

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 30, 2022**

ATTENDANCE: Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Scott Burns, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Matthew McCarthy, Tyler Mack, Mary McBride-Lee (10:20 a.m.)
AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia (10:40 a.m.)

OTHERS: Council President A. Nieves; Council Member(s): A. Boyd, J. Cruz, F. Hodges & R. Smith; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Acting Police Chief Garcia, Police Lt. M. Cotto, Kathleen

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. A quorum was present.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED CAPITAL PLAN FY 2022-2023 AS EXHIBIT #04-30-2022-A.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED OPM BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS PROPOSED FY-23-27CAPITAL BUDGET PLAN AS EXHIBIT #04-30-2022-B.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED PARKING METERS -- 01320000-56180 AS EXHIBIT #04-30-2022-C.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED PUBLIC FACILITIES ADMINISTRATION AS EXHIBIT #04-30-2022-D.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER AN ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT TITLED "CCM ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORT" AS EXHIBIT #04-30-2022-E.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Council Member Burns said he would email Exhibit #04-30-2022-E to all of the Committee members.

Mr. Nkwo said that he would like to commend Mr. Testani for his willingness to work with the City. He said that he had met with Mr. Testani about the paving at the schools. Mr. Nkwo said that he had suggested that they reprogram some of the money that had already been bonded for replacing the boilers towards paving and use Federal grant funding for the boilers.

Council Member McCarthy asked if the previous error that had been made with the Nutrition Center had been corrected. Mr. Nkwo said that they had corrected the issue.

Council Member Newton said that it was important to note that the BOE was working together with the City.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about the increase for the playground. Council Member Burns said that the cost of the materials had increased.

Council Member Mack asked if there was a list of which school sidewalks were going to be replaced. Mr. Nkwo said that the BOE would be determining the priority of which ones needed replacement.

Council Member Herron said that the prices had increased dramatically and pointed out that something like air conditioning a school could be very, very expensive.

Council Member McBride-Lee joined the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Council Member McCarthy asked if they had received a breakout of the cost per square foot for paving the parking lots. Mr. Nkwo said that he did not ask. A discussion followed about the details of the paving.

Council Member Newton noted that when the BOE had proposed this, he was sure that they had checked with the Public Facilities about the costs. Council Member Burns said he had checked with Mr. Nadrizny about the costs. He was told that the cost would depend on the quality of the paving materials used.

Council Member Newton said that Mr. Nkwo had been very good about identifying items that should not be paid with bonding funds. He said that a fork lift would not last for 30 years.

Council Member Boyd joined the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked about the BOE money that is saved when an absent teacher's class is split into two and sent to other classes rather than hiring a substitute teacher. Council Member Newton reminded everyone that they can only talk about the Capital Projects.

The discussion moved to Exhibit #04-30-2022-B, OPM Budget and Appropriations Proposed FY-23-27 Capital Budget Plan. It was discovered that half the Committee had received an outdated version of the Capital Plan.

Council Member Hodges joined the meeting at 10:35 a.m.

Mr. Nkwo said that Land Acquisition and Blight had requested an increase. He said that they should spend down their current budget before allocating new funding. One project had been on the list for 10 years and this should not be allowed to happen.

The discussion moved to the Remington Arms building demolition. Mr. Nkwo suggested that the Committee consider having OPED present a regularly scheduled update report to the B&A Committee on the status of the capital projects.

Council Member McBride-Lee pointed out that the Council Members have allocated the funding, but the projects have never been done. This is not fair to the taxpayers.

Council Member McCarthy said that they have to tell the departments to inform the Council if they have funds allocated to a project but the projects have been delayed.

Council Member Newton said that there were areas that are lit at night downtown, but other areas that were not lit at all.

Council Member Newton said that the Wonderland of Ice building was owned by the City. The front two doors have to be fixed. The City allocated funds for the Amphitheater and other locations, but they need to fix the front entrance doors. He asked the Council Members to support that repair.

Council Member Burns said that he was in favor of the repair and noted that Council President Nieves was also in favor of the repair.

The discussion moved to the paving issues involving the utilities digging up the freshly paved streets. Council Member Herron said that they were choosing the lowest bidder who is using the lowest quality materials. Her District had all the streets paved and six years later, they need more work.

Council Member Burns & Council Member McCarthy left the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

Mr. Nkwo noted that over the last six years, there had been 35 bodies added to Public Facilities.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that it was not working out just paving two streets a year.

Council Member Burns rejoined that meeting at 11:08 a.m. Council Member Cruz joined the meeting at 11:09 a.m. Council Member McCarthy rejoined the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Council Member Burns said that they had a contractor who would be giving them a conditional ranking as A,B,C, etc. Council Member Newton said that it would be important to keep a log of the streets that have been paved for the future Council members.

Mr. Nkwo said that there was some money allocated to paving parking lots. Council Member McCarthy said that he was concerned that they would be paying for the lots across from the Amphitheater. Discussion followed about the number of parking lots that the City owns. It was suggested that the City start selling some of these vacant lots.

Mr. Nkwo said that they need to consider the Perry Arches. He said that he had spoken with Ms. DeJesus about this and there was grant funding available. He said that the repairs will cost about \$3 million. Discussion followed.

Council Member Newton said he had spoken with Mr. Hladun and that the interior rooms had been cleaned and they are working on stabilizing it.

Council Member Mack left the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

The discussion moved to the Arena and the fact that \$15 million had been allocated towards repairs.

Council Member Mack rejoined the meeting at 11:30 a.m. Council Member Herron left the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked about the Island Brook Design. Mr. Nkwo explained that the design cost does not include the Federal and State funding.

Council Member Herron rejoined the meeting at 11:34 a.m.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she wanted to make sure that the funding for Island Brook was not re-directed. Mr. Nkwo said that there was a two folded answer. The first part is for securing the project and the second was the actual allocation of funding. Council Member Burns said that it would be important to make sure that the flood control projects are noted by the State. Council Member Herron said that the State had reallocated some funds for a flood project to a different project and now the area that she lives in has started to flood where it never did before.

A discussion followed about the Police parking lot. The Committee discussed the fact that the Police Department needs a new police station. Council Member Newton said that the B&A Committee needs to have this discussion at another meeting.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ALLOCATE \$2.5 MILLION TO START A PROJECT FOR A NEW POLICE STATION IN THE FY 2024-2025 CAPITAL BUDGET PLAN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Cruz said that he wanted a full budget from OPED. Mr. Nkwo said that he would get that report to him.

Lt. Manuel Cotto said that the parking lot owner was currently open to selling the lot or increasing the rent. He cautioned the Committee that there were prospective investors interested if the lot goes on the market. If the City does not purchase the property, the Station will start looking like New Haven with cars parked all along the streets.

Council Member Newton said that they would reprogram funds from OPED to purchase the lot.

Acting Chief Garcia then said that they had moved two Departments out of a rental property into a City owned building. She requested that the building be renovated to accommodate their needs.

Council Member Burns said that he felt that reprogramming bonded funds for Land Acquisition was not a good idea. Discussion followed. Council Member Herron pointed out that it would be a short term fix for a major problem.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the Co-chairs should include the information about the Police Station in their comments to the public. The Police Department are Public Safety.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that the Police Department should have a central place to park. She said that it was important to work with what they have.

Mr. Nkwo said that they have to put the item into the Capital Plan first before deciding where the funding was coming from.

Mr. Nkwo explained that CDBG funding had been allocated for fire equipment but the lead time on a fire truck was 16 to 18 months. The allocation is only open for a short window. Mr. Nkwo said that he would coordinate this with the Fire Chief and Police Chief.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia left the meeting at 12:20 p.m.

Council Member Burns then reviewed the ITS and WPCA allocations.

Council Member Mack left the meeting at 12:22 p.m. and returned at 12:23 p.m.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia returned to the meeting at 12:25 p.m.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO AMEND ADD \$700,000 FOR OPED LAND MANAGEMENT ACQUISITION (FOR POLICE PARKING LOT PURCHASE)
** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (NEWTON, HERRON, MACK, MCBRIDE-LEE AND VIZZO-PANICCIA) AND TWO (2) OPPOSED (BURNS AND MCCARTHY).**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE THE CAPITAL PLAN AS AMENDED TO INCLUDE \$700,000 FOR OPED LAND MANAGEMENT ACQUISITION (FOR POLICE PARKING LOT PURCHASE) IN FY 2023.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (NEWTON, HERRON, MACK, MCBRIDE-LEE AND VIZZO-PANICCIA) AND TWO (2) OPPOSED (BURNS AND MCCARTHY).**

Acting Chief Garcia said that when they moved the departments to a City building there were certain modifications that needed to be made to the building. She added that also the rent that was formerly paid for the previous location has stopped so there are savings there.

The discussion moved to the details involving renovating a City building to accommodate two Police departments, which was estimated to cost \$200,000.

Council President Nieves joined the meeting at 12:34 p.m.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO INCREASE CITY WIDE BUILDING MAINTENANCE BY \$200,000 FOR NEEDED POLICE RENOVATIONS OF A CITY OWNED BUILDING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RECESS

Council Member Newton announced a recess at 12:40 p.m. He called the meeting back to order at 1:06 p.m.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO AMEND BY SUBSTITUTE OPM BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS PROPOSED FY-23-27CAPITAL BUDGET PLAN WITH OPM BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS PROPOSED FY-23-27CAPITAL BUDGET PLAN DATED APRIL 30,2022 AS EXHIBIT #04-20-2022-B**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO APPROVE THE CAPITAL PLAN AS AMENDED.**

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

Council Member McCarthy asked about the re-appropriation of the OPED funding. Council Member Newton said that he would be speaking with OPED about the dormant funds first.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OPM

Mr. Nkwo directed everyone to Page 120 of the Budget Book.

Mr. Nkwo then distributed copies of a document regarding a budget award that the department had recently received.

Mr. Nkwo said that in the past his department had 8 or 9 staff but it has been cut down to 6. Mr. Nkwo said that he would be converting one position into a Project Manager. He said that the funding was already there. He said that his administrative assistant, who has 30 years of history with OPM, was retiring.

Mr. Nkwo noted that when the previous administration left, the budget documentation was no longer available to him. He had to re-create the information from old back-ups.

Council Member Burns then reviewed the Exhibits. Exhibit C was about the Parking Meter revenue. He noted that more people will be coming downtown, there will be an increase in the credit card charges. Mr. Nkwo explained that during COVID, they did not enforce the parking fees. During the pandemic, the downtown area was refitted.

The discussion moved to the relocation of the Parking to the Police because of a situation that had happened in Public Facilities. Council Member Newton said that he was concerned about the fact that the Police Department was so under staffed, they were going to transfer Parking back to Public Facilities.

Council Member Herron said that the staff can't be called "Parking Enforcement" if they are not under the supervision of the Police Department. They also stop working at 4 p.m. If the staff are transferred back to Public Facilities, they can be Meter Maids. Mr. Nkwo said that most of the transactions were now done with credit cards so there was not much coinage involved.

Acting Chief Garcia said that the officer that accompanies the Parking Enforcement staff were there for transparency and also is there for the safety of the Parking Enforcement officer.

Council Member McCarthy asked if they would still need a police officer accompany the Parking Enforcement Officer. He was told that they would.

Council Member Burns said that he had done some calculations regarding seasonals vs. part time employees.

Council Member Burns added that Public Facilities had submitted a multi-page organizational chart, which is Exhibit 04-30-2022-D.

Council Member Newton asked if there had been a study done regarding department management. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that they had done a study a number of years ago.

Council Member Newton said that they will be sending a message to the department heads that if they don't use the allocated funds, it will be re-programmed.

Council Member Burns said that Council Rule 28 says that the City Council would be responsible for investigating the administrative salaries. Council Member Newton said that Bridgeport was not the highest taxed City in the State.

Mr. Nkwo said that elective officials are entitled to tuition reimbursement for a degree. No official has ever applied to go back to school for a degree.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MACK SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services