

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SPEAKING SESSION
MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2013
6:30 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Torres, Banta, Taylor-Moye, Halstead, Swain, T. McCarthy, Lyons, McBride-Lee, Salter, DeJesus, Castillo, Martinez, Feliciano, Paoletto, Martinez-Walker

ABSENT: Council members: Brannelly, Austin, Vizzo-Paniccia, Marella, *Holloway

*= arrived at 6:50 pm

Council President McCarthy called the public speaking session to order at 6:40 pm.

The city clerk took the roll call and announced there was a quorum.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSON HAS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2013 AT 6:30 P.M., IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 45 LYON TERRACE, BRIDGEPORT, CT.

❖ *Statements were submitted to the city clerk's office.*

NAME

SUBJECT

Ethan Book
Coleman Street
Bridgeport, CT 06604

Continuation of observed defects of the recent election process and "to do" list stemming from that process

I am Ethan Book, a recent candidate for this City Council to represent the important 131st District. I use the term "recent candidate" in a qualified manner as there are various issues of defects of the campaign and election process, some of which I described to you at the public comments portion of the December 2nd City Council meeting.

It was apparent that before you at the previous meeting, for the five-minute time limit, I was not able to present all my prepared comments. There was an important portion which I elect to provide to you now. It pertains to the lack of an articulated campaign platform which had been presented by the incumbent 131st District City Council members, Denese Taylor-Moye and Jack Banta.

About ten days prior to the November 5th election, as being two of five declared candidates for the City Council for the District, they were invited to participate in an e-mail forum arranged by a South End Community Group. There were various suggested categories of interest topics including matters of city finances, taxes, education, the Broad Street Housing Project, crime and others. It is curious that only *David Goodman, my running mate, and I participated in that forum.* Prior to election day, I neither saw nor heard *anything* regarding a campaign platform for Ms. Moye or Mr. Banta. Then on election day, I observed being distributed at the voting locations this campaign flyer (copy attached to the written text of these comments). Regardless of the merits of this platform which can be discussed further, it is significant that for not being available prior to election day, there was *no* opportunity either for other candidates or the public for review, research discussion or rebuttal. *In other words, the two incumbents campaigned pursuant to a hidden agenda. This is horrific, it shocks the conscience and it denigrates the integrity of the election process.* This is at least an ethical issue which for the election matters to which I have referred, there are both issues of *election-related disorder and campaign-related disorder.* For this, I refer to a 2005 federal court decision in ACORN v. Bysiewicz. The decision affirms that there is a [p]ublic interest in ‘protecting against [election related and campaign related disorder and concomitant vulnerability to impropriety”.

With respect to these raised and yet unanswered and unaddressed matters and implications for Ms. Denese Taylor-Moye and Mr. Jack Banta, I quote President George H.W. Bush, “Read my lips”. I will be watching you!

Finally, regarding the local economy, there is a matter of much local and state interest which I believe should be equally supported by all local major and minor political parties, that being the issue of what inventor accomplished the first sustained airplane flight. On December 3rd, I had the opportunity to attend the annual banquet of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council which featured a presentation by historian John Brown. Mr. Brown made a very credible, fact-filled presentation that the first sustained airplane flight was accomplished, not by the Wright brothers in North Carolina in 1903, but rather by Gustave Whitehead in Bridgeport in 1901. This issue of historical correctness is gaining attention including with a recent article in Time magazine. *The nationally-recognized correction of the historical record would be a good economic impetus for the City of Bridgeport, the Bridgeport area and the State of Connecticut.*

Thank you!

Ethan Book

Attachments submitted to city clerk’s office (4)

Cecil C. Young
99 Carroll Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06607

W.P.C.A. foreclosing on city residents

Mr. Young spoke about his concerns of city foreclosures on the homes of people that owe a water pollution bill. He said that he thought consideration should be given to people, as it is for people who own certain types of businesses that may be exempt.

He went on to recall the matter of his unjust termination after twenty-seven years of working for the city and the denial of his benefits. He recalled that at the time of his termination, it was stated that he wasn't at work when he should have been; but he disputed that claim to clarify that he was at work on the day he was terminated. Furthermore, he thought that Council President McCarthy should remove himself as council president, since he was associated with the sheriff's department at the time of his termination. He emphasized that as a minority, he felt he was unable to get justice and that his rights were being violated. He commented that he was very angry that he hasn't been able to get any justice regarding the matter, noting that it's a matter of right and wrong and he was critical of those involved with the situation, because they have chosen to ignore the matter.

Clyde Nicholson – *signed up prior to the beginning of the Public Speaking Session*
54 Wallace Street
Bridgeport, CT

Mr. Nicholson recalled that he was present in Council Chambers a month ago to attend a Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. He said that he heard a proposal to put the new Harding High School on the old GE site. He emphasized that he was here tonight to say that in his opinion, the entire property is contaminated with iron, lead and oil that has seeped into the soil. He recalled the Raybestos site that took fifteen years to clean up due to contamination. He expressed that a proposal to put students on a contaminated site would be unheard of in other towns. He commented that it will be impossible to clean up the amount of contamination on the site and it would be very costly to do. He emphasized that the building on site would pose a health risk to the students and he thought there was an insensitivity to building on the site because there is a perception that the kids at Harding are primarily poor, but that shouldn't matter. He stated that the residents need to hear from each member on the city council to find out how they will vote on this issue. He further noted that he also planned to go before the Board of Education about the issue. He requested that the city council look further into the matter.

Carolyn Nah– *signed up prior to the beginning of the Public Speaking Session*
44 Lewis Street
Bridgeport, CT

Ms. Nah spoke about the situation at Harding High School. She stated that she was present to try the city council's conscience. She emphasized that the site is too contaminated to even think about building on the property, noting that behind GE there is a contaminated

body of water. She commented that this will affect not only the students, but the teachers as well. She urged the council to do their research before voting on the project, because she felt they would be signing a death warrant if the school is built on the site. She further expressed that she wouldn't be able to sleep if she knew there were children being exposed to toxic conditions. She stressed that the city council needs to take black people seriously and she was adamant that this matter shouldn't even be a question or discussion. She clarified that the matter wasn't about the good of the children, but it was really about dollars and cents.

John Marshall Lee
30 Beacon Street
Bridgeport, CT 06605

Budgets and oversight

Comments to the City Council Monday 12-16-13

Ladies and gentlemen of the City Council and Bridgeport neighbors in the audience we can see the days grow shorter, and the weather becomes colder, so let me wish you Season's Greetings at this last City Council meeting of 2013.

For many of us the upcoming two weeks include celebrations and holidays that feature opportunities for gifting. That is the subject that I would ask you about this evening. Last Monday evening, a dozen members of this Council were present to hear the City administration tackle a subject they called Budget 101. Two new members asked questions. Other new and old members listened to answers. I hope that each of you keep asking questions and repeating them if you do not get full answers, ones that make sense to you. It is the best way to represent your fellow taxpayers. I have tried to be a "necessary watchdog" where oversight or monitoring is not obvious. Some call me "aggressive" for this questioning. I will admit to being "confrontational". Let me give you an example this evening.

This is the season for personal giving to family and loved ones, as well as attention to those in particular need, and giving for the benefit of favorite charities where a tax deduction can be earned for this current tax year if a gift is completed before 12-31-13.

Each City Council member has use of 1/20th of the \$180,000 budgeted each year for stipends. This is money intended to assist you in the performance of your duties. A new system was adopted over the past year that uses a debit card. I presented an FOI request on paperwork dealing with the stipend change of administration that the City Attorney office tells is not fully found at this time, nearly six months after my original request.

That is not the problem I raise tonight, although I and many others think that you should reveal your use of taxpayer funds by making a publicly available listing in a monthly record of reimbursements. That is not done today and is neither open, accountable nor transparent behavior. New members need to question why they go along with a secret system that bothers taxpayers while spending tax funds.

The specific issue I raise for your action is based on a story that I have heard recently, The debit card can pay for many types of expenses supporting your duties. In the past however, more than one Council person provided funds to individuals and or organizations of a "charitable and worthy nature" covered by stipend. The debit card system may not lend itself to that type of City payment.

I looked at your legislative budget. It is not large, and in the June DRAFT report for 2013, line item #56180 showed \$5,722 total for Other Expenses, an account you budgeted at \$93,500 annually but rarely is used for a fraction of that. The July, 2013 monthly report issued October 11, 2013 presumably after close of year adjustments showed the actual unaudited 2013 sum for the same amount as \$31,622. That is a significant difference. Where was almost \$26,000 of Legislative funds transferred? Was it to cover charitable contributions by Council? where was the City Council vote on this matter? Who signs off on such items? Institutions are judged on how they handle small matters as well as large issues. It is not only about \$400,000 gravel driveways or eliminating \$4 Million of "ghost positions" last year but still spending the money. Where is it accounted for? More than two dozen taxpayers whom I have spoken within the past week believe that funds to charity should be personal only, not for the City Council to give away. They also believe that your reimbursement amounts should be public and regular. What say you?

This would require some discussion and action by your group. Stop the rumors about stipends. Go public. Several Council members, still sitting here, in recent years have received more than \$9,000 in annual reimbursement. That is prohibited. Perhaps these were repaid in a subsequent year? How would the public know? What about the Council person who stepped down with \$2,000 overage? Was this City money recovered?

This is a season of giving and celebration. Is it appropriate for you to become public about the details of your stipends? Will you do it this year? Will you decide to follow the Charter and Ordinance language in multiple areas for the benefit of taxpayers? Time will tell.

John Marshall Lee

The public speaking session ended at 7:05 pm.

CITY OF BRIDGEPORT

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2013

7:00 PM

City Council Chambers, City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace

Bridgeport, Connecticut

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Torres, Banta, Taylor-Moye, Halstead Swain, T. McCarthy, Lyons, McBride-Lee, Salter, DeJesus, Castillo, Martinez, Feliciano, Marella, Paoletto, Martinez-Walker, Holloway

ABSENT: Council members: Brannelly, Austin, Vizzo-Paniccia

Mayor Finch called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

Prayer - Council member Lyons offered the prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance - Council member Halstead led the pledge of allegiance.

Roll Call - the city clerk took the roll call and announced there was a quorum.

Mayoral Proclamation: Honoring the memory of Jessie Askew, and avid Bridgeport Bluefish fan who was an inspiration to the church, community young and old alike.

City Council Citation: Honoring the memory of Jessie Askew, an avid Bridgeport Bluefish fan who was an inspiration to the church, community, young and old alike.

Mayor Finch acknowledged Jessie Askew for his support of the Hometown team. He asked members of the district to join him in front of council chambers. Mr. Askew's family and friends also came forward.

Council President McCarthy expressed that the city council always tries to recognize a person(s) that have done good things in Bridgeport. He recognized Council member Jack Banta to speak.

Council member Banta expressed that the next time they come across a war veteran, they shouldn't wait to acknowledge their contribution. He went on to acknowledge Mr. Askew who passed away but was known and well received as a WWII veteran in the U.S. Army. He recalled this was at a time when the army was segregated and unequal. He expressed that where there should have been bitterness among the black soldiers, they weren't bitter and they came back to work hard and raise families. He further expressed that Mr. Askew was an avid baseball fan and he was always first to get season tickets.

Council member Taylor-Moye stated that she found out through Mr. Askew's neighbors that he was warm and caring. She shared how his neighbors took care of him when his wife passed away and she acknowledged his aunt Ms. Pettway and his neighbors that were present to receive the citation. She further expressed that it's good to show a community that it's a great thing to look out for others.

Mayor Finch expressed to Ms. Pettway and Jessie Askew's friends that he knew Jessie. He recalled a community organizer event where Jessie was the first to sign a petition for a cause that was of concern to him. He expressed that although he would have liked Jessie to be here tonight to accept the citation, he felt that he was looking down.

Mayor Finch read the proclamation.

A representative from the Bluefish expressed his sentiments about Jessie Askew as a valued and respected season ticket holder at the Bluefish games. He thanked him for his support and for being an inspiration, sincerely expressing that the Bluefish family missed him.

Council member Banta presented the citation plaque to Ms. Pettway and the family members present. A family member thanked Mayor Finch and the council members for the citation. He expressed that Jessie was a great guy, noting that although he lived in a big house by himself, he always made it a point to remember others by acknowledging their birthday. He further expressed that he was a true soldier to the end, even when he was faced with hardship. He thanked everyone for the citation.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

Approval of City Council Minutes: November 4, 2013

Council President McCarthy reminded the council members that only those that were present at the November 4 meeting from the prior city council could vote on the minutes.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES
** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES:

- 05-13** Communication from City Clerk re: Certification of Oath of Office for City Council Members, **ACCEPTED AND MADE PART OF THE RECORD**
- 06-13** Communication from City Attorney re: Proposed Settlement of Pending Litigation with Joseph Diaz, referred to Miscellaneous Matters Committee.
- 07-13** Communication from City Attorney re: Twenty Day Notice to Settle Pending Litigation Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 2.10.130 Bao Chau, et al, **ACCEPTED AND MADE PART OF THE RECORD**
- 08-13** Communication from City Attorney re: Twenty Day Notice to Settle Pending Litigation Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 2.10.130 Bao Chau, et al, **ACCEPTED AND MADE PART OF THE RECORD**
- 09-13** Communication from OPED re: Proposed Resolution concerning the Disposition and Redevelopment of City-Owned Property located at 1752 Barnum Avenue and Request to Order a Public Hearing Relative to the Same, referred to Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee.
- 10-13** Communication from OPED re: Proposed Resolution concerning the Disposition and Redevelopment of City-Owned Property located at 431-435 & 445-449 Kossuth Street and Request to Order a Public Hearing Relative to the Same, referred to Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee.
- 11-13** Communication from Central Grants and Community Development re: Grant Submission: State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Microgrid Design and Installation Grant for Critical Facilities, referred to Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee.
- 12-13** Communication from Housing and Community Development re: Proposed Resolution Approving the 2014-2016 Bridgeport Citizen's Union Committee, referred to Miscellaneous Matters Committee.

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON (CONSENT CALENDAR):

- *04-13** Contracts Committee Report re: Greater Bridgeport Regional Solid Waste Interlocal Agreement.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO REFER COMMUNICATIONS TO
BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES
** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED**

Council member Torres referred to item 09-13 to ask if the council rules outlined in Section-30 in relation to the item regarding tax assessment, would be taken up during the committee meeting. Mayor Finch responded yes.

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON (CONSENT CALENDAR):

***04-13** Contracts Committee Report re: Greater Bridgeport Regional Solid Waste Interlocal Agreement.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DEJESUS MOVED TO TABLE
** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED WITH SIXTEEN VOTES IN FAVOR AND ONE VOTE IN
OPPOSITION (COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES)**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT PAOLETTO MOVED TO ADJOURN
** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MARELLA SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services