

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 23, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; M. Evette Brantley, Matthew McCarthy,
Council President Aidee Nieves, Samia Suliman (6:19 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): M. Brown, J. Cruz, J. Herron, E. Martinez,
M. McBride-Lee, E. Newton & M. Pereira; Thomas Gaudett, Mayoral
Aide; Constance Vickers, Director, Legislative Affairs; Atty. Lawrence
Ouellette, City Attorney's Office; Atty. John Mitola, City Attorney's
Office; Atty. Mark Anastasi, City Attorney's Office; Veronica Jones, Tax
Collector; Barbara, Jacqueline Martoral, Johana Dorgan; 203-576-7934;
203-637-7318

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. A quorum was present.

Co-chair Burns stated that Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia would not be attending due to health issues.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES:

- **June 28, 2021. (Regular Meeting)**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 28, 2021
REGULAR MEETING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 28, 2021 REGULAR
MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

65-20 Refund of Excess Payments – Seaview Bridgeport II LLC.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO INCLUDE A DOCUMENT TITLED
“SEAVIEW AVENUE FIELD CARD” AS EXHIBIT #08-23-2021-1.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO INCLUDE A DOCUMENT TITLED
“CERTIFICATE OF CHANGE FOR 731 SEAVIEW AVENUE” AS EXHIBIT #08-23-
2021-2.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Jones greeted everyone and explained that she had previously requested a refund for 731 Seaview Avenue. The Tax Assessor had combined the real estate and personal property. She gave the details and said that the personal property portion of the combined bill had been removed and they were due to have a refund.

Council Member McCarthy asked if there was documentation showing the payments. He wished to see copies of both checks. Ms. Jones said that she was not normally privy to the Tax Assessor's information. She said that the Council Members had not originally asked about the Personal Property payment.

Council Member Brantley said that Council Member McCarthy wanted to see where they made the double payment. Ms. Jones said that the Council Members would see a real estate bill, but the combined amount had been noted the field card. Once the error was discovered, the amount was changed on the field card. Discussion followed.

Council Member Suliman joined the meeting at 6:19 p. m.

Council Member Pereira said that she had gone to the Tax Assessor's Office and seen that the boat lift had been included when this was actually personal property.

Council Member Pereira asked why it took a year and a half to bring this to the Council Members. Ms. Jones said that they send notification out to the Taxpayer and then the taxpayer has to respond. She then listed the steps that the Tax Collector's Office follows in the process.

Council Member Pereira said that it should not take a year and a half to correct this issue and should have been presented to the previous Council since the Tax Assessor had already identified the error and corrected it. This is not acceptable.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 65-20 REFUND OF EXCESS PAYMENTS – SEAVIEW BRIDGEPORT II LLC.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

87-20 Appointment of Johana Dorgan (D) to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Ms. Dorgan said that she had previously served on the Planning and Zoning Commission under the Fabrizi administration. She resigned from the Commission when she took a City position.

Council Member Brantley said that Ms. Dorgan had been a volunteer in several different organizations and takes pride in the City. She said that she felt that Ms. Dorgan was well qualified and would be a positive appointment for the City.

Council Member Burns said that Council Member AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia had submitted the following statement for the record:

I write to you in asking for your vote to approve Johanna Dorgan. I do this of my own free will (only way I operate) as I have known my friend approximately 30 years and NOT due to any politics.

Johanna is very versed in Bridgeport, knows what is right and what is not right on any level for our City.

Johanna knows her job, be it as an employee or as a volunteer and is very professional, also she is very aware of all legal matters, city required policies and procedures. Johanna does her research in detail and is very capable of such.

For those that know me, will know that I do not promote anyone or any agenda if not good for us and for our city.

To continue for our City to move forward and with confidence, I ask again, to approve Johanna Dorgan. Thank you,

Signed,

AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia
Council Member, 134th District

Council Member Pereira said that many people in the City feel that they constantly recycle the same people over and over again, often highly politically connected. Ms. Dorgan is the secretary for the entire 90 member DTC and a member of the 134th Democratic Town Committee, the District where both Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia and Council Member Lyons represent. It is well known that Mr. Mario Testa loves to have as many people on Planning and Zoning so that he can count on their votes. This is not a good appointment for the City of Bridgeport.

Council Member Pereira said that she did not know Ms. Dorgan and this was not personal. Council Member Pereira said that she may have spoken with Ms. Dorgan when she worked at 45 Lyon Terrace at the front desk. This goes back to bad politics where people are appointed to Boards and Commissions when there are 150,000 residents to choose from. For Council Member Pereira, this raises red flags and she will not be supporting this.

Council Member Newton said that he would support Ms. Dorgan and took exception to what the previous speaker just stated. Council Member Newton has known Ms. Dorgan a long time and she is a fair person and loves the City. He said that many people are reluctant to apply for City appointments because of the type of background checks that the Council does. There is nothing in the Charter that says that the candidates can not belong to a political party. Making an assumption that someone or a Commission is controlled by someone else is wrong. Ms. Dorgan

has previously served on the Commission and there has been no problem. Ms. Dorgan will have his vote when it comes to the full Council. She was previously on the Commission and did a good job. It is important to have people who know what they are doing.

Council Member Brantley said she would like to echo Council Member Newton's comments. Many are called, but few are chosen. Many don't want to through the process. She asked if anyone knew of family or friends who were interested on serving on a Board or Commission

Council Member Herron said that Ms. Dorgan is an asset to the City because she knows the City. Council Member Herron said that this was a Democratic city and those who are not happy about being a Democrat should change their affiliation.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that the City was not in a good place if they only approve who they know. While Council Member McBride-Lee doesn't know Ms. Dorgan, she will be voting for Ms. Dorgan when it comes to the Council floor. While she knows Mr. Testa and the Mayor, her vote is her vote. While this is a Committee vote tonight, when it comes to the Council Floor, she will support Ms. Dorgan. Council Member McBride-Lee said that Mr. Testa has never told her how to vote, nor has the Mayor.

Council Member Martinez said that she was not on the Committee but she would be supporting Ms. Dorgan when the item comes to the Council floor. Ms. Dorgan has been a resident of the City for many years and is very knowledgeable. It is disgusting that she has to listen to the insults from an elected official who affiliates herself with the same people that the official is referring to. It should not matter as to who someone is connected to because the Council should be looking for someone who will run departments properly and who will make appropriate decisions when issues come before Boards and Commissions. They should not be worrying about who had ties to whom and who doesn't. Council Member Martinez said that she would like to echo Council Member Newton's comments about the negativity and the negative individual was receiving money from the party.

Council Member Martinez then told Ms. Dorgan that she would have Council Member Martinez's support when the item reaches the Council floor. Council Member Martinez encouraged Ms. Dorgan to continue on because her knowledge and education will bring a lot to the City of Bridgeport.

Council Member Cruz said that he would be supporting her. He did not know Ms. Dorgan as well as others and it is unfortunate that she was hearing all the negative things when she was volunteering to come back to serve the City.

Council Member McCarthy ask Ms. Dorgan what she would do if someone tried to sway her vote. Ms. Dorgan said that no one had ever tried to sway her vote. She said that she would vote in the best interest of the City.

Attorney Anastasi said for the record is that the obligation of the Planning and Zoning Commission is to vote based on the record before them. There has been no evidence to the contrary regarding this in the City of Bridgeport. Suggesting that Planning and Zoning do not act appropriately based on statute is totally inappropriate.

Council Member McCarthy said that he was not suggesting that Ms. Dorgan would be swayed by someone.

Attorney Anastasi replied that he was not speaking to Council Member McCarthy but responding to earlier comments.

Council Member Brantley thanked Attorney Anastasi for adding the information and clarifying the voting process for the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Council Member Brown said that there were not 150,000 residents that were eligible to serve on a Board or Commission because they need to be an eligible voter. There are about 77,000 registered voters in Bridgeport. This is for a Democratic seat, and that brings the number down to about 50,000 or so. It is also important to factor in those who are willing to do a thankless job, volunteer their time, along with dedicating their time to read the required documents and develop thoughtful questions in the best interest of the City. That reduces the number of potential candidates even more.

Council Member Brown thanked Ms. Dorgan for her willingness to dedicate even more of her time to the City and will be supporting her when the item comes to the Council floor.

Council Member Pereira said that allowing a 1099 consultant to simply jump in and offer testimony should not be allowed. He is not a member of the body. This would not be accepted in the legislature, in Congress or in most town governments. He's not a member of the body and is offering testimony and his opinion. This is pretty atrocious and should not be allowed. He is not even a City employee.

Council Member Brantley requested that they move the question and repeated that she was glad that Attorney Anastasi had brought up the point about the Commission's requirements just to ease people's minds. It is not right to think that because an individual is connected to someone, the individual will be voting a certain way.

Council Member Burns said that appointment was for Planning and Zoning, and he asked Ms. Dorgan when she would recuse herself. Ms. Dorgan said that she would recuse herself if an issue was connected to family or a friend.

Council Member Burns said that City was working on updating the Planning and Zoning regulations. Ms. Dorgan said that she had just heard about the update today and would be reviewing the documentation.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 87-20 APPOINTMENT OF JOHANA DORGAN (D) TO THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

88-20 Appointment of Jacqueline Martoral (U) to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Ms. Martoral greeted everyone and said that she had been involved in the Board of Assessment Appeals.

Council Member Burns said that Ms. Martoral would have to step down from the Board of Assessment Appeals. Ms. Martoral said she understood.

Council Member McCarthy said that he had met Ms. Martoral and felt that she was interested. It is a thankless job, as someone else said earlier.

Council Member Herron asked why she would leave the Board of Assessment to join Planning and Zoning. Ms. Martoral said that her original application had been for Planning and Zoning, but when the re-evaluation was underway, they needed help on the Board of Appeal, so she joined that.

Council Member Newton said that he welcomed new blood. He thanked Ms. Martoral for her willingness to serve. He said that there was not many people willing to serve and this was evidenced by the length of terms that other Commissioners had.

Council Member Pereira said that Ms. Martoral had joined the Waterfront Advisory Board. Ms. Martoral said that she had just joined in to listen.

Council Member Pereira asked when Ms. Martoral was appointed to the Board of Assessment Appeals. Ms. Martoral said that she believed it was in February. Council Member Burns said that he remembered the appointment came through.

Council Member Pereira said that Ms. Martoral was the owner of a new wine and liquor store in downtown Bridgeport. Ms. Martoral said that this was correct. Council Member Pereira asked whether Ms. Martoral would be abstaining from any Planning and Zoning vote that related to liquor stores as a potential conflict due to being a competitor. Ms. Martoral said that she would recuse herself from any issue that she had an interest.

Council Member Pereira said that the issue of liquor stores have been contentious in the past and she wished to make sure that Ms. Martoral would abstain from any discussion on that. Ms. Martoral said that this was understandable.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 88-20 APPOINTMENT OF JACQUELINE MARTORAL (U) TO THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED.**

Council Member Burns said that Ms. Martoral would need to resign from the BAA and he would like a resignation letter before the City Council Meeting.

Council Member Burns asked Ms. Martoral what she thought about the updates on the Zoning Regulations. Ms. Martoral said that she had been following the developments.

Council Member Burns said that she listed that she was a property manager. Ms. Martoral said that she does assist some property managers with their holdings. However, if an item came up on the agenda that involved one of the individuals or properties, she would recuse herself.

Council Member McCarthy said that Ms. Martoral business was an upscale package store.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Pereira asked if Council Member Burns would be forwarding the applications to the full Council before the vote. Council Member Burns said that the past practice has been that it was private information. Council Member Pereira said that it was public record.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she hoped that when the Council Members are given information, they should not be using that information against the individual. Too much of that has been happening lately. She said that she would not want people to use information against candidates and this should be discussed with the City Attorney's Office.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

95-20 Proposed Settlement of Pending Litigation with Sasha Collins.

Atty. Ouellette gave a brief summary of the case about a civil court and came out of a motor vehicle accident where a City vehicle hit a parked vehicle.

The Committee and Attorney Ouellette entered into Executive Session at 7:10 p.m. They returned to Public Session at 7:24 p.m. No actions or motion were made during Executive Session.

Council Member Burns stated for the record that he had forgotten to request a vote to enter into Executive Session but knew that the Recording Secretary had noted the time the Committee entered into Executive Session for the minutes.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 95-20 PROPOSED SETTLEMENT OF PENDING LITIGATION WITH SASHA COLLINS.
** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

96-20 Proposed Settlement of Pending Litigation with Dwayne McBride.

Atty. Mitola explained that this was a Federal discrimination lawsuit.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS A PROPOSED SETTLEMENT OF PENDING LITIGATION WITH DWAYNE MCBRIDE.
** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Committee and Attorney Mitola entered into Executive Session at 7:27 p.m. They returned to Public Session at 7:24 p.m. No actions or motion were made during Executive Session. They returned to Public Session at 7:52 p.m.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 96-20 PROPOSED SETTLEMENT OF PENDING LITIGATION WITH DWAYNE MCBRIDE.
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY MOVED TO adjourn.
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services