

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
APRIL 22, 2021**

**ATTENDANCE:** Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Jorge Cruz, Jeanette Herron, Matthew McCarthy, Mary McBride-Lee; Scott Burns, Co-chair (6:06 p.m.)

**OTHERS:** Council Member(s): M. Brown, E. Martinez, M. Pereira, R. Roman-Christy & M. Valle; N. Nkwo, OPM Director; K. Flatto, Finance Director; T. Gaudett, Mayor's Office; Curtis Denton, ITS Director; Janene Hawkins, CAO; John Gomes, Assistant CAO; Dr. Herron Gaston, Assistant CAO; Patricia Rowe, CAO's Office, Tamara Root, 203-543-8878; 203-576-7965; 203-209-1058; 203-275-6420

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

He said that he expects everyone to be courteous and polite.

**ITS DEPARTMENT**

Mr. Nkwo gave a brief overview of the Personnel Summary. They are asking for two additional positions. They are asking for a Security Specialist, but they are currently working on the job description.

Mr. Denton said he was asking for a Security Specialist and a Public Safety Support Specialist for Police, Fire and EOC. He also gave a brief summary of the two job responsibilities.

Mr. Denton explained that the State is requiring that all Police Departments have body cams and dash cams by 2022 and this Public Safety Support position will allow a sworn officer to work on police matters.

Council Member Pereira said that the department had received a 10% increase last year and they are asking for another 10% increase. She said that the BOE has a large staff and they only have half the ITS staff that the City does.

Mr. Denton said that the increase cost from last year was due to upgrading the computers Windows platform.

Council Member Pereira repeated her concerns about the BOE having twice the staff and many more devices than the City. She said that she could not justify the ITS request.

Mr. Nkwo said that the BOE has its own budget. With the new Public Safety officer, it will allow an officer to do police work.

Mr. Flatto pointed out that on the City side, ITS handles the MUNIS program which services both the BOE and the City.

Council Member Cruz said that he found the raises were to be quite high. Mr. Nkwo said that those were union negotiated raises.

Council Member Pereira said that there was a \$6,000 raise for ITS Director. Included that is not a union position. Mr. Nkwo said that the position comes with steps and union agreement.

Council Member Pereira asked about a mid-year adjustment line item on page 146. Mr. Nkwo said that during the year, a specialized outside firm was needed to prevent a serious hacking attempt.

Council Member Pereira said that Mr. Nkwo had appropriated a \$125,000 without the Council approval.

Council Member Pereira asked about a bonded item. Mr. Flatto said that a number of years ago, the City had bonded \$3.5 million for fiber optics infrastructure. Mr. Nkwo said that there were no computers included in the bonding.

Council Member Newton thanked Mr. Denton for his time.

### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**

Mr. Nkwo gave a brief overview of the Personnel Summary.

Ms. Hawkins said that she had sent out copies of her PowerPoint presentation. She said that COVID had taken up a great deal of their attention in keeping everyone safe. The original focus was testing but then it shifted to vaccinations.

She said that they have continued to modify the administration for more efficiency and build communications. Kronos is online at the Police Department.

The Department was able to continue the continuity of services during the pandemic and were able to work cohesively with the Health Department.

Currently, the City administration is on a modified work schedule. They are performing evaluations and working on reorganization. There is a reopening committee and they have been encouraging employee vaccinations and for the employees' families.

Council Member McCarthy said that they had noticed a number of vacant positions and the department heads have stated that they did not have the authority to fill the positions.

Ms. Hawkins said that the job request has several departments that have to sign off on the positions. She said that it has been difficult to find the appropriate candidates for the staff. It is an on-going situation not only in Bridgeport, but throughout the State.

Council Member McCarthy said that there were revenue generating positions that the Department heads did not have the authorization to fill.

Council Member Cruz said that he always expresses his gratitude to Dr. Gaston and Adrian for their assistance when Council Member Cruz had to suddenly relocate 25 homeless individuals.

Council Member Cruz said that he felt that the administration was not making a serious effort to reach out to Bridgeport residents regarding the open City positions. He said that they should be listing the positions with the Department of Labor And be more aggressive with getting the word out there.

Ms. Hawkins said that she had a much longer list of the various entities that receive information on open City positions. She said that she would send him a list of those agencies.

Council Member Pereira asked about the Membership Registration on page 144 which lists \$88,000, which is similar to what it would cost to join Trump's club. Council Member Newton said that the reference to Trump was unnecessary. Mr. Nkwo said that the \$88,000 was for key organizations such as CCM.

Council Member Pereira asked why the Memberships were in the CAO's office. Mr. Nkwo said that they handle the administration of the memberships.

Council Member Pereira asked about the priority ranking process for hiring Fire and Police. Ms. Hawkins said that the process was instituted long before she became the head of Labor Relations or CAO.

Council Member Roman-Christy said that the Financial Coordinator was being transferred to the Parks and Recreation. She asked where the funding was coming from. Mr. Nkwo explained that it was just shifting funds from one department to another.

Council Member Valle asked for clarification on the two Assistant Chief Administrators. She said that during the past year, when she called City Hall, the calls were not answered. If there is no one there, the position should be eliminated.

Mr. Nkwo reiterated that when a position request form comes to his office, it is processed right away.

Council Member Newton said that Mr. Nkwo and the administration should sit down and work on the process to speed the hiring up.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that if a department has a position and they don't fill it, they should not receive additional funding.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked where the job application process begins. Ms. Hawkins said that it would depend on the union contract and how it is advertised. Most of the time, it should start at Labor Relations while tested positions start in the Personnel Department.

Council Member McBride-Lee thanked Ms. Hawkins, Mr. Gomes and Rev. Gaston for their assistance.

Council Member Newton asked Ms. Hawkins to explain what the CAO's handle within the City. Ms. Hawkins said that she, Mr. Gomes and Dr. Gaston all work cohesively as a team.

Dr. Gaston greeted the Committee. He said that when COVID 19 heightened, he was asked to assist with the homeless, along with the State of Connecticut. Council Member Cruz and Council Member Herron helped with leveraging the homeless into hotels when requested to do so. Dr. Gaston also works with the Health Department regarding the temporary housing. He also spoke about the outreaches through the Lighthouse Program and overseeing the Small and Minority Business Program high school internships.

Mr. Gomes said that there were projects that were underway on a day to day basis, that he works on, such as Kronos, Fire and Police tech, Purchasing Department approvals, ITS strategic planning, updating the Windows operating platform, Central Grants and the BOE grants. He also provides support to the Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, Town Clerk and others as needed. He also works with Public Facilities on projects like anti-blight, the East Side Senior Center and working with different technologies and work order managements.

*Council Member Burns joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.*

Council Member Burns asked how the priorities were going to be divided up in the CAO's Office and what the status on that was.

Council Member Burns also wished to know what the status of the Intergov program.

Ms. Hawkins said that there were some employees that were challenged regarding the Intergov program. There are still many functions that are done via paper and not digitally. They are working on training people on using Intergov.

Mr. Gomes said that they had targeted 13 departments and they have trained a portion of the staff when COVID closed the City. He said that he believed it would be 70% of the departments have been trained and about 45% of the staff have achieved proficiency.

Mr. Gaudett said that he felt that there would be a public announcement about Intergov in the coming months. On the back end, the documents are passed along to the appropriate department and managing the workflow. After this is smoothed out, then the public portal will be available where the public will be able to apply for permits and licenses. Eventually, the paper portion will be phased out.

Council Member McCarthy said that five years ago, there was one CAO and now there are three CAOs. He said that he wants to see things changed in the department.

Mr. Flatto said that when the current administration came in, there were a number of other positions in that office.

Ms. Hawkins said that they cut a number of positions due to the deficit. She agreed that the Building Department needs an overhaul. She said that she was physically in the Building Department doing an evaluation of the department when the City closed. She said that the staff should be responsive and polite to the public. The three CAO officers work together to make sure that the public does not have to wait in long lines and do receive accurate service.

Council Member McCarthy said that the Building Department was a revenue producing department and that he felt they were losing revenue because of the long delays involved.

Council Member Roman-Christy said that the Health Department and Veteran's Department were being relocated to 115 Highland Avenue. She wished to know when that will happen and if the City will be paying rent to the Bridgeport Housing Authority.

Ms. Hawkins said that there was a meeting about this yesterday regarding having the building up and running. She said that it was her understanding that 115 Highland Avenue was owned by the City.

Mr. Nkwo confirmed that the City owns the property and the Housing Authority was a tenant there. Discussion followed about the details of the tenants and where the various departments will be located.

Council Member Pereira said that the PowerPoint presentation states that there was an Acting Health Director and an Acting Deputy Director. She asked if the City had an Acting Health Director.

Ms. Hawkins said that Ms. Ebony Jackson-Shaheed was the Acting Health Director.

Council Member Pereira said that it was not listed in the budget or the Ordinance. Ms. Hawkins said that the position was negotiated and the title was changed. Council Member Pereira said that she did not know how they could create a position that was not listed in the Ordinance.

Council Member Burns asked about the black fiber project in the City. He asked about the status of that program and whether they could use the Federal dollars towards it.

Mr. Gomes said that Mr. Denton was still on the call and that some locations of the City had been identified for the project.

Mr. Denton said that there were 30 non-BOE City sites that would receive dark fiber and this would reduce the cost of Frontier. There are numerous locations that do not have WiFi. An RFP has been released and this will stabilize the access. Dark fiber has been run from the City to the EOC.

Mr. Denton said that the cost of the fiber was the lower cost of the project. The expensive portion is running the wire along the poles or building the conduits between sites. The City does not have to pay a fee for the usage of poles.

Mr. Flatto said that he had received a cost proposal from Mr. Denton and believed that they could cover the cost through the American Rescue Act.

Council Member Newton announced that there would be a public hearing at 7:00 p.m.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services