

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 14, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton Co-chair; Jorge Cruz, Jeanette Herron, Matthew McCarthy; Denese Taylor-Moye
AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Council Member(s): Maria Pereira, M. Evette Brantley, Marcus Brown, Rosalina Roman-Christy, Mary McBride-Lee, Eneida Martinez, Maria Valle (6:28 p.m.); Council President Aidee Nieves; Thomas Gaudett, Mayoral Aide; Michelle Muoio, Sikorsky Airport Manager; Acting Police Chief Rebeca Garcia; Barbara, Call-in user #1; Call-in user #2; 203-521-1930; 203-257-2193; 203-414-0712; Constance Vickers (6:28 p.m.); 929-439-2866 (6:30 p.m.); 203-864-0559 (6:30 p.m.); Lexie (7:59 p.m.); Call-in user #3 (7:59 p.m.); Thalia's Phone (7:59 p.m.); iPhone (8:25 p.m.)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

• **November 9, 2020.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 9, 2020.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia pointed out that she was not on the Committee at that time.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 9, 2020 PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (NEWTON, CRUZ, HERRON, MCCARTHY AND TAYLOR-MOYE) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (VIZZO-PANICCIA).**

BUDGET UPDATE FROM PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Mr. Flatto said there had been a number of questions about the quarterly report and that Mr. Tardy was present to answer them.

Mr. Tardy said it had been a challenging year and they had been working hard to keep above water.

Council Member Newton said many people had questions about what the City purchases. He wished to know if they were opened to minority participation and who were these companies that were being awarded the contracts.

He noted the Deputy Purchasing Agent position was currently vacant.

Mr. Tardy said in 2017 the bid threshold was raised to \$25,000. This requires a formal bid process with a posting on Bid-Sink and the contract is awarded to the lowest responsible bidder. There is also a buy local program in effect, which allows a local vendor within about 10% of the lowest bidder's price, they can be awarded the contract.

Those purchases that are over \$1,000 but under \$25,000, the City requires three bids, one of which must be from Mr. Gee's list for minority contractors.

Council Member Newton said when he reviewed the purchasing list, many of the same companies appeared over and over again. Those companies do not appear to be minority companies, so he was concerned it was not an open process.

Mr. Tardy asked if the companies were qualified vendors or bids. Council Member Newton said he did not have the list available. Mr. Tardy said there were certain vendors, like Sonitrol, that had to be used in order to tie into the rest of the system.

Mr. Flatto pointed out many of the larger jobs require the use of prevailing wages, which the smaller companies cannot do. There is also a great deal of paperwork involved. Discussion followed.

Council Member Newton said he did not see any evidence that the Ordinance was being followed. Council Member Newton said it is the Purchasing Departments role to ensure that Bridgeport companies are supplying the City.

Mr. Tardy said a few weeks ago, a proposal was released for deep cleaning and they only received one bid from a company in New Jersey.

Council Member McCarthy asked for a review of the information on the spreadsheets and clarification on the various terms such as RFP, RFQ, Qualified Purchases and other items.

Mr. Tardy explained Qualified Purchases do not go out to bid for few reasons such as being a sole source provider or a single source.

Council Member Valle and Constance Vickers joined the meeting at 6:28 p.m.

Discussion followed.

929-439-2866 and 203-864-0559 joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

[Loss of video at 6:32 p.m.]

Council Member McCarthy asked why there was a major snow removal item listed in September. Ms. Muoio explained that it was for a snowplow which had gone out for bid. The funding was from a grant award. The Purchase Order went out in September because it takes a while to build the plow since it is a custom build.

Council Member McCarthy asked where the grant revenue was logged in. Mr. Flatto said Mr. Nkwo would create a special account for the grant funding. Mr. Nkwo confirmed this was so.

Council Member Herron said there was a minority business office and the minority vendors on that list have told her that they have bid repeatedly but were always outbid by other vendors. She said often there are low bidders who end up being paid more from change orders. She wished to know if these companies were flagged.

Mr. Tardy said that the bid is turned over to the Contract Officer, who monitors the project.

Council Member Herron said she was aware of the change orders and wanted to clarify if anyone who was trying to track the change orders from any particular vendor. Mr. Flatto said there have been situations where change orders had been presented and they had been denied.

Council Member Cruz said the minority business had been neglected for too long and the way they were checking out the potential businesses was not right. Contracts are going to Fairfield, Shelton, and Westchester County. He would like the Small and Minority Business Office to send him a list. Some contractors are getting preferential treatment because they have friends in high places. The Council Members are here to fight for their constituents and to stop the preferential services.

Council Member Cruz asked why the City was paying Kelly Services, which is a temp agency. Mr. Flatto said the item was for the Board of Education. Mr. Nkwo said the BOE uses them for substitute teachers.

Mr. Flatto said he doesn't understand why this is happening either and would reach out personally. Council Member Cruz said he would send Mr. Flatto a list because the preferential treatment has to stop.

Council Member Pereira said Kelly Services provides substitute teachers for the BOE. She was responsible for the BOE's selection of Kelly Services for the substitution teachers after an unfortunate incident with the previous vendor.

Council Member Pereira asked who were the members of Public Purchases, when they meet and where is the calendar. Mr. Tardy listed the following names: Denise Hanks, James Money, Kathy Williamson and Ken Flatto as members of the Public Purchases. He also listed the meeting schedule.

Council Member Pereira said the last agenda was filed 12 months ago. Mr. Tardy said that the Assistant Purchasing Agent was responsible for that task.

Council Member Pereira said that the Board of Public Purchase must post their agenda to the City website at least 24 hours prior to the meetings.

Council Member Pereira asked if the Ordinance of Public Purchases be sent to every Council Member. Mr. Flatto said the meetings are very thorough and careful.

Council Member Pereira asked if this allowed them to violate the FOIA. She added that she would like a list of the members with the expiration dates for their terms.

Council Member McBride-Lee said she thought it was cheating to allow contractors to submit change orders.

Council Member McBride-Lee said three or four months ago, Council President Nieves had sent a memo indicating there was some funding available for small businesses. She suggested the Council Members could help by referring the job opportunities to their constituents.

Council Member McBride-Lee pointed out the Purchasing Agent should not be advocating for vendors. She asked what the role of the Small and Minority Business Office was. Mr. Tardy said there was a process to get on the list, but he added there were services and items that the Bridgeport small businesses do not offer. Discussion followed.

Council Member McCarthy said his concern was focused on qualified purchases. He asked if there was any documentation which would give an overview of the processing process. Mr. Flatto said he had a 3 page memo that describes the process.

Council Member McCarthy asked if it was possible to find out who the principals were in the various companies. Mr. Tardy named the website that they check when they need to know that information. Mr. Flatto said it was attached to the bid documents. Council Member McCarthy asked for a list of principals for certain companies. Mr. Flatto said they could provide him with that information.

Council Member Newton said he was hoping that the Public Purchasing Board would commit to seeing that more minority businesses are selected.

Council Member Herron requested Mr. Tardy and Mr. Gee attend the next meeting to answer questions. She went on to ask that the companies who have been bidding for years and they need to evaluate this.

Council President Nieves said there was an issue around the ability to track qualified purchases for the various companies. She said she did not see that report. There had been an incident where there were multiple change orders for the cement company for the Public Facilities garage.

She noted there had been a discussion about color coding the quarterly report spreadsheet and listed a number of changes, such as indicating which items were for the BOE.

Council Member Brown asked what Cream-o-Land Dairy supplies. Mr. Tardy told Council Member Brown they were the suppliers for a variety of dairy products. They are supplying milk.

Council Member Brown asked if Wade's Dairy had applied. Mr. Tardy said that they had applied. Council Member Brown asked if they had ever been awarded. Council Member Pereira said Federal Law prevents the awarding of a contract based on location but noted Wade's Dairy had been awarded the contract once or twice in the past.

Council Member Burns said the Communications Department was under OPED and suggested that OPED work to get the information out about the RFQ and RFPs out more.

Council Member Newton suggested the Small and Minority Business Office be appointed to the Board of Public Purchases.

130-19 Proposed resolution committing to reallocating certain funds from the Police Department to address the safety, security, educational and social services needs of Bridgeport residents.

Council Member Burns said he was not looking for a vote on this based on the discussion that was held at the last Council meeting. There have been many discussions with different groups across the City. When something is changed, it has to be for everyone's benefit.

Council Member Cruz thanked Council President Nieves for meeting with the stakeholders. He said it was an emotional and sensitive topic. In the past five years, he said the average homicide in Bridgeport was 20 per year. None of those involved a police officer. While he agrees the Police Department needs to have some reform, it is important not to remove the funding until after they do some deep, thorough research. While there was one person who was killed by an officer, there are many more who are dying in the street where no officer was involved. It is important to think carefully before de-funding the officers. He wanted to know how many people are dying because of drug overdoses or are homeless. As a Council Member, he wants to work with everyone. He suggested that this item be tabled.

Council Member Newton said to Council Member Burns and Council President Nieves that the dialog was long overdue and they need to understand what is going on across the country. This is about accountability. People are asking for accountability. They are not asking to close Police Departments but are asking for accountability. It is time to stop the conspiracy theories that everything is being done in the dark.

It is true the Police Department needs to be revamped. Council Member Newton said he was tired of voting to settle cases due to police violence. Over the last five to ten years, the amount of the settlements has been very high. No one should be above the law.

Council Member Newton said the Police Departments were being asked to do things that they don't know how to do, but there are outside agencies that do know how to handle these issues. This is the 21st century and Bridgeport is still in the Dark Ages. Some of the funding needs to go to these agencies. There are certain things the officers aren't trained for and there are outside

agencies that are trained to handle them. He wished to know how they can make the Police Department better.

Council Member Newton spoke about how there is continual flow of retirees from the force and the number of new officers is less than those who leave. The Council will have to come up with the money to hire the number of officers that they need to so they won't be using so much overtime. He said he believed they could do better.

Council Member Herron said there had been a conversation about adding more officers to the Department. It is all about money. She said the retirees goes out quicker than new officers come in. They have to have conversations with various groups and would be looking forward to the report that comes out. There are some amazing officers on the force, but there are some discipline issues.

Council Member Pereira said the Annual Budget was \$102 million a year and the largest portion of the budget goes to the Police Department. She said that Mr. Nkwo challenged her on the amount. Hartford and New Haven have a larger uniformed force. She said that she had verified the figures with Hartford and New Haven.

She said people were constantly telling her that the officers were cocky and arrogant. One officer knocked on her door the day after Thanksgiving and was very professional.

Council Member McBride-Lee said she agrees with Council Member Cruz and would not take one dime from the Police Department. When her house was broken into, she didn't call a social worker, she called the Police Department. They are not perfect, but they need them. Overall, she felt the Police Department was pretty good. When she arrived in Connecticut, she did not like any police officers because of her experiences in Alabama. Now she feels differently. She hoped they would bring in a trainer that knows what they are doing. She does not believe they are as bad as many people say. Many times, the officers are provoked, but it is important remember that the officers want to go home to their families, too.

She asked who the people were that were protesting the death of one young man. She wanted to know if they were from Bridgeport or not.

Council Member Taylor-Moye said accountability was important, but she didn't look at the officers as problems. There have been resolutions through the years. The goal has been to change things. There are issues going on all over Connecticut. The Council Members are not all alike and they need to sit down to discuss things. She said that she was not in favor of moving money from the Department, but it will be important to work with one another to make a change.

Council Member Martinez said that much has been said and in 1990 she had lost a brother.

[Zoom crashed at 7:50 p.m.]

Council Member Martinez pointed out she relies on the Police Department. She reminded everyone that officers don't pull the trigger just to pull the trigger.

Council Member Pereira asked if there had been any analysis done on training resolution was passed.

Acting Chief Garcia said they were training on de-escalation, but they were still working on Customer Service because it is such a broad topic. The officers have to receive accredited POST training.

Council Member Pereira said many residents complained that the officers were rude and unprofessional. Hearing that Acting Chief Garcia did not understand this issue was troubling to Council Member Pereira. The officers are the professionals. She said Acting Chief Garcia obviously did not understand that the officers need Customer Service training because their attitude causes problems. The Council can require anything they want and it doesn't have to be POST accredited.

Acting Chief Garcia said it would cost the City an additional amount of money to provide the classes. She said it would be important to review the curriculum that was being used. She asked Council Member Pereira to send her information about any particular program.

Lexie, Call-in user #3 and Thalia's Phone joined the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

Council Member Brantley said Council Member Pereira was talking about Community Service and also found it difficult to understand that Acting Chief Garcia did not understand this. Council Member Brantley said her sister was the first black Bridgeport Police Officer and her sister recently had an incident that she would be writing a letter to Acting Chief Garcia about it because her sister was totally disgusted.

Council Member Cruz said he appreciated all the work Council Member Burns and Council President Nieves had done. All Police Departments need to be reformed. He cautioned everyone the resolution was simply a piece of paper. He said he would like to table this item to allow the Acting Chief Garcia time to gather the information that the Council Members want.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 130-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION COMMITTING TO REALLOCATING CERTAIN FUNDS FROM THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO ADDRESS THE SAFETY, SECURITY, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES NEEDS OF BRIDGEPORT RESIDENTS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

02-20 Proposed Budget Transfer to Fiscal Year 2020-2021 General Fund Budget From: Citywide Contingency Account #01610000-57005 (\$560,000) To: Airport Department Public Safety Equipment Account #01375000-551759 (\$560,000) for the purpose of replacing damaged components of the Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS) associated with Runway 6 located at Sikorsky Memorial Airport.

Mr. Nkwo noted that Account #01375000-551759 (\$560,000) contained a typographical error. The correct Account number is #01375000-55175.

Ms. Muoio explained the airport had some vandalism at the Runway 6 EMAS site after a vehicle drove onto the surface, which damaged it. The deductible amount on the insurance would not cover it. The investigation is still open with the Bridgeport Police and security measures have been taken. The insurance company will cover about \$360,000 and CARES acts will cover \$157,000 and this will cover another portion of it, but the City will need to pay \$560,000. It needed to be repaired immediately due to liability or shut the airport down. There is a 16 week delay time for the materials to be manufactured.

Council Member Newton asked what the airport grosses at the airport. Ms. Muoio said that they were currently just under \$900,000 at this time.

Council Member Newton asked why the airport did not have cameras in this area which allowed this to happen. He said he did not understand this since they live in the 21st century. Ms. Muoio said their camera there and electronic badges for access. The portion of the runway is very remote. She added she was not aware of any airport that had cameras pointed at their EMAS sites.

Council Member Newton asked how the airport was doing. He wished to know if they could get an update on a potential customer that ended up going to Tweed Airport.

Ms. Muoio said there was an interim period when there was no Airport Master Plan, which documents the future for the airport according to the FAA regulations. There was pre-COVID interest which has continued. The airport is at the final stage of planning and she hoped to have the Plan available to the Airport Commission in January. Then it will be sent to the FAA.

Council Member Newton asked if they should consider other options. Council Member Burns said he did not believe that they should consider other options at this time.

Council Member Herron thanked Ms. Muoio for clarification. She asked if there would be prosecution if they are able to close the case and what the possibility of recouping any of the costs. Ms. Muoio said she was not aware of any pending charges.

Council Member McCarthy asked about the location of the security cameras. Ms. Muoio said there were cameras at various locations. They have added additional security.

Council Member McCarthy said he did not want to take the money out of Contingency. He said there was a list of many different Capital Plan projects that had excess funds after completion.

He also wanted to know how this was associated with COVID. Mr. Nkwo said the funding was from Contingency, which is for unforeseen events and this vandalism was definitely unforeseen.

Ms. Muoio said the CARES ACT funding was for maintenance and she had checked to see if they could use the money for the repair. She received approval to do so.

Council Member McCarthy said he thought Congressman Himes was very interested in the airport and asked if they had asked him about helping out.

iPhone joined the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Council Member Pereira asked Mr. Flatto if this was the same Contingency Fund that they had taken \$500,000 from for the City Attorney's Office. Mr. Flatto said they were hopeful to end up with a surplus. He added there were different Contingency Fund lines, one of which is dedicated for insurance.

Council Member Pereira said she thought everything in Bridgeport was self-insured. Council Member Pereira said she believed that Ms. Muoio had testified that the airport had not made a profit in many years, but this was continued behavior where the Council puts money in things that don't affect the average residents, or care about.

Council Member Pereira said she wanted an answer about the insurance. Mr. Flatto said that there was outside property insurance for City buildings and schools. The Airport has a special type of causality insurance.

Council Member Pereira asked if the airport had made a profit in the last 15 years. Mr. Nkwo said it had not made a profit, but if it did, they would have to pay the Town of Stratford.

Council President Nieves said the area where the EMAS is located, it is very distant and very dark. She added the Governor has been informed about the problem and has not made a decision about it. Ms. Muoio has been working very hard to bring the airport up to date. The former manager cost the City a lot of money when he installed a private driveway. The previous administration ignored the airport and didn't authorize updates.

Council President Nieves said she did not want to spend the money from Contingency, but the EMAS has to be fixed so they are not in violation. If something happened, the City would be liable. It is her hope that the Police Department solve this case.

Council Member Cruz said it is important to stick to the point. He said something happened at the airport that did not involve the employees. However, the discussion is about all the things that were not done. The police are investigating and the Airport Manager, the Finance Direction and the OPM Director have looked for any kind of grant or outside funding for the repairs. He asked about the \$7 million that the state had promised to give the City for the airport.

Mr. Nkwo replied that Governor Malloy had promised the money, but the State had never bonded for the money.

Council Member Cruz said someone had broken into the Airport and done some damage. He supports the project.

Council Member Burns asked if the \$560,000 could be returned to the City if the \$7 million comes in from the State. Mr. Nkwo said the funding would be designated for Airport Management.

Council Member Newton asked about the security. Ms. Muoio said the area is now under surveillance and is in compliance with the FAA regulations.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED AGENDA ITEM 02-20 PROPOSED BUDGET TRANSFER TO FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 GENERAL FUND BUDGET FROM: CITYWIDE CONTINGENCY ACCOUNT #01610000-57005 (\$560,000) TO: AIRPORT DEPARTMENT PUBLIC SAFETY EQUIPMENT ACCOUNT #01375000-55175 (\$560,000) FOR THE PURPOSE OF REPLACING DAMAGED COMPONENTS OF THE ENGINEERED MATERIALS ARRESTING SYSTEM (EMAS) ASSOCIATED WITH RUNWAY 6 LOCATED AT SIKORSKY MEMORIAL AIRPORT.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira asked if they needed to amend the item due to the typo in the Account Number. Council Member Burns said it was a scrivener's error and did not need to be amended.

[Audio disconnect]

Council Member Burns said that Council preferences should not be overlooked.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**GENERAL DISCUSSION RE: REVIEW OF THE MONTHLY
FINANCIAL REPORT.**

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said there had been a great number of questions that had been brought forward that did not pertain to the discussion on hand. Those questions should be sent to the Chairs in advance so the staff can be prepared with the information. It is important to stay on topic. She said the airport was a safety and insurance issue, not a budget issue.

Council Member McCarthy left the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Council Member Newton said he was tired about voting for positions and then having the position just sit there for years and years. He said there were positions in Economic Development and in Purchasing. If they are not going to hire the personnel, they need to use the funding elsewhere.

Council Member Burns said he had reviewed the Report and nothing significant seemed to be in it.

Mr. Flatto said there were a few lines where there were deficiencies in revenues because of the COVID slow down. He reviewed the details with the Committee.

Council Member Pereira asked if both the Police and Fire Overtime were over by \$1 million. Mr. Nkwo said if they continue with the same trend compared to last year, they will each be over by \$2 million

Council Member Burns asked if there was an update on the Steel Point. Mr. Flatto replied that there was no major changes.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services