

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
JUNE 5, 2015**

**ATTENDANCE:** Eneida Martinez, Co-Chair; Enrique Torres, José Casco,  
Melanie Jackson, Lydia Martinez

**STAFF:** Steve Hladun, Parks and Recreation; City Attorney Mark Anastasi;  
Council Member Milta Feliciano

**CALL TO ORDER**

Council Member E. Martinez called the meeting to order at 6:13 p.m. A quorum was present.

**85-14 Request that the taking of Vehicles and the action of “Booting” must only be employed after multiple offenses and that a Certified Letter be submitted to the owners of Vehicle and that Notice is provided to the appropriate City Council Committee for their Approval of said action.**

Council Member E. Martinez asked Atty. Anastasi to explain to Council Member Torres why the City Attorney has up to 60 days to provide a legal opinion on the submitted resolutions on home foreclosure. Atty. Anastasi said that there were several areas where various departments had statutory authority to perform certain legal actions. The Council has to be careful not to intrude on various departments such as the Police, the WPCA, the Tax Collector and other parties involved. He also cited that there were State Statutes that support the Tax Collector. He apologized that he did not have an opinion ready but these were serious issues that need to be considered. He also urged Council Member Torres to have a conversation with the Budget Director and the Finance Director about this.

Council Member Torres then gave an example of a woman who had a delinquent \$90.00 tax bill on a vehicle that was worth less than \$1,000. The vehicle was booted and towed, which escalated the amount owed to over the worth of the vehicle. He added that there were two other vehicles that had been booted on a particular street earlier of the day. Atty. Anastasi said that this would restrict the authority of the Police to perform their duties. Council Member Torres said that the booting program was out of control. He added that the Council needed to have a outside counsel's opinion.

Atty. Anastasi said that the Charter states the City Attorney is the attorney for Council. He reiterated that he had not had a chance to formulate an opinion. He suggested that Council Member Torres should talk to the Chief of Police, the WPCA head and the Tax Collector. Council Member Torres said that he was elected to represent the people in his District.

Council Member E. Martinez said that the point of her calling the meeting so that the Council Members could hear Council Member Torres' thoughts on the proposal. She said that the Committee could not vote on this until an opinion is issued to the Committee on what the Committee's authority is in this matter. Atty. Anastasi said that his office was still researching

this to determine which areas the Council has authority. He added that once the item is approved, then a public hearing needed to be held. The public will not only have a chance to talk about the people who have had items impounded, but also those who will be there who will be in favor of the resolution.

Council Member Casco asked why the City Attorney got to speak at such length.

Council Member Jackson said that she felt that Council Member Torres's intention was not to have people pay their taxes, but to be fair.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she was concerned that people were losing their houses because of the WPCA or vehicle taxes that result in the vehicles being booted. A \$20.00 fine can end up being over \$1,000 after everything is said and done. She said that she works a number of jobs, but struggles to pay her taxes.

Atty. Anastasi said that the Council Members should know what the policies the WPCA and the Tax Collectors use for the tax delinquent residents. He gave a brief overview of the process and said that the City does not foreclose on houses. They bundle the debt and sell the debt liens to various buyers. Those buyers purchase the liens and then collect the various amounts.

Council Member Torres said that he was in a Budget meeting and those present were taking delight in the fact that the City was collecting in excess of what the parking ticket was. This is not a wealth city and the issue is that the City should treat their residents well. When a foreclosure company gets their hooks into a property, they don't let go. He reminded everyone that the Council created the WPCA and the Council needs to control. The council can choose to act. The foreclosure letters are very nasty.

Atty. Anastasi said that if the Council is not happy with the manner of the process, then the Council can do something about it.

**80-13 Proposed Amendments to the Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 12.28 Park Use Regulations, amend to add new Section 12.28.210 Regulation Banning Smoking in City Parks.**

Council Member E. Martinez said that there had been a request to table this agenda item.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 80-13 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF ORDINANCES, CHAPTER 12.28 PARK USE REGULATIONS, AMEND TO ADD NEW SECTION 12.28.210 REGULATION BANNING SMOKING IN CITY PARKS.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**84-14 Request that Home Foreclosure action must only be employed after consultation and approval of said action by Common Council, first through appropriate Committee and then as a Whole Council.**

Council Member Torres said that this attempts to limits the City's ability to indiscriminately foreclose on properties. He said that there were people who were just walking away from properties, and those properties should be foreclosed. There were other residents who just needed to a bit of time. Council Member E. Martinez said there needed to be a control as to when the liens are sold. Atty. Anastasi said that he agreed and stated that the liens can't be sold without the Council's approval.

Council Member Torres said that if the process was just slowed down a bit, it would help. What is happening is that families are moving into boarded up, abandoned buildings.

Atty. Anastasi said that the Committee should be asked what is involved in booting vehicles.

Council Member Jackson asked if the Committee could have a meeting with the Tax Collector and the Police to discuss these issues.

Council Member Torres said that the Committee could amend the resolution if needed.

Council Member Casco said that he knew a number of people who were losing their homes because of the WPCA. Some people are just leaving because of the taxes, while others are sick or those who have lost their jobs.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 84-14 REQUEST THAT HOME FORECLOSURE ACTION MUST ONLY BE EMPLOYED AFTER CONSULTATION AND APPROVAL OF SAID ACTION BY COMMON COUNCIL, FIRST THROUGH APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE AND THEN AS A WHOLE COUNCIL.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CASCO SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**85-14 Request that the taking of Vehicles and the action of “Booting” must only be employed after multiple offenses and that a Certified Letter be submitted to the owners of Vehicle and that Notice is provided to the appropriate City Council Committee for their Approval of said action. CONT'D**

Council Member Torres said that this issue was about booting. Bridgeport's car tax is one of the highest rates in the State. The booting aspect is egregious to those who are poor, who usually own vehicles that aren't worth much. The City takes the vehicles, but the resident still have the bill. He suggested that the City wait until they try to re-register. Atty. Anastasi said that he thought that there was either a certain amount or a certain number of tickets. He said that discriminating against someone based on their income or the value of the vehicle is wrong.

Council Member E. Martinez said that the Committee needs to research this. She said that one of her constituents had her vehicle booted because of a \$90.00 amount, the boot cost \$95.00 and the vehicle was towed, so that cost \$300.00. Atty. Anastasi said that there was a company that chases outstanding debt and he urged the Committee to have the Police Department. Council Member E. Martinez said that she thought it was a private contractor. Atty. Anastasi said that it might be a private collector doing this.

Council Member Torres said that there was another aspect was the interest rate. The City charges 18%, but a bank only offers 1% or 2%

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 85-14 REQUEST THAT THE TAKING OF VEHICLES AND THE ACTION OF "BOOTING" MUST ONLY BE EMPLOYED AFTER MULTIPLE OFFENSES AND THAT A CERTIFIED LETTER BE SUBMITTED TO THE OWNERS OF VEHICLE AND THAT NOTICE IS PROVIDED TO THE APPROPRIATE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE FOR THEIR APPROVAL OF SAID ACTION FOR THE LEGAL OPINION AND ALLOW THE DEPARTMENT HEADS TO COME BEFORE THE COMMITTEE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CASCO SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**86-14 Request that Leaning or the taking of Homes by Foreclosure Action by the WPCA or the City of Bridgeport must only be employed after consultation and approval of said action by the Common Council, first through appropriate Committee and then as a Whole Council.**

Council Member Torres said that these WPCA foreclosures are done through the City Attorney's Office. Attorney Anastasi said that there are multiple letters sent to the owners and offers for payment plans. He then read the City Ordinances. The Committee Members have the right to know what actions triggers what actions. When the debts are not collected to a certain rate, the taxes on everyone else increases. The City is collecting aggressively.

Council Member Torres said that the Council was not supposed to be collecting aggressively against the residents. The City should not be trying to collect at all costs. There are stated that are homesteading states and those home owners can stop paying, but the banks can take properties only after the owners dies.

Council Member Feliciano asked if the WPCA handles the foreclosures. Attorney Anastasi said that Atty. Liskov handles those and makes a major effort to help people not lose their homes. Council Member Feliciano asked what happens if Atty. Liskov, the WPCA coordinator, and his team can't get the money. Attorney Anastasi said that the City can do a tax lien. Council Member Feliciano asked why these items are then sent to an outside group. Attorney Anastasi said that Atty. Liskov uses a group of attorneys. Council Member Feliciano asked if there could be a spreadsheet of the process. Attorney Anastasi said that there was protocol for these debts.

Council Member E. Martinez asked if the residents are aware of these opportunities. Attorney Anastasi said that usually the residents realize the City is serious when they are served. They ignored the earlier demand letters. He suggested that the Committee could explore this with Atty. Liskov.

Council Member Feliciano asked for a list of those who are in foreclosure and those who are in the payment plans. Council Member Torres said that he would like to know how many properties were taken by the City. He had asked for a list from OPED, but had not been given it.

Council Member Feliciano said that the City was not the entity that forecloses on properties, but she wanted to know from those agencies how many properties they have taken from in the last three years. Attorney Anastasi said that the Tax Assessor would know this.

Council Member McBride-Lee said the people who are being penalized are the ones that keep the City going. Those who don't own a car or a house, or have a job don't. Attorney Anastasi said that the Council approves the sale of the liens.

Council Member Feliciano said that there was a list of properties that were often hidden in large piles of papers. She said that the ECDCE Committee needs to review these. Council Member E. Martinez said that Max Perez was gathering the information.

Council Member Jackson said that she remembered when Mr. Coleman said that it was usually offered to the abutters.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CASCO MOVED TO TABLE 86-14 REQUEST THAT LEANING OR THE TAKING OF HOMES BY FORECLOSURE ACTION BY THE WPCA OR THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT MUST ONLY BE EMPLOYED AFTER CONSULTATION AND APPROVAL OF SAID ACTION BY THE COMMON COUNCIL, FIRST THROUGH APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE AND THEN AS A WHOLE COUNCIL.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**96-14 Proposed Amendments to the Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 8.80 Noise Control Regulations, amend Sections 8.80.020 Definitions and 8.80.050 Prohibited Noise Activities by adding new Subsection "C" (10).**

Council Member E. Martinez said that she had been requested to table this item.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 96-14 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF ORDINANCES, CHAPTER 8.80 NOISE CONTROL REGULATIONS, AMEND SECTIONS 8.80.020 DEFINITIONS AND 8.80.050 PROHIBITED NOISE ACTIVITIES BY ADDING NEW SUBSECTION "C" (10).**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE MOVED TO ADJOURN.  
\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON SECONDED  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services