

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 17, 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(s): E. Martinez, M. Pereira, R. Roman-Christy, S. Suliman, M. Valle, D. Taylor-Moye, M. E. Brantley & M. Lyons (10:20 a.m.); K. Flatto, Finance Director; N. Nkwo, OPM Director; Michelle Muoio, Airport Manager; Craig Nadrizny, Acting Public Facilities Director; Paul Catino, Public Facilities; Steve Hladun, Parks; Stephen Roach, Golf Course; Luann Conine, Recreation; Greg Dancho, Zoo Director; John Hoiser, Roadways; Barbara, Liz, 203-880-5666

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. A quorum was present.

Co-chair Newton said that Mr. Nkwo and Mr. Flatto would give an overview. Council Members need to be respectful to all.

**CAPITAL PLAN DISCUSSION – PUBLIC FACILITIES;
GENERAL BUDGET DISCUSSION –
(PARKS, ZOO, ADMINISTRATION, ENGINEERING)**

Mr. Nkwo said that he would be highlighting areas that he felt that the Council Members need to be aware of and some of them may not re-occur. Most of those items have to do with COVID and will not re-occur next year.

Parking Violations are being transferred from Public Facilities to the Police Department. This means the revenue will appear under the Police Department.

Mr. Nkwo pointed out the American bond listed on line 22, has been paid out and will not re-occur.

Mr. Nkwo explained that the City received financial reimbursement from the State if the City tax rate is over 45 mills. The Mayor's proposed mill rate will be 43.8. Because the mill rate is below 45 mills, the City will not receive State reimbursement In 2024, the City will have to find \$5.3 million.

Council Member Newton said that when the Council changed the meter collectors from Public Facilities to the Police Department, he noticed that there was a police officer with the collectors when the meters were emptied.

Mr. Nkwo said that Public Facilities had handled the coin collections for a very long time. He said that there had never been a problem and went on to describe the type of safeguards that were in place. Mr. Nkwo said that it was his opinion that this was not necessary because of all of the safeguards.

Council Member Newton said that he did not think that the collectors being accompanied by an officer was in the contract and wanted to know if that was charged as overtime.

Council Member McCarthy said that he did not understand why the City had to ‘find’ \$5 million in a few years. Mr. Nkwo said that he meant that the City had to “find” the money by cutting the costs.

Council Member McCarthy said that they need to remember that they should not rely on the funding. He said that they have to pay attention this year because they would not have some of the revenue next year. Mr. Nkwo said that they try to use the money wisely.

Council Member Herron asked about the move of the Parking Violations. She said that having officers accompany the collectors had never happened before. She wished to know where the three officers were located.

Mr. Nkwo said that the supervisor was a retired police officer. He suggested that she speak to the Police administration about this.

Council Member Pereira asked if Mr. Flatto had spoken about delaying the tax foreclosures for a year. Mr. Flatto said that they had spoken about delaying the sale to the fall. [Inaudible]

Council Member Pereira asked why there was no reimbursement for Steel Point and other revenue. Mr. Flatto gave a brief overview, most of which was inaudible.

Council Member Cruz said that he had seen three officers removing the quarters from the meters along with the supervisor. He said that it was troubling to have two or three police officers supervising this was unnecessary.

Council Member Newton asked if they were using one time dollars for re-occurring expenses. Mr. Nkwo reviewed the details. This year, they will have almost \$70 million in non-reoccurring revenue.

Council Member Newton said that they had budgeted for that non-reoccurring money in the budget. He wished to know if that would allow other funds to be used for other items. Discussion followed.

Council Member Herron said that she was concerned about the fact that the City would be \$10 to \$12 million in arrears without the one-time funding.

Mr. Nkwo said that this was correct. Without those revenues, the City would have been compelled to increase tax. He cautioned everyone that they have health insurance payments and pension payments that the City has no control over the costs.

Mr. Nkwo reviewed the Revenue Increases, the increase in the value of the mill rate, and how much the Library will receive as from their mill rate. He also reviewed the numbers associated with the PILOT tax program along with the ones that have recently phased out. The State will be giving the City \$8.9 million and this is a re-occurring amount. He indicated where the one time Federal CARES Act revenue was listed. After December of 2024, the City will have to adjust for the \$5 million shortage in the non-reoccurring revenue.

He pointed out that the BOE Nutrition Center expenses will be going up because of the revenue changes.

Council Member McCarthy asked what the mill rate would be if the \$13 million and \$5 million were removed from the Budget. Mr. Flatto said that it would increase the taxes by 3 mills.

Council Member McCarthy asked what it would take to reduce the taxes by 1 mill. Mr. Flatto said that it would take \$7.077 million to reduce the mill rate by 1. Mr. Nkwo said that the value of one mill for motor vehicles was \$479.00.

Council Member Newton said that there were projects that should be going online and they be paying taxes in the future. Mr. Nkwo said that other than something like PSE&G, the new projects will not generate significant taxes because they will be paying less than \$2 million dollars. Discussion followed.

Council Member Pereira said she compared the new Grand List figures of \$8.2 million to the last Grand List of \$6.5 million. Council Member Pereira said that if they wished to generate the exact same revenue with the new grand list, they could lower the new mill rate to 41.24. Anything over 41.24 would be a tax increase. She said that they had reduced the allocation to the Board of Ed when the City gave \$2 million to the Lighthouse for the bus transportation. This was reducing the contribution to the BOE by \$2 million dollars. The new payment from Governor Lamont allocated to urban cities is not a one-time revenue. Bridgeport will generate another \$3.5 million in revenue. The City has netted an additional \$12 million dollars in revenue in the Operating Budget. Any over 40 mills is a tax increase.

Council Member Pereira said that she had prepared this for her constituents because she was holding a budget meeting and everyone knows the WPCA will be increasing their rate by 3% starting July 1st. She will be explaining to her constituents that anything over 40 mills is a tax increase, not a tax decrease. Even though the City is netting an additional \$12 million dollars, the Mayor has appropriated no additional funding to the BOE and actually reduced the allocation to the BOE by \$2 million dollars. She said that there was no justification for this mill rate.

Council Member Pereira stated that the administration was telling people that they were reducing it by 10 mills, which is 19.5% but because of the re-evaluation, people's rates are going up by 50% in the East End. The residents are going to see a massive tax increase. She repeated her earlier statement that there was no justification for the mill rate.

Mr. Flatto said that there was an increase in revenue simply because there were some projects that were leaving the PILOT program. Mr. Nkwo said that his job was to report the facts and the Mayor has proposed his budget to the Committee and the Committee takes it from there.

Council Member McCarthy said that he did not like it when people make up their own math on things and the fact is that there will be increases over the years.

Council Member Newton asked what would happen if the City reduced the car taxes to below 45 Mill. Mr. Nkwo said that the State would not reimburse the City. Mr. Nkwo said that it was about \$5.3 million in reimbursement. This is another partially unfunded mandate. Mr. Flatto said that if the mill rates drops to 44.5 or 44, the State reimbursement will stop in two years.

Council Member Pereira said that the numbers that she had cited had been calculated by a well-respected CPA who she worked with.

Council Member Pereira stated that all of the abatements that were just referenced are ultimately paid by the residents of Bridgeport. Developers have \$40 or \$50 million to construct apartment complexes, the residential taxpayers should never pay the burden of the developers. This is why she votes against every single one and will continue to do so.

She said that she was known for being quite accurate, thorough and researched.

Mr. Nkwo then reviewed the figures for the Police and Fire overtime. He pointed out that the wages have increased for the Police Officers and Firefighters during the last five years, but the City had reduced the amount of overtime for both departments during that time. However, the increases are forcing the City to increase their budgets by \$13.5 million dollars. Some of these increases are unfunded State mandates and others are from actuary reports. Health insurance will see an 8% increase citywide. Discussion followed about the various increases. He reminded everyone that the goal was to contain the mill rate. He pointed out that while the revenues have been decreasing, the expenses have been increasing.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked about the BOE Nutrition Program listed on the summary sheet Mr. Nkwo had sent out. She said that there was some funding left over and wished to know how it was used.

Mr. Nkwo said that last year, the BOE had a surplus of about \$4.2 million which was transferred into their health insurance.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that it bothered her that when there was a surplus, the money was used for health insurance rather than the classroom. It should be used for the students. Every year, the Council hears about how much they are not giving to the Board, but the BOE surplus is used for other things.

Mr. Nkwo reminded everyone that the Council does not have the authority to tell the BOE how to use their funding. Council Member Burns reminded everyone that the BOE would be coming on the 22nd.

Council Member Herron said that it was a doomsday budget as Mr. Nkwo presented. She asked where the revenue from all the house sales that were expected. Mr. Nkwo said that it would be reflected in the Town Clerk's office with the real estate conveyance tax. Mr. Flatto said that the last two years were good revenue years for the Town Clerk's Office.

Council Member McCarthy said that there was a disconnect between people thinking what the BOE should get and what others think they should get. He pointed out that if they don't keep up with the wage increases for the BOE, the City will simply fall behind on their allocations.

Council Member McCarthy asked if they were still reviewing whether the City should be self-insured. He also wished to know if they should get out of MERF.

Mr. Flatto said that the City had opted for the Police to join MERF between 8 to 10 years ago and Fire had followed about 7 years ago. He pointed out that it would almost be impossible to leave MERF because they would have to set up their own pension plan. Discussion about the details followed.

Council Member Lyons stated she joined at 10:20 a.m.

Council Member Newton asked Mr. Nkwo if they put funding aside for anticipated salary increases. He asked Mr. Nkwo if they felt the time had come to send more contracts to binding arbitration because the panel reviews what the City could realistically pay. Mr. Nkwo agreed and said that he had testified at binding arbitration.

Council Member Newton asked if the BOE had surplus they had put the money into health insurance rather than the Classroom. Mr. Flatto said that the BOE FOC does allocate some funding into programmatic accounts.

Council Member Burns reminded everyone that the BOE would be in next week.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she was just concerned that the BOE surpluses were being used in the proper manner.

Council Member Cruz said that he was hearing that in the future, there would be funding shortages. He said that the unaffiliated positions should be reviewed. It is time to get rid of some of those positions.

Council Member Pereira asked why there was so much effort to account for various things like the Nutrition Center, but nothing was shown for the \$2 million dollars given to Lighthouse for the bus transportation.

Mr. Nkwo said that he had no idea where Council Member Pereira was citing the \$2 million dollars from. He said that he did not recall where that was.

Council Member Pereira said that the revenue for the Nutrition Center was documented in the budget even though the City has nothing to do it with, however the revenue that is now not being given to the BOE to cover transportation was not being documented on one single page. She

repeated that that the revenue for the Nutrition Center was documented in the budget, but there was nothing documented for the BOE transportation despite the fact that Mayor Ganim committed to this.

Mr. Flatto said that the list only included changes to the budget rather than items that have remained the same. The \$2 million was still same from the previous year. Council Member Burns confirmed that this was so.

Council Member Burns said that they had already reviewed the Public Facilities administration at a previous meeting. He directed everyone to page 256 which covered the Golf Course.

Mr. Catino said that COVID had boosted the golf course revenues because it was a relatively safe sport. If the weather remains constant, the course is currently at \$1.5 million and the all-time historical high has been \$1.8. He hopes that they will surpass the previous revenue.

Mr. Catino reviewed the details outlined on page 256. There was some additional landscaping done to trim back the rough from the fairways.

Council Member Newton asked about the three employees. Mr. Catino said that there was only one administrative staff member. The majority of the staff that maintains the greens are seasonal staff.

Council Member Lyons asked about the status contract for the food area which will be expiring soon. She wished to know if it would affect the revenue. Mr. Catino said that the rent was included in the Parks section and will be negotiated. The rent does not affect the golf course revenue.

Council Member McCarthy said there were numerous seasonal jobs at the course. He said that those type of jobs turn into favor jobs. He suggested that they look at hiring those who are in need of jobs.

Mr. Catino said that they had reached out to the local high schools with the seasonal positions. There is no set program in place, but they have also reached out to Bullard Haven, but cautioned people that there might be union issues. They have to check with Mr. Amado about this.

Council Member Pereira stated that based on all the information they had received about the course, she wished to know why they were not projecting more of an increase.

Mr. Nkwo said that primarily since so many restaurants have been closed, families have been patronizing the course. However, once the parks open up, he did not think that they would continue to see the same level of revenue.

Council Member Pereira said that the golf course revenue generated from the course should be listed on the same pages.

Mr. Nkwo said that the Public Facilities and Parks have a page. They roll up the total on that page.

Council Member Pereira said that they should be able to see what the revenues were on the page. She then related to the restaurant on the Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course. She stated that they did not have the right to extend the contracts. The maximum they can extend a contract under the Purchasing Ordinance is three years or two years with a one year extension. Under both Connecticut General Statutes and the Purchasing Ordinance, the City is required to go out to bid for anything on a City property.

Mr. Nkwo said that the contract was not extended, but when a lease expires, it becomes month to month and will remain so until the City approves a new lease. Council Member Pereira stated that this was irrelevant. Mr. Flatto said that the lease was handled by the City Attorneys. Council Member Newton pointed out that both he and Council Member Burns had already stated that they had brought this item up to the City Attorney's Office.

BRIDGEPORT ZOO

Mr. Greg Dancho said that they had weathered the COVID issue and were working towards opening in June of this year. They are looking at 75,000 worth of work that was being done and privately funded. They are preparing for a major anniversary next year. The education has become virtual and they have been maintaining the safety protocol. The carousel is still not operational at this time. The PPP funding helped with the staffing.

Council Member Burns asked about the Western Connecticut Tourism group. Mr. Dancho said that there was State funding applied for the western portion of the state and they are working on marketing. They will be having billboards from NYC to Massachusetts. In Fairfield County, they have more attractions than other parts of the State.

Mr. Dancho said that he was just appointed to the State Council for attractions and would be advocating for Bridgeport.

Council Member Burns asked if the State revenues had been allocated. Mr. Dancho said that they were working on that right now, but he believes it would be the same as last year. Half of it has been received and he expected the second half to come in.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that her class was one of the ones that he had done on Zoom and her students were very happy with it. She asked if they do virtual Zoom trips.

Mr. Dancho said that they were working on doing virtual field trips, but added that the State was focused on getting the students outside and away from the computers. They are trying to do this before the end of this school year. This is part of a partnership with the Maritime Aquarium, and other entities on this.

Council Member Brantley commended Mr. Dancho with the work that he has been doing during the pandemic. She said that they should keep up the good work and families had called her to talk about their visit to the Zoo.

Mr. Dancho said that there were events underway and a river clean-up was scheduled for today.

Council Member Pereira said that the Mayor had budgeted \$1.6 million for the zoo. She asked if they charge for school field trips. The zoo charges visitors but the money from the City comes from the taxpayers. Mr. Dancho said that they give a deep discount for the Bridgeport schools and there are passes at the library for families. Mr. Dancho said that they have been talking about this issue and it's not the admission, but the cost of the busing.

Council Member Pereira said that it was not necessarily correct. She said that there had been a paradigm shift about the animals that should be in their natural habitat. She said that zoos should not exist anymore. The tigers and other animals should be running wild in their habitat.

Mr. Dancho pointed out that this is not the old P.T. Barnum circus. He agreed that they should close if they had stayed the way they were 40 years ago.

Council Member Newton said that Mr. Dancho and the staff had done a phenomenal job and they are the only zoo in the State. Council Member Newton said that the children love looking at the animals and hoped that they could get back to the school trips.

Mr. Dancho said that they were seeing people come out from New York and many of them say that they feel safe at the Zoo.

Council Member Brantley said that the Zoo was open to everyone statewide. She said that Council Member Newton had been participated in DCYF Fun Days at the Zoo and Mr. Dancho had been able to keep the cost down for families.

Council Member Herron commended Mr. Dancho about this. Her daughter is a vegan and her family generally does not like zoos. They help with breeding programs. Unfortunately, many of the children don't leave Bridgeport and they don't have the chance to see the animals. She said that there was a problem with the cost of busing for field trips and the classes have to pay for the buses.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia thanked the Zoo staff and pointed out that it was not just seeing the animals, but it was conservation and preservation of the various animals. Mr. Dancho said that they had moved some male cranes from the Zoo to the Bronx Zoo and it was filmed by a cable company and will be shown nationally.

RECREATION

Ms. Conine then spoke about Recreation. She said that their programs had been cancelled last year and the kids really suffered. They look forward to the various activities. She gave a brief overview of the various requirements that would be in place.

Council Member Burns asked about the Financial Coordinator in the Department. Mr. Nkwo said that it was a transfer and was not a new position.

Mr. Nadrizny said that was to help the department in terms of administration but they have many camps and other activities going on so they need help.

Council Member Burns asked if they would handle the finances. Mr. Nadrizny said that Mr. Catino handles most of the finances.

Council Member Newton asked about page 269 which lists the Recreational programs. He asked if the public was aware of these various programs. Ms. Conine said that it was on social media and they distribute flyers through the BOE for 6th, 7th and 8th graders.

Council Member Newton asked if they could get the information to the Council Members to distribute to constituents. Ms. Conine said that she would be happy to get this information to him.

Council Member Newton asked Mr. Nadrizny if they could make the job offerings such as Camp Counselors and lifeguards available to Bridgeport residents first. Mr. Nadrizny said that this was the department's priority.

Council Member McCarthy said he was confused why the CAO would transfer this position to the Department. Mr. Nkwo said that the transfer was requested by the CAO.

Council Member Pereira asked about the Financial Coordinator and said that the salary was listed at \$3,000 more than what was listed in the budget book. She said that the Senior programs were transferred to the Health Department. She said that there was no justification to transfer the position to the Recreation.

Mr. Nadrizny said that the Recreation Department works with Parks and Recreation.

Council Member Pereira asked for an explanation for the reason they moved the Senior programs to the Health Department. Ms. Conine said that the Recreation Department has always had assisted with the Senior Programs such as Tai Chi, dance, picnics and Eisenhower Center.

Council Member Pereira said that the responsibility had been moved to the Health Department and the Recreation Department is still involved. Mr. Catino said that it was the Department of Aging that was transferred.

Council Member Pereira said that these were the games that were being played because the Recreation Department is not responsible for the Senior activities.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked if the Seniors get passes for the parks and the Zoo. Ms. Conine said that they do receive that by coming into her office.

Council Member Burns said that there was a difference between Recreation programs and other services. They have been working with the Task Force on Public Safety and there are not many opportunities for youth to be involved.

PARKS ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Nkwo then reviewed the revenue summary shown on page 280 with the Committee members.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked what security was in place to ensure that the amount of cash admitted matched the number of cars that were allowed in. Mr. Catino said that they have regular seasonal employees and two full time employees that check on them daily.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about the security with the re-opening of the parks. Mr. Catino said that they would be working with the Health Department and the Police Department on this.

Council Member Cruz asked about the concession stands. Mr. Hladun said that the amount was the license agreement for the west side concession. The lease is approaching the one year extension which was discussed by the Parks Commission.

Council Member Cruz said that he had an issue with the one vendor having this whole area. He felt that there should be food trucks. Mr. Hladun said that they had discussed food trucks at the Board of Parks Commissioners recently and he went on to list the various requirements for doing this. They are also reviewing how other municipalities were doing this.

Mr. Catino said that there had been many conversations about this and said when there were multiple vendors, it can be difficult to keep the area clean. They also have to work out how to do this without disturbing the traffic flow.

Council Member Newton said that he had a problem with the Parks Commission being the only body that has the right to approve these contracts, because the Contracts Committee should be reviewing these.

Council Member Newton asked about the apartment rental. Mr. Nkwo said that there was an apartment on the golf course. Mr. Catino said that it was a small house next to the golf equipment storage building.

Council Member Newton asked for an update on the status of the lease. Mr. Nkwo said that they had gone to the City Attorney's and reviewed the lease. The lease had been drafted by the City Attorney and went to the Parks Board for approval. Mr. Hladun said he believe it went to the Board, but may not have been taken up by them.

Council Member Newton said that they felt the rent was too low and were told by the City Attorney that it had been taken care of. He said that when they asked the staff to follow up on something, they expect them to do what they are asked to do.

Mr. Nkwo said that he had brought it to the City Attorney's office and that the lease had been taken to the Parks Commission. Mr. Nadrizny said that the tenant is on call 24 hours a day and takes care of the course and the grounds immediately around the house.

Council Member Herron said that she appreciated him working on this. She pointed out that the house was on the Fairfield side. She said that she was disturbed that the Commission had not taken care of this. She said that they start to work on having a PGA tournament there. The City Attorney does not assess the value of the house and the Park Commission had not followed through on this.

Council Member Cruz asked Mr. Hladun's title was Special Project Coordinator. He thanked Mr. Hladun for sprucing up the handball court and hope to have another tournament there.

Council Member Cruz said that Mr. Hladun was a busy man and there was a lot of ground that he had to cover. Mr. Hladun said that this was correct. He said that they should consider adding another staff member.

Council Member Pereira said that under the City Charter, under the Parks Department, no parks or park land belonging to the City shall be sold or capital leased unless the capital lease or sale is recommended by the Board of Park Commissioners and approved by a two-thirds vote of the entire membership of the City Council. Both bodies have concluded a public hearing prior to taking any action.

She said that she assumed this included any edifices or structures in the park. She said she wanted to be clear that the City Council does have a role in the Wonderland of Ice or anything else in the parks.

Council Member Pereira said that she did not understand why there were two separate lines for Seaside and Beardsley parks. Mr. Hladun said that the park stickers were generated at two different checkpoint locations.

Council Member Pereira said that the residents who are taxpayers are being charged to enter the parks that they have already paid for. She said that she hears about it all the time. She wished to know how much comes from out of town visitors.

Mr. Catino said that it is within the Council authority to decide whether they can charge or not. It has always been a controversial topic.

Council Member Pereira asked how much money was generated from out of town visitors. Mr. Hladun had gotten some information about this, but during the past year, the parks were only open to Bridgeport residents. In the past years, the out of town visitor fees were about 25% of the total revenue.

Council Member Pereira suggested that they test allowing those who have their vehicles registered in Bridgeport a free permit for this year.

Council Member Burns said that he would like to see the process automated. He said that there should be a check point at St. Mary's.

Council Member McCarthy said that he agreed with the residents not paying the fee, but did not think they could reduce the motor vehicle tax and the free pass at the same time.

Council Member Newton said that there was a time when residents paid their car taxes, they got a free park sticker.

Council Member Martinez said that she was in favor of keeping the parks stickers free because they would pay for going to another out of town. She said that the parks have been opening and closing earlier than normal. This is one more reason to have the parks stickers free.

Mr. Nadrizny said that they had spoken to Police Department about this.

AIRPORT

Ms. Muoio said that the airport has been operating and felt that they would see some changes at the airport this year. The Airport Master Plan has been completed. They are pursuing the projects that had been recommended. Then she will put out an RFI for interest and hope to close the deficit. Leases are coming up for renewal and there will be a draft for fee increases that will be presented to the Airport Commission. She then spoke about the upcoming roof repairs for the control tower.

Mr. Nkwo then reviewed the personnel changes and the resulting savings on page 292.

Council Member Pereira said that she would be covering this at her District Budget meeting. She asked why they needed a supervisor to oversee two people. Ms. Muoio said that there had been a Public Facilities staff member at the airport and allows her to retain the skilled staff member. This change will save the City money.

Mr. Catino said that that these were working staff members, not just administration.

Council Member Pereira said that they were projecting to lose \$700,000 again and they were just not heading in the right direction.

Council Member Newton said that the airport was part of the City and it had never been a revenue generator. The State refused to purchase the airport years ago and now they need to work on getting the airport to generate revenue.

ENGINEERING

Mr. Nkwo said page 298 shows the revenues and personnel. He said that there was only one vacant position in the department.

Council Member Burns asked about the Special Project Coordinator. Mr. Nkwo said that it was supposed to be an executive secretary reclassification. It has not been filled. An engineer makes less money than the secretary.

Council Member McCarthy asked Mr. Nkwo if he was the one that was making recommendation. Mr. Nkwo said that the Mayor was briefed on the budget and it was the Mayor's recommended budget. Discussion followed about who makes the decision for the recommended budget.

Council Member Newton asked if Mr. Nkwo and the Mayor sit down to create the budget. Mr. Nkwo said that there was a panel of administration that reviews the budget to create the Mayor's

recommended budget. The final policy decisions that are made are the ones that are in the Mayor's Recommended Budget. He is informed what he is to add or subtract on the draft and then does so.

Council Member Martinez said that as elected officials, there should never be a time when the OPM director does not provide the Committee with the information. There should never be a statement about "well, I guess". Mr. Nkwo is very poor in representing the budget.

Council Member Pereira asked about the Engineering position that was vacant last year. Mr. Nkwo said that it was a Civil Engineer II position was approved. Mr. Nkwo said that Mr. Urquidi was interviewing.

Council Member Pereira said that she did not like the Special Project Coordinator jobs because they were patronage jobs that were filled by staff that was unqualified.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that Mr. Nkwo had done a great job with the information that he had. As a pastor, she knows what is going on in her church. The congregation is not going to look at the elders, the trustees or anyone else but her when something happens. It is up to the Mayor to know what is happening in the City, not Mr. Nkwo.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that the Mayor has a Committee and the Budget is given to the Council to decide what to approve. If they don't approve a budget, then it is on the Committee.

Council Member McCarthy said that he did not agree with Special Projects Coordinator job title but felt that the person in this particular position was well qualified.

Mr. Nkwo said that he was used to taking the punches. The Committee modifies the Mayor's Recommended Budget.

Council Member Burns said that Mr. Urquidi was not on the call but felt that he was one of the most qualified directors.

Council Member Newton said that this was budget season and they were there to ask questions. They have to rely on people who have the expertise to do it. He said that he wanted the Council to hear the chain of command in producing the budget. The staff member in the position was more than qualified.

Council Member Cruz said that he was reacting to comments and felt that Mr. Nkwo was doing his job. Now it was up to the Committee to make the final changes. He thanked Mr. Nkwo for his work.

PARKS MAINTENANCE

Council Member Burns directed everyone to page 288. Mr. Nkwo then reviewed the figures on the Personnel Summary.

Council Member McCarthy asked about the Senior Check Point Attendants and the Seasonal Help. He said that there was no proposed number of staff.

Mr. Nkwo said that Parks could provide that number to the Committee.

Council Member McCarthy said that he felt there were too many staff members sitting in chairs at the checkpoints.

Mr. Nadrizny said that they could provide the number of staff they need.

Council Member Pereira asked about the three positions that were bargaining positions. She wished to know why there were no salary increases.

Mr. Nkwo said that the Maintainers may be on the top step and if they leave, the new hire starts at the lowest run. Council Member Pereira said that it did not explain why the salaries were not increasing. There was no adjustment for the salary increases. Mr. Nkwo said that he would review it again and get back to the Committee.

Council Member Pereira said that there was a \$190,000 decrease in landscaping. Mr. Nkwo said that it was an increase.

Mr. Nadrizny said that they were having a difficult time hiring seasonal employees and have to go to a temporary agency for the staff.

Council Member Pereira said that they should go to the high schools and the youth need jobs. They should work to offset the work.

Mr. Nadrizny said that it wasn't just cutting grass, but also involved trimming trees. They had reached out to the high school seniors, but their parents were concerned about COVID.

Mr. Catino said that the bulk of the jobs involved city wide tree trimming which was a dangerous job. They appreciate the \$100,000.

Council Member Pereira asked about stump grinding. She asked if high school seniors could perform stump grinding. Mr. Catino said that it was a dangerous job. They have done as much stump grinding as they can.

Council Member Taylor-Moye said that it had been hard to get everything done regarding the tree work. She acknowledged that Mr. Hladun had been doing a good job in answering her calls and there still remains work to do in her area.

Mr. Catino explained that stump grinding and tree trimming are two different services. They are both dangerous, specialized services.

Council Member Burns asked if residents could come to the City to have stumps removed. Mr. Nadrizny said that they have a hard time keeping up with their own city trees.

Council Member Newton asked questions about Maintenance 1 and IV. Mr. Nkwo said that he would review it and get back to the Council. Mr. Catino replied that the two staff members were at their top steps.

Council Member Newton said that while he was in favor of hiring young people, he did not want to put young people behind a piece of equipment they don't know how to operate safely.

Mr. Nkwo said that the employees were part of a union that had an expired contract and there had been no new contract in place.

Council Member McCarthy said that it was hard to believe that they were having a hard time finding seasonal help.

Council Member McCarthy asked why the tree trimming was in parks and not along roadways. Mr. Catino said that at one time the Parks Department had their own tree crew and therefore it was always done by Parks.

Council Member Martinez asked if it would make more sense for them to hire full time staff for the City or hire two or three experienced tree trimmers.

Mr. Catino said that they were trying to hire full time staff and seasonal. Some of the trees that they outsource are very large trees and very dangerous. The staff are not trained to handle them because they are often near wires.

Council Member Cruz said that they need another Tree Warden to be added to Parks. He said that there seems to be a problem in attracting applicants to seasonal jobs.

Mr. Nadrizny said that the seasonal Parks jobs are very demanding. Most kids can make more money at Target and the job lasts only 120 days.

Council Member Newton said that they have to exhibit the documents that Mr. Nkwo gave them. He pointed out that people did not want to only work four months and they should extend the time frame. There's no advancement and they have to leave when their time is up.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER A 4 PAGE DOCUMENT TITLED "OPM RECOMMENDED CHANGES" AS EXHIBIT 04-17-21-A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Nadrizny thanked everyone and said that the positions that they were asking for were vital to keep the City clean.

Mr. Nkwo reminded everyone that he is just the numbers person and makes the changes requested.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services