

CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, JULY 13, 2015

6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Council President McCarthy called the Special Council Meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

PRAYER

Council President McCarthy then requested Mr. Tyler Fairbairn to lead those present in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council President McCarthy then requested Council Member Salter to lead those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Assistant City Clerk Ortiz called the roll.

The following members were present:

130th District: Enrique Torres
131st District: Denese Taylor-Moye, Jack O. Banta
132nd District: Robert Halstead, Patricia Swain
133rd District: Thomas McCarthy, Howard Austin, Jr.
134th District: Michelle Lyons
135th District: Richard Salter
136th District: Josè Casco, Alfredo Castillo
137th District: Milta Feliciano
138th District: Melanie Jackson
139th District: James Holloway

A quorum was present.

Council President McCarthy announced that Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia was enroute to the meeting, Council Members Brannelly and L. Martinez were delayed at work and Council Member Marella was out of town.

Council President McCarthy then reviewed the details for conflicts of interest and read out the names of the Council Members who were not able to vote on the matter due to conflict of interest: Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia, Council Member Lyons, Council Member McBride-

Lee, Council Member Torres, Council Member Salter, Council Member Feliciano, Council Member Taylor-Moye and Council Member E. Martinez. He said that once the legal opinion was presented, the Council Members on the list would be requested to recuse themselves from the meeting.

Atty. Anastasi then distributed copies of the legal opinion. The Council Members present reviewed the document.

Mayor Finch took over as chair at 6:15 p.m.

Council Member Lydia Martinez joined the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Council President McCarthy then requested the Council Members with conflicts of interest to recuse themselves from the meeting.

The following Council Members then left the Council Chambers at 6:16 p.m.: Council Member Lyons, Council Member Torres, Council Member Salter, Council Member Feliciano, and Council Member Taylor-Moye.

Council President McCarthy stated for the record that the City disagrees with HUD's interpretation of a conflict of interest but wanted to be squeaky clean. Council President McCarthy explained that the Council Members who recused themselves were frequently involved in community activities and charities.

Communications to be Referred to Committees:

128-14 Communication from Housing and Community Development re: Program Year 41 Annual Action Plan: Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), Homeless Emergency Solutions Grant Program (HESG), HOME Investment Partnership Program, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program (HOPWA), referred to Special Committee on CDBG Program.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED THE ITEM.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SWAIN SECONDED.**

Council Member Halstead asked what the referral was for. Mayor Finch then said this was to refer the CDBG, HOPWA, and HOME programs, which were all Federal programs to the CDBG Special Committee for approval.

Council Member Holloway asked why this was necessary to receive the funding. Council President McCarthy reviewed the details with those present.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia joined the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

Council President McCarthy explained to Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia that the Council Members with the conflicts of interest had already recused themselves.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia recused herself from the meeting at 6:24 p.m.

Council Member Casco asked for clarification on the conflict of interest. Council President McCarthy said that all the Council Members had signed the conflict of interest statement. He reviewed the details.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 128-14 COMMUNICATION FROM HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RE: PROGRAM YEAR 41 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (CDBG), HOMELESS EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT PROGRAM (HESG), HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM, HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH AIDS PROGRAM (HOPWA), REFERRED TO SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CDBG PROGRAM PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mayor Finch said that the circumstances had created a difficult situation. Many people around the country are involved in various charities and organizations that help others. Washington has issued a well meaning requirement that has had the unintended consequence of shaming many involved citizens who support or participate in local charities by not allowing them to vote on these matters. He added that the conflict of interest definition had been expanded to include relatives such as a nephew who may have worked for a charity.

He related a story about a Mayor who had said that there was little proof that the Federal programs actually benefited people. Mayor Finch said that he had replied that the speaker should come and sit in his chair in order to see the effects of Early Childhood Education, the AIDS patients being helped or the homeless mothers who get housing assistance. It's important to stand strong when facing these issues. He said that he would be working to change the situation so that the Council Members who help their constituents don't lose their right to vote on matters like this. He thanked everyone for coming in order to make quorum and asked if there were any further matters to come before the Council.

Council President McCarthy pointed out that there were always conflicts of interest but said he felt the government had taken this definition to a ridiculous level. Mayor Finch said when he had heard about this expanded definition, he had pointed out that the local governments have to be okay with it in order to conduct business. When he was a State Senator, Mayor Finch heard someone say the State Government was the most important government. Mayor Finch said that he had immediately disagreed with this statement. If a Bridgeport resident needed something like a street light or a stop sign, they did not contact him as a State Senator, they contacted the Mayor or the Council Members about the issue. He thanked the Council Members again for helping with the process.

Council Member L. Martinez said that she had just realized that a family member had been hired to work at a charity earlier in the week.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MADE A MOTION TO RECONSIDER.
** COUNCIL MEMBER SWAIN SECONDED.**

Council Member L. Martinez recused herself at 6:26 p.m.

Council Member Halstead said that his daughter worked for a charity.

Council Member Halstead recused himself at 6:26 p.m.

Council President McCarthy asked if there was any other Council Members who had concerns. A brief discussion followed.

**** THE MOTION TO RECONSIDER PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 128-14 COMMUNICATION FROM HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RE: PROGRAM YEAR 41 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (CDBG), HOMELESS EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT PROGRAM (HESG), HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM, HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH AIDS PROGRAM (HOPWA), REFERRED TO SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CDBG PROGRAM.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SWAIN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HOLLOWAY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services