

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
PUBLIC SAFETY AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 2, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Maria Valle, Co-chair; Mary McBride-Lee, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Michelle Lyons, Maria Pereira, Avelino Silva

OTHERS: Council President A. Nieves, Council Member(s): E. Martinez, M. E. Brantley, J. Cruz, A. Castillo, M. McCarthy & R. Roman-Christy; T. Gaudett, Aide to the Mayor; M. Anastasi, Esquire; S. Appleby, Emergency Operation Center Director; C. Vickers, Director of Legislative Affairs; Bridgeport Fire Chief R. Thode; Lieutenant P. Grech; Barbara; TJ Coolidge, JAZ, Lexie Heredia, Bob, Bridgeport Videos; Android; Dave's iPhone; iPad, iPhone; X, 203-209-1058; 203-339-5088; 203-673-7218

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair McBride-Lee called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES:

• January 5, 2021 (Regular Meeting)

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 5, 2021 REGULAR MEETING.**

Council Member Valle stated that she would like to have the documentation from the Informational Session on January 6th, 2021 added to the January 5th minutes as an exhibit.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO HAVE THE JANUARY 6, 2021 PRESENTATION INFORMATIONAL SESSION TO BE INCLUDED WITH THE JANUARY 5, 2021 MINUTES AS EXHIBIT 01.06.2021.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira pointed out that the Police Presentation took place after the January 5th meeting and therefore could not be included as part of the January 5th meeting minutes.

Council Member Pereira said that the minutes for the January 5, 2021 meeting noted that Council Member Taylor-Moye and Council Member Martinez had arrived late and included the time in the minutes. However, Council Member McCarthy and others had arrived late but were not targeted in the same manner. She said that it was not fair to target some Council Members and not others.

It was stated that the arrival of two Council Members who were late had been announced and this had been duly noted in the minutes.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that Council Member Valle was now on the call and would assume the chairmanship.

Council Member Newton pointed out that the other Council Members who arrived late were not Committee members. He said that they should not be focused on attendance.

Council Member Valle said that she would like to suspend the rules so that the presentation from the January 6, 2021 was attached to the minutes for the February 2, 2021 meeting.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO WITHDRAW HER MOTION TO HAVE THE JANUARY 6, 2021 PRESENTATION INFORMATIONAL SESSION TO BE INCLUDED AS EXHIBIT 01.06.2021 WITH THE JANUARY 5, 2021 MINUTES.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS WITHDREW HER SECOND.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ADD THE BRIDGEPORT POLICE PRESENTATION FROM JANUARY 6, 2021 TO BE ADDED TO THE FEBRUARY 2, 2021 MINUTES AS EXHIBIT 01.06.21 IN ORDER TO MAKE IT PART OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECORDS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

A brief discussion followed regarding this. Council Member Valle requested that the motion for the documentation to be added be withdrawn and said that she would discuss how this documentation could be done off-line.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON WITHDREW HER MOTION TO ADD THE BRIDGEPORT POLICE PRESENTATION FROM JANUARY 6, 2021 TO BE ADDED TO THE FEBRUARY 2, 2021 MINUTES AS EXHIBIT 01.06.21 IN ORDER TO MAKE IT PART OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECORDS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS WITHDREW HER SECOND.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 5, 2021 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (MCBRIDE-LEE, HERRON, LYONS, AND SILVA) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (PEREIRA).**

Informational Session with Mr. Richard Thode, Chief, Fire Department and Mr. Scott Appleby, Director, Emergency Operation Center to provide reports to the committee.

Chief Thode said he had sent out a short report to the Committee Members. He said that there had been a 28% decrease in calls. He said that when the pandemic started there had been a drop overall in the number of calls.

Council Member Pereira said that she had just double checked her email and had not received the report. Council Member Valle thanked Council Member Pereira and asked Chief Thode to continue. Council Member Pereira said that she was a member of the Committee and this was not acceptable.

Chief Thode gave a summary of his report displayed on screen.

Council Member Valle asked how many fire hydrants there were and how many were working. Chief Thode said that there were over 3,000 hydrants and only 1% were off duty. Some of those hydrants are major repairs requiring street excavation. He added that the fire trucks had computers that indicated where the fire call was located and indicated whether or not there was an out of service hydrant in the area.

Council Member Lyons said that she had concerns about the hydrant on Jewett Avenue. Chief Thode said that he would check on it and get back to Council Member Lyons.

Council Member Pereira asked if Chief Thode was an elector and resident of Bridgeport. Chief Thode said that he was not a Bridgeport resident.

Council Member Pereira said that Chief Thode said in his presentation that he was pleased that they were only \$3 million over budget. Chief Thode pointed out that he had stated in his presentation that he was pleased that they had reduced their overtime compared to last year.

Council Member Pereira said that she had several meetings recently and the residents were not pleased when the Police and Fire Department were over budget.

Chief Thode said that if every firefighter reported for duty for a whole year, the overtime would automatically be \$4.2 million, but they are only budgeted for \$3 million, so they start out the budget year with an overage.

Council Member Brantley asked if the residents could call the Fire Department to pick up a smoke detector. Chief Thode said that they had to suspend the program because there was a liability if the Firefighter does not install the smoke alarm.

Council Member Cruz said that he wanted to know what the Department was doing to balance out the racial diversity. He also noted that there were only 9 female firefighters.

Chief Thode said that the Department was at about 40% minority two years ago and was now at 50%. The current list will expire soon, and the Department will move forward with its recruitment efforts.

Council Member Newton asked about the manpower levels. Chief Thode said that they anticipated about 10 firefighters retiring in April and would start hiring in August.

Council Member Newton said that he remembered when there were more women in the Department before, but there were changes in the testing which excluded minority women.

Chief Thode said that originally the Department had used its own physical agility test. There were two firefighters who died in a fire and one of the recommendations from the national review indicated that the Department should use the CPAT exam. He said that they had 200 women come to Bridgeport to use the CPAT training center. Unfortunately, many of the women were not Bridgeport residents and therefore did not qualify for the 15 residency points.

Council Member Valle asked if there was a schedule for the Firefighters to receive the vaccines. Chief Thode said they were part of the first wave. About 170 firefighters have had their first shot and a number of the firefighters were receiving the second shot today.

Council Member Pereira said that in her area, there were numerous retired firefighters in her district. She said that there had been an event in front of 999 Broad Street and there were members of the Firebirds that said that Chief Thode was in the same situation as former Police Chief Perez. She asked Chief Thode if he had a college degree. Chief Thode said that he did not.

Council Member Pereira said that there was an Emergency Services High School in Bridgeport. She wanted to know why they were not recruiting more students. Chief Thode said that the test list was good for two years and this affects the recruitment. He explained that the testing process could take up to three years.

Council Member Valle thanked Chief Thode for his presentation.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE MOVED TO ENTER CHIEF THODE'S REPORT AS AN EXHIBIT 02.02.21A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO ENTER CHIEF THODE'S REPORT AS AN EXHIBIT 02.02.21A PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (MCBRIDE-LEE, HERRON, LYONS, AND SILVA) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (PEREIRA).**

Mr. Scott Appleby then addressed the Committee regarding the EOC. He said that he had sent the Co-chairs an update on the EOC. He then narrated his report, which was displayed on the screen.

Council Member Pereira said that she was frustrated that the report was sent out so late. She said that it was not fair to the Council Members to send out the reports so late. If the Co-chairs were working the day of the meeting, the Committee Members do not receive the report until right before the meeting. This is not acceptable or professional.

Council Member Pereira said that there had been at least 7 or 9 vacancies last year and they were still unfilled. She said that she was concerned that the money for fringe benefits was becoming a slush fund.

Mr. Appleby said that they have filled some of the positions and then there were some retirements. Regarding the fact that the Department is a critical service, they are working with Civil Service to recruit more applicants.

Council Member Pereira asked why they were not immediately recruiting once a Civil Service list expires. Mr. Appleby said that he notifies the administration whenever a position is about to become vacant.

Council Member Valle noted that Council Member McCarthy, Council Member Martinez, Council Member Roman-Christy and Council Member Castillo were present at the meeting.

Council Member Herron asked about some grant funding for the Emergency Medical Call taking. Mr. Appleby gave a brief overview of the necessary steps that would need to be done before the Department could become a full service department.

Council Member Lyons asked if the reports from Chief Thode and Mr. Appleby had been delayed in releasing their reports because of the storm. Mr. Appleby said that he had been working on the storm issues.

Council Member Cruz asked about the homelessness issue. He asked if Mr. Appleby was aware of the fact that the South End Community Center was used for sheltering the homeless and it would be extended. He asked for details. Mr. Appleby said that they had put some of the individuals in hotels. He said that it was up to the homeless shelters and their social workers to place the individuals. His department provides as much support as they can but they are not a homeless shelter agency.

Council Member Cruz said that he was disappointed that the South End Community Center was not being utilized as much as it should be. He added that he would like to see the EOC be able to provide more bus passes for the homeless outreach teams that are on the street. He said that he would like to have the South End Community Center open more and more bus passes provided to the homeless outreach teams on the street.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that they were doing a great job and appreciated a great job. She just wanted to thank them for their work.

Council Member Silva said that the issue regarding receiving the reports two hours before a meeting was unacceptable.

Council Member Silva said that he would like to know if they had a plan when there was a list that was about to expire.

Mr. Appleby said that he would take responsibility for the fact that the report was late. He added that the request form for filling positions when a retirement was coming up. Even with a list that expires every two years, the turnover is fairly high. Some employees are happy being a dispatcher, but others want to have a career path and want to move up in the department.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ENTER THE EOC REPORT SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT APPLEBY AS EXHIBIT 02.02.21B.**

Council Member Herron said that she would like to call the question.

Council Member Valle said that she would like to have Council President Nieves, Council Member McBride-Lee, and Council Member Newton speak first before voting.

Council President Nieves said that she would like to clarify the fact that when testing is done through Civil Service there is a cost. Not every applicant that takes a test makes it through to the final stage. They should also be working with the First Responder High School. She spoke about the Public Safety program in Minnesota and commented that this might be a conversation to be had about this in the future. She reminded everyone that when it is time to work on the Budget, they need to look at the testing budget.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that when they cut things in the budget, they have to realize that it has an effect on the departments.

Regarding the reports that arrive late, Council Member McBride-Lee said she would rather make sure that the streets are plowed in the storm than to receive the report a day or so earlier.

Council Member McBride-Lee added that there was a difference between asking a question and giving a lecture.

Council Member Newton said that as a Budget Co-chair, he and Council Member Burns were looking at the positions where money had been allocated, but there was no employee hired. Right now, they don't have a Public Health Director or a Civil Service Director.

Putting a test together costs money. However, with the COVID issues, there are funds from other departments that are not being used.

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

**** THE MOTION TO ENTER THE EOC REPORT SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT APPLEBY AS EXHIBIT 02.02.21B PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (MCBRIDE-LEE, HERRON, LYONS, AND SILVA) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (PEREIRA).**

138-19 Resolution regarding Commitments by the City Council to Reform Policing in the City of Bridgeport.

Council President Nieves said she would like to update the committee. Both she and Council Member Burns were waiting on the Mayor to announce the Public Task Force in the next day or two.

The work that was already done will be reviewed in a public forum. She also mentioned the SRO issue that was just released by the Education and Social Services Committee. She said that at the end of the COPS grant contract, the Police Department will have to repurpose the officers. She requested that the item be tabled.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PEREIRA MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 138-19 RESOLUTION REGARDING COMMITMENTS BY THE CITY COUNCIL TO REFORM POLICING IN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT AND HAVE ACTING POLICE CHIEF GARCIA RETURN TO THE COMMITTEE WHEN AGENDA ITEM 138-19 RESOLUTION REGARDING COMMITMENTS BY THE CITY COUNCIL TO REFORM POLICING IN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT IS ON THE AGENDA IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THIS AND THE RECENT CHANGES TOP LEVEL OFFICERS THAT HAVE OCCURRED.**

Council Member Valle said that she felt the Committee should honor Council President Nieves' request to table the item.

Council Member Lyons said that she would have to abstain from this item, so she could not second it.

**** THE MOTION TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 138-19 RESOLUTION REGARDING COMMITMENTS BY THE CITY COUNCIL TO REFORM POLICING IN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT AND HAVE ACTING POLICE CHIEF GARCIA RETURN TO THE COMMITTEE WHEN AGENDA ITEM 138-19 RESOLUTION REGARDING COMMITMENTS BY THE CITY COUNCIL TO REFORM POLICING IN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT IS ON THE AGENDA IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THIS AND THE RECENT CHANGES TOP LEVEL OFFICERS THAT HAVE OCCURRED FAILED TO PASS DUE TO A LACK OF A SECOND.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 138-19 RESOLUTION REGARDING COMMITMENTS BY THE CITY COUNCIL TO REFORM POLICING IN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SILVA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO TABLE AGENDA 138-19 RESOLUTION REGARDING COMMITMENTS BY THE CITY COUNCIL TO REFORM POLICING IN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT PASSED WITH THREE (3) IN FAVOR (MCBRIDE-LEE, HERRON, AND SILVA), ONE (1) ABSTENTION (LYONS) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (PEREIRA).**

09-20 Grant Submission: re Subrecipient Agreement between the City of Bridgeport Police Department and University of Bridgeport UB Safer Campus Project.

There was no one present to address the item.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 09-20 GRANT SUBMISSION: RE SUBRECIPIENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT AND UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT UB SAFER CAMPUS PROJECT.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 09-20 GRANT SUBMISSION: RE SUBRECIPIENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT POLICE**

DEPARTMENT AND UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT UB SAFER CAMPUS PROJECT PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

11-20 Reappointment of Stuart Rosenberg (U) to the Board of Fire Commission.

12-20 Reappointment of Joseph Larcheveque (R) to the Board of Fire Commission.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO TABLE THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS:**

11-20 REAPPOINTMENT OF STUART ROSENBERG (U) TO THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSION.

12-20 REAPPOINTMENT OF JOSEPH LANCHEVEQUE (R) TO THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSION.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SILVA SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira asked why the items were being tabled. Council Member Valle said that they had originally been sent to the wrong committee and then referred to Public Safety, but the paperwork had not arrived.

Council Member Lyons said that in the past when individuals that were being re-appointed the Committee members had received the information in advance, but due to privacy issues, the information was distributed at the meeting and then collected following the Committee vote.

Council Member Pereira said that the City Council Rule 13, Section 10A, the Committee has to review the Police and Fire Department. She said that it was the jurisdiction of the Public Safety Committee.

**** THE MOTION TO TABLE THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS:**

11-20 REAPPOINTMENT OF STUART ROSENBERG (U) TO THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSION.

12-20 REAPPOINTMENT OF JOSEPH LANCHEVEQUE (R) TO THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSION.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADJOURNMENT.

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

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services