

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
MARCH 26, 2024**

**ATTENDANCE:** Tyler Mack, Co-chair; Ernest E. Newton; Jeanette Herron; Michelle Lyons; Maria I. Valle; Aikeem Boyd (6:15)

**OTHERS:** Council Member(s): Aidee Nieves, Council President; Scott Burns, (6:29); Dasha Spell, (7:50) & Maria Pereira; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Julie Miller, Assistant Tax Assessor; Bill Gaffney, Interim Assessor; Aaron Curry, Deputy Director, Public Facilities; Luis Burgos, Director, Public Facilities; John Hosier, Parks Commission; Tyisha Toms, City Attorney; Mark Anastasi, Esquire

**Call to Order**

Co-chair Mack called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. There was a quorum present at the time of roll call.

**Approval of Committee Minutes**

- **February 29, 2024 (Regular Meeting)**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 29,2024**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

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

**39-23      Proposed Amendments to the Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 3.16 - Property Taxes, amend Article II - Real Property Tax Relief for Senior Citizens, Section(s) 3.16.110 - Real Property Tax Relief and Maximum & 3.16.120 - Application for Real Property Tax Relief.**

Mr. Flatto shared this is expansion to the ordinance before the pandemic the council expanded the tax relief by tax amounts and this update will raise each bracket. The state has also made an increase this year, the municipal programs are more inclusive, which include disabled citizens. The first change would be increasing the brackets by \$100 dollars per credit and increasing the maximum eligible income level from \$58 thousand dollars to \$75 thousand dollars due to household income and inflation. It is predicted for the budget request to increase by half of a million. They are currently taking applications for the tax credit until May 15, 2024.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTIONED TO EXHIBIT THE SENIOR AND DISABLED TAX RELIEF ORDINANCE AMENDMENT INFORMATION AS 03-26-2024A.**

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

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

Mr. Gaffney added they will be using the state definition to the term household income. The office suggests using the same to get rid of ambiguity.

**\*\*COUNCIL MEMBER AIKEEM BOYD JOINED THE MEETING AT 6:15 PM.\*\***

Council member Newton asked if there needs to be an ordinance change. Mr. Flatto replied yes. Council member Newton asked if a public hearing needs to be done first or amend it before the public hearing. Attorney Toms said they can do it now by amending it with substitution or just defining the term.

Council President Nieves suggested keeping it as the state standard to not complicate anything. Council member Herron agreed they use the state standard to help the senior citizens and make it easier for them as the residents already pay a lot of taxes to the state and city.

Council member Periera added she looked up this matter and found out the state sends a reimbursement to the city. Mr. Flatto replied the state only reimburses up to \$30 thousand dollars a year as a circuit breaker.

Council member Pereira brought up the suggestion of helping senior citizens with a car tax. Are there any updates to this possibility? Mr. Flatto replied senior citizens can only get tax credit for real property not automobiles, there is nothing to enable that.

**\*\*COUNCIL MEMBER SCOTT BURNS JOINED THE MEETING AT 6:29 PM.\*\***

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON AMEND EXHIBIT 03-26-2024A AND ADD SECTION D TO SECTION 3.16.100 TO READ AS FOLLOWS: HOUSEHOLD IS DEFINED AS SINGLE OR MARRIED SENIOR CITIZEN AND THEIR SPOUSE**

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

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

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOTIONED TO APPROVE ITEM 39-23 AS AMENDED.**

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

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

**40-23            Proposed Resolution concerning the Initiation of a Charter Revision Process for the City of Bridgeport.**

Council President Nieves shared that she previously asked the council to compile a list of possible members for the charter revision committee. It would be an 18 month process to revise the charter so all members who are interested must be mindful of that once they are approved onto the committee. She added the budget session is also coming so they could organize themselves to meet on a Saturday and work on the group.

Council member Lyons asked what are the qualifications to join the committee. Council President said they just need to be a resident of Bridgeport.

Council member Pereira asked how many commissioners there would be. Council member Newton said not too large of a group. Council President Nieves said not more than 11. Council member Burns recommended an odd number of members like 9 or 11.

Council President Nieves said they can meet after a budget meeting for the working group to begin the framework of the committee.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTIONED TO TABLE ITEM 40-23.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

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

**50-23      Proposed Amendment to the Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2.36 - Officers' Salaries, amend Section 2.36.010 - Officers' and Unaffiliated Employee Salaries for the purposes of moving the Full-time City Attorney Position from the subsection Executive Appointed Officials at grade 8 to the subsection Chief Appointed Officials at grade 9a.**

Attorney Toms said not many changes were made. The city attorney's contract has them at \$164,043 dollars which means nine of the ten attorneys in the office make more money than her. The purpose of this is to allow the city attorney to slightly make more money, less than \$1000 dollars more than other city attorneys. They have adjusted everyone on the list so she isn't ahead of the mayor. The mayor would be paid \$185 thousand dollars using Hartford to determine the salary. She mentioned Eroll Skyler's received a promotion to director of labor currently being paid by the city attorneys union being paid \$164 thousand dollars. To avoid a pay decrease he was moved from 8 to 9B and adjusted the pay scale to end at \$159,385 thousand dollars. The CAO position is being reclassified to match pay to the city attorneys but no pay increases are being proposed from them so just the range is increasing. There is an assistant CAO position available and the other change is from deputy registrar officer as their salaries were proposed to be increased and moved up in the ranges going from 2 to 3A.

Council member Herron asked when the mayor's salary would take into effect and if there would be retro pay. Attorney Toms said it would take into effect in 2 years and the state constitution

says a salary increase cannot happen during the term unless they are in a four year term after the first two years.

Attorney Anastasi said there should be an asterisk to clarify the amendment is being changed now but the ordinance is as the state constitution.

Council member Newton asked if the salary increases are for the labor relations director , city attorney, mayor, deputy registrar of Voters. Attorney Toms said that is correct and positions and the categories are changing but no salary changes will occur for the chief of staff and CAO.

Council member Newton added he doesn't have a problem with the salary increase but they never hear about reviews. He believes there should be a review before pay increases. Attorney Toms said in certain positions you can see the performance, in the city attorney's office they have frequent performance reviews.

Mr. Flatto said the mayor has been requesting reviews for the last four years regarding accomplishment, goals and objectives for each department but it is not a formal review.

Council member Lyons said when she worked for the BOE, the principals gave reviews that would be reported to the superintendent and filed. She recommends every two years that the committee goes over the review to see who's getting a raise, who's not and their performance.

Council member Herron added when the council members stepped into office they must review salaries to bring them up to standard which allows for retention and quality work to continue. She has asked before about evaluations and they said it is difficult as there are many classifications but a comment from the mayor is not enough for a review, it must be filed.

Council member Pereira said if the state constitution clarifies two years after the ordinance passes or two years after the mayor's term begins. Attorney Toms replied two years after the mayor's had started. Council member Pereira asked when was the mayor sworn in. Attorney Anastasi said he has been serving as a placeholder. Attorney Toms added due to the conditions of the election they are looking for an advisory opinion for the attorney general, their current opinion the term would begin December of 2023 but they want to get the confirmation as this is something that has happened before.

Attorney Anastasi added the charter has two conflicting provisions where the mayor's term begins December 1st following the election and the problem is the judge who approved this vacated in November but approved the February election. Technically it would be December 1st, 2024 but that wouldn't make much sense.

Council member Pereira asked if they would explain the classifications. Attorney Toms said the new classification was to designate the city attorney, chief of staff and CAO to report directly to the mayor and organize the position correctly between ranges and salaries.

Council president added in regards to the reviews, the department heads must report their metrics outside of the mayor's reviews. Updating the ranges and salaries must be done every two years to get top quality employees and work provided.

Council member Burns shared he went to a session with the auditor and other municipalities of other sizes were there. He asked about evaluations and most municipalities don't have review processes but a yearly review is reasonable. He added regarding classifications, the assistant CAO why is it being taken down. Attorney Toms said she didn't make the change herself but it was explained that it didn't make sense where it was originally categorized.

Council member Newton asked from page two, what is a deputy director. Council President responded that is the deputy director of finance and management.

Council member Pereira asked if everyone who is not affiliated follows the supervisor's union so they will be getting a supervisor's union increase. Attorney Anastasi said it will be retroactive to last July 1st but to this July 1st hasn't been approved yet. The retroactive pay will be based on what they already owned but the range increases doesn't mean the salaries will increase.

Council member Pereira added she is so opposed to the registrar's office getting a \$7,000 dollar increase as they can't open at 10am or correctly, count votes correctly, or just count in general.

Council member Valle shared the item should be approved as they deserve it and they are looking to create new positions.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTIONED TO EXHIBIT 2.36.010 OFFICERS' AND UNAFFILIATED EMPLOYEE SALARIES - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS AS 03-26-2024B.**

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

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

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTIONED AS APPROVE AS AMENDED TO EXHIBIT 2.36.010 OFFICERS' AND UNAFFILIATED EMPLOYEE SALARIES AS 03-26-2024C.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

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

Council member Burns shared there have been many changes between positions and they should be aware that other cities don't get those positions or wage changes.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTIONED TO AMEND EXHIBIT 03-26-2024C - 2.36.010 OFFICERS' AND UNAFFILIATED EMPLOYEE SALARIES TO READ AT THE ASTERISK AS SALARY SHALL ADJUST PURSUANT TO THE CONNECTICUT CONSTITUTION ARTICLE XIX.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOTIONED TO APPROVE 50-23 AS AMENDED.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

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

**55-23            Proposed Amendment to the Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 12.28 - Park Use Regulations, amend Section 12.28.040 - Parking Restricted within Public Parks.**

Co-chair Mack shared this is just a discussion with the Park commission and Public Facilities to determine how this free parking initiative for taxpayers would work out.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTION TO EXHIBIT COST ANALYSIS FOR PARK STICKER AS 03-26-2024D**

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

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

Council member Herron shared they have a population in Bridgeport with many cars and not many parking spaces. If they will be giving a free park pass to each registered car in the city they would be losing a lot of money, they should consider one or two per household. Senior Citizens already get a free park pass so they also need to consider that.

Council member Pereira the amount of out of state registered cars in the city makes them lose a lot of money on tax revenue, hopefully this could be an incentive for people to keep or switch over their car registration to match where they actually reside. She suggested they promote the initiative for those who are up to date on their taxes and raise the prices on out of state park passes. Council member Pereira also added she gets calls from constituents when they register their car in regards to free park entry and parking but the confusion is it only for state parks.

Council member Lyons shared she does agree with the idea of increasing the out of state and city passes to balance the loss of revenue. She also gets a lot of calls regarding out of state automobiles in the city, for instance the students at university should pay something towards the city.

Council member Burns added in regards to out of state cars being parked in the city, it is a matter of tracking the car which takes a lot of time and effort. Attorney Anastasia the problem is some of the tri states allow for online registration.

Council member Pereira suggested they raise the price during weekend holidays.

Council President Nieves added they sold 19,403 tickets at \$15 stickers which will be a lot of revenue that will be lost and they would have to sell almost double of the out of town stickers to make up for loss revenue. She isn't against the free initiative but they need to look at the cost of printing and mailing. Also, every year more seniors sign up for the free parking.

Mr. Hosier from the Parks Commission shared the fact that this is on the agenda is great for opening conversation but for the commissioners weren't aware of it being on the agenda. He shared that the state of Connecticut registration charged \$10 dollars for access to all state parks. He suggested maybe the city of Bridgeport can look into the same system and hopefully the payment will go into the parks commission and not the general fund. The last time he checked there were around 92 thousand cars registered to the city.

Council member Burns added it would be nice to give free park passes but there are a lot of costs associated with the project. Other cities do have this free initiative but they need to consider the maintenance of the parks and how congested they get.

Council member Newton said in the budget committee they have talked about hiring a director of parks so the money acquired doesn't keep going to the general fund but he believes each household should receive two park passes.

Deputy Director Curry said they have been looking at electronic systems to allow people to sign up for the passes.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTIONED TO COSPONSOR ITEM 55-23 WITH THE ADDITION OF COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTIONED TO TABLE ITEM 55-23.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

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

**54-23            Proposed Amendment to the Municipal Code of Ordinances, amend to Add New Chapter 2.127 - Civic Engagement Commission.**

Co-chair Mack said they need to do a better job with involving the residents into what they would like to see done. He suggested they can also create a voter's guide to share information regarding those people running for chair.

Council member Lyons added she mentioned at the last committee meeting that they should create a guide or brochure explaining the city and highlighting the restaurants, parks, and attractions from the city.

Council member Newton said they need to share and highlight all the children's activities available within the city. Council member Herron said every year the city shares all the children programs that are funded and available. Council member Newton said he never saw it.

Council member Pereira said senior citizens have an issue with finding things to do. If they create any brochures it should be online and printed to accommodate everyone.

**\*\*COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOTIONED TO COSPONSOR ITEM 54-23 WITH THE ADDITION OF COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS, AND HERRON.**

**\*\*COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOTIONED TO TABLE ITEM 54-23.**

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

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

**\*\*COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOTIONED TO CONSOLIDATE TO ONE VOTE THE PUBLIC HEARING DATE FOR ITEM 39-23 AND ITEM 50-23 TO APRIL 1ST, 2024 AT 6PM.**

**\*\*COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

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

#### Adjournment

**\*\*COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOTIONED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Vianca Rivera,

Telesco Secretarial Services.