

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**PUBLIC SPEAKING FORUM**

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021**

This meeting was conducted by Teleconference.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Council President Nieves called the Public Speaking session of the City Council to order at 6:38 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

The City Clerk Lydia Martinez called the roll.

130th District: Scott Burns, Matthew McCarthy  
131st District: Jorge Cruz, Tyler Mack  
132nd District: Marcus Brown  
133rd District: *Aikeem Boyd*, Jeanette Herron  
134th District: Michelle Lyons, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia  
135th District: Mary McBride-Lee, Rosalina Roman-Christy  
136th District: *Avelino Silva, Alfredo Castillo*  
137th District: Aidee Nieves, *Maria Valle*  
138th District: Maria Pereira, Michele Small  
139th District: Wanda Simmons, *Ernest Newton*

The names in italics did not appear to respond during the roll call.

Council President Nieves reviewed the rules for Public Speaking.

**THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSON HAS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021 AT 6:30 P.M. THIS MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED BY ZOOM/TELECONFERENCE.**

**NAME**

**SUBJECT**

**Cecil Young**  
99 Carroll Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06607

Follow up – Response to CD/DVD – Civil Rights Violation.

Council President Nieves called for Mr. Young. There was no response. She called his name several times.

**John Marshall Lee**  
30 Beacon Street  
Bridgeport, CT 06605

Dreamport/Bridgeport.

Mr. Lee welcomed the new Council Members. He then read the following statement into the record:

**Municipal Dreams for “Dream Port” in Bridgeport**

Council members, a moment please...just a moment before a beloved holiday, a time of celebration and faith for many, and the holiday generates lots of dreams for those of all ages and not just about “sugar plum fairies.”

At this moment City youth of varied ages have lost much of the previous two learning years. We know this from differences in testing, and test results; limits on classroom participation; socialization in the K-2 grades; necessary changes around the fun features of sports, music and school events sidelined, postponed, and canceled. No human no matter what their office, wealth, class, or status has an outside pre-set limit on their dream activity. They, or others may impose limits on what may be considered practical or effective. But the use of intelligence, feelings, lessons from life, and inspiration that combines into a dream, has no pre-set boundary which is why we should welcome fellow humans to our table when we would seek counsel, consider opinion, harvest dreams, or frame public issues. A commitment by members of a City body to request, provide for respectful listening, and be present to hear the current dreams of citizens would be a first step in such a listening harvest to find our human value in dreams for the City.

Our City though most populous in the State, both in actual numbers and in terms of density, is an example, of what happens when dreams are not considered, exploited, and delivered into the world of the real. A visit to the Connecticut sister cities of Hartford and New Haven recently, wandering through neighborhoods within their boundaries by auto, opened up comparatively fresher vistas, welcoming buildings, both private and public and cleaner streetscapes.

What if the City Council had an annual Dream Catcher Contest open to all, following multiple public invitations to several sessions, limited only as to time, 3-5 minutes, and a written or film submission? Will folks get excited to hear the energy of dreams released publicly? What might dreamers consider a proper reward for those who respond to such an invitation? Dreams are the products of the varied minds of all in our community. Can we spend dedicated regular times to be sure that this harvest benefits the community? Time will tell.

*Council Member Newton joined the meeting at 6:47 p.m.*

**Karen Jackson**  
209 Virginia Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06610

Policy before State/Federal Laws and  
settlement agreement – not being honored  
on behalf of son.

Council President Nieves called Ms. Jackson’s name several times. There was no response.

City of Bridgeport  
City Council Meeting  
Regular Meeting  
December 20, 2021

**Johnny Ray Moore**  
574-576 Union Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06607

Bridgeport WPCA, Collection practices  
against property owners here in the City of  
Bridgeport.

Mr. Johnny Ray Moore said that he was present to seek help as a property owner. He said that about five years ago, Atty. Epstein had initiated foreclosure on Mr. Moore's property on behalf of the WPCA. Later the suit was withdrawn and Mr. Moore has been making regular payments on the outstanding balance. He said that he received two notifications from the WPCA and contacted the WPCA, his Council representatives, and the City Attorney about this collection letter and received no response. This is terrible customer service by the WPCA and the City.

**Eneida Martinez**  
819 Connecticut Avenue, #2  
Bridgeport, CT 06607

City Council Members accountability and  
stability as elected officials.

Ms. Martinez said that she would be mentioning accountability and stability in reference to Council Members. She said that the Council Members are accountable to standards proposed during campaigning and should own up to commitments and promises that were made. Council Members are responsible and responsive to the citizens who elect them. As an elected official, the Council Members will review and approve an annual budget and establish long and short term objectives and priorities. They are also to oversee the performance of the local municipality and oversee the effectiveness of the City established tax rates, pass ordinances and resolutions, codified by the City Charter. They are to regulate Land Use through zoning laws, regulate public health and safety and exercise the power of eminent domain. They are also to communicate policies and programs to their constituents and respond to all concerns and complaints. They are to represent communities to other levels of government. The Council Members are the buffer between the Mayor and the constituents. Council Members hold a limited amount of power.

As elected officials, when issues come before the full Council, the Council Members must follow the same standards that they expect others to follow. When Board and Commission applicants come before the Council, the Council Members check off a list that applies to the Council Members as well. This list includes having the car taxes and property taxes paid.

Ms. Martinez said that her research indicated that there were Council Members who owe car taxes dating back to 2017. That is not an appropriate standard for a Council Member.

Maintaining stability means to be steady, calm, inspired and trusted as a leader. Stable leaders know where they stand and provide resources to the constituents and ensure that the community has the tools they need. They also communicate honestly and have a plan of action. They check in often with their community and lead in a proper and trustworthy way.

Council Members need to have accountability and stability to stand by but they do not have sole power to direct a District. They are a buffer between the Mayor and their constituents.

Council President Nieves called Mr. Young and Ms. Jackson to speak. There was no response.

**Maria Pereira**  
206 Bradley Street  
Bridgeport, CT 06610

Governance - (City Charter, Ordinances,  
Robert's Rules of Order, City Council  
Rules), Nurses Contract.

Council Member Pereira said that she wanted to speak about the lawlessness of the Council, the administration, but especially the City Attorney's Office. The emergency meeting that the Council just attended was completely illegal. It was unlawful under the Freedom of Information Act. An emergency meeting cannot be called due to incompetency. It is not allowed. It has to be an emergency like a fire or COVID, not about someone's incompetence because they could not complete their work on a timely basis.

This will be brought to the Freedom of Information Commission. Every City Council Member that remains silence is complicit. They are no different than the person breaking the law, breaking a City Council rule or breaking a City ordinance or the City Charter.

As far as the nurses' contract, Council Member Pereira said that she had read the contract and there were several glaring issues. In the Contracts Committee, a Committee member made a motion to move the question while Council Member Pereira was speaking and this motion was seconded by another Committee member. Many people arrive at meetings unprepared, but Council Member Pereira stated that she prepares religiously.

Council Member Pereira stated she had spoken with Superintendent Testani who had spoken to the staff. On the issue where it states that the school nurses report to the City Health Director, the representatives at the table pointed out that this was unlawful because the Board of Education controls 100% of its employees. Superintendent Testani had stated that the City had overruled them. Council Member Pereira questioned how the City could overrule them when this is a State statute and State law. No one has control over the BOE employees or funding except the BOE.

Council Member Pereira said that she had tried to point out a provision regarding the nurses being appointed solely on seniority and cultural sensitivity. The cultural sensitivity piece is being removed from the contract, which is a detriment to ELL students. There are large segments of ELL students at a number of the schools. A non—Spanish speaking nurse with seniority would be assigned over a Spanish speaking nurse with less tenure. However, she would not be able to speak with the ELL student or their parents. Council Member Pereira asked if the nurse would have to pull in a Spanish speaking custodian or secretary to translate, which she added would be a violation of federal HIPPA laws. These are flagrant violations in the nurses' contract.

Council Member Pereira said that she would be meeting with Nate because there is a need for litigation. [inaudible]

Mr. Young announced that he was now on the call.

**Cecil Young**  
99 Carroll Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06607

Follow up – Response to CD/DVD – Civil  
Rights Violation.

City of Bridgeport  
City Council Meeting  
Regular Meeting  
December 20, 2021

Mr. Young said that he had sent the Council Members a CD/DVD about his termination. It's been 16 years since he was terminated. He said that his civil rights had been violated and said that Jody Paul and Dr. Evans had violated his rights with his termination 16 years ago. He filed a whistle blower's complaint on this. If he is not correct, the Council should tell him. Mr. Young said that he uses the n word to get the Council Members' attention but they still ignore him. He said that Atty. Anastasi had told him to get over it. This is not right and his civil rights were violated.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Council President Nieves closed the Public Speaking portion of the Council Meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT**  
**CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021**

**7:00 P.M.**

This meeting was conducted by teleconference.

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Ganim called the Regular Meeting of the City Council to order at 7:05 p.m.

**PRAYER**

Mayor Ganim asked Council Member Newton to lead the Council in prayer.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Ganim asked Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia to lead those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council Member Lyons asked for a moment of silence for the grandson of former Council Member Taylor-Moye, along with Council Member Brown and his family in the loss of a cousin, and to mark the one year anniversary of Senator Edward Gomes' passing on December 22nd.

**ROLL CALL**

The Assistant City Clerk Frances Ortiz called the roll.

130<sup>th</sup> District: Scott Burns, Matthew McCarthy  
131<sup>st</sup> District: Jorge Cruz, Tyler Mack  
132<sup>nd</sup> District: Marcus Brown  
133<sup>rd</sup> District: Aikeem Boyd, Jeanette Herron  
134<sup>th</sup> District: Michelle Lyons, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia  
135<sup>th</sup> District: Mary McBride-Lee, Rosalina Roman-Christy  
136<sup>th</sup> District: Avelino Silva, Alfredo Castillo  
137<sup>th</sup> District: Aidee Nieves, Maria Valle  
138<sup>th</sup> District: Maria Pereira, Michele Small  
139<sup>th</sup> District: Wanda Simmons, Ernest Newton

Mayor Ganim yielded the chair to Council President Nieves for the Public Hearing portion of the meeting.

**10-21 Public Hearing re: Proposed Resolution making certain findings required by the City and Town Development Act (As Precursor to Consideration of a Tax Incentive Development Agreement) for Steelpointe – New Residential Development along East Main Street South of Stratford Avenue.**

Council President Nieves recognized Mr. Robert Dzurenda. Mr. Dzurenda said that he was not a Bridgeport resident but was the Executive Director of Hall Neighborhood House, which is a few blocks away from Steelpointe. He said that he would support this item because they reached out and supported the community.

State Representative Antonio Felipe said that he was present to speak in support of Steelpointe and they were supporting the community. They have shown how the waterfront can be opened up and encourage outside investment in the Bridgeport waterfront. This makes for a more connected City and will help support Hall Neighborhood House.

State Representative Felipe said that he had been told that having market rate housing in the development was racist, but as a Hispanic male, he felt that this was wrong. However, he felt that they needed to increase the 30% minority rate in the ordinance. He noted that during the past two years, there have not been many opportunities for construction, so he would encourage the City to extend the contract.

Mr. John Torres greeted the Council, he said that he was the Executive Director of the Bridgeport Caribe Youth. He spoke about how the youth need the sports and that the Christoffs have supported the youth with funding and a scholarship fund. This is what needs to be done. They invest in the youth, in the neighborhoods and the community. Now is the chance to add to the waterfront community.

Ms. Deborah Sims said that she was calling to support the Steelepoint development. There have been many people who have come to the East End and made promises. However, the developers are not your typical developer because they do what they promise to do and care about the community. They work out the issues that need to be addressed. This is very important to the East End residents.

Ms. Callie Heilmann, the President and Co-director of Bridgeport NOW, spoke next. Everyone at Gen Now is in favor of development but this is a moment for the Council to negotiate the tax plans. The original plans were developed in the 1990s and early 2000's. The policies drive systemic racism. Bridgeport has its share of housing discrimination. The Christoffs have worked with Bridgeport to make Steelpointe possible and in 2012, they were able to create a Special Taxing District. Then the Christoffs promised 10% of affordable units and this is a segregationist policy. Now, best practices require 20% of affordable units be on site and fully integrated into the Community.

Ms. Eneida Martinez greeted the Council Members and said that she was in full support of the project. The developers have developed a land that was taken many years ago. The property owners were compensated for that property. She said that she was placing her full support in the developers because they have been supporting both the black and Hispanic communities. Those who are against development should think about living elsewhere because Bridgeport needs new development.

Mr. Keith Williams, the president of the East End NRZ, said that he wished that they had more developers like the Christoffs because they have been moving the project forward and have supported the East End.

Ms. Jennifer Jones said that she was a Bridgeport resident but came from Florida. She said that the Christoffs had come to work with the City about economic income. They chose to hire her, a single woman, and requested that she hire Bridgeport residents for the Steeplepoint Boat Show. During COVID, the Christoffs invested about \$1 million in Bridgeport. She felt that they have a great future in store for Bridgeport.

Ms. Gloria from the Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust said that she was present to support the Steelpointe project. The Christoffs have been very instrumental in providing affordable housing for Bridgeport. They have made sure that the BNT had enough funds for building affordable housing.

A representative of the Black Horse Garage said that they have been in Bridgeport for 35 years and moved to the East End 17 years ago. Now there is a Bass Pro Shop and Starbucks and it is very exciting. It feels like Bridgeport is an up and coming place. The Christoffs have been helping the neighborhood and the Black Horse Garage is benefiting. The tax abatement are dividends. The Black Horse Garage received a tax abatement that allowed them to stay in Bridgeport rather than moving elsewhere. A grocery store is being built and that is very exciting, too.

Mr. Niels Heilmann said that he was not speaking for or against, but wanted to say that they were not being asked to vote on whether the development was good, or the developers were good, but the Council Members were being requested to approve a specific deal. There were no numbers or tools to indicate what the City was giving up for this contract. This makes it difficult to judge the merit of the contract.

He said that 400 units at full taxation over a 10 year period of time would work out to about \$20 million dollars. He said that it would be fair to ask about an increase in the amount of affordable housing. It is segregation to have the affordable housing off site, particularly in a county that is one of the most racially segregated.

Council Member Pereira said that listening to the speakers, it appears that there were only two people who actually read the 200 page acquisition document. She had requested this document from Mr. Gill but had not been able to finish it all. She was shocked about the number of families that were displaced for that project.



When Bass Pro came in, the Federal government filed against them for racist practices. She said that the Starbucks was not something the community uses. The community likes Dunkin Donuts.

When the 400 units are filled, the residents will be using the streets, the infrastructure, the schools, fire and police, but their taxes will go back to the Special District, not to the residents.

She said that Adam Wood had contacted her, but she told him that she would not speak with him because it was a violation of the ordinance. She said that she would not be supporting a massive tax break on the backs of her constituents.

Council Member Newton said that he was on the City Council and was president when the Steelpointe project was first introduced. There have been five different mayors and nothing has happened. Over the last 30 years, there has been nothing but broken promises. The deal was signed when Mayor Finch was in office. Everyone is talking about affordable housing, but now they need to look at how much has been done. For a Council Member to claim that black and brown people are not able to afford luxury housing is wrong. Downtown Bridgeport is filled with black and brown families. This deal is not different than what happened in Black Rock just a little while ago. This developer has done what they promised. They hired people from the community. Wanting 20% or 30% of affordable housing is nice, but the City needs people who have money to move in and spend their money. The Christoffs put their money where their mouth is. Every property owner who had their home taken was paid the market value for their property. He asked his colleagues to support the Christoffs because they have already made a commitment to the City. If developers don't come in to do projects, they will not be able to lower the tax burden for the other residents. It's important to keep this in mind.

Mr. Jase Ramon Olavarria said that he has lived on the East Side and while he lives elsewhere, he feels this because it was close to his previous house. He said that 69% of the renters pay 30% of their income in rent. He does not support this project unless they give 20% affordable units.

Ms. Diana Washington, the president of the Southern Connecticut Black Chamber of Commerce, came forward. The Chamber has a great relationship with Steelpointe. They have been hiring local contractors, some of which are members of the Chambers. People are now coming to Bridgeport to see the events.

Ms. Kimberly Rosedale, a former Planning and Zoning Commissioner, said that she was in support of the project. Having the property values increase is what they need.

Mr. Charles Scott, a business owner and realtor, said that he was in support of the tax abatement agreement. The East End will benefit because their property values will increase because it gives the property owners equity. There are jobs that are starting up there. When people talk about minorities and market rate housing, it seems that people don't think minorities can afford these market rate properties. This is wrong. Minorities can afford these properties. This will also benefit all parts of the City, not just the East End. He said that as a past president of the Realtors, the Christoffs supported a bus tour of the entire city to showcase Bridgeport. More development will raise up the affordable housing also.

Ms. Gemeem Davis said she opposes the tax abatement without affordable housing on site. This is a structural racism issue. This is a national issue. When developers come to develop a waterfront, they have to include affordable housing so they aren't segregating black and brown people from white people. It is not about whether the Christoffs are good or bad people, but what the people want their city to be like. The minorities should not be segregated out of an area. The land that they currently own was once owned by black and brown people and taken from them through eminent domain. The Christoffs should be ashamed of themselves for setting up a deal that would prevent black and brown people from living there.

*Council President Nieves closed the public hearing at 8:10 p.m.*

**11-21 Public Hearing re: Proposed Resolution Authorizing a Tax Incentive Development Agreement for a New Residential Development at Steelpointe along East Main Street South of Stratford Avenue.**

Council President Nieves explained that this was very similar to the previous item.

Mr. Ludwig Spinelli said that while he no longer lives in Bridgeport, he said that the Christoffs were involved in the Community before they even started working on Steelpointe. He said that he was speaking in support of the project.

Council Member Small said that they need affordable housing in Connecticut rather than a tax abatement.

Mr. Jim Anofferro, from the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, said that he was speaking in support of the development. He has seen the opportunities and sees people coming to Bridgeport. Housing is a big issue throughout the state. This development will be a good thing for Bridgeport.

Council Member Cruz said the residents of the East End and East Side have been living with that vacant parcel for many years. He wondered why this was so hard for people to understand that if their property values increases, they have more equity. He said that this was a 10 year deal and he was supporting the East End residents.

Council Member Pereira said that she was amazed by the number of people who don't live in Bridgeport, or are part of a non-profit. The non-profits don't pay taxes and that put the tax burden on the middle class residents. She said she doesn't care about Optimum Health Care or the RBC. The people who live here have to deal with the day to day tax burden. When the Christoffs make millions, they keep the profits. That parcel is over 60 acres and the City only gets \$400,000. She represents her constituents and noted that she had opposed the Black Rock project. People need to be accurate when they make statements.

Council Member Newton said that they hoped the same criteria about paying property taxes and car taxes was used. He said that he was tired of people thinking that black and brown people can't own property. He said that he owns his own home and for a while, its value was

underwater. Now his property values have increased. For the East End to prosper it must be tied to the development. The Council had lowered the mill rate in the past. There are communities that do not have affordable housing, but Bridgeport does and is on the right track. It is time to stop painting black and brown people as some type of orphans.

Council Member Herron said that her background as a minority means she was told that she would not amount to much, but she owns her own home and raised her family. The Council Members will be discussing this item and while they need affordable housing, the City needs a tax base and development.

Ms. Gemeem Davis said that she wanted to talk about affordable housing. The median income for Bridgeport is \$60,000. She said that until recently, she lived downtown in a building with both market rate and affordable housing units. The affordable housing unit was \$200 less than the market rate unit. Some developers want to take the residents for a ride. The land was taken away from people some 20 years ago and now the developers want to make profit off it. This is not about painting Bridgeport as a black and brown community. Not having affordable housing means it is segregated.

Mr. Harry Boardsen, the Bridgeport Boatworks owner said that he was calling in to express his support. His business is about 3 years old and they resurrected a failing business on the Harbor. There are about 60 people who work in the shipyard that was closed for about 10 years. The majority of workers are local residents. His customers and employees are already asking about the development project. This type of development takes time, hard work and money to start. This will be a world class addition to Bridgeport Harbor. His business is a large business and growing, so he is happy to be part of this.

Council Member Simmons said that this is not a contract that is set in stone and the terms of the contract will be discussed. Development is good, but the Council needs to look at the structural aspect regarding the affordable housing. She is looking forward to the discussion.

Mr. Richard Killeny, a resident since 2005, said that he had been displaced at least once by a developer. He said that while he supports the project, the tax situation is very important to him. Having affordable housing is very important.

*Council President Nieves closed the public hearing at 8:37 p.m.*

### **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

#### **• October 4, 2021**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 4, 2021.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH EIGHTEEN (18) IN FAVOR (BURNS, MCCARTHY,**

**CRUZ, MACK, BROWN, HERRON, BOYD, LYONS, MCBRIDE-LEE, ROMAN-CHRISTY, SILVA, CASTILLO, VALLE, NIEVES, PEREIRA, SMALL, SIMMONS, AND NEWTON) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (VIZZO-PANICCIA).**

**RESOLUTIONS TO BE REFERRED TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, ETC.:**

**13-21 Resolution presented by Council Member(s) Cruz & Herron and Co-sponsors Valle, Simmons & Newton re: Proposed Resolution Declaring Homelessness as a Public Health Crisis, referred to Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee.**

**14-21 Resolution presented by Council Member Newton re: Proposed Resolution to determine the Membership and Status of the Fair Rent Commission, referred to Miscellaneous Matters Committee.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN MOVED TO REFER THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, ETC.:**

**13-21 RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY COUNCIL MEMBER(S) CRUZ & HERRON AND CO-SPONSORS VALLE, SIMMONS & NEWTON RE: PROPOSED RESOLUTION DECLARING HOMELESSNESS AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS, REFERRED TO ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE.**

**14-21 RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON RE: PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO DETERMINE THE MEMBERSHIP AND STATUS OF THE FAIR RENT COMMISSION, REFERRED TO MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON (CONSENT CALENDAR):**

**\*02-21 Contracts Committee Report re: Agreement with the Bridgeport School Crossing Guards Association regarding their Bargaining Unit Contract for the term of September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2026.**

Council President Nieves asked if any Council Member wished to remove the item from the Consent Calendar. Council Member Pereira requested that Agenda Item 02-21 be removed from the Consent Calendar.

**MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON:**

**01-21 Contracts Committee Report re: Agreement with the Connecticut Association of Labor Unions (CALU), (Nurses Union) regarding their Bargaining Unit Contract for the term of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2025.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED AGENDA ITEM 01-21 CONTRACTS COMMITTEE REPORT RE: AGREEMENT WITH THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF LABOR UNIONS (CALU), (NURSES UNION) REGARDING THEIR BARGAINING UNIT CONTRACT FOR THE TERM OF JULY 1, 2019 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira said that there was no requirement that the crossing guards go through the national background check. She said that she had called someone about this. There used to be three steps in the contract, but now there is just one step. Everyone will be at \$14.00/hr because it is mandated by the State. There is no difference between those who have worked one year or ten years. She reviewed the other wage increases. These are the lowest union members in the City and this is the worse contract she has seen in 12 years. It is not codified that they are not pedophiles, or sex offenders.

*Mayor Ganim returned to the meeting and assumed the chair.*

Council Member Brown said the contract was negotiated by the City and the union and now was before the Council. He said that the union did not think it was a bad deal. He also said that he thought that the City was a “Ban the Box” community.

Council Member Herron, the Co-chair of Contracts, said the union president was on the call. Angel Resto has been president for the union for years. He did not bring up any of the issues at the Committee. The Committee is not present to dissect the terms of a contract, because the contract has already been negotiated and agreed upon by the various parties.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that if it was not a good deal, the union would not have voted for it. She said that while she thought it wasn't a good deal, it was not the Council's job to negotiate the contracts. It was Mr. Resto's job to negotiate the terms.

Council Member McCarthy requested the question be moved.

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 01-21 CONTRACTS COMMITTEE REPORT RE: AGREEMENT WITH THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF LABOR UNIONS (CALU), (NURSES UNION) REGARDING THEIR BARGAINING UNIT CONTRACT FOR THE TERM OF JULY 1, 2019 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025 PASSED WITH FOURTEEN(14) IN FAVOR (BURNS, MCCARTHY, CRUZ, MACK, BROWN, BOYD, HERRON, VIZZO-PANICCIA, MCBRIDE-LEE, SILVA, CASTILLO, VALLE,**

**SIMMONS AND NEWTON); THREE (3) OPPOSED (LYONS, PEREIRA, AND SMALL) AND TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS (ROMAN-CHRISTY AND NIEVES).**

**02-21 Contracts Committee Report re: Agreement with the Bridgeport School Crossing Guards Association regarding their Bargaining Unit Contract for the term of September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2026.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY MOVED AGENDA ITEM 02-21CONTRACTS COMMITTEE REPORT RE: AGREEMENT WITH THE BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS ASSOCIATION REGARDING THEIR BARGAINING UNIT CONTRACT FOR THE TERM OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2021 THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2026  
\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira said that she had a number of issues about the contract and while she was speaking about her concerns in the Committee meeting, someone made a motion to move the question. She said for the record, she had spoken with Superintendent Testani who met with his staff.

The contract has a provision that all the school nurses report to the Health Department Director rather than the Superintendent. That is a violation of State statute. All 28 nurses are 100% funded through the Board of Education budget, including their benefits, salaries and uniforms. Superintendent Testani informed Council Member Pereira that the issue had been raised but had been overruled. They cannot overrule a State statute. It is clear that all Board of Education staff report to the Superintendent and are controlled by the Board of Education. This is a clear violation.

There is also a provision regarding the nurses being appointed solely on seniority and cultural sensitivity. The cultural sensitivity piece is being removed from the contract, which is a detriment to ELL students. There are large segments of ELL students at a number of the schools. A non—Spanish speaking nurse with seniority would be assigned over a Spanish speaking nurse with less tenure. However, she would not be able to speak with the ELL student or their parents. Council Member Pereira asked if the nurse would have to pull in a Spanish speaking custodian or secretary to translate, which she added would be a violation of federal HIPPA laws. These are flagrant violations in the nurses’ contract.

For these reasons and the reason she stated in Public Comment, Council Member Pereira said she would be voting no on the contract.

Council Member Newton said at the Contracts Committee meeting, Mr. Nkwo said that the City of Bridgeport pays for the nurses. This was negotiated by the unions and they agreed to this. The Council’s job is to approve the contract. He asked the chairs to clarify what Mr. Nkwo said.

Council Member Lyons asked why Superintendent Testani had made some comments about the fact that the nurses were BOE employees and the City had overruled this. She also asked if he

had attended the Contracts meeting and whether Superintendent Testani had spoken with the City about this.

Council Member Burns said that this contract had come from the Labor Relations Department and had been arbitrated. He said that they should respect the fact that the contract terms had been agreed to by the union and the City.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that the students and nurses are not in school. She said that the Council does not really know what the contracts terms were. Last week, they had 11 teachers out in her school and no nurse. They are suffering due to lack of staff.

Council Member Herron said that the BOE pays for a translator for those who do not speak a student's language and there is access to that service via a simple phone call.

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 02-21 CONTRACTS COMMITTEE REPORT RE: AGREEMENT WITH THE BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS ASSOCIATION REGARDING THEIR BARGAINING UNIT CONTRACT FOR THE TERM OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2021 THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2026 PASSED WITH SIXTEEN (16) IN FAVOR (BURNS, MCCARTHY, CRUZ, MACK, BROWN, BOYD, HERRON, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, MCBRIDE-LEE, SILVA, CASTILLO, NIEVES, VALLE, SIMMONS AND NEWTON); TWO (2) OPPOSED (PEREIRA AND SMALL) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (ROMAN-CHRISTY).**

Council Member Burns said that Council Member Roman-Christy had cited that she had not been in the meeting to hear the discussion, so she was abstaining. He felt that she should vote. Mayor Ganim said that he did not think anyone should be forced to vote.

**Election by Roll Call Vote to fill for the unexpired portion of the term of office the vacancy in the City Council Membership from the 132nd District.**

Council Member Brown said that the 132nd District had met and interviewed two candidates. They endorsed Rolanda Smith, who has been involved with the City for many years. Ms. Smith ran for Council in 2017.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN MOVED TO NOMINATE ROLANDA SMITH TO FILL THE UNEXPIRED PORTION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE THE VACANCY IN THE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP FROM THE 132ND DISTRICT.**

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

Mayor Ganim asked if there were any other nominations.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BOYD NOMINATED DASHA SPELL TO NOMINATE ROLANDA SMITH TO FILL THE UNEXPIRED PORTION OF THE TERM OF**

**OFFICE THE VACANCY IN THE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP FROM THE 132ND DISTRICT.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MACK SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira said that this was a 20 member democratic Council. She stated that she hoped that all the Council Members believed in the democratic principles of elections and people's right to vote. There has been a nationwide effort by right wing Republicans to especially suppress the black and brown voters. This is an opportunity to allow the people of the 132nd District to vote on a vacant seat. It is not an unfilled seat. In order to vacate something, one must first occupy it. Evette Brantley's untimely death occurred on November 18th and she vacated her seat when her term expired on November 30th. However, none of the Council Members can take their seats until they are sworn in no earlier than 12:01 a.m. on December 1st.

Council Member Pereira said that she loved the legal opinion that specifically quoted Section 5-1(d), but directly above in Section 5-1(c), there is no reference in the legal opinion that says, "Council Members shall serve for a term of two years from the first day of December and [inaudible] their election and until their successors are elected and have [inaudible]."

Page 3 of the City Charter, Section 5 is about vacancies in an elected City Office, There is no mention of that in the legal opinion. Under Section b, it says "All elected and appointed officials of the City shall be sworn to the faithful discharge of their respective duties. The person involved in this [inaudible] shall find their certification thereof under that hand which the certificate shall report to the City Clerk."

That never happened with Evette. That is a requirement in order for any Council Member in order to take their seat. The seat is not vacant. It's unfilled. She never occupied it, not even for 60 seconds. Had she been administered her oath by someone lawful at 12:01 on December 1st and the certification had been submitted to the City Clerk, her passing afterward would give the City Council the right to fill that seat. That would be a vacancy.

Council Member Pereira said that she thought there were clear reasons to believe that the City Council should not be filling this vacancy. Council Member Pereira said that she was not 100% sure. She added that she had not been 100% sure regarding her vote against Rebeca Garcia as Deputy Police Chief either. She reads everything she can get her hands on and follows her gut instincts. She said that she did not believe that the City Council has a right to fill this vacancy.

Council Member Pereira said that she did not know the nominee and this is not personal. Council Member Pereira said that she knew Ms. Spell and if she was going to vote, she would vote for Ms. Spell. However, due to her position that the Council does not have the right to fill the unfilled seat, she will not be voting for any of the candidates.

Council Member Lyons said that she did not know Ms. Spell well but knew Ms. Smith. She asked if Atty. Anastasi could clarify the issues around whether the seat was vacant or unfilled.

Atty. Anastasi said that the City Attorney's opinion spoke for itself.



Council Member Newton said that he disagreed with Council Member Pereira. Council Member Newton was Council President in the 1980's and there was a Republican candidate was elected but never took the oath of office. The Town Committee selected a candidate for that position. If there is a problem and a Charter Revision needs to be made, then they need to request a Charter Revision Committee be formed.

Council Member Simmons said that while she thinks that there should be some type of Charter revision, they have the problem today. The City Attorney has given his opinion.

Council Member Boyd said that he did feel that he should be picking the next City Council member.

Council Member Brown said that while he agreed that the Charter does not go over every situation, what is clear is that when it was reviewed the last time, the Council Members approved a process if a Mayor died in office, what the role of the City Council would be. He felt that there was enough clarity to take a vote at the meeting. His constituents trust him to vote for them. He added that when Ms. Smith ran, she got over 200 votes, but when Ms. Spell ran, she received less than 100 votes.

Council President Nieves stated that the Charter is the law that the Council goes by. There are many questions about this. However, she reminded everyone that Council Member Brown had stated that the 132nd District had endorsed the candidate. If they were to hold a Special Election, as has been suggested, whoever the Town Committee endorsed would be the candidate that Council Member Brown would be running with. This would cost the City taxpayers more money. The candidate that the 132nd Town Committee endorsed would be the candidate that would most likely win.

Council President Nieves said that the late Council Member Brantley had been her friend and said that she knew Ms. Smith through Child Protective Services. Most importantly, Council President Nieves said that Ms. Smith embodies the same values that the late Council Member Brantley had. She said that one of the reasons she was supporting this nomination was because Ms. Smith had run with the late Council Member Brantley in a previous election that was very tight. It is the role of the 132nd Town Committee to nominate an individual candidate to succeed the late Council Member Brantley.

Council Member Cruz said that this was a difficult time. While he respects Ms. Spell, it is important that the Town Committee made a decision, and Council Member Cruz will support the decision of the 132nd Town Committee.

Council Member McCarthy said that he would like to have a Charter Commission to address these issues.

**\*\* THE RESULT OF THE VOTE TO FILL THE UNEXPIRED PORTION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE VACANCY IN THE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP FROM THE 132ND DISTRICT WAS FIFTEEN (15) FOR MS. ROLANDA SMITH**

**(BURNS, MCCARTHY, CRUZ, BROWN, HERRON, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, MCBRIDE-LEE, ROMAN-CHRISTY, CASTILLO, NIEVES, VALLE, SIMMONS, NEWTON, AND SILVA), TWO (2) FOR MS. DASHA SPELL (MACK AND BOYD) AND TWO VOTES FOR NEITHER CANDIDATE (PEREIRA AND SMALL).**

Ms. Smith thanked everyone for their support. There are some very big shoes to fill, but it can be done together.

**Appointment of Special City Council Committee for Redistricting.**

Council President Nieves announced the following Council Member appointments to the Special City Council Committee for Redistricting.

Council Member Brown, Council Member Newton, Council Member Valle, Council Member Silva, Council Member Roman-Christy, Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia, and Council Member Mack

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTMENTS TO THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE FOR REDISTRICTING:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN,  
COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON,  
COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE,  
COUNCIL MEMBER SILVA,  
COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAN-CHRISTY,  
COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA,  
AND COUNCIL MEMBER MACK**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira said that they had missed the deadline for redistricting, which ended in July under Chapter 5, Section 2. The census data was not released until August, but the State Legislature was able to meet its State Senators and Representatives timeline. It did miss the Congressional timeline due to missing the second opportunity to complete it. If they don't complete it in a timely manner, the Supreme Court takes over the Congressional redistricting.

The City Charter states that on or before the 15th of February of the following year after the U.S. census, the Council Committee should have appointed a Committee in February of 2021. It needed to be done by ordinance for the ten districts and completed by July. If the City Council defaulted on this, which they did, it moves to Section B, which requires that if the Council does not complete redistricting plan by the first day of July following the year in which the U.S. census is taken, then the majority leader could have reappointed three members in August and the minority leader could have appointed three members. If there were no minority members, it

defaults to the Republican Registrar to appoint the minority representation for three Republicans. The redistricting must be done in 11 days.

Council Member Pereira said that she did not know where the authority was coming from to appoint City Council Members when the City Council defaulted on their responsibility back in July. Now they only have 11 days left for the City Charter on the committee with a minority leader, which was at the time, Council Member Eneida Martinez, and in September changed to Council Member Jeanette Herron. The Charter states that if they do not have minority representation, the Republican Registrar of Voters would then appoint three people. It is a six member Commission that has to be completed in 11 days. The City Charter is clear on this. This matter will be litigated. City Council Members cannot be appointed to do this. The deadline was missed. The City Charter is clear. There are only 11 days to do the redistricting by the six member Special Committee. After that, the only option appears to be for the City to approach the Court and ask for direction due to the default on Options 1 and 2.

Council President Nieves said that she had spoken with the Registrar of Voters and they just received the data less than 3 weeks ago. The Council has been waiting to hear from the State. Most municipalities have just started the process.

Council Member Pereira said that they were not required to wait to hear from the State.

Council Member Newton said that he concurred with everything that Council President Nieves said. The City can't do anything until the State legislature gives the go ahead. Appointing a Committee tonight is the right thing to do.

Atty. Anastasi said that the Charter speaks in terms of completing the work following the census. The redistricting can't be done until the census data is released.

Council President Nieves requested the question be moved. Council Member Pereira requested a roll call vote.

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTMENTS TO THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE FOR REDISTRICTING AS FOLLOWS:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN,  
COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON,  
COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE,  
COUNCIL MEMBER SILVA,  
COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAN-CHRISTY,  
COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA,  
AND COUNCIL MEMBER MACK**

**PASSED WITH SIXTEEN (16) IN FAVOR (BURNS, MCCARTHY, CRUZ, MACK, BROWN, BOYD HERRON, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, ROMAN-CHRISTY, SILVA,**

**CASTILLO, NIEVES, VALLE, SIMMONS, AND NEWTON) AND THREE (3) OPPOSED (MCBRIDE-LEE, PEREIRA AND SMALL)**

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia gave a brief summary of Agenda Item 12-21 – the Proposed Litigation Settlements for the State of Connecticut Consolidated Class-Action Opioid Lawsuits. The Emergency meeting was held by the Miscellaneous Matters Committee earlier in the evening and was labeled as an Emergency Meeting per Connecticut FOI Section 1-225(11b). It was held with the Miscellaneous Matters Committee and the City Attorneys in attendance.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MACK MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADD AGENDA ITEM 12-21 PROPOSED LITIGATION SETTLEMENTS (WITH MODIFIED CONDITIONAL PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS) CONCERNING CERTAIN LITIGATION COMPRISED OF VARIOUS CONSOLIDATED CLASS-ACTION OPIOID LAWSUITS PENDING IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT TO THE AGENDA.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CASTILLO SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira stated that this item would require a 2/3rds vote.

**\*\* THE MOTION TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADD AGENDA ITEM 12-21 PASSED WITH SEVENTEEN (17) IN FAVOR (BURNS, MCCARTHY, CRUZ, MACK, BROWN, BOYD, HERRON, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, MCBRIDE-LEE, ROMAN-CHRISTY SILVA, CASTILLO, NIEVES, VALLE, SIMMONS AND NEWTON) AND TWO (2) OPPOSED (PEREIRA AND SMALL).**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MACK MOVED FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA ITEM 12-21 PROPOSED LITIGATION SETTLEMENTS (WITH MODIFIED CONDITIONAL PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS) CONCERNING CERTAIN COMPRISED OF VARIOUS CONSOLIDATED CLASS-ACTION OPIOID LAWSUITS PENDING IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DUE TO TIME BEING OF THE ESSENCE IN ORDER FOR THE CITY TO MEET COURT MANDATED FILING DEADLINES TO ENABLE ITS PARTICIPATION IN SETTLEMENT REGARDING THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CASTILLO SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA ITEM 12-21 PASSED WITH SEVENTEEN (17) IN FAVOR (BURNS, MCCARTHY, CRUZ, MACK, BROWN, BOYD, HERRON, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, MCBRIDE-LEE, ROMAN-CHRISTY, SILVA, CASTILLO, NIEVES, VALLE, SIMMONS AND NEWTON) AND TWO (2) OPPOSED (PEREIRA AND SMALL).**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MACK MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 12-21 PROPOSED LITIGATION SETTLEMENTS (WITH MODIFIED CONDITIONAL PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS) CONCERNING CERTAIN LITIGATION COMPRISED OF VARIOUS CONSOLIDATED CLASS-ACTION OPIOID LAWSUITS PENDING IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CASTILLO SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira stated for the record that the Emergency Special Meeting was an absolute violation of the Freedom of Information Act for an Emergency Meeting because Attorney Anastasi, a consultant for the City, issued a memorandum stating that this item was not need on the Agenda until January 20th, which was stamped by the City Clerk. When the Executive Summary was issued the next day, it stated that the item had to be voted on by the Committee. An emergency is not created by incompetence. The meeting was scheduled at 1:19 p.m. for 6:00 p.m. and the lawyers did most of the talking. The Council Members had 8 minutes to ask questions about a multi-billion dollar settlement with millions coming to Bridgeport. The Council Members did not see the settlement agreement or receive a copy of it.

Council Member Pereira said that she was not a rubber stamp and refuses to do things like this. She added that those who go along with this are in violation of the law. Council Member Pereira said that she was a definite no on this.

Council Member Mack said that the motion should include the following language:

Now Therefore, be it resolved that the City Attorney and/or his designees is/are hereby authorized and empowered to execute Opioid Class-Action Litigation Settlement Participation Forms pursuant to the Janson and distributor settlement agreements materially as discussed with the Miscellaneous Matters Committee and;

the City Attorney and/or his designee are further authorized and empowered to take such other reasonably necessary actions in the furtherance of these settlements as he may deem to be in the best interest of the City of Bridgeport.

Atty. Anastasi said that the Special Meeting of the Committee aside, the Council took a separate vote on this for Immediate Consideration because time was of the essence for the health, welfare and public safety of the citizens. Regardless of the Special Meeting, the Council voted to act on this by Immediate Consideration. The Council has the power to do this as cited in Chapter 5, Section 5b.

Council Member Small said that she was opposing this item because she just got the information and had not done any research on it.

Council Member Cruz said that when people deal drugs, they may go to jail, but they don't get sued. This is about money from a pharmaceutical company that created a firestorm of addiction and there are many who are out there dying from this.

Council Member McCarthy requested to move the question.

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 12-21 PROPOSED LITIGATION SETTLEMENTS (WITH MODIFIED CONDITIONAL PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS) CONCERNING CERTAIN LITIGATION COMPRISED OF VARIOUS**

**CONSOLIDATED CLASS-ACTION OPIOID LAWSUITS PENDING IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT WITH THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE INCLUDED:**

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY ATTORNEY AND/OR HIS DESIGNEES IS/ARE HEREBY AUTHORIZED AND EMPOWERED TO EXECUTE OPIOID CLASS-ACTION LITIGATION SETTLEMENT PARTICIPATION FORMS PURSUANT TO THE JANSON AND DISTRIBUTOR SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS MATERIALLY AS DISCUSSED WITH THE MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE AND;**

**THE CITY ATTORNEY AND/OR HIS DESIGNEE ARE FURTHER AUTHORIZED AND EMPOWERED TO TAKE SUCH OTHER REASONABLY NECESSARY ACTIONS IN THE FURTHERANCE OF THESE SETTLEMENTS AS HE MAY DEEM TO BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT.**

**PASSED WITH SEVENTEEN (17) IN FAVOR (BURNS, MCCARTHY, CRUZ, MACK, BROWN, BOYD, HERRON, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, MCBRIDE-LEE, ROMAN-CHRISTY, SILVA, CASTILLO, NIEVES, VALLE, SIMMONS AND NEWTON) AND TWO (2) OPPOSED (PEREIRA AND SMALL).**

**ADJOURNMENT**

- \*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- \*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Telesco Secretarial Services