

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
PUBLIC SPEAKING FORUM - TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024
City Council Chambers,
City Hall
45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, CT 06604**

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Aidee Nieves called the Public Speaking Session of the City Council to order at 6:45 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The City Clerk Lydia Martinez called the roll.

130th District: Scott Burns (Absent), Matthew McCarthy (Absent)
131st District: Jorge Cruz, Tyler Mack
132nd District: Dasha Spell, Rolanda Smith (Absent)
133rd District: Jeanette Herron, Aikeem Boyd
134th District: Michelle Lyons, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia
135th District: Mary McBride-Lee, Richard Ortiz
136th District: Frederick Hodges, Alfredo Castillo (Absent)
137th District: Aidee Nieves, Maria Valle
138th District: Maria Pereira, Jazmarie Melendez
139th District: Eneida Martinez, Ernest Newton

A quorum was present.

Council President Nieves addressed those in attendance and read the rules for public comments. Those that signed up for public speaking may come forward to the podium when their name is called, state name and address.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSONS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024 AT 6:30 P.M. IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 45 LYON TERRACE, BRIDGEPORT, CT 06604.

There were in total ten speakers, ten speakers were registered and one from the floor.

Public Speakers:

1. **John Marshall Lee**, 30 Beacon Street Bridgeport, spoke about municipal government and the need to have more opportunity for community involvement, greater public attendance at meetings like this crowd here in protest of the petition for a ceasefire in Gaza
2. **Mohammad Shaham**, 866 Beechmont Ave. Bridgeport. My name is Mohammad Nazme Shaham. I'm here today in silence...Silence will speak for itself... Silence.... Silence for the need for a ceasefire in Palestine.

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3. **Mustafa Salahuddin Israeli** 56 Stoehr Place Bridgeport, spoke in support of the immediate cease fire in Gaza/Palestine.

4. **Aziz Seyal**, 703 State Street Bridgeport, spoke in support of the resolution calling for an immediate de-escalation and permanent ceasefire in Israel, Gaza, and the occupied West Bank. He and his family and friends of the community mourn the loss of innocent lives, and this must come to an end.

5. **Victoria Majewski**, 378 Willow Street, Bridgeport spoke in support of the resolution calling for an immediate de-escalation and permanent ceasefire in Israel, Gaza, and the occupied West Bank.

6. **Shaakour Abuzneid**, 703 State Street, Bridgeport, spoke in support of the Resolution calling for an immediate de-escalation and permanent ceasefire in Israel, Gaza, and the occupied West Bank.

7. **Linda Biafore**, 325 Lafayette Street Bridgeport, spoke in support of the Resolution calling for an immediate de-escalation and permanent ceasefire in Israel, Gaza, and the occupied West Bank.

8. **Maha Attieh**, North Avenue Bridgeport, spoke in support of the Resolution calling for an immediate de-escalation and permanent ceasefire in Israel, Gaza, and the occupied West Bank.

9. **Al' Urdun**, 136 George Street, Bridgeport, spoke in support of the Resolution calling for an immediate de-escalation and permanent ceasefire in Israel, Gaza, and the occupied West Bank.

10. **Carmen Lopez** (*comment from the floor, document provided for the record*)

Good evening,

My name is Carmen L. Lopez. I am a resident and taxpayer of the City of Bridgeport. I am here to speak on Agenda Item Number 20-23, a resolution calling for an Immediate De-escalation and Permanent Ceasefire in Israel, Gaza and the Occupied West Bank.

I have reviewed the language of the resolution, and it is filled with historical inaccuracies and lacks balance and context. According to the minutes of your meeting of December 4, 2023, this resolution was added to your agenda off the floor by a unanimous vote of all 20 members.

Public Speaker #10 continued.

In other words, this matter did not appear on your agenda; notice was not provided to the public regarding the City Council's intention to act on a matter of international concern, as well as a matter outside of its power and authority. The resolution was referred to your miscellaneous matter committee. On December 26, three weeks after the referral, the committee held a meeting, at which time the City Attorney issued a letter stating that since the Council did not "formally request" an opinion, he would "accommodate" the Committee Co-Chair with "advice and guidance."

City Attorney Anastasi presented this proposal and highlighted "this is just an advisory notice and there is no binding effect and there is not a formal position taken on the issues."

The city attorney also advised the Committee that "this is not a matter within the jurisdiction of the City Council." The Committee chose to disregard the City Attorney's advice.

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I believe that the City Attorney is correct. Chapter 5, Section 7 of the City Charter defines the powers and responsibilities of the City Council. Connecticut General Statutes also set forth and delineate the powers of a municipal legislative body. Nowhere, either in the Charters of the General Statutes is this council authorize to pass resolutions in the form of an advisory opinion concerning international affairs, foreign relations or other matters which are properly committed to the United States Congress. This is not to say that these issues are not important. Each member of this Council and every resident of this city has an absolute right to express his/her opinion on such matters.

However, this should not be done in the form of a resolution adopted in your official capacity. You are not elected to make pronouncements on foreign policy in the name of 140,000 people who reside in the City of Bridgeport. I believe that acting on this resolution would be setting a dangerous precedent which could be used in the future in a manner which might not be to the liking of members of this council. Once again, I do not wish to diminish the importance of this issue, nor to deny the passions felt by the proponents and the opponents of this issue. I concentrate on the rule of law, which does not give these powers to a municipality, or its legislative body. Municipalities have no inherent power. I urge you to rule this matter out of order and focus your efforts upon those matters which are within your power and authority to act.

Council President Nieves asked the assembly if there were further comments from the floor, and hearing none, closed the Public Speaker Form at 7:20 p.m.

CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024

7:00 PM

City Council Chambers, City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace

Bridgeport, Connecticut

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ganim called the Regular Meeting of the City Council to order at 7:55 p.m.

PRAYER

Mayor Ganim asked Council Member McBride-Lee to lead the prayer.

Mayor Ganim asked City Clerk, Lydia Martinez to lead the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The City Clerk Lydia Martinez called the roll.

130th District: Scott Burns (Absent), Matthew McCarthy (Absent)

131st District: Jorge Cruz, Tyler Mack

132nd District: Dasha Spell, Rolanda Smith (Absent)

133rd District: Jeanette Herron, Aikeem Boyd

134th District: Michelle Lyons, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

135th District: Mary McBride-Lee, Richard Ortiz

136th District: Frederick Hodges, Alfredo Castillo (Absent)

137th District: Aidee Nieves, Maria Valle

138th District: Maria Pereira, Jazmarie Melendez

139th District: Eneida Martinez, Ernest Newton

(15 Present) (5 Absent) A quorum was present.
The names listed were present when the roll was called.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 6, 2023 AS SUBMITTED.**

**** MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 6, 2023 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH (13) IN FAVOR (CRUZ, MACK, BOYD, HERRON,**

NIEVES, NEWTON, MCBRIDE-LEE, SPELL, ORTIZ, HODGES, PEREIRA, MEL ENDEZ, MARTINEZ) AND (3) ABSTENTIONS (PEREIRA, VIZZO-PANICCIA, LYONS)

Council Member Michelle Lyons asked for a moment of silence for Lourdes Quintana who worked for the City for many years, and she was acknowledged by the City Clerk Lydia Martinez.

Council Member Ernest Newton requested a moment of silence for Joseph Kasper, an engineer and architect who owned his firm Kasper Group, and for Steve Auerbach who worked for the City of Bridgeport Department of Parking Meters/Police Department.

Mayor Ganim acknowledged those mentioned and called the assembly for a moment of silence.

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES

Item 28-23 Communication from City Attorney re: Proposed Settlement of Pending Litigation in the Matter of Megha Jain – Docket No. 3:22-cv-00874 (VDO), referred to Miscellaneous Matters Committee.

Item 29-23 Communication from Labor Relations re: Proposed Tentative Agreement with The Connecticut Laborers’ District Council for the Bridgeport Public Employees Union Local 665 (LIUNA) regarding their Bargaining Unit Contract from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2026, referred to Contracts Committee.

Item 30-23 Communication from Mayor re: Proposed Professional Services Agreement with Griffin & Strong P.C. regarding the creation of a New Disparity Study for the City, referred to Contracts Committee.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ MOVED TO APPROVE COMUNICATION ITEMS 28-23; 29-23; 30-23 TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ROLL CALL VOTE ITEMS:

Item 08-23 Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Appointment of Jerome Roberts (U) to the Fair Rent Commission.

Council Member Pereira asked about the issue of appointees serving on multiple commissions. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia reported that Mr. Roberts would resign from the ADA Commission.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 08-23 MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE REPORT RE: APPOINTMENT OF JEROME ROBERTS (U) TO THE FAIR RENT COMMISSION.**

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

**** MOTION PASSED WITH (14) IN FAVOR (CRUZ, MACK, HERRON, NIEVES, NEWTON, MCBRIDE-LEE, SPELL, ORTIZ, HODGES, PEREIRA, LYONS,**

MELENDZ, MARTINEZ, VIZZO-PANICCIA) NONE OPPOSED AND (1) ABSTENTION (BOYD *absent from vote*)

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON (CONSENT CALENDAR):

*23-23 Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Approval to Establish Two (2) New Permanent Positions for the Job Classification and Specifications of the Library Maintenance and Facilities Manager and the Library Information Technology Services Manager (ITS) Pursuant to Municipal Charter, Chapter 17, Section 206(d).

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 23-23 MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE REPORT RE: APPROVAL TO ESTABLISH TWO (2) NEW PERMANENT POSITIONS FOR THE JOB CLASSIFICATION AND SPECIFICATIONS OF THE LIBRARY MAINTENANCE AND FACILITIES MANAGER AND THE LIBRARY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES MANAGER (ITS) PURSUANT TO MUNICIPAL CHARTER, CHAPTER 17, SECTION 206(D)**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADD THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO THE AGENDA**

Item 06-23:

Grant Submission re: United States Conference of Mayors 2024 Childhood Obesity Prevention Environmental Health and Sustainability Awards (24305)

Item 12-23

Grant Submission re: State of Connecticut Department of Public Health- Sexually Transmitted Diseases Control Program & Tuberculosis Control Program (#24232 & #24233)

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

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ITEM 06-23: GRANT SUBMISSION RE: UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS 2024 CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS (24305)

ITEM 12-23 GRANT SUBMISSION RE: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH- SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES CONTROL PROGRAM & TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL PROGRAM (#24232 & #24233)

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION TO APPROVE ITEMS 06-23 AND 12-23 PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO ADD THE FOLLOWING ITEM TO THE AGENDA**

Item 24-23

Proposed Approval to update the job description of the classification of Purchasing Agent pursuant to Civil Service Rule IX, Sec3

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO APPROVE
ITEM 24-23 PROPOSED APPROVAL TO UPDATE THE JOB DESCRIPTION OF THE
CLASSIFICATION OF PURCHASING AGENT PURSUANT TO CIVIL SERVICE
RULE IX, SEC3**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON:

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES
TO ADD THE FOLLOWING ITEM TO THE AGENDA**

**Item 20-23 Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Resolution Calling for an
Immediate De-escalation and Permanent Ceasefire in Israel, Gaza, and the Occupied West
Bank.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION TO ADD ITEM TO AGENDA PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Item 20-23 Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Resolution Calling for an Immediate
De-escalation and Permanent Ceasefire in Israel, Gaza, and the Occupied West Bank.

Council President Nieves indicated Council members would be recognized to speak in the order
of microphone signals.

Council Member Pereira reported that there was an email to the Committee requesting to add a
resolution to the agenda, and she noted that it required a 2/3rds vote according to charter
procedure. She added that the resolution is beyond the purview of the Committee, and it was
totally inappropriate to bring this to the attention of this Committee to forward on to the City
Council with no advanced notice. She spoke of the nature of this resolution that was drafted by
religious leaders that was not the way things are to be done, and to consider this is a deviation of
procedure and sets a very dangerous precedent.

Council Member comments on Item 20-23 – continued

Council Member McBride-Lee spoke on the importance to call for a cease fire on all sides and to
support the Bridgeport community. This resolution is in response to a call for peace and amidst
death of innocent lives that continues to accelerate, it is essential to send this on to the City
Council for all to have a voice of support of the religious community to send this to the federal
government a call for action of a cease fire. She added that she greatly appreciates all that are
here tonight, and for all to know that the Council supports their efforts.

Council Member Newton spoke that murder is wrong on both sides and while this resolution
may not have the clout to impact a resolution, this is something that has been done before during
a crisis of such magnitude. As a City Council we need to have a voice and to support the City
residents that are calling for action.

Council Member Melendez spoke that this resolution is in response to a call for peace and amidst death of innocent lives that continues to accelerate, it is essential to send this on to the City Council for all to have a voice of support of the religious community to send this to the federal government a call for action of a cease fire.

Council Member Lyons spoke on this as an effort to call for peace, and while it is not part of municipal business, resolutions like this have been done in the past. She added that we have an obligation to the community at large and this resolution of support sends a message to the White House that this is what all cities should do to appeal to the federal legislators to call for a cease fire, and support the City of Bridgeport community and citizens.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia noted that she feels strongly that it is not within the scope of this Committee or of a municipal governing board to bring an item of federal and international matter such as this cease fire. She added that it was inappropriate for religious leaders to write a resolution and it is not City of Bridgeport business to propose action on this matter of federal legislation and international affairs.

Council Member Cruz spoke on the importance to have a voice and to do the right thing, to call for a cease fire on all sides and to support the Bridgeport community.

Council President Hodges spoke on this as an effort to call for peace, and while it is not part of municipal business, there is no harm to bring this to the full Council. He added that we have an obligation to the community at large and this resolution of support sends a message to the White House that this is what all cities should do to appeal to the federal legislators to call for a cease fire.

Council Member Martinez called for an end of discussion and for a vote.

Council Member Pereira called for a point of order, as this item was not posted for public notice and a resolution drafted in secret is against procedure according to the charter. She noted that she feels strongly that it is not within the scope of this Committee or of a municipal governing board to bring an item of federal and international matter such as this cease fire. She noted it was inappropriate for religious leaders to write a resolution.

Mayor Ganim stated that this was not binding and the request to table was denied.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked to read the following from Council Member Burns:

My apologies for not being able to attend last week's Miscellaneous meeting as I had a houseful of family guests. Similarly, I will not be in attendance at this evening's council meeting as we are away on a family vacation. I am sharing a few thoughts re item 20-23.

First, while the conflict between Hamas and Israel is deeply concerning, it is not necessarily under the purview of the Bridgeport City Council. Thus, our potentially taking a position on the issue perhaps distracts us from the critical work this city faces. Our federally elected officials hold the responsibility of taking up such issues, and we are not limited from speaking as individually elected officials. More substantively, I cannot support a ceasefire resolution when Hamas launched this war on October 7 and where Hamas continues to advocate for the elimination of the Israeli state. As a sovereign nation, Israel retains the right to defend itself, particularly in the face of an existential threat from a terrorist organization funded and supported by Iran, a nation whose government regularly opposes the United

States. While the conduct of the war by Israel certainly deserves scrutiny and perhaps should be admonished and even punished under international law, it nonetheless preserves the right to defend its people and territory.

Of course, it is also simple to get into a back-and-forth as to the actions of both sides in this conflict, which would lead to no positive resolution at this point. Lastly, as representatives of the entire Bridgeport community, we should recognize the past and present contributions of the Jewish community here in the Park City. To 'pick sides' in this current conflict would do little to forward the interests of all residents. A more clearly written, nuanced, and balanced resolution may have done so. To be sure, education remains a critical in all our work, and if this resolution helps us all learn more about this long-standing conflict, then the resolution will have this benefit. To with, I offer a podcast and a high-level written assessment of the Israeli campaign <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/mwi-podcast-understanding-hamas-from-tactics-to-strategy/> <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/legal-questions-unanswers-in-israel-air-war-in-gaza> While this conflict is most troubling, at this point, my vote would be a no on the resolution.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AIKEEM BOYD MOVED TO AMEND BY SUBSTITUTION WITH THE DOCUMENTS THAT WAS RECEIVED WHICH REFLECTS A CONSENSUS OF A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS FROM BOTH THE JEWISH AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES OF BRIDGEPORT. BASED ON THEIR CONSENSUS WE ASK THAT THIS ITEM BE ADOPTED AS AMENDED. MOTION TO APPROVE ITEM 20-23 MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE REPORT RE: RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE DE-ESCALATION AND PERMANENT CEASEFIRE IN ISRAEL, GAZA, AND THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK.**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED MOTION.**

Council Member Pereira called for a roll call vote.

**** MOTION TO APPROVE PASSED WITH (13) VOTES IN FAVOR (BOYD, CRUZ, MACK, HERRON, NIEVES, NEWTON, MCBRIDE-LEE, SPELL, ORTIZ, HODGES, LYONS, MELENDEZ, MARTINEZ) TWO OPPOSED (PEREIRA, VIZZO-PANICCIA) AND NO ABSTENTIONS.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NIEVES MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED THE MOTION.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Telesco Secretarial Services.