

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
APRIL 7, 2021**

**ATTENDANCE:** Ernest Newton Co-chair; Scott Burns, Co-chair; Jorge Cruz, Jeanette Herron, Matthew McCarthy, Mary McBride-Lee, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

**OTHERS:** Council President A. Nieves, Council Member M. Valle; T. Gaudett, Mayor's Aide; K. Flatto, Finance Director; N. Nkwo, OPM Director; Jon Urquidi, City Engineer; Michelle Muoio, Airport Manager; Craig Nadrizny, Acting Public Facilities Director; Paul Catino, Steve Hladun, Aaron Curry, Ericka Curry, Barbara, Johanna, Tim O'Connor, Tyler Mack, 203-275-6420; 203-690-2385; 203-880-5666

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Co-chair Burns called the meeting at 6:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

He reviewed the process and noted that Committee Members would be allowed to ask questions first.

**CAPITAL BUDGET – Capital Facilities**

Mr. Nkwo said that he would focus on FY 2022 which would become effective if the Council approves it. He cautioned everyone that the outer years were not firm numbers. He added that Wonderland of Ice needed to have the roof replaced.

Mr. Nkwo then displayed the spreadsheet and gave a general overview of the key financial requests including the East Side Senior Center, the Police Headquarters, Airport improvement projects, citywide rest rooms including the Kennedy Stadium restrooms. He added that the golf course was now generating income and it would be important to keep up the maintenance so that the course would continue to generate revenue.

Mr. Nkwo explained that the Old Town Road re-alignment was a shared project between Bridgeport and Trumbull. He cautioned everyone that a policy decision about that project had not been made.

Council Member McCarthy said he noticed that there were major financial numbers projected for the golf course over the next five years. He asked what those allocations were for. Mr. Catino said that the City had commenced on nine bunker reconstruction. COVID had been good for golf in terms of revenue. There will be work done on nine additional bunkers next year and nine the following year.

Council Member McCarthy said that he was concerned about the outer years. Mr. Catino said that there were people who objected to the idea of a “wish list” and the course manager is hoping to restore some environmental pods in five years.

Council Member Newton said that the East Side Senior Center has been underway for years. The price is increasing year by year, but the project has not started. Mr. Nkwo said that the original number was someone’s guess as to what it might cost for the restoration of a historic building that would have to be raised due to flooding. They did not know that it would cost so much because it was in a flood zone and a historic building.

Council Member Newton said that the Police Headquarters on Congress Street was just throwing good money into a poor building. He asked if there was any other location for the Police Station. Mr. Nadrizny said that there were structural issues with the Police Stations and added he was not aware of any property that would be available.

Mr. Flatto said there may be funding available for the Police Headquarters from the Federal infrastructure.

Council Member Herron said that for the past five years, there were Council Members who had been working on getting a new building. She said that Nancy McDonald had looked into grant funding in the past and identified some potential grants.

Council Member Herron asked if the City owned the building. Mr. Nkwo confirmed that they do own the building.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that they had put money aside for a new Police Headquarters and they had been looking at the intersection of Congress Street and Main. There are grants out there for building a new Headquarters building. She added that she had sent an email out about cleaning the air in the buildings. This has been talked about for years and had been lost in the shuffle. She encouraged people to look at the property at Congress and Main in order to give the Department the space and dignity they need.

Council Member Cruz apologized for being late. He reminded everyone that he had brought this issue up last year in Washington D. C. with Senator Murphy, Congressman Himes and Senator Blumenthal. There’s a brand new juvenile center, and new firehouse, but the Police Headquarters is just falling down and it’s a shame. He listed a parcel that was used for free parking. There is \$120 million dollars coming in and he wished to know why it could not be used to build a state of the art Police Headquarters.

Mr. Nkwo explained that the guidelines for the stimulus money had not been fully established. Earlier in the day, Mr. Nkwo said that a Police building would not qualify for funding. This will help interpret the Federal legislative intent. The creators of the grant will need to hear from a variety of Mayors about their needs.

Council Member Cruz asked if they could make a concerted effort for a new building. The police officers deserve a new building. Mr. Nkwo said that he would follow up with Ms. DeJesus. Mr. Flatto said that there needs to be a decision by the administration and consent on the direction.

Council Member Burns asked if the building could be rehabilitated or if demolition would be the better choice. Mr. Nadrizny said that the roof is leaking. They have been replacing various things and the parapet has been separating from the building.

Council Member Taylor-Moye said that Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia, Council Member Herron and Council Member Cruz have discussed this many times, but nothing has ever happened. The administration needs to work with the Council to get this done. They get grants for other departments and they should be able to get grants for the Headquarters.

Mr. Flatto suggested that the Committee consider adding a line to the budget for designing a new Police Headquarters.

Council Member Herron suggested that Mr. Flatto contact the Police chief to assign an officer to look for grants. She said that they should add a line to the budget because this has been going on over five years. It's time to get this moving forward.

Council Member McCarthy asked about roadway and paving and the thinking behind the proposed figures. In his district, \$200,000 would not be enough. In his district, there are issues with the gas company tearing up the roads. He added that he did not like bonding for road paving.

Mr. Nkwo said that Public Facilities had requested \$3 million, but the administration reduced it to \$2.5 million that would be spread out between 10 districts. Mr. Flatto said that there was \$2 million from last year because the bonding was done so late and there may be \$3 million from LoCIP. Discussion followed about the details of street paving and what the utilities company will be charged for paving.

Council Member Newton said that the City had done a poor job in holding the utilities accountable for the condition of the streets after the repairs are completed.

Council Member Newton said there were items that mentioned bridges and other similar infrastructure items. He wished to know whether they could use Federal dollars towards those projects. Mr. Flatto said that it was too early in the process to know what the guidelines would be.

Council Member Burns said that Mr. Urquidi had come before the Council Members about the bridge infrastructure projects. Mr. Urquidi said that there were between 70-80 bridges in the City and most of them need repair. He said an analysis of all the bridges were underway and indicated a few that were already on the Capital project list.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked about paper streets, which are privately owned. Her constituents ask why certain streets were not being plowed or paved. Mr. Nadrizny said that the

paper streets would have to be approved by the City for paving. Mr. Urquidi said that there were a number of paper streets that were approved and the City has maintained them. Other paper streets are not to City standards, in poor condition, or private streets, which the City Attorney has told the department not to maintain those. There are many city streets that need maintenance.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked about the process for making the paper streets a City street. Mr. Urquidi said that there had been a number of streets that had been proposed to be accepted as a City street. There were issues, such as poor drainage, no curbs or not wide enough. Discussion followed.

Council Member Martinez said that Council Member McBride-Lee's constituent had called her about one of her streets. She said that there was a stream that runs behind the houses by Pond Street. The street is horrible.

Council Member Martinez asked about a past ordinance regarding utility companies paying for the streets they dig up.

Council Member Cruz asked what the status of the projects on Railroad Avenue between Broad and Howard Avenue was and when they could expect it be paved. Mr. Nadrizny said that the WPCA and the utilities were doing projects in the area. He suggested they talk offline about the details.

Mr. Urquidi said that the north side of Railroad Avenue was in very poor condition, but a utility company has approached him about micro-trenching. They may pay for repaving the area.

Council Member Burns encouraged everyone to focus on the Capital Budget rather than specific streets.

Council Member Taylor-Moye spoke about a street in her district that was a private street. The current residents had no idea it was a private street and the City ended up taking it over.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that if Council Member McBride-Lee needs to go to the City Attorney's Office, she needed to call first because they are closed to the public.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that there was one paper street that was adopted by the City, but they never followed through.

Council Member McCarthy asked about the streetscaping and whether it was the sidewalk match program. Mr. Nkwo said that they had discontinued the funding.

Mr. Catino then spoke about the PILOT program and how the homeowners can utilize the funding. He said that there was significant funding for sidewalks available. Discussion followed about the eligibility of co-ops for the sidewalk program.

Council Member Burns asked about the Airport Equipment line and what it covers. He wished to know if there was anything they could put into the General Fund.

Council Member Burns asked about the Wonderland of Ice doors, which have issues. Mr. Nadrizny said that he had not been aware of issues with the doors but would look into it.

Ms. Muoio said that the item for the airport was about replacing the fencing, which is old and deteriorating. There was a deer strike in 2018 and again in January 2021. The Airport is working with the USDA and the FAA about this. There would also be some brush removal included.

Mr. Nkwo added that there would also be some security cameras added. He explained that he had sent an email to everyone that the roof repairs had not been included.

Council Member Newton asked about EMAS damage that required additional security fencing improvements and cameras. Ms. Muoio gave a summary of the adjustments that the Airport management made.

Council Member Newton asked for more details about the location of the fencing, which Ms. Muoio reviewed with the Committee. There are some areas that have natural barriers, but they need wildlife fencing there.

Council Member McCarthy pointed out that the overall Public Facilities budget was almost \$5 million less than it was in previous years. He asked if the City was getting near their debt service ceiling.

Mr. Flatto said that they were currently at about 13% to 14% of debt service. While the stimulus funding will help, the City has bonded over \$400 million for schools over the past years and they have not yet bonded for Bassick yet.

Mr. Nkwo said that the City was peaking in their debt service this year and would start to decline in the coming years. Discussion followed about the LoCIP funding.

Mr. Catino said that Public Facilities was working towards limiting their requests and projects to what they really need. He said that they appreciate the funding in the general fund, but the amount in the General Fund and the Capital Requests would barely cover half of their needs for vehicles and equipment. He gave an example about how the snow removal equipment need to be updated. He said that it would be important for the Council not to cut their requests.

Council Member McCarthy asked if they could get the Department's original request documents. Council Member Burns said that he would send out that documentation in the next day.

Mr. Nadrizny said that the focus in the past was on sanitation trucks, but the snow removal equipment needs attention.

Both Council Member Cruz and Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that they would like copies of the requests before the requests are altered by the Mayor's Office. The information will be sent to the Committee. Council Member Newton asked Mr. Nkwo to send out clean copies without Mr. Nkwo's handwritten notes on them.

Council Member Burns said that there were many art deco lamps on the streets and felt that they were not necessary. Many have been damaged and they are expensive to replace.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that there were some lamps that had been removed and the bolts were sticking up. Mr. Nadrizny said that they had a list of lamps that had been knocked down and the light bulbs that were out. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia mentioned locations where there were some bolts sticking up because the lamp posts were never installed.

Council Member Newton said that they have to change their lighting because it is just too dark when they go into certain parts of the City. The East End is definitely one area that needs attention.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.**

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services