

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 11, 2022**

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

OTHERS: Council Member(s): A. Boyd, J. Cruz, R. Smith, M. Pereira, R. Roman-Christy & M. Valle; Paul Catino, Public Facilities; Luann Conine, Greg Dancho, Beardsley Zoo; Craig Nadrizny, Acting Public Facilities Director; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Luis Burgos, Parks; Steve Hladun, Parks Department; Jon Urquidi, City Engineer; Michelle Muoio, Airport Manager; Barbara, iPhone-DNPH80W00DXT

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present. He reminded everyone that they had invited a number of guests to speak about their submitted budget. They are not here to be scolded, but answer questions about what they need.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED COMPARISON OF DEPARTMENT FY23 PERSONNEL POSITIONS VS. FY17 AS EXHIBIT 04-11-2022-A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED OPEP CAPITAL BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES AS EXHIBIT 04-11-2022-B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED FY23 SPECIAL PROJECT MANAGERS W/UNIONS AS EXHIBIT 04-1-2022-C.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED ENGINEERING PERMIT SUPERVISOR REQUEST AS EXHIBIT 04-11-2022-D.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT FY23 CAPITAL EXPENDITURES INTO GENERAL BUDGET AS EXHIBIT 04-11-2022-E.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC FACILITIES

(Administration, Parks, Zoo, and Engineering)

• **Zoo** – Mr. Nwko asked Mr. Dancho if there were any changes. Mr. Dancho said that there was a change with the State Tourism funding. He said that there was a question about some additional funding that came from a different source. He is looking into this.

Council Member Burns directed everyone to page 254.

Council Member Pereira said that Mr. Dancho had sent her some bylaws about the zoo, but she was looking for the signed document between the City and the Zoo. Mr. Dancho said that there was a copy in the City Attorney's Office, which is a very long document. He will look for his copy and send it to her.

Council Member Pereira said that Mr. Dancho was a professional but he also knows how she feels about the zoo.

Council Member McCarthy asked whether the actual operating expenses exceeded what the Council Members see in the budget. Mr. Dancho said that there were funds from the State and gate receipts.

Council Member Newton thanked Mr. Dancho for the opportunity for the children to go to the zoo for free. He asked if the State does any advertising for the Zoo. Mr. Dancho said that the zoo admission was free on Saturday for Bridgeport residents until June. He said that they were waiting to hear if CT residents would be allowed to visit the zoo for free in the summer. Mr. Dancho then went on to describe a light show for their 100th year anniversary. Another bond has been approved for the tiger exhibit and the bear exhibit. Discussion followed.

Council Member Roman-Christy asked Mr. Dancho about scheduling the visits to the zoo. He explained that the reservations were part of the COVID restrictions. All the visitors had to log in at the gate.

Council Member McCarthy asked where the \$500,000 revenue number came from and if there was a way to increase the funding. Mr. Dancho said that it was AARPA funds and there was no actual figure. When the Zoo was part of DEEP, it was \$500,000, but the amount subsequently dropped. Later it was increased, but has been decreasing over time. He said that they should not be in the Tourism, but in Education.

Council Member McCarthy said that it was the 100th anniversary of the Zoo and felt that the new Communications Director should be advertising this. Mr. Dancho said it is also Frederick

Olmstead's 250th anniversary this year. He said that if they have free admission, they will have to do some planning so that people have a positive experience.

Mr. Flatto said that the reason that last year shows \$380,000 was because it was a catch-up payment for the previous year. He said that the general State funding amount was about \$250,000 and went on to give the details.

Mr. Dancho said that one of the long-time staff members had recently passed away.

• **Parks and Recreation** – Mr. Nwko said that the Recreation Department was on page 260. He said that they had discussed the Seaside Park rental already. He then gave a brief overview of the Personnel transfer, which had already been discussed.

Council Member Burns asked if there were any vacancies. Mr. Nadrizny said that he thought all the positions had been filled. Mr. Catino said that he thought there were no vacancies in that department.

Council Member Newton said that they had asked for a break-down of the number of positions in a department but had not received one yet for this department. Mr. Nadrizny said that it was listed in the budget. Discussion followed about the request for an organization chart. Mr. Nadrizny said that he would send one.

Council Member McCarthy said that they could generate more revenue if they fixed up the bath house and rented it out. He had discussed this last year and would continue to discuss it until the bath house was fixed.

Council Member McCarthy asked for clarification on the seasonal employees. Mr. Catino said that this was not the same group of seasonal employees that they had discussed before. This group includes the lifeguards, camp counsellors and instructors who put on classes for the seniors.

Ms. Conine said that she was grateful for the request for seasonal lifeguards. They are competitive with the surrounding towns. There were a few non-Bridgeport counsellors last year. She summarized the other positions for the Recreation Department.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked for clarification on the Recreation Superintendent. Ms. Conine said that it was her position. Council Member McBride-Lee said that she was pleased to know that it was Ms. Conine.

Council Member Pereira asked if the parents have to pay a fee for enrolling the children in the summer camp. Ms. Conine said that it was a sliding scale fee.

Council Member Pereira asked how many children were in the camps. Ms. Conine said that it was between 130 and 150 children for the 5 weeks. The \$100 fee pays for the Zoo admission, Lake Compounce and other trips.

Council Member Pereira said that the revenue was revenue and it should be recorded in the budget.

Council Member Valle said that there was only 1 swimming pool open. She asked which one it was. Ms. Conine said that Blackham was down and would likely be down for the summer. They use High Verizon right now until Blackham is open again.

Council Member Pereira said that she did not understand why the Seaside Rental was listed in this section when it was for the camp counsellors. Mr. Nwko said that if they move it there will be two-line items called Seaside Rentals.

Council Member Pereira asked about the transfer of the Financial Coordinator. They had transferred that position last year. Mr. Nadrizny said that the Financial Coordinator works out of Public Facilities Maintenance.

Council Member Burns directed everyone to page 266. Mr. Nwko said that there was a decrease of revenue because they have provided vehicles for all the departments. He then gave an overview of the details.

Council Member McCarthy asked for clarification on the purchase of the trucks. Discussion followed about the purchases.

Council Member Pereira said that they were maintaining \$35,000 for two small pick-up trucks. Mr. Nwko said that he would purchase one first. Mr. Catino said that they were given that number and believed that it was outdated.

Council Member Pereira asked if they were trucks that would be used by Recreation or used by other departments. Mr. Catino said that they were for Parks Maintenance and Mr. Nwko had put the line item in Recreation.

Council Member Pereira said that this was not honest, ethical or transparent budgeting. She repeated that the trucks were listed here and it was not honest, ethical or transparent budgeting.

Council Member Newton said that Mr. Nwko had told them that they wanted to have all the budgeting items on the same page and as clear as possible.

Mr. Nadrizny said that they had \$35,000 listed for a Ford Ranger for 2023 and a second one for 2024.

Council Member Burns asked if \$400,000 for seasonals was an accurate number. He noted that the last few years had been light because of COVID. Mr. Nwko said that in 2019, they spent \$375,000. Mr. Catino said that the last two years had been affected by COVID and that they were looking at a robust year as life returns to normal.

- **Parks** Council Member Burns said that the budget was on page 272. Mr. Nwko gave an overview of the revenue, but cautioned everyone that they don't know the exact condition of the Seaside parking lot.

He then mentioned the Park rental and said that the tenant was now paying \$1,000 a month rather than \$400 a month. The tenant will be going before the Parks Board tomorrow for a new contract and is expected to assume the utilities cost.

Council Member Newton asked about the concession stands. He wished to know why the concession stand at Seaside was never open. Mr. Hladun said that the RFP was done in 2016 but was not able to open in 2020. This past year, the Parks Board did an extension for the current lease. The concessioner said that he was only able to open the West Beach, but he was not able to find staffing for the Grove concession. They will be asking for permission to put the RFP back out.

Council Member Newton said that the vendors who do the carts for the ices have carte blanche. Mr. Hladun said that they would be assessing the contract for the designated fee for vending on the Parks property.

Council Member McCarthy said that the \$260,000 should be listed in this section of the budget. Mr. Hladun said that the bandshell had been historically listed here. He gave the details and explained that they report to Public Facilities.

Council Member McCarthy said that they have to put some decent food in the concession. He asked where the \$5,000 came from. Mr. Hladun said that there was an escalator clause and gave the details.

Council Member Herron said that there was an ice cream truck that is the only one that is allowed inside. They need to be fair to everyone. She asked about the vendors who were at the concession at Pleasure Beach. Mr. Hladun said that they had been closed since 2020. The concession stand on Pleasure Beach was done through some limited Parks staffing.

Council Member Pereira said that the City Charter requires a Director of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Nadrizny said that he was filling both roles. Council Member Pereira said that they were the Park City and there were a massive number of parks. She asked how the job could be done well when it did not have a separate Department Director.

Council Member Pereira asked about the WICC lease. Mr. Flatto said that there was a radio tower that the radio company used. Mr. Nwko said that the company went under and they were paying the amount listed in the budget. Council Member Pereira asked why they did not bring this to the Council.

Council Member Valle said that she would like to have the concession stands go out to bid. Other people should be able to sell their food products in the park. She also said that the bath house should be fixed up.

Mr. Hladun said that vending on park land is governed by the Parks Committee. There is a clause for providing other vendors. This will be discussion at the Parks Commission meeting. Council Member Newton suggested the Midway as a prime location for the vending trucks.

Council Member McCarthy asked why they could not create a Parks Department that was run by the Director of Parks. Council Member McCarthy said that the Parks staff were cutting the grass on the street median dividers. Mr. Nadrizny said that they had been responsible for this for over 30 years.

Mr. Nwko said that there had been two separate departments, but then they were combined into the Public Facilities. Mr. Catino said that if they break the Parks and Recreation into a separate department, they will find that there were economies of scale that they will lose.

Council Member Newton said that it was a very large burden to have the Director of Public Facilities to handle all of this.

Council Member Burns said that one of the Deputy CAO was devoting quite a bit of time to the Parks and mentioned that there may be another staff member who would be also working on the Parks but will not have the same title. Discussion followed.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that regarding the golf course restaurant, the rental was in negotiation last year. She said that they had agreed to upgrade the facility, but the cost would not be in the rent.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the combination of the Public Facilities and the Parks had happened a number of years ago due to budgetary issues.

Council Member Pereira asked about the Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course. Council Member Newton said that it was an old lease that had expired. Council Member Pereira said that there were a number of news articles about the person who had been managing the restaurant and the number of fines that had been issued.

Council Member Pereira then read the Charter where it indicates there should be a Director of Parks, but the position would continue to be under Public Facilities.

Council Member Burns said that St. Mary's has a great deal of traffic and he would like to see a booth set up for fees. Other communities mail out Park stickers. Discussion followed about the legalities of this type of situation.

Mr. Hladun asked if Mr. Burgos, the current manager for the Parks and Roadway Management, could address the Committee. Mr. Burgos said that they would continue to work on the biggest challenge, which is the size of the staff.

People go to the parks to relax. The City is responsible for about 1,800 acres of park land and includes 42 parks, not including the pocket parks. He asked the Committee to consider adding

four more full time staff members to the department. The City is growing and in order to keep up with the growth, they need more staff. This will provide the residents with a safe place to enjoy their Park City.

A discussion followed about the details of staff sharing between the two departments.

Council Member McCarthy said that there was a seasonal budget of \$125,000 for Roadway. He said that they could pay 3 staff members. He also asked what they would be doing during the winter months. Mr. Nadrizny said that there was plenty of work to be done in the winter months. Mr. Nwko said benefits and pension costs are \$67,000 a year.

Council Member Pereira asked why it says Manager of Roadways and Parks. Mr. Nadrizny said that it had always been that title. The staff manages Parks but also does Roadways during snow events.

Council Member Pereira said that she gets many complaints about the dog parks and the lack of mutt mitts. Mr. Burgos said that people take them home or kids throw them all over the park. The mitts are costly.

Council Member Pereira asked why they are skipping the dog parks. Mr. Burgos said that it is a result of the lack of staff. They try to do major clean ups and add wood chips, but they can't keep up. Mr. Hladun said that there was a lot of garbage to pick up in the parks. He said that they were trying to find a balance between full time staff and seasonals. Discussion followed.

Council Member Newton said that if the Committee were able to allocate three or four more staff positions, they should not come back to the Committee asking for more seasonals or over budget.

Council Member Burns said that the Parks Administration was the last page.

Council Member McCarthy asked about the number of years between the Maintainer 1, 2 and 3. Mr. Nwko said that he would send that information.

• **Engineering.** Council Member Burns directed everyone to page 292.

Council Member Pereira said that last year, the City Engineer had requested a position and eliminated a Civil Engineer 1. She said that while they had eliminated the position, a job offer had been made before July 1st. Discussion followed about the details of the position and the steps.

Council Member Pereira said that there had been a problem in her district where an individual had created a sidewalk that was too narrow.

Council Member Pereira asked if Mr. Nwko had notified anyone when the job candidate had received a job offer. Mr. Nwko said that he had not notified anyone because he did not know. Council Member Pereira said that this was problematic.

Council Member Newton asked why Mr. Nwko had not known. Mr. Nwko said that the Civil Service had sent the letter and he did not know. Once he signs off on the position, he has no way to know how long it took to fill the position. Discussion followed.

Council Member Newton asked Mr. Nwko to check with Civil Service to keep them informed.

Mr. Urquidi said that there were four engineers in 2021. They had converted one Civil Engineer 1 to a Civil Engineer 2. He said that transferring Permits to the Engineering was not a problem since he was already managing it.

Council Member Pereira said that the budget book reflect only three positions and that they were adding one position. Mr. Urquidi said that there were four employees in his department including himself up until a few months ago. One engineer left and he is waiting to fill that position.

Council Member Pereira said that they should not make the offer to fill the position since they had eliminated it last year.

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** COUNCIL MEMBER COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services