

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL**

SPECIAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JULY 28, 2020

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 Special Meeting of the City Council to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRAYER

Mayor Ganim requested Council Member Suliman to lead those present in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Ganim requested Council Member Roman-Christy to lead those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The Assistant City Clerk, Frances Ortiz called the roll.

130th District: Scott Burns
131st District: Denese Taylor-Moye, Jorge Cruz
132nd District: Marcus Brown, M. Evette Brantley
133rd District: Michael DeFilippo, Jeanette Herron
134th District: Michelle Lyons, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia
135th District: Rosalina Roman-Christy, Mary McBride-Lee
136th District: Alfredo Castillo, Avelino Silva
137th District: Maria Valle, Aidee Nieves
138th District: Maria Pereira, Samia Suliman
139th District: Eneida Martinez, Ernest Newton

ITEM FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION:

139-19 Resolution presented by Council Member(s) DeFilippo & Herron; Co-Sponsor(s) McCarthy, Taylor-Moye, Brown, Lyons, Vizzo-Paniccia, Castillo, Silva, Valle, Pereira, Suliman, Martinez & Nieves re: Proposed Resolution calling for the Restoration of the Christopher Columbus statue to its original location in Seaside

Park; Resolving to working together to unite the community in reaching an amicable resolution regarding this sensitive issue – **FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO SUSPEND RULES FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION TO ACT ON AGENDA ITEM 139-19 RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY COUNCIL MEMBER(S) DEFILIPPO & HERRON; CO-SPONSOR(S) MCCARTHY, TAYLOR-MOYE, BROWN, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, CASTILLO, SILVA, VALLE, PEREIRA, SULIMAN, MARTINEZ & NIEVES RE: PROPOSED RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS STATUE TO ITS ORIGINAL LOCATION IN SEASIDE PARK; RESOLVING TO WORKING TOGETHER TO UNITE THE COMMUNITY IN REACHING AN AMICABLE RESOLUTION REGARDING THIS SENSITIVE ISSUE.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DEFILIPPO SECONDED.**

Council Member Newton asked if they needed 2/3rd vote to add this to the agenda. Mayor Ganim said that they did.

Council Member Newton then asked if the City Attorney would opine on whether the Council had the authority to authorize the restoration of the Columbus statue to Seaside Park.

Atty. Anastasi said that Chapter 5 is clear about the requirement for the 2/3rd vote regarding items for Immediate Consideration. He went on to say that the Parks Commission had authority to place items in the parks. The Council's action would only be advisory. The Council has no authority or jurisdiction in this situation.

Council Member Newton asked for a 2/3rd vote by roll call.

Council Member Brantley said that she also wanted a roll call vote.

Council Member Cruz said that it was unfortunate that the statue was taken down and he would have asked them not to remove it. He said that he understood why the statue was removed and did not want to have an officer guarding it. This is clearly the Parks Board's decision. He was not in favor of this resolution.

Council Member Taylor-Moye said that she agreed with the request for a roll call vote and also agreed with Council Member Cruz. She said that she wanted to have a meeting with Mayor Ganim about this. The Parks Commission needs to do their due diligence and make a decision. She said that she would not vote for this item.

Council Member Herron said that she appreciated what her colleagues were saying and wanted to ensure that the people that were concerned about this had their voices heard. If it happens to one item, then it could happen to others. The resolution was submitted to prevent this becoming an on-going issue.

Council Member DeFilippo thanked everyone who signed on about this. He said that he received many phone calls about this which turned into an issue about having to beg for a meeting. The Council has been treated like garbage.

Council Member DeFilippo said that he would like to make a motion but his motion was inaudible due to a number of people cross talking and claiming "Point of Order".

Council Member McBride-Lee said that the statue was not removed out of disrespect and felt that it might be safer where it is. Otherwise it might be vandalized. She did not want tax dollars going to pay a police officer to guard the statue.

Council Member Pereira said that the City Charter indicated that if the item was acted on by a 2/3rd vote , there would not need to be a referral to committee.

Council Member Pereira said that the Mayor has no authority to remove the statue. The Council does have the authority to designate that the Mayor reverse his decision. The Council knew that this was up to the Board of Park Commissioners to decide. Mayor Ganim circumvented the Council, the Italian American community and disrespected everyone by doing this. The City Charter is a legally binding document. Mayor Ganim made the situation 10 times worse by doing this. The Italian American community has a strategic plan for it, and it was a clear, transparent process.

Council Member Castillo said that he had met with members of the Italian community. It is not right that everyone is saying Black Lives Matter and end up attacking the other communities. The Italians came to this country with nothing for a better life and many of them fought in two World Wars. The statue belongs to the Italian American community, not the City. It is time to figure out how to work together. They are willing to work with the City. It is time to stop attacking other communities.

Council Member Lyons said that the Parks Board and the Italian Community needs to have a voice. If it had been discussed earlier, this issue would have been avoided. There was no chance to decide where to place the statue. Even though Mayor Ganim thought he did the right thing, the Parks Commission was upset that they were not notified right away. This has caused a lot of animosity with the Italian American community and the black community.

Council Member Silva said that he supported Council Member DeFilippo because he did not like the way this was handled. He said that it would be important to talk about this and not disrespect the Italian American community or the black community.

Council Member Suliman said that when she signed the petition it was because of the way that the item was handled. She said that she received many calls from the black community and they were upset, so she will not support the item.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said it was getting out of hand with all the disrespect and the outsiders influencing the opinions. She said that in the late 1980's, early 1990s, there were lot of groups involved in the 500th anniversary. There was a unity in the celebration of Columbus Day.

When someone becomes a Council Member, they are no longer activists. This issue happened because there were outsiders pushing an agenda. This is not showing the youth how to work together. There is disrespect and it is time to work together for the entire City. This has got to stop because it has gotten out of hand. She said that it was terrible how this was publicly handled by some Council Members.

Council Member Roman-Christy said that when the meeting occurred, there were only a few people invited. There were other Council Members that were included to the meeting behind closed doors. This issue should just go back to the Park Commission. Her biggest fear is that someone will attack the statue and it would be a loss to the Italian Community.

Council Member Newton said that he had a point of order.

Council President Nieves said when Council Member DeFilippo contacted her, she said that this did not constitute an emergency. She said that she agreed with Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia and noted that it was going to the Parks Commission tomorrow. New Haven created a commission to recognize individuals in the community. She said that the Italian Community worked very hard to raise the money for the statue. It would not be right to have officers guarding the statue at night. On that Friday, there was a decision to remove the statue from the park because there was an email about someone outside of Bridgeport coming with a bulldozer to knock down the statue.

Council Member Brantley asked to move the question.

Council Member Burns asked for clarification on the vote. Atty. Anastasi and Mayor Ganim reviewed the details with the Council Members.

**** THE MOTION FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION TO ACT ON AGENDA ITEM 139-19 RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY COUNCIL MEMBER(S) DEFILIPPO & HERRON; CO-SPONSOR(S) MCCARTHY, TAYLOR-MOYE, BROWN, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, CASTILLO, SILVA, VALLE, PEREIRA, SULIMAN, MARTINEZ & NIEVES RE: PROPOSED RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS STATUE TO ITS ORIGINAL LOCATION IN SEASIDE PARK; RESOLVING TO WORKING TOGETHER TO UNITE THE COMMUNITY IN REACHING AN AMICABLE RESOLUTION REGARDING THIS SENSITIVE ISSUE FAILED TO PASS WITH SEVEN (7) IN FAVOR (BROWN, DEFILIPPO, HERRON, LYONS, VIZZO-PANICCIA, CASTILLO, AND PEREIRA) AND TWELVE (12) OPPOSED (BURNS, CRUZ, TAYLOR-MOYE, BRANTLEY, MCBRIDE-LEE, ROMAN-CHRISTY, SILVA, NIEVES, VALLE, SULIMAN, NEWTON AND MARTINEZ).**

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services