

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 11, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Ernest Newton Co-chair; Scott Burns, Co-chair; Jorge Cruz, Jeanette Herron, Denese Taylor-Moye, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia (6:06 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): M. McBride-Lee, M. Brown, M. Pereira, M. Valle, S. Suliman (6:34 p.m.) & Council President A. Nieves (6:34 p.m.); K. Flatto, Finance Director; N. Nkwo, OPM Director; T. Gaudett, Mayor's Aide; W. Gaffney, Assessor Consultant; Mike's iPhone X, Chris Klein, Steph, Barbara, 203-913-2368; Call in User 1, Call in User 2; C. Vickers, Legislative Office (6:34 p.m.); Mike Fazio, MVS; Johanna, (6:15 p.m.); Chris Kerin, MVS; 203-690-9227 (6:23 p.m.); Nikki (6:23 p.m.); 203-275-6420; 203-673-9373; 203-414-0712

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

Council Member Burns stated that Council Member McCarthy was ill and would not be joining the meeting.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

Approval of Committee Minutes: December 14, 2020.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 14, 2020.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 14, 2020 AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2020 Reassessment/Revaluation presentation by Finance Director, Assessor and MVS company.

Mr. Flatto said that there was a 15 minute presentation on the 2020 Reassessment/Revaluation. The last one was done in 2015 and was a statistical evaluation. The current evaluation is a full evaluation. Mr. Flatto then gave a brief timeline and explained how MVS [Municipal Valuation Services] was chosen.

Mr. Gaffney said in the past, the evaluations were done every 10 years but it was felt that there was too much of a lag. He said that they had done the evals and the appeal applications must be filed by February 22nd by State Statute. Appeals will be held in March and the property owners will be informed as to the final decision regarding their appeal via mail.

Mr. Fazio said that his company had started their work in 2019, but in 2020, COVID forced the company to send out data mailers to the property owners. There were groups who were photographing all the buildings in the City. There was about an 80% return on the data mailers, which is very good. October 1, 2020 was chosen as a date for the evaluation. There has been a number of investments that have found their way to Bridgeport. All the sales and building permits were reviewed and compared to the MLS listings.

Mr. Fazio then spoke about the land values, which is a key factor in determining the improvements. Notices of assessments went out after Thanksgiving. The property owners could then review their assessments with the company. Informal hearings for approximately 270 parcels were heard. These hearings should be completed by the 22nd of February.

There were increases in single family homes by 32% over a 5 year period. Condos and multi-family residence also increased, which indicates that the City is in a very healthy state.

Mr. Chris Kerin then spoke about the commercial properties and gave a general overview of the various categories, such as industrial properties, retail or office properties. The largest growth area was in the apartment properties, and this was followed by fast food properties and gas stations.

Some non-essential businesses did not increase in value during this time. The downtown area did not have any significant appreciation over the last five years.

Nursing homes were impacted by the State of Connecticut in terms of reimbursements. The State had focused on home care models and then the nursing homes were further impacted by COVID.

Mr. Kerin said that he handles the informal commercial property appeal hearings.

Council Member Burns displayed a map of the City with the various generic averages for the evaluations for both Single Family (SF) and Multi-families (MF) structures. The average increase is 32% around the City, but each property has individual variations.

Mr. Fazio then spoke about the increase in value in the 138th and 139 District, which borders Stratford.

He noted that there was a surprising amount of new construction underway and a great deal of healthy activity for the City.

Mr. Flatto explained that there were cases where improvements had been made but not properly reported to the City. Mr. Flatto said that having a local company handle the re-evaluation was excellent since they were familiar with the area.

Council Member Newton noted that Council President Nieves, Council Member Suliman and Ms. Vickers had joined the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

Council Member Newton said that he would allow one question per person because there were additional items on the agenda.

Council Member Burns asked about the land value versus the structure value. He wished to know how a property owner would determine whether the land value was accurate.

Mr. Fazio said that the only way an owner could appeal an assessment was to appeal the entire evaluation rather than the land value versus the structure value. He then reviewed the method they used to arrive at the assessment.

Council Member Herron asked where the figures for the structures versus the land value were available. Mr. Flatto said that once the hearings were completed, they would be posting the figures on the website. Mr. Gaffney said that he would be signing off on the Grand List on the 31st.

Council Member Pereira asked that the colored map be sent to all the Council Members. Council Member Burns said that he had sent the document out to all the Council on the 10th.

Council Member Pereira said that it appeared that the more impoverished area such as 139th District were about to receive a 52% increase and she did not understand how this could be. Mr. Flatto said that there were some neighborhoods that received high increases last time did not have as much of an increase this time.

Mr. Fazio and Mr. Kerin both reviewed the changes in the property values, including Success Village, which is considered to be a commercial property. Mr. Kerin pointed out that these were percentage increases rather than dollar changes.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED “REVAL MAPS_SINGLE_AND_MULTI_FAMILY.PDF DEC 2020” AS EXHIBIT 01-11-2021-A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Newton asked if they could get a copy of some of the evaluations from the previous re-evaluation so they could see the changes. Mr. Flatto made a note of this.

Council Member Burns asked for more details about the commercial property changes. Mr. Flatto noted that the commercial properties were not part of the Evaluation map. Mr. Kerin explained that it was the apartment buildings that lead the increases.

Council Member Burns asked how much of the increase would be covered by Commercial. Mr. Flatto said that he believed commercial would represent about 10% of the Grand List. He said that Commercial/Industrial would represent about 25% of the Grand List in terms of dollars.

Council Member Pereira said that all apartment properties would have a 40% increase. She said that Governor Lamont had issued an Executive Order that the appraisers could not enter the properties. She wanted to know what percentage of properties were visited by the appraisers.

Mr. Fazio said because they were not allowed to go on the property because of the Executive Order, they had used the data mailers, and high resolution GIS photographs. Many of the changes were noted via the MLS listings.

Council Member Pereira said that she would like to know which Executive Orders covered having the appraisers on the property because she was not familiar with that Executive Order.

Council Member Newton said that they would get a copy of the item for the Council Members. He thanked everyone for their time.

General Discussion re: Review of the Monthly Financial Report.

Council Member Burns displayed the monthly report on the screen.

Mr. Flatto said that the report figures had been fairly steady since the last month. One item would be shown next month would be the receipt of the COVID relief and expense reimbursement because the money arrived in December.

One of the risk areas that has moved forward involved the public improvements made at Steel Point.

The taxes are still coming in steadily. Earnings on investments have been very low. Short-term borrowing will cost the City less this year because the interest rates are so low.

The parking meters revenue has been quite stagnant due to the lack of patrons going to restaurants and office workers working on site.

The Parks revenue has been increasing and will most likely increase even more in the spring.

The Nutrition revenue for the schools had been lower since many of the students are using remote learning.

The expenses have been steady. Mr. Flatto said that they have been monitoring both Police and Fire overtime.

The transfer of the airport repairs has been made.

Mr. Flatto then reviewed the various allocations for the CARES reimbursements and the other COVID State grant funding. He said that he hoped that some of the reimbursement funding would be available for Police and Fire overtime.

Council Member Newton asked about the potential for reimbursing the General Fund for the Airport repairs.

Mr. Flatto said that as they learn more about the funding, they may be able to replenish half a million to cover the repair costs. At the end of the day, he hoped that Contingency Fund would

remain at the same level. Mr. Nkwo agreed. Mr. Flatto gave the accounting details. Discussion followed.

Council Member Pereira had several questions about the summaries. She wished to know when they could expect revenue from Steel Point. Mr. Flatto said that they were expecting the reimbursement revenue by June 2021.

Council Member Pereira said that they expected a \$500,000 deficit on the rent revenue. Mr. Nkwo said that the figure represented the Amphitheater and the Arena.

Council Member Pereira asked if they would be reviewing the variances shown on the report since there were major variations. Council Member Newton said that he would prefer that she submit her detailed questions to the Chairs so they can be sent to Mr. Flatto and Mr. Nkwo.

Council Member Pereira replied that this was a public meeting and the public would not have access to the emails.

Mr. Flatto indicated the line item number for Steel Point and stated most of the variances was related to Steel Point. There was also the Tax Receipt projections. The Amphitheater and Arena were listed on Page 6 of 9.

Council Member Pereira said that the only variances were related to Police and Fire Overtime, but pointed out there were many vacant positions.

Mr. Flatto said that he had not attributed the savings from unfilled positions due to the fact it was accounted for on a different line. That figure is not broken out by departments. On the expense side, there are items that are seasonal, such as landscaping and do not occur during the winter.

Council Member Pereira disagreed because there would be savings in the fringe benefits also. She said that this was not okay because they were already six months into the year. Mr. Nkwo indicated where the Fringe Benefits savings would be listed in the report.

Council Member Newton asked if there was a way to simplify the report so the Council Members have a better understanding of what the numbers represent.

Council Member Pereira said that there was a one million dollar savings shown. Mr. Flatto explained that it was for the Contingency and Reserve Fund. This was a forecast, not a hard and fast number.

Council Member Burns asked about the monthly report from the Police Revenue Report. He wished to know why there was no revenue indicated on one line item. Mr. Flatto said that due to COVID, there were fewer road jobs. Mr. Nkwo agreed that the figure appeared to be incorrect and said that he would check with the Police Department about the figures.

130-19 Proposed resolution committing to reallocating certain funds from the Police Department to address the safety, security, educational and social services needs of Bridgeport residents.

Council Member Newton said that he understood that Council Member Burns and Council President Nieves were addressing the concerns about creating a panel. He then requested the Committee table the item.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO TABLE 130-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION COMMITTING TO REALLOCATING CERTAIN FUNDS FROM THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO ADDRESS THE SAFETY, SECURITY, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES NEEDS OF BRIDGEPORT RESIDENTS DUE TO ISSUES THAT HAVE BEEN RAISED.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services