

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 20, 2022**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Maria Valle, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Michelle Lyons, Tyler Mack, Mary McBride-Lee (6:15 p.m.); Rosalina Roman-Christy

OTHERS: Council Member(s): M. Brown, J. Cruz, M. McCarthy, E. Newton, M. Pereira, M. Small & R. Smith; Adrienne Houel, Andrien Numaworse, Devon T. Brown, Eneida Martinez, Emma Holtzman, Barbara, Jeff, Johanna, Call-in User 1; Ebony's iPhone; 203-673-7218

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

The public was able to listen to this meeting by calling a conference line.

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES:

• **December 15, 2021. (Regular Meeting)**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 15, 2021 MEETING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAN-CHRISTY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 15, 2021 MEETING PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Cruz said that he would like to address the Committee regarding Agenda Item 13-21. He had to leave the meeting by 6:20 p.m. Council Member Valle said that Council Member Herron was also on the call. Council Member Herron said that Council Member Cruz was the primary on the item.

13-21 Proposed resolution Declaring Homelessness as a Public Health Crisis.

Council Member Cruz said the goal was to declare homelessness as a public Health Crisis. He then read a portion from the actual resolution.

Now therefore be it further resolved by the City Council of Bridgeport that homelessness is a public health crisis in Bridgeport that we are not able to solve on our own. It truly is a

regional, State and national issue that will worsen unless immediate action is taken to elevate the issue to the highest priority and

Be it further resolved that the City of Bridgeport will continue to advocate locally for the relevant policies to reduce homelessness in communities of color and support local, State, regional and Federal initiatives that advance efforts to provide funding for a broad range of options for homeless individuals including permanent support, housing, shelter, wrap around services to eliminate homelessness.

Council Member Cruz said that last week the Educational and Social Services Committee had a meeting about homelessness. Currently, the South End Community Center is open as a warming center. However, it will close on April 1st.

Council Member Herron said that the legislators in Hartford were recognizing that homelessness is a problem. Bridgeport led the pack when they opened hotels to the homeless.

Council Member Pereira said that she supports the resolution but reminded everyone that they had made the same type of resolution on gun violence. It has to have something behind it.

Council Member Herron explained that when the gun violence resolution was put in place, it was in support for Hartford. Now, the City will be receiving funding and the agencies have been coming together to work on the problem. The Council is strong in numbers and they don't have to put everything on paper to have an effect.

Council Member Burns said that he supports the resolution but wished to know what type of actions that they were looking for.

Council Member Herron said that the Homelessness Office in City Hall has been collaborating with the various agencies to provide the services. She added that the Social Services Department will be changing their name in the future and Ms. Houel would be in charge.

Council Member Cruz said that based on the previous meeting, the idea was for the City to partner with the various agencies. The City is an advocate for partnership and resources. The homeless population has been ignored for many years. There are serious issues such as drug abuse, mental illness and unemployment that needs to be addressed. Discussion followed.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 13-21 PROPOSED RESOLUTION DECLARING HOMELESSNESS AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MACK SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member McBride-Lee, Council Member Small and Council Member Smith joined the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

16-21 Grant Submission re: United Way of Fairfield County Impact Philanthropy – Fund – COVID Relief for Residents in Need. (#22480)

Ms. Oliviera said that the funding was for purchasing gift cards. These are then distributed to those in need.

Ms. Houel said that in the past when they receive gift cards, they are distributed within a week. The United Way will be providing the money for this. The individuals will apply through the Health Department. Discussion followed about which store gift cards would be used.

Ms. Houel said that her office was at 999 Broad Street and they deliver paperwork for rental assistance and the gift cards.

Council Member Lyons asked if there was an income threshold for the rental income. Ms. Houel said that she had a set of guidelines she uses.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAN-CHRISTY MOVED AGENDA ITEM 16-21 GRANT SUBMISSION RE: UNITED WAY OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY IMPACT PHILANTHROPY – FUND – COVID RELIEF FOR RESIDENTS IN NEED.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Informational Session with Mr. Jeff Leichtman, Consultant and Ms. Adrienne Houel, BRBC to discuss Bridgeport Regional Energy Partnership.

Mr. Leichtman came forward and explained that he grew up and went to school in Bridgeport. He is a consultant for the Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC).

Ms. Houel said that she was pleased talk about the Bridgeport Regional Energy Partnership. She spoke about her past work with the mattress recycling program, the renewable energy and the Governor’s Climate Change Committee. Connecticut is the second most expensive state in the U.S. for energy consumption.

This presentation is to show the Council Members some of the opportunities that are available now. Ms. Houel then narrated a PowerPoint Presentation slide deck on the Bridgeport Regional Energy Partnership and the impact of Federal and State programs.

Mr. Leichtman explained that energy is often a hidden cost for municipalities. He gave an overview of the energy conservation and the significant savings if the buildings are more efficient. He spoke about how they were able to use the time during the COVID lock down to replace the heating at the Taylor Center. It was paid for through a combination of Federal grant funding and other sources.

Mr. Leichtman displayed a list of the various landmark projects during the last 13 years such as the fuel cell park; the Green Energy Park, the Old City Hall microgrid, the offshore wind port and the Green Bank financing.

Ms. Houel said that they have been working on creating a plan for the Local Energy Action Program. They have submitted an RFP for the Department of Energy Planning grant. She said that if a dollar is invested in Bridgeport, 40% has to be directed to the disadvantaged communities. The funding will be for dealing with the Climate Crisis and insuring equity and diversity.

Ms. Houel said that Bridgeport has a high level of energy burden that means more than 6% of the household income goes to energy costs. There are only one or two districts that are under 2%. The average is 6.2%.

As a group, she hopes to bring the communities together and become conveners to address the problems for the entire community. They would like to improve the local environment and improve the energy with a more sustainable system. This would also include creating high paying sustainable jobs.

Mr. Leichtman then gave an overview of bringing all the elements together for the planning. This project began with a small group and then the group was expanded to include other stakeholders. He reminded everyone that there was a major highway that cuts through the entire City and introduces ground level pollution to the residents.

He then spoke about on-site energy generation for schools that could be developed which would be similar to the microgrid that links Lyon Place and the Police Department. He said that he feels that the wastewater treatments plants should be buying electricity from the grid. They could be working off a microgrid instead. He gave the details of several projects to provide clean fuel for the City and said that he hoped that they would be selected by the Department of Energy for grant funding.

He noted that 35% of the cost of energy was the actual use of the energy, while the other 65% involved the cost of delivering the energy to the location. He spoke about having third parties own the micro-grids and having the City pay the microgrid cost for 20 years rather than trying to replace 50-year-old boilers.

Ms. Houel said that this was not just a district approach but a total City approach. The Committees will include people from all walks of life to make them more aware of the energy resources and the community's needs.

Mr. Leichtman said that it will be important to look at alternatives such as heat pumps rather than using fossil fuels. He mentioned projects on Seaview Avenue that use heat pumps. He said that UB and the Cherry Street Lofts were both off the grid.

Council Member Pereira said she did not see the PowerPoint presentation on the City website as required. She was told that the presentation was not on the website yet.

Council Member Pereira asked where Mr. Leichtman's group got their authority. Mr. Leichtman said that it was a group of private individuals that were concerned about reducing energy costs.

Council Member Pereira said that both Palisades Avenue and Park City School were in Council Member Pereira's district. She said that Mr. Leichtman was speaking about the JFK campus, which he confirmed.

Council Member Pereira said that the technical school was a state run school under the authority of the State Board of Education. She said that the JFK campus has a private school, a magnet school and Thurgood Marshall which is also referred to as a 6 to 6 magnet, which is also under the authority of the State. She said that Mr. Leichtman also mentioned Fireside and the utility costs. Council Member Pereira had several detailed questions about how these facilities could be linked together as a microgrid. Mr. Leichtman reviewed the general details with her.

Council Member Roman-Christy said that the previous administration had created a green plan for the City. Ms. Houel said that there was a plan developed in 2010 but was based on the 1997 Kyoto Accords. There were goals in the plan that had target dates of 2012, 2016 and 2020, so it is no longer applicable. There is interest in energy now and for the future.

Council Member Roman-Christy asked if Ms. Houel was representing the City of Bridgeport on the team they are trying to assemble. Ms. Houel said that the Federal Government was interested in how they would administer the plan and how invested the community was in the plan. They would not want to send a group of technical advisors to a location where they did not have firm data and a commitment for the program.

She said that this was actually a coalition of interested parties. They have every intention of involving the interested foundations such as PSEG funding for the Environmental Task Force.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that there were many times that the City missed out on funding because they don't hear about it, particularly in the black and Hispanic communities. She said that she felt that they should move forward because too many times they get tangled up in details and miss out on the funding.

Ms. Houel said that the Federal justice movement requires at least 40% of the funding to go to the disadvantaged communities. The intent is to have everyone at the table, not just businesses or the administration.

Council Member Lyons said that there was a Bridgeport 2020 Green Plan. Ms. Houel said that she had spoken about this earlier. The technology has progressed so much that a new plan is needed to update the objectives.

Mr. Leichtman said that they needed to make the older buildings more energy efficient and look at new ways to do this. Discussion followed.

Council Member Newton said there were projects that were already underway. He suggested that they start with the projects that are already in place and move on from there rather than bringing a whole group of people together to the table to start all over again. Bridgeport is already ahead of the game.

Mr. Leichtman agreed and said that all that they have done should help the group get even more funding for the City. He gave an example of how McBride Electric could expand into Energy Efficiency.

Ms. Houel said that if Mr. McBride expands his business, he will need more workers. She then listed a variety of programs that could help supply that need.

Council Member Herron said that having a Green Initiative was key and she felt that others would follow. She said that with public housing, the cost reductions are taken and applied to the tenants.

Council Member Pereira asked about Palisades Avenue microgrid. She had several detailed questions about the complex where the senior housing was located along with a cluster of schools. She asked if a microgrid could service that area. Discussion followed.

Mr. Leichtman said that a microgrid could service that large of an area. A microgrid that was based on a fuel cell could service a number of businesses and he provided the details. Mr. Leichtman said that until they worked on climate change, the storms were also going to get worse.

Council Member Pereira said that she was definitely interested in pursuing this but said that there were those who were concerned about the large fuel cells that have been placed around the City. Mr. Leichtman said that the larger ones were generally for the main grid and the smaller ones could be the size of a cargo container.

Council Member Burns asked what the timeframe was on the grant. Ms. Houel said that they were working on the BRBC page. The CT Green Bank was involved in the proposal.

Council Member Burns said that he was excited about this project. He said that Mr. Leichtman and Ms. Houel were involved in these types of projects for a long time. He said that the Democrats should be proud to support these efforts.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE MOVED TO EXHIBIT THE BRIDGEPORT REGIONAL ENERGY PARTNERSHIP POWERPOINT PRESENTATION AS EXHIBIT # 01-20-2022-A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAN-CHRISTY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services