

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2010**

ATTENDANCE: AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia, Chair; Manuel Ayala, Denise Taylor-Moye, Thomas McCarthy, Susan Brannelly

OTHERS: Mark Anastasi, City Attorney, Anne Kelly Lenz, Tax Collector, Tyrone McClain, Mayor's Office; Alanna Kabel, Community Development & Housing; Osman Shabazz, Kelly McDermott, Atty. Preston Tisdale, Maisia Tisdale

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia called the meeting to order at 5:50 p.m.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: OCTOBER 26, 2009

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 26, 2009 AS SUBMITTED.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR MOYE SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: DECEMBER 21, 2009
(SPECIAL MEETING)**

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 21, 2009 AS SUBMITTED.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR MOYE SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

06-09 Refund of Excess Taxes.

Ms. Kelly Lenz came forward and explained there were two accounts with overpayments over \$10,000 that needed Council Approval. One is for \$12,000 and the second for \$30,000. The first was a reassessment; the second was a lien that was paid off by a third party.

- ** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE THE TAX REFUNDS AS CITED BY THE TAX COLLECTOR.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR MOYE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

08-09 Appointment of Cynthia S. Maignan (D) to Board of Assessment Appeals.

Ms. Maignan was not present. Council President McCarthy asked if the file was complete. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia passed the file to the Committee members for their inspection. Mr. McClain asked that the item be tabled.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 08-09 APPOINTMENT OF CYNTHIA S. MAIGNAN (D) TO BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR MOYE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

09-09 Appointment of Osman Shabazz (D) to Board of Assessment Appeals.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said the original request was for an appointment to the Board of Assessment Appeals but the Mayor's Office had requested that the appointment be changed to the Energy Improvement District.

Mr. Shabazz, who lives on Laurel Place, came forward. He said that he was interested in the committee because he was concerned by the nation's dependence on foreign oil. He also mentioned that a major portion of the income for the poorer families goes for heating fuel.

Mr. Shabazz said that he works for a finance company that provides financing capital equipment for companies. Council Member Brannelly asked Mr. McClain about the status of the Commission. Mr. McClain explained that the Commission was being developed and the City was looking at some of the things that Stamford was doing in terms of setting up the model and creating the charge. Mr. McClain said that he would be insuring that the political affiliation of the new Commission was correct.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 09-09 APPOINTMENT OF OSMAN SHABAZZ (D) TO BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

13-09 Proposed approval of 2010-2012 Citizens' Union Committee.

Ms. Kabal came forward and said it was time for the Council to submit their recommendations for the Citizen's Committee. She said that this is required by the Charter and that HUD is aware of this. Each Council Member should make one

appointment and those members, once appointed, can then choose seven additional members from the community to have a group as large as 27 members. The candidates for appointments need to be submitted to Ms. Kabal to be compiled into a list for approval by the Miscellaneous Matters Committee before being forwarded to the Council.

Ms. Kabal introduced Ms. McDermott who will be working in the Grants Department to the Committee.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR MOYE MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 13-09 PROPOSED APPROVAL OF 2010-2012 CITIZENS' UNION COMMITTEE.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

19-09 Proposed Worker's Compensation Stipulation between the City of Bridgeport and Ronald F. Debiase.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM.**

19-09 PROPOSED WORKER'S COMPENSATION STIPULATION BETWEEN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT AND RONALD F. DEBIASE.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR MOYE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

20-09 Proposed request for approval of conveyance of properties located at 354 and 368 Main Street (aka Little Liberia) by the City of Bridgeport to The Mary and Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community, Inc.

Atty. Anastasi introduced Atty. Preston Tisdale, who was representing the Mary and Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community, Inc. and Mr. Bill Coleman. Atty. Anastasia reviewed the details of the Council decisions regarding the properties at 354 and 368 Main Street.

Atty. Tisdale said that his sister, Maisia Tisdale, who was enroute to the meeting, was caught in traffic. He then explained that Mary and Eliza Freeman developed this small community for African Americans and this is oldest site for African Americans. This area was an Underground Railroad stop and also allowed other immigrants to live there. This project was so successful that when the surviving sister died, she was the second wealthiest citizen in Bridgeport, second only to P.T. Barnum.

There have been many parties interested in this project, including the University of Massachusetts. Atty. Tisdale said that there had been a show on PBS called "Tales from the Deep North" that involved "Traces of the Trade". The Mary and Eliza Freeman

Center would address the issues of racial healing and understanding. The National Historic Trust is also interested in the project and the rehabilitation.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked if it would be just a house museum or an educational center. Atty. Tisdale said it would be a destination, and an anchor.

Council President McCarthy said that he had been involved in the Liberia issue and that the community has a great desire to have the properties maintained.

Atty. Anastasi said that the Committee's role was to select an entity for the property. He then gave some details of the proposal and how it would work out.

Ms. Tisdale joined the meeting and explained that the Freeman houses and the Freeman project have attracted attention because the other sites similar to this have been demolished. These sites were included on the list of Connecticut's most endangered gems. With so many federal and state agencies interested, the houses should be used as a catalysis for economic improvement. Case studies have been done and other African American sites have attracted positive influence. The historical settings and unique history is enough to drive a small economic engine. Two meetings have been held to explore how this could be done.

The National Trust has sent a special invitation to the Freeman Center to discuss how the site could be made self-sustaining. The City is represented on the Board of this organization. The site visit may require the Board members' attendance. The National Trust has reached out to the project and is willing to help with the sustainability.

Mr. Coleman said that it would be important that the project continue to move forward through the efforts of the group that is involved. He explained that the property involved had gone through foreclosure. There are some foreclosure funds that may be available but there may be some technical details that need to be addressed first. A discussion then followed about what the best manner of transferring the property. There may be some urgency in getting the title transferred for grant funding. Mr. Coleman will meet privately with the Tisdales regarding this.

Ms. Tisdale said that the funds that her group has been pursuing is only available to non-profits. This would bring new money into the City.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO APPROVE 20-09
PROPOSED REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF CONVEYANCE OF PROPERTIES
LOCATED AT 354 AND 368 MAIN STREET (AKA LITTLE LIBERIA) BY THE
CITY OF BRIDGEPORT TO THE MARY AND ELIZA FREEMAN CENTER
FOR HISTORY AND COMMUNITY, INC.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR MOYE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR MOYE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services