs and committee members for putting in all the hours and time to complete the task. He also thanked Mayor Finch for allocating additional funds to education. However, he stated that as a council member, he said he found it difficult to review the entire budget in only thirty days. He recalled that he requested documents from department heads, but the never received them. He made the point that in the future they be given the opportunity to hold regular monthly Budget & Appropriation Committee meetings to allow time for asking questions, instead of waiting until budget crunch time. He stated that the budget is complex and he believed that they could get the mill rate down more. Overall, he said they needed more accountability and transparency to be able to make a more informed decision. He stated that he didn't support approval of the budget.

Council member Curwen stated that the vote would be in (5) segments for item 70-11 and identified as 70-11 A, B, C, D, E.

***70-11-A - GENERAL FUND REVENUE INCREASES = \$2,945,041**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED WITH FIFTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND THREE VOTES IN
OPPOSITION (COUNCIL MEMBERS: BAKER, M. McCARTHY AND SILVA)**

***70-11-B - GENERAL FUND REVENUE DECREASES = \$8,999,556**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER BONNEY SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED WITH FIFTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND THREE VOTES IN
OPPOSITION (COUNCIL MEMBERS: BAKER, M. McCARTHY AND SILVA)**

***70-11-C - GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION INCREASES = \$2,869,793**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER T. McCARTHY SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED WITH FIFTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND THREE VOTES IN
OPPOSITION (COUNCIL MEMBERS: BAKER, M. McCARTHY AND SILVA)**

***70-11-D - GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION DECREASES = \$8,924,308**

Council member Lyons stated that she has a concern about the Board of Education money being in a separate fund. She said she wanted an outlined financial plan; otherwise, she wasn't in support and would vote no. She commented that if the plan wasn't provided, then she would encourage the council to give the money back to the taxpayers.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED WITH FIFTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND THREE VOTES IN
OPPOSITION (COUNCIL MEMBERS: BAKER, M. McCARTHY AND SILVA)**

***70-11-E - TOTAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION = \$511,760,560**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY SECONDED**

Council member Brantley stated that tax reforms should be considered to decrease taxes for seniors. She expressed her concern about another foreclosure situation. She requested that city staff reach out to the vulnerable senior community and implement a possible adjustment in the tax rate. She made the point that many seniors aren't gainfully employed to be able to afford the tax increase.

*Mayor Finch commented that Elaine Ficarra, Press Secretary, Mayor's Office was addressing on the matter.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH FIFTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND THREE VOTES IN
OPPOSITION (COUNCIL MEMBERS: BAKER, M. McCARTHY AND SILVA)**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO ADJOURN
** COUNCIL MEMBER T. McCARTHY SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services