

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
JUNE 10, 2024**

**ATTENDANCE:** Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia; Mary McBride-Lee (6:11 p.m.)

**OTHERS:** Ken Flatto, Finance Director, Christopher Anastasi, Finance Department

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**Approval of Committee Minutes:**

**April 8, 2024 (Regular Meeting)**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER ORTIZ MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 8, 2024 REGULAR MEETING.**

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

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 8, 2024 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**REVIEW OF REVENUE PROCESS AND GAPS.**

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

Council Member Burns said that this was basically a continuation of the budget process since there were a number of zeros for revenue. He asked Mr. Flatto to look into this to verify the information from the various departments.

Mr. Flatto said that he had made a copy of how the invoice various payments.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT CALLED “REVENUE SAMPLE REPORT” AS EXHIBIT 06-10-2024A**

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

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

Mr. Flatto said that a year ago, they had a meeting to review the revenue tracking process. Various types of revenue include parking lot leases, building rentals and other rental revenues. He gave a brief overview of the list they created and had the departments review the parcels they were responsible for. When things were verified, it was evident that the City does not lease out many properties to private entities. Many of the properties are leased to various City agencies.

These City leases were reviewed and some leases had expired, others were paying rent and others were not paying rent. Each property has its own story.

*Council Member McBride-Lee joined the meeting at 6:11 p.m.*

He explained that how they decided to track these rental payments through MUNIS and then collected all the copies of the leases that they could find. Month to month rentals now receive a rent bill on a regular basis. Now they can track and generate reports on the payments that have been made for the monthly rentals. Departments like Parks and Recreation aren't really set up to track the rental payments because their focus is elsewhere.

There are a few leases that are difficult to manage. There are about 17 leases that the City is now billing regularly. 15 of those leases are fixed amounts and can be adjusted for COLA amounts.

The City just hired a property manager to oversee these various properties. He will be responsible for tracking the leases and negotiating the renews. The manager will be visiting all the various properties to assess their current condition, vacancies, and future disposition.

Council Member Newton said that he would like the manager to come to the Council and present a report on the properties' status.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked if the new manager could attend the Budget and Appropriations meetings. She noted that she had not been aware they had hired anyone for the position.

Council Member Burns said that the position was designated for 2024-2025 budget year and the Commission was still in the 2023-2024 budget year. The position was requested and has been signed off on. The manager does have a background in real estate.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked why the two particular rental bills had been chosen. Mr. Flatto said that he asked the staff to give him two larger bills and those were the ones they chose

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that in the past the City had a 99 year lease with the Discovery Museum, and now the Discovery Museum has been taken over by Sacred Heart Museum. She asked what the status was of that agreement. Mr. Flatto said that he had not focused on the long term leases but would be reviewing them. He said that this was a good example of what the property manager could supervise. Discussion followed.

Council Member Ortiz asked for clarification on the role of the property manager, which Mr. Flatto reviewed with him.

Mr. Flatto then gave a brief summary of some of the issues involved with the Captain's Cove lease, which is based on ticket sales and boat rentals in addition to other amounts. He said that the amphitheater was behind last year and is also behind this year. They have not paid for last autumn's rent, but he was expecting them to pay some of the money soon. Discussion followed.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked if anyone had applied for the OPM director's job. Mr. Flatto said that they are starting the process.

Council Member McBride-Lee pointed out that there were some problems with the way that math was being taught these days. She also expressed concerns that it not be a political appointment. Mr. Flatto said that they had a clear idea of what kind of skill set was needed for the position. Discussion followed.

Council Member Newton pointed out that the City Hall Committee also had a role to play regarding various properties Discussion followed on what that role was and how it was currently being utilized. Mr. Flatto said that he would have more information next month.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the two City Attorneys that handled these types of leases were Atty. Lisa Trachtenberg and Atty. Ron Pacacha, who are no longer working for the City.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the City should be ashamed that they had not moved forward on hiring a replacement for Mr. Nkwo since they knew at least a year earlier that he would be retiring.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked if the new property manager would be doing an evaluation on all city owned properties. Secondly, she said that they had not talked about him monitoring the leases and contracts. Mr. Flatto said that he would not be the sole negotiator, but will be alerting the City Attorney's Office about leases that were expiring.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said it would be important to include all the pocket parks that were not being utilized as pocket parks.

She asked if the City had been paid in full by the amphitheater for the Police and Fire Department services. Mr. Flatto said that they had not been paid as of last week. Discussion followed about the details of how the police department was calculating their amphitheater charges.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that she did not see a line item for revenue generated from the rentals of the parks. Commissioner Burns directed everyone to page 5 of the handout. He noted that Seaside Park rental was basically Sound on Sound.

The discussion moved to the Event Surcharges at the amphitheater. Mr. Flatto said that they sent out a letter informing the amphitheater that it is their responsibility to collect the surcharge but he added that there was no enforcement mechanism.

Council Member Burns asked if these monthly charges were going to OPED or to the Tax Collector. He also had some concerns about why the parking revenue was so uneven. He said that there was no revenue noted for the State building garage where the revenues were supposed to be split 50/50. Mr. Flatto said that it was part of the train station and they had inquired about this money.

Council Member Burns asked about the airport revenues. Mr. Flatto said that they have caught up on their payments.

Council Member Burns said that some departments were good about tracking their revenue, but others were not. The discussion moved to the revenues from the towing agreements that the City has through the Police Department.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked about the sidewalks. Mr. Flatto said that the line item was for the sidewalk permits. He said that they have been collecting fees for sidewalk repairs and that money goes into a special fund. That funding is used for additional sidewalk repairs/replacements.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that many people think that the homeowners have money to fix sidewalks. Her personal opinion was that the home owners shouldn't have to pay for sidewalks. Their driveways are a different thing, but everyone use the sidewalks. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia agreed.

Council Member Newton said that maybe the Council should look at repairing the sidewalks. He reminded everyone about the Black Rock slip and fall case. If someone falls, they sue the City, not the homeowner. He suggested using some of the LoCIP money.

Mr. Flatto said that the monthly report had not changed very much. It appears the year end may show a surplus of between \$3 to \$5 million.

Council Member Burns said that it would be important to have someone in the Police Department that is accountable for all the fees that are collected.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that there are some people who think they are the Mayor but there needs to be more communications between the administration and the Council. Discussion followed about the details of a position that the Council wanted to have to work with the Council.

Council Member Burns said that it was not clear exactly what authority the Council Presidents have.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that she felt that there should have been a joint meeting with Budget and Public Safety about the WPCA regarding hooking up a development from Stratford into the Bridgeport system. While Stratford and Trumbull residents pay their fees to their towns, Bridgeport is the end user because Bridgeport will be the one fined if something goes wrong. The City Attorney's Office disagreed. She said that she had recommended that both committees should have been involved in the discussion.

Council Member Newton said that Mr. Flatto had included a fee in the contract. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the developer was appealing the decision and noted that the developer's attorney was allowed to speak during Public Comment during the meeting. Discussion followed about the details.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services