

Office of the City Clerk
Legislative Department
Lydia N. Martinez, City Clerk
Frances Ortiz, Assistant City Clerk



**Notice and Agendas for Miscellaneous Special Budget & Appropriations
Committee Meetings for FY 2024-2025**

Date	Time	Agenda Subject / Dept.	Location
Wednesday, April 3	6:00 pm	Capital Plan and General Budget Review	Wheeler Rooms
Thursday, April 4	6:00 pm	Capital Plan and General Budget Review	Wheeler Rooms
*Saturday, April 6	10:00 am	Capital Plan and General Budget Review	Conference Rooms A, B & C
Monday, April 8	6:30 pm	Civil Service/Human Resources/Labor Relations & Benefits	Wheeler Rooms
Wednesday, April 10	6:00 pm	City Attorney/CAO	Legislative Services Office
Thursday, April 11	6:00 pm	Board of Education: General Budget and Capital Plan Review	Wheeler Rooms
Tuesday, April 16	6:00 pm	Police Department/EOC	Wheeler Rooms
Thursday, April 18	6:00 pm	Fire Department/ITS	Wheeler Rooms
*Saturday, April 20	10:00 am	Capital Plan and General Budget Review: Public Facilities	Wheeler Rooms
Wednesday, April 24	6:00 pm	Registrar of Voters/Central Grants Office/OPM	Wheeler Rooms
Thursday, April 25	6:00 pm 6:30 pm	Public Hearing: Capital Plan OPED/Capital Plan Discussion	City Council Chambers Wheeler Rooms
*Saturday, April 27	10:00 am	Capital Plan and General Budget Review: Finance Department/ Vote - Capital Plan	Wheeler Rooms
Monday, April 29	6:00 pm	Public Hearing: Board of Education	City Council Chambers
Tuesday, April 30	6:00 pm	Public Facilities: Parks Administration	Wheeler Rooms
Wednesday, May 1	6:00 pm	Public Facilities: (All non-Parks Divisions)	Wheeler Rooms
Thursday, May 2	6:00 pm 6:30 pm	Public Hearing: General Fund Budget Library/Legislative Department/General Budget Review	City Council Chambers Wheeler Rooms

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*Saturday, May 4	10:00 am	General Budget Discussion/Vote – Capital Plan	Wheeler Rooms
Monday, May 6	7:00 pm	City Council Meeting: Vote – Capital Plan	City Council Chambers
Wednesday, May 8	6:00 pm	Health Department: Social Services/Fair Rent Commission	Wheeler Rooms
Thursday, May 9	6:00 pm	Health Department: (All Other Divisions); General Budget Discussion & Possible Budget Vote	Conference Rooms A, B & C
Friday, May 10	4:00 p.m.	General Budget Discussion & Possible Budget Vote	Conference Rooms A, B & C
Monday, May 13	*5:00 pm	City Council Meeting: General Budget Vote	City Council Chambers
Schedule is subject to adjustments as needed by Committee Co-Chairs: 05/07/2024 – Rev.# 4			

Locations: *City Council Chambers: City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace 1st fl., Bridgeport, CT 06604.
Wheeler Rooms: City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace 1st fl., Bridgeport, CT 06604.
Conference Rooms A, B & C: Margaret E. Morton Government Center, 999 Broad Street,
Bridgeport, CT 06604.
Legislative Services Office, Margaret E. Morton Government Center, 999 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT
06604.*

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 4, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Frederick Hodges; Mary McBride-Lee; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Council Member(s): Council President A. Nieves, A. Boyd, E. Martinez, M. Pereira, R. Smith & M. Valle; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director, Kathleen Brickett, OPM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and greeted everyone. He said that this was Council Member Ortiz's first budget meeting.

Co-chair Newton said that the grand list did not grow very much and this would be a difficult challenge. There are some shortfalls, but Council Member Newton said that he was pleased to hear from the Board of Education.

Council Member Burns said that the Committee would have to take their time to go through the budget and that ultimately it would be presented to the Council for adoption.

The Budget Book contains the actuals from 22-23 and the adopted budget from last year along with the requested, the proposed and the variances between the modified and the proposed.

Council Member Newton said that he was aware of how things had been done in the past, but pointed out that the proper procedure for the budget is the seven members of the Budget and Appropriations Committee sit at the table and discuss the budget figures. Then the Committee members vote on the budget and present the approved budget to the full 20 member Council. The goal is to keep these meetings as productive as possible.

Council Member Burns said that it would be important to be respectful to one another and not jump into conversations, but to wait to be called on by the Chairs. It will be important to keep their eyes on the goal.

Council Member Burns asked if the Committee Members had any particular goals that they wanted to share with the group.

Council Member Herron reminded everyone that this will be a tough year for budgeting since all the extra Federal funding will end in June. This is why it is important not to over hire when grant funding is awarded. The Board of Education was very careful not to overbudget with the extra Federal funding. This year, the Committee will have to deal with some of these financial revenue losses. There have been times when the City has been told that funding would be coming to it, but 10 years later, the City still hasn't receive the funding.

Council Member Newton said that every year, the Council allocates funding for various positions and then the positions aren't filled. And after speaking with the Council President and the Co-chair, the funding for vacant positions needs to be moved to areas where there is really a need. In Public Facilities they hire seasonals. They need to include seasonal positions in the individual department budgets. Public Facilities can use up all the funding with overtime for mechanics and carpenters so by the time another department needs funding, there is no money left. It will be important to learn to budget so that the funding is available when it is needed, which might be later in the budget cycle.

The Committee then stated their names and Districts.

Council Member Newton said that the Health Director sometimes has to send staff out at night to check into issues.

Council Member McBride-Lee agreed with Council Member Newton about departments that had requested funding and then not used the money.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia then reminded everyone that there were certain items that the administration was obligated to fund. There are also some issues with situations where the Health Department, Public Facilities, Building Inspectors or even Zoning may have to go on site after hours. She pointed out that there was the minimum staffing for the Fire Department and the overtime that is required to maintain those levels. It is important to remember that the administration has no control over the fire, illnesses, vacation or training time.

Council Member Burns said that the focus of this meeting is the proposed 2024-2025 Capital Plan which is the long term spending plan. The Committee also will begin to look at the proposed budget.

It was explained that there were a number of projects that would be in the Capital Plan, but the proposal is to fund them from the General Fund in order to avoid bonding. The City has been doing this type of funding for the last five years. Some items were initially listed in the Capital Plan but later removed because they were funded from the General Fund. Because of this, these various line item will appear in the General Fund section of the budget.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED "CAPITAL REQUESTS VS. FUNDED BY GENERAL BUDGET" AS EXHIBIT 04-04-2024-A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Nkwo explained that the document was broken out by department and there was a listing of what they intended to purchase. These are one-time expenses and they don't actually belong in the Capital Fund. He gave an example of Civil Service needing furniture for the testing center.

Mr. Nkwo then spoke about the Workforce Time Management software, which is a one time expense. The software tracks employees checking in, clocking out for lunch and then when they leave for the day. Currently, many employees just arrive at their desks without clocking in. The departments submit time sheets that are filled out. This will automate the time sheets.

He then spoke about the Police Department and noted that the Department had not purchased the tasers that they had said they would. Apparently, the funds were spent on something else. Mr. Nkwo has informed them that they have to spend the funds before June 30th and honor the funding that the Council allocated.

The Fire Department has a request to purchase four cars, one of which is a supply van that is 40 years old.

In Public Facilities, they are asking for a HVAC technician, a F-250 truck with a plow and a fork lift for pallet deliveries and one mid-sized SUV. Mr. Nkwo then listed the various employees, such as sanitarians, housing code employees, and public works staff that need access to City vehicles for their jobs such as removing graffiti.

At the Klein Memorial work needs to be done on the air conditioning and heating system. Mr. Nkwo said that the air conditioning in the summer costs about \$25,000 a month. That comes to about \$75,000. Discussion followed.

Mr. Nkwo said that they had been leasing a mad vac, which was working out well. They are coming to the end of those five year contracts and will own the equipment for \$1.00. He gave a brief overview of the landscaping equipment requests.

Council Member Newton spoke about how there were a number of police cars that were damaged shortly after they arrived. He asked if the officers were told that they should care for their cars carefully because they were City property. The officers should drive the vehicles as if they were driving their own personal vehicles.

There was a question about why these line items were separated out. Mr. Nkwo explained that these items would be paid from the General Fund and the reasons for this. Discussion followed.

Council Member Herron asked about the tasers and wished to know what the Police Department was using the funding for that was allocated for the tasers. She said that the administration should charge those amount back. She would like the information on what they spent the funding on to be sent to the Committee. Mr. Nkwo said that the Chief was not aware of the details of the specific allocations. Council Member Herron repeated that she would like the information on what they spent the funding on to be sent to the Committee.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked about the Klein Memorial and Mr. Nkwo reviewed the details of the line item. She also wished know why the City was paying for the HVAC but did not receive any revenue from the events. Council Member Burns explained that the City owns the Klein and the City is obligated to maintain it.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked if they lease it from the City. Mr. Nkwo reviewed the details of the agreement with her. Council Member Burns said that he would request the Klein administration present a report to the Committee. He added that the Klein does a lot of work with civic groups and with children.

Council Member Martinez said she appreciated Mr. Nkwo informing the Committee that the Police Department did not use the allocated funding to purchase tasers. She said that she when joined the Council in 2018, she had noticed that previous Police Chiefs had not necessarily used the funding where it was allocated for and used for other things.

Council Member Martinez said that she sees City employees beating up vehicles and driving at excessive speeds. It is time to start holding employees accountable for the vehicles they are assigned to drive. It is wrong to keep putting money in the budget for new vehicles.

Council President Nieves suggested that they look into using some CARES funding for the Klein if it is qualified rather than taking the money from the General Fund. Discussion followed about the details of using bonded money.

Council Member Newton asked why the departments could use funding allocated for vehicles or tasers and use it for something else. He said that he thought that the department would have to come back to the Council to transfer the funding. Mr. Nkwo said that he cannot monitor the daily financial transactions of the various departments. He reminds them periodically during the year, but that is all he has time to do.

Council Member Newton said that when the various departments come in for their presentations, the Committee should remind them that the funding should be used for the allocated items and if they don't do that, the funding should be returned to the General Fund. Mr. Nkwo said that he had just discovered this a few months ago.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that they should send the department heads a memo saying that they would be expected to account for the allocated funding expenditures for equipment.

Mr. Flatto pointed out that the department heads do have some latitude to transfer funding within categories. Council Member Burns agreed. Mr. Nkwo said that he can object to a transfer, but he has to approve it if it is the same object code.

The discussion moved to the adjustments in the budget book and attrition.

There was a question about the Board of Education budget and the time clock system. She asked why they were not using Kronos city wide. By not having all the departments on the same system, the City loses leveraging power when it comes to negotiation contracts. Mr. Flatto replied that there were timesheets turned in and given to the supervisors for approval. The biggest departments with staff that are in the field have to verify the sheets.

Council Member Burns said that the Committee should ask the CAO and the ITS director about this when they are present for their interviews.

Council Member Hodges asked for clarification on what would be considered a “small” department. Mr. Flatto said that it was usually an administrative department that had about 5 to 15 staff members. He added that everything is included in the system, but it starts with manual time sheets.

Council Member Burns reminded everyone that this was just a review of items that were in the Capital Projects Plan but being paid out of the General Funds.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED “THE OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT FOR PURCHASES” AS EXHIBIT 04-04-2024-B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Burns announced that page 1 was revenue increases, page 2 was revenue decreases and expenditure decreases, page 3 and 4 were expenditure increases. There is a summary on the final page.

Mr. Nkwo then gave a brief overview of the State figures that the Governor has indicated. He then reviewed the amount of anticipated tax revenue. The Grand List did not grow much and the tax review is sustained by the collection rate. He also spoke about the PILOT payments and Steel Point payments.

Council Member Newton asked what the \$17 million was for. Mr. Nkwo said that it was State Aid. Mr. Flatto gave the details and said that there was an amount of \$7 million that had not been included as “reoccurring”. Mr. Flatto said that the State legislators had been confident that the extra funding would be restored and made a commitment that the \$12 million would be allocated. The Mayor and the legislators were trying for the additional \$5 million, but he said that there was a risk that they may receive less. \$5 million is already incorporated in the State Budget for Bridgeport. They are hoping for an additional \$7 million. Discussion followed.

Mr. Nkwo said that the electric bill had increased along with the cost of the garbage tonnage.

Council Member Burns said that this would be the number that the Committee needs to consider and that the ARPA money will help meet the Mayor’s Budget.

Council President Nieves reminded everyone that the ARPA funds will sunset in June. Discussion followed about the South End Flooding Project and the Rooster River flooding.

Council Member Herron said that Mr. Urquidi, the City Engineer, has stated that the City needs a ACOE study and one was done approximately 30 years ago. State Representative Hennessey managed to secure funding for the project, as did State Senator Marilyn Moore. She noted that C zones were now becoming Flood Zones. The ACOE study has to be done before anything else is done. She said that she would be asking Mr. Urquidi about this when he was present for his presentation.

Council Member Newton said that because the State messed up on the Bassick Plan, it ended up costing the City more money. The Resilience Plan never went through and now the legislature will have to try to fix what should have been done four years ago. Now they have to deal with the issues with the school and the road.

Mr. Nkwo then gave a brief overview of the revenues listed on the pages and the premises that these projections were based on.

The discussion moved to the fact that the revenue from the cannabis dispensaries was being placed in the general fund rather than being allocated back into the host communities.

Mr. Nkwo said that he was required to put it into the General Fund. Council Member Burns said that they needed to create an ordinance to separate those funds out from the General Funds. Council President Nieves said that this was being worked on. She added that Affinity had been working on supporting the local communities.

Council Member Martinez said that Jonathan Delgado had created some language, but that it needed to be amended, so that the resolution for the ordinance is in the works, but not quite completed.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia cautioned everyone that the revenue was based on a percentage that would change over time depending on sales.

Mr. Nkwo then reviewed the funding for the City Attorney's Office. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the City Attorney had made an agreement about how the funding would be handled.

The School Bus Violation revenue has not started coming in because the State has not approved the statute yet. Until it passes, the number was reduced to \$50,000.

He reviewed the remaining revenue items and then reviewed the expenditure decreases.

Council Member Burns explained that MERP (Municipal Employee Retirement Plan) was the State Retirement Pension fund and the State determines the percentage of what the City should pay. Regular City employees are covered at a certain rate, but Police and Fire have a high payment percentage.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED "FY24 ADOPTED MONTHLY RATES" AS EXHIBIT 04-04-2024-C.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Committee then began a review of the Capital Budget.

Mr. Nkwo then reviewed the figures on the document with the Committee and how the figures changed with salary raises and State percentage rate increases.

Council Member Newton said that the Council had been told that by joining MERP, it would save the City money, but it wasn't saving money now. Mr. Flatto said that they should do an analysis to determine if the plan was still working for the City.

Mr. Nkwo then listed a number of one time purchases that were listed on the page 2 of the document, included the purchase of two dump trucks. He noted that line 47 contained information involved with binding arbitration.

There was a request for a list of positions and salaries, which Mr. Nkwo made a note of.

Mr. Nkwo said that the Probate Court office needed to be renovated. Council Member Newton asked about this. Mr. Nkwo explained that the City was responsible for providing space, a copier lease, and other requirements except salary.

The Committee then reviewed page 3 of the document. Council Member Burns asked about Lines 59 and 60, which held information on fees. Mr. Nkwo said that they had never included this information in the budget previously.

He gave a brief overview of the debt service payments.

Council Member Pereira asked why they were charging sewer fees for the City building. Mr. Nkwo explained that the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) was a separate entity with its own tax ID number and considered to be a private corporation. Discussion followed.

Mr. Nkwo said that he had reviewed the Police allocation for gas and they had not increased it, but the cost of fuel has, so Mr. Nkwo increased the amount to prevent the Police Department from not having enough money for gas.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked for details about inviting the department heads to the meeting and wished to know about whether the sub-departments are included in the presentation invitation. Council Member Burns said that the Committee often invited the smaller department heads to present. Council Member Newton said that they will often invite others that might be able to provide clarification on issues.

Council Member Pereira asked why they were installing an HVAC system during the summer rather than when it was cooler. Mr. Nkwo said that this was the first question he had asked. He was told that it takes about 8 months to get the new system. The rental was just to get through the summer.

The discussion moved to the Small and Minority Business Office and then to the purchase of City vehicles.

At the conclusion of the review, Mr. Nkwo said that in totality, both sides of the budget would increase by \$10.6 million dollars.

There was a question asked about the Council Member's stipends. Council Member Newton said that the City has a responsibility to their residents. He mentioned two recent deaths of residents

in his District and said that he had received calls for financial assistances since the two young people did not have insurance. It is important to help the community. People need help 24/7. Raising the amount from \$1,100 to \$1,500 was fine with him. If a Council Member does not want to spend their funding, they can give it back. Discussion followed about the Council stipends, the travel allocation and the fact that the Council probably receives the lowest amount of stipends in the country.

Council Member Herron said that many of the Council Members can't afford to attend the various NLC meetings. The Council Members have an obligation to be educated and they should bring back information to the Council. She said that she had learned a lot at NLC and CCM conferences. Council Members can choose not to attend the conferences, which is their choice. Some Council Members can pay out of pocket for the conferences and courses, but others can't afford it. In New York, the Council Members receive \$120,000 in salary along with admins and offices. Bridgeport is the largest City in the State and the Council Members have to ask repeatedly to attend conferences and have had issues with stipend cards. She said that the stipend card allows her to keep on learning.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that it was up to the individual Council Members as to how to use their stipend funding. She also mentioned the City wide contributions were good because it shows the people that they are getting something for all their taxes.

Council Member Newton reminded everyone that this was just an overview and that they have a lot of work to do. He encouraged everyone to write down their questions for the department heads.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED "THE FY 25 PROPOSED GOVERNOR'S BUDGET VS. THE FY 24." AS EXHIBIT 04-04-2024-D.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia encouraged everyone to send their questions on the various departments to the co-chairs in advance so they can forward them to the various departments. This gives the Department Heads time to prepare. Council Member Newton said that they had tried that before and it didn't work. People waited until the meeting to ask questions. Council Member Pereira agreed.

Council Member Burns said that this was their first night. They would be meeting on Saturday, the 6th and the BOE has a major retreat, so rather than the BOE Facility Director speaking to the Committee on their capital budget, the Committee will look at the City's Capital. On Monday, they have a regular Budget and Appropriations meeting scheduled. On Wednesday, April 10th, they will be meeting in the Council suite. On Thursday, April 11th, they will have a discussion on the BOE Capital Budget. Council Member Burns said that Mr. Nkwo had received the BOE Capital Budget requests.

Council Member Herron asked that the Council suite be aired out and vacuumed thoroughly because of her asthma. Council President Nieves made a note of this. Discussion followed.

Mr. Nkwo gave a brief description of the document that had just been distributed regarding the proposed State Aid. Council Member Newton said that the State had a billion dollar surplus and should be investing that in the cities and infrastructure.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 6, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Scott Burns, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron; Frederick Hodges; Mary McBride-Lee; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Council Member(s): Council President A. Nieves; Jorge Cruz, Dasha Spell, E. Martinez & M. Valle; Thomas Gaudett, CAO; Anthony Paoletto, Mayor's Office; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Ken Flatto, Finance Director

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 10:09 a.m. He called the roll and announced that there was a quorum present.

Council Member Newton said that they would be reviewing the revenue portion of the budget and the Capital side of the budget. The budget books are at 45 Lyon Terrace. This budget is different from two years ago. It is a very tight budget.

Council Member McBride-Lee joined the meeting.

Co-chair Burns said that there was not a recording secretary and the audio will be sent to the secretary. Mr. Nkwo will review the revenue portion.

A discussion followed about the availability and use of PowerPoint presentations and what information the Committee was expecting from the Departments. Council Member Burns said that during the past few years, the departments have been good about providing the Council Members with documentation. They are looking for changes in the Departments, successes and disappointments in achieving their goals. He noted that there were some departments that were supplemented by grants.

Mr. Gaudett pointed out that according to the Charter, the Budget and Appropriations Committee only has the authority to change the budget figures. He said that they made changing in other budget areas.

Council Member Newton said that he had yet to hear a Department director state that they had accomplished X,Y,Z goals. He said that he would be looking for that.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia suggested that they check out the OPED conference room across from the Legislative Offices which was set up for PowerPoint presentations. Discussion followed about the details.

Council Member E. Martinez joined the meeting.

Mr. Nkwo gave a brief overview of the material.

Council Member Newton asked Mr. Nkwo to give them a brief overview of where they stand, with how much money they need and how much money they have. Mr. Nkwo said that that they needed \$12 million dollars for the 24-25 FY.

Council Member Newton said that he had read that the Appropriations Committee in Hartford had not re-opened the Governor's budget. He asked Mr. Gaudett to explain what this would mean to the City.

Mr. Gaudett said that a few years ago, the legislature increased the PILOT non-taxable payments, but the formula does not help Bridgeport much. Cities like New Haven and Hartford have almost double the amount of non-taxable properties, such as churches and hospitals, but also includes State and Federal buildings. Whenever that formula is changed, Hartford and New Haven gain a lot of money, but Bridgeport only get some money. Mr. Gaudett said that they had complained about this but no one knows how to correct the problem without upsetting the apple cart. Their solution was to stay with the formula and add a line item that designates an extra \$5 million dollars to Bridgeport.

Last year, the City asked for a larger allocation and were given \$7 million more but it was a one time allocation. While this was very good, and there was a change in another allocation, the City received \$12 million dollars. However, those additional funds were not included in the new budget. The Speaker said that he would try his best to include additional funding, but their budget is already fixed. If they are allocated any additional funding, they will be informed about this in the coming weeks.

Mr. Flatto directed everyone to page 66 in the Budget Book and indicated where the PILOT payments were listed. He said that they had the \$7 million and reviewed the details of the other figures in the columns. Mr. Flatto suggested that they amend the budget by removing the \$5 million and make some additional adjustments. Discussion followed about the details.

Council Member Newton said that they would make the necessary adjustments as they receive updated information. This was just to get a clearer picture of what the Council was facing. There are no magic wands. He added that trying to factor in the State contributions before the State sets their budget was a terrible way to do the budget, which he has said numerous times before.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked what the percentage was for the State PILOT contributions. She said her last figure was 47%. Mr. Flatto said that he thought it was about 50%. Additional discussion followed.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia noted that Sacred Heart University was expanding their property holdings in Bridgeport, but they list their Fairfield address. She asked if the City was getting credit for the non-taxable University property in Bridgeport. Mr. Flatto said that they do recognize the SHU parcels.

Council Member Spell has a question about non-profits. Council Member Newton suggested she speak with Mr. Gaudett and Mr. Flatto about this off line.

Council Member Burns asked about the unexpended ARPA amounts. Mr. Gaudett said that he needs an accounting about this. Council Member Burns asked for a copy of the reimbursement rate. Mr. Gaudett said that he would provide that information to the Committee.

Mr. Gaudett pointed out that there were a number of very creative minds at the meeting and asked for suggestions on what they could proposed next year to the State Legislature to update the PILOT formula that is not dependent on non-taxable properties. This is a long term problem.

Council Member Newton pointed out that Hartford and New Haven watch out for their own towns and they are in key positions to watch out for their communities. He noted that it takes the will of the leadership to adjust this. Unless the Governor puts funding in for Bridgeport, it will not happen. Mr. Gaudett agreed and pointed out that even when the State has a surplus, they won't give money to Bridgeport because they have inserted guard rails to prevent that. Even when there is a surplus, they have to use it for pensions or set it aside. The discussion moved back to the \$7 million for Bridgeport, earmarks and the work of the delegation.

Council Member Burns asked for clarification on the Contingency fund investments on page 38. Mr. Flatto and Mr. Nkwo then reviewed the details.

Council Member Newton reminded everyone that the City was in a much better financial place than they were five years ago. He added that for Bassick High School, the City has to use their funding to pay the contractors because the State has not yet reimbursed the City for the work. He said that the State owes the City about \$120 million. One of the problems is that once they submit the paperwork for the reimbursement, the State asks for more documentation. Once they receive the funding, the money will be used for Capital projects, since that is where they took the money from to pay the contractors . Discussion followed.

Council Member Burns wished to know what the oldest school projects were that the State had not paid out the reimbursements. Mr. Flatto said that he thought it was Fairchild Wheeler. Council Member Newton agreed and added that they were still waiting on reimbursement for Black Rock and Aquaculture, also. He reminded everyone about the State scandal that had happened and how the State shut everything down to start everything all over again.

Council Member Burns asked for clarification on what the State guidelines were for investments. Mr. Flatto listed them. Council Member Burns said that they had \$40 million in the General Fund and asked for potential investment returns on investments. Discussion followed about the details.

Council Member Newton said that if a Council Member knew they would not be able to be present at a meeting when a department director was presenting, they should send their questions and concerns to the Chairs. That will then be passed to the department director as a request for information or explanation.

Council President Nieves reminded everyone that there were some raises were included in the Budget Book, but often they are parts of contractual agreements and sometimes they are accumulated COLA increases. If a contract is delayed due to negotiations, the final adjustments seem to be major increases in salaries. Mr. Gaudett and Council Member Newton agreed.

Mr. Gaudett reminded everyone that when there were retroactive payments, the employees worked for that period of time without the pay adjustment they were due. Discussion followed.

Council Member Martinez said that it was important to attend Committee meetings because there is information that is presented at them. She said she has issues with the unions being two years behind with pay raises. She noted that Atty. Skyers was working on having the contracts settled in a timely manner.

Council Member Martinez said that all the concerns about various Departmental issues should be given to the Council President and that she should be the one who contacts the departments. Council Members are elected to represent their Districts, not departments in the City. There are many residents in the City that think the elected officials are supervisors of the Departments, but this is why they have to let the Council President contact the Department directors and bring the information to the Council Members. This is how to run it effectively, appropriately and avoid miscommunications.

Council Member Burns said that on Monday, they had a regularly scheduled meeting with two items on the agenda. They will consider the Civil Service item first and then after the conclusion of that meeting they will have the special meeting on the Budget.

Mr. Nkwo said that they would see a three year spread of budget information. Council President Nieves said that this was a proposed budget and the Council would approve it. No Mayor or Governor will submit a perfect budget. It is the job of the Council to be fiscally responsible and plan ahead to the best of their ability. She said that the Council was working hard to be financially responsible.

Council Member Burns asked about parking meter collections. He said that the person who was directing that operation had passed away and the person who was overseeing it on a part time basis experienced some health issues. He asked who was going to be in charge and wished to know about the details of the operation. The employee has to leave at 5 and that means he is not collecting until 5 because he has to be back in the office.

Mr. Gaudett said that things were changing on a daily basis. He said that he had a meeting with all of the Parking Enforcement staff. They are going to try to hire a bi-lingual employee to fill one of the vacancies. A Personnel Request Form (PRF) has been submitted. Mr. Gaudett then reviewed the hiring process. He also explained that department had been split into two sections, one that deals with the actual equipment will be overseen by one area of Public Facilities and the other that deals with the administrative issues such as tickets will also be handled by a different aspect of Public Facilities.

Mr. Gaudett said that there was a debate about Parking Enforcement because while it generates revenue, it also can incur overtime. While it enforces the rules, it make the residents angry.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked if they could stagger the hours. Discussion followed about the cost of filling one of the vacancies in the Parking Enforcement.

Council Member Martinez said that she had an issue with having someone collecting the money from the meters without supervision. She believes that there were too many Parking Enforcement staff members and that the Parking staff enforces where they want to ticket rather than following the guidelines in the ordinances. There have been incidents where low income residents have received parking tickets for being a few feet away from the curb or other minor issues. She said that they could eliminate positions in this department.

Council Member Herron said that there was an ordinance already in place about this and they can only go to specific areas. Previously, the enforcement officers were going all over the City. These are regular civilians, not sworn officers. The department needs to be revamped.

Council Member McBride-Lee spoke about how someone had been ticketed for parking in front of their house. She spoke about other, long standing concerns with the department and potential conflicts of interest.

Council Member Cruz said his problem was with the week-end parking. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that they could ticket if someone parked in a handicapped space or a No Parking area. The meters are not active on week-ends.

Council Member Cruz said that he got a call from a pastor about his parishioners being ticketed on Easter Sunday. Mr. Gaudett said that there was an appeals system and the Parking Enforcement staff becomes annoyed when the tickets are issued and then just are ignored. Some Parking Enforcement staff are very dedicated to their jobs and sometimes excessively so.

Council Member Newton said that there had been a Public Facilities staff member who had been annoyed with an official and ticketed family members. This is not a secret police department.

Mr. Gaudett pointed out that they have thousands of employees and that if a Council Member sees something, they have to let him know because the administration cannot possibly oversee everything in the City. By letting the administration know, the administration will try to deal with it.

Council President Nieves reminded everyone that Police Officers can also issue tickets and mentioned a particular intersections where there were a number of accidents. She added that the Police Chief had promised to deal with tractor trailers. Residents need to realize that the signs that say “No Parking” mean something. It is time to hold the residents accountable.

Council Member Burns said that the meters were located downtown and at St. Vincent’s. It is time to enforce them. Police enforcement is another side of it. Fire hydrants and parking on corners are no parking areas for a reason. He said that he had spoken with the Police Chief about tractor trailer enforcement.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that they were working on getting an area under an overpass blocked off by the State because it is a safety issue.

Council Member Newton asked the Council Members to prepare for the upcoming meetings. Council Member Burns said that on Monday, they had a regularly scheduled meeting with two

items on the agenda and then after the conclusion of that meeting they will have the special meeting on the Budget.

Mr. Nkwo asked for clarification on a particular issue from Capital Funding. He said that the City of Bridgeport is the manager of the Klein Memorial and it was the City's responsibility to keep the building repaired. They have been requesting funding for their HVAC system.

Mr. Gaudett said that he had spoken with Mr. Nkwo about this and noted that interest rates were high, so using the General Fund for the repairs was okay with him. Discussion followed.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

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

**** THE MOTION TO ADJOURNED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 16, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Mary McBride-Lee; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia; Frederick Hodges (6:53 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): J. Melendez, D. Spell, M. Valle, E. Martinez (6:11 p.m.); A. Boyd (6:12 p.m.); Council President A. Nieves (6:20 p.m.) & R. Smith, (6:25 p.m.); Nestor Nkwo, OPM; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Anthony Paoletto, Mayor's Office; Scott Appleby, EOC Director; Police Chief Roderick Porter; Captain Paul Grech, Deputy Police Chief James Baraja; Captain Kevin Gilleran; Lt. Frank Jacobellis, Lt. Stacy Lyons;

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Co-chair Newton announced that they would start with EOC on page 203.

Mr. Appleby greeted the Committee members and said that Emergency Management had done a lot with the community events, training, workshops and responses. The department is focused on the people that they serve and insure that the community is prepared when situations arise. They work with neighborhood groups, businesses and daycare facilities.

He directed everyone's attention to the organizational chart. Currently the department is short 7 telecommunication officers.

Mr. Appleby indicated that the departmental goals, which were on the next page, have basically remained the same. However, they are working on way to improve services such as enhancing the Emergency Planning efforts and increasing for State and Federal grants that come in. Currently, they have brought in slightly over 1 million dollars in grant funding including the Port Security grants, the Emergency Management Performance Grants and the State of Connecticut subsidy grant.

The department is considering restructuring the department in order to provide better services to the community and working on obtaining accreditation for both as a 9-1-1 Center and an Emergency Management Center. If they are able to do this, Bridgeport will

be one of the first large cities in the State with accreditation. He added that Bridgeport was one of two large municipalities that answered 9-1-1 calls in 10 seconds or less.

Mr. Appleby explained that the EOC has been developing neighborhood plans for each of the Districts with the goal of analyzing what the individual neighborhoods should be prepared for. This should be completed by July 1st for the Council Members.

The EOC handles anywhere from 2,200 to 2,500 9-1-1 calls for service every week.

Council Member Martinez joined the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

There are about an additional 2,000 non-emergency calls that also come into the Center every week. The total call volume per month is between 8,000 and 9,000 calls.

Mr. Appleby said that there are other calls that are weather related and an additional number of calls from residents inquiring where they should go in the event of an emergency.

He added that they also handle activations that can range from a bomb threat to a major weather or storm event. They also handle planning and training for those who have to leave their homes in terms of shelter locations and supplies. There is also a security assessment done.

Currently, the EOC is projecting that they will be overbudget in the overtime category by approximately \$500,000 due to the short staffing situation. There is also a shortage on certified training officers along with the normal overtime causes such as illness or vacation. In the past, the department has been able to work within their allocated budget when they have a full staff.

Mr. Appleby then reviewed the various items that the department was requesting. He noted that there had been several requests for additional security officers at City Hall and City Hall Annex.

Council Member Newton said that he was concerned about the security issues since there were numerous reports of shots being fired and other incidents. The City has to do a better job. Council Member Newton said that it would be important to consider this as they review the budget figures.

Council Member Burns asked for a breakdown of the costs for the various budget items. He also asked about the issues around the vacancies. Mr. Appleby said that there was a class that would finish up in May. He explained that often the calls are centered on an individual that is having the worst day of their life and the telecommunicators are hearing people who are injured or fire victims. This takes a toll on the operators and the

department has instituted a wellness program and a decompression program for the stressors. Hopefully, this is reduce the number of telecommunicators leaving.

Council President Nieves joined the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

He said that they have recently presented awards to individuals who have worked at the Center for 15 years and 5 years. Several telecommunicators have left to join either the Fire Department or Police Department.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia thanked Mr. Appleby for the public education the department provides.

Council Member Herron asked about the status of the test list. Mr. Appleby said that the incoming class was the last group from the list and the department was also working with the Military Academy and Bullard Haven to recruit individuals for the positions.

Council Member R. Smith joined the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Council Member McBride-Lee expressed concerns about school security. Mr. Appleby explained that his department is not in charge of school security, but does handle the distribution for a school grant funding. Capt. Grech said that he works with Mr. Appleby on this issue also. Discussion followed.

Council Member Martinez said that the report did not include how much the EOC spends on public equipment, time involved with the homeless population. Mr. Appleby said that the Service indicators includes a section that shows how many homeless individuals they assisted. They work with the YMCA to insure there are cots, blankets and other supplies available. Mr. Appleby said that they often receive blanket donations and transfer them to the shelters because there are often homeless individuals who do not wish to stay on location. They also review the supplies for the emergency shelter locations to make sure they have what will be needed on hand.

Council Member Herron commented that in the past, the City missed out on a number of grant opportunities because no one wanted to facilitate the finances.

Council Member Burns spoke about a recent meeting about the Public Information Officer and suggested that the funding be funneled to the EOC because they receive those types of calls. Mr. Appleby said that he had met with Fire Chief Edwards and Police Chief Porter about this issue. Discussion followed about public health, security guards and social services.

Council Member Valle asked about the Director of Public Safety positions and the Public Information Officer. Mr. Appleby and Mr. Nkwo gave the details.

Council Member Newton said that it was his understanding that a new person had not been hired, but that a current employee would be transferred into the position. Discussion followed about the details.

Council Member Martinez said that there were some security guards who were ineffective and were spending time on their cell phones. She said that when residents come in with police reports about stolen garbage cans or other items, the security guards don't know what to do with the document. Other staff know how to call or direct individuals to departments but the security guards don't know what to do. She added that political favors in the City of Bridgeport need to stop. The clerical staff do their job and the security guards should be eliminated. If something happens, they call the police officers in, so Council Member Martinez said that there was no point in having security guards there at all.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that it would be important to hire people who are qualified for the job. The discussion then moved back to the fact that previously, the Fire Department and Police Department had their own Publicity Officer.

Council Member Hodges joined the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

Mr. Appleby said all the departments need an individual to handle publicity. Secondly he said that everyone that works at the EOC works. That is the standard and expectation for anyone who walks through their doors. Discussion followed about how information is sent to the Council Members when there is an event underway.

Mr. Appleby explained that he had been handling the general communications and that now both he and Terron would work together. They also want to make sure some positive stories are presented to the public rather than just crisis or emergency events. Council Member Martinez wished to know how much training Mr. Appleby would be providing and what Mr. Appleby's expectations were for this individual. Mr. Appleby then gave a brief overview of what information would be available to the public and noted that it would be on the City website.

Council Member Martinez said that she gets her information from Captain Gilleran or Captain Blackwell but does not receive any information from the EOC when things happen. She said that Council Members should be informed of things so they can speak to their constituents about them.

Council Member Newton thanked Mr. Appleby for his presentation.

The following documents were entered into the record as follows:

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED “EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS AS EXHIBIT 04-16-2024A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RECESS

Council Member Newton announced a recess at 7:00 p.m. He called the meeting back to order at 7:30 p.m.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED “EOC OVERTIME PROJECTIONS” AS EXHIBIT 04-16-2024B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED “POLICE OVERTIME PROJECTIONS” AS EXHIBIT 04-16-2024C.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED “BRIDGEPORT POLICE STAFF PERSONNEL REPORT” AS EXHIBIT 04-16-2024D.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED “BRIDGEPORT POLICE BUDGET INFORMATION” AS EXHIBIT 04-16-2024E.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chief Porter greeted the Council Members. He said that he and Chief Baraja would be presenting along with Captain Paul Grech and Captain Kevin Gilleran, Lt. Stacy Lyons and Lt. Frank Jacobellis. He said that his team was invited but had other obligations. He then read a portion from one of the handouts to the Council Member.

Chief Baraja also addressed the Council Members regarding data mining and the presentation of information to the Council Members. He also mentioned grant funding and financial management. Chief Porter thanked Mr. Nkwo for all his assistance with the budget.

Lt. Jacobellis spoke about the information availability on the internet. He also mentioned the Police Academy program and other information available to the public via LexisNexis.

Lt. Jacobellis noted that in 2022, 24 officers either resigned or retired from the department. An additional 38 left the department in 2023 along with 3 more during this year. Currently, there are 31 more officers that are eligible for retirement from the department and 58 more will be eligible in 2025. By 2027, 81 officers will be eligible for retirement. There is a class at the Academy that will be graduating within the coming few weeks.

Lt. Jacobellis then gave a brief overview of the patrol assignments. He also spoke about the Officer Wellness program and scheduling challenges. He noted that there were 85 special events in the City last year, which brings in more revenue, and the vacancies on staff also result in savings.

Lt. Jacobellis displayed the figures for Hartford and New Haven's departments. Chief Porter pointed out that Hartford has the Capitol Police Force available to them and Yale University has their own police force, also.

He also reviewed the shootings and homicides for Hartford and New Haven compared with Bridgeport. Bridgeport experienced 76 shootings and 19 homicides; Hartford had 97 shooting and 36 homicides while New Haven witnessed 97 shootings and 23 homicides. The Detective Bureau does a tremendous job handling these cases. He also reviewed the statistics for the other types of crime with the Council Members.

With all the vacancies, the staffing is not sustainable. The focus is on retention and recruitment. Chief Porter has been working on facilitating transfers and also there have been 23 new officers hired in 2023 and there are new recruits in the Academy at the present time. Civil Service is processing another batch of applications and the administration hopes to have a new Police Academy class start in June.

Leadership and training programs are underway, along with master's degree course available.

Lt. Lyons then spoke about the efforts to recruit more female officers. She noted that in 2017, approximately 7% of the officers were female. In 2021, there were only about 10% of the officers that were female. Lt. Lyons also presented the figures for females in key positions such as supervisors. In the last year, Chief Porter has also made a number of classes offered by outside agencies, such as the FBI and others, available to the officers.

Council Member Newton left the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Council Member Burns assumed the Chairmanship at this time.

Lt. Jacobellis spoke about two new transport vehicles that are in the process of being outfitted with seat belts to insure the passengers are secured correctly and arrive safely. Chief Porter commented that the State Law now requires prisoners to be properly belted in and added that the current transport vans are about 30 years old.

The next area that Lt. Jacobellis reviewed was technology. Since 2022, the department has been amassing a database with the signature marks from shell casings which can often lead to identifying information on a case even if the shooting did not involve anyone. Out of the 500 recent entries, 400 of them produced significant leads. He added that the reduction in crime could easily be related to the new technology the department has been using.

Chief Porter then informed the Council Members about a recent meeting with Matrix about the staffing study. He said that the PRO position would primarily be working with the Police Department because they generally have the most information that needs to be communicated to the public. Two of the officers have also been trained because the Department recognizes the important of having a uniformed officer at these briefings and releases.

Council Member Herron expressed concerns about video that was leaked from the Fusion Center. Lt. Jacobellis said that several new measures have been taken to prevent this type of leak from happening again.

The discussion moved to the cost of special events, such as parades, which have become larger.

Council Member Martinez spoke about a police officer who had been in a serious car accident years ago and had worked tirelessly on the Fusion Center. She was thankful and appreciative for all that he had done for the City. Council Member Martinez also thanked Captain Gilleran for his work with the Detective Bureau.

Council Member Martinez said that a few years ago, before Chief Porter's time, some funding had been allocated for tasers, but as far as she knew, the tasers had never been purchased. Council Member Martinez said that she would like to know what happened to that money. Mr. Nkwo said that the funding would have gone into the general department allocation. He gave the details.

Chief Porter explained that tasers were included in "use of force" category, so it may not have been individually noted. Council Member Martinez said that she just wanted to make sure that the funding was used for the appropriate allocation.

Council Member Martinez said that years ago, the City had a contract with funeral homes to transport bodies after a shooting or death. She said suggested that the Department revisit this because it was unfortunate that the City has to pay a third party for this type of

service. She spoke about an incident that occurred when she was a teenager where the deceased ended up lying on the street until the funeral home arrived to remove the body.

Chief Porter explained that when this type of situation occurs, the police officers have to wait for the Medical Examiner and the funeral home to arrive, which is beyond their control. The officers also may have to collect evidence from the scene. Discussion followed.

Chief Porter said that the department is now posting the crime statistics online along with a variety of other information. He added that the department has brought all their cases up to date, along with the Board of Police Commissioners. However, there are some union issues that will not allow certain information to be shared with the public. He said that he supports the Police Accountability Bill, but there is information that they cannot share because it may compromise an investigation. Discussion followed.

Council Member McBride-Lee expressed her concerns about the Fusion tape leak and wants to know who released that video tape. Chief Porter said as the chief, he feels responsible for that tape being released. He pointed out that the release of that video tape made the police officers into victims.

Council Member Hodges said that the presentation did not mention anything about police misconduct or about police vehicles that were involved in crashes. He also spoke about the lack of community engagement and how the officers are reluctant to engage the residents in discussion or conversations. This is a major barrier between the Department and the community. Discussion followed.

Chief Porter was asked who was working with the social worker assigned to the Department. Chief Porter said that an officer was assigned to work with the social worker during each of the shifts. The Chief was told that there had not been any reports about the social workers assisting with homicides or other scenarios. Chief Porter explained that there were officers who were trained to assist other officers when there is a homicide. He added that wellness is a major part of the department now. When there is a serious incident, the officers are required to speak face to face with their supervisors about the situation before returning home.

Council Member Valle had several concerns about the use of cameras during a recent shooting near the East Side Senior Center.

Chief Porter explained that the use of cameras had been invaluable to his department, especially since they are short staffed. He said that not every residential or business camera is connected to the Fusion Center. Some of those security cameras are very good. Areas where cameras are needed have been identified along with areas where there has been an uptick in crime.

Captain Grech spoke about the Safe Passage for Schools program and the Fusion Center feeds that allow the department to relocate officers as needed. Even with the decrease in officers, crime has gone down because they are using the cameras proactively. He pointed out that it was important to upgrade and maintain the equipment so that they can continue to provide this level of service and save lives. Chief Porter added that prosecutors now ask for video footage of crimes for their cases.

Captain Grech said that it was not about arresting people, but about not arresting the wrong people because they fit a description. The Police Department is trying to have a good relationship with the community. They don't always get it right, but Captain Grech felt that they were doing a decent job.

The discussion moved to recruitment efforts and educational training.

Council Member Martinez referred to a resident who had spoken during the Council meeting about an issue with a police officer and said she had the details of the incident. When the Council Members have the details, they are able to stand behind the Department more effectively. She suggested that Council President Nieves set up a seminar with the elected officials focused on what the Detective Bureau can and cannot do, what the Fusion Center can and cannot do and so on.

Chief Porter said that he believes that 99% of Bridgeport officers do not engage in misconduct. When misconduct happens, it is addressed immediately. Chief Porter will not allow any officer to compromise the public trust.

The discussion moved to the number of officers on foot patrol.

Council President Nieves asked about the cost of Public Safety cameras. Chief Porter explained that moving violations such as running a red light or a stop sign goes to the State of Connecticut. Any revenue from parking tickets remains in Bridgeport. He added that the Department looks at the data for the number of accidents at an intersection.

Council President Nieves asked if the Department is checking to make sure they are getting all the revenue for the various special events. Chief Porter said that they check with the Parks Commission, the Health Department and others to make sure all the events are properly permitted. The number of police permits decreased in the last year. Mr. Nkwo explained that not every permit requires police involvement.

The discussion turned to towing fines, which is currently awaiting a legal opinion on the amount that can be charged. Council President Nieves wished to know if anyone was aware of how much revenue the City was missing out on due to the towing agreement amounts.

Council Member Martinez asked for more details about the maintenance costs for the crime scene truck. Chief Porter said that it would be included with general vehicle maintenance.

Council Member Martinez had a number of detailed questions about various line items in the budget, which Chief Porter answered.

Council Member Burns said that the Budget and Appropriations Committee receives routine updates on staffing for the Police Department. He said that Mr. Amado had told them there were 284 officers and 16 of those were on leave for different reasons.

Council Member Burns then spoke about the monthly report, which lists the number of permits issued for the month of February. He asked if there was a staff member who was dedicated to tracking the finances. Chief Porter said it would be helpful to have a staff member do that, but they don't have anyone at this time. Discussion followed.

Chief Porter updated the Council Members on the efforts to hire civilians to fill clerical positions that sworn officers currently perform. He explained they have been having difficulty with this, as has Hartford and other departments. Mr. Nkwo gave an brief overview of the financial and personnel staffing and reviewed the details of various line items with the Council Members.

Chief Porter mentioned they are continuing to work towards a new headquarters.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 8, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Frederick Hodges
Mary McBride-Lee; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Council Member(s): Council President A. Nieves; A. Boyd, M. Pereira, R. Smith & M. Valle; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director, Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Eric Amado, Personnel Director, Civil Service; Atty. Eroll Skyers, Labor Relations Director; Monquencelo Miles, Benefits Manager; Lisa Mastronunzio, Civil Service

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:54 p.m. He called the roll and announced that there was a quorum present. He added that Council Member Herron was not present due to illness.

CIVIL SERVICE

Mr. Amado then greeted the Council Members and said that they updated the Civil Service presentation. The Civil Service office handles matters related to Chapter 17 of the City Charter in terms of hiring, tracking and retaining high performing employees.

Mr. Amado said that the Department had been asked to supply an organizational chart and highlight any major changes along with providing a breakdown of departments. He then reviewed the details regarding the reallocation of some positional duties to other positions. He gave an example that the Department doesn't need a time clerk anymore but they do need a data clerk. Now that the Department is giving more examinations, there will be a need for an additional person to assist with those processes.

Mr. Amado said that when examinations are given, there are many details to address such as marketing and advertising, scheduling pre-appointment physicals and other tasks.

The Department has continued to hire police recruits and currently has a police class graduating, one that is in the process and they have started the process to assemble the next class of recruits. He thanked the Council for approve the lateral transfer for police officers.

The Fire Department has 18 recruits in it and they are continuing to process recruits. They are working on the transition of provisional positions to regular positions.

Mr. Amado said that one key issue that Bridgeport and other municipalities need to work on is home growth and promoting Bridgeport residents within the City structure. He said that it would be important to have Bridgeport residents employed at the entry level and work into key positions.

Mr. Amado then spoke about the employee evaluations. He explained that his Department is working on updating and modernizing the employee evaluations. The instructions for the various department heads for promotion criteria and any associated examinations have been reviewed and updated along with the probationary reviews. In February, Civil Service and Labor Relations held a training session for supervisors on how to complete forms and how to engage their subordinates. The evaluation process should be a daily thing. This type of training should help address the deficiencies that currently exist.

Council Member Newton said that he was pleased to see this and said that they were making progress in this area. There are employees that have been working in the City for 20 years without reviews or any type of documentation in their files. He thanked both Mr. Amado and Atty. Skyers for this.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about the updated employee evaluations, which Mr. Amado reviewed with the Committee. The evaluation forms were created some time ago, but rarely utilized. The forms have been updated and there has been collaboration with the Labor Relations on this.

Council Member Hodges asked if the evaluations were required yearly. Mr. Amado said that when someone was appointed, they are subject to evaluations. The probationary forms are for when someone is hired or promoted into a position, depending on the contractual agreements involved. The Department is trying to encourage regular coaching and creating documentation for the employees. He added that not every employee automatically receives step increases. Discussion followed.

Council Member Hodges wished to know what kind of guard rails were being put in place so that if a police officer or fire fighter goes through the training, they don't transfer out immediately. Mr. Amado said that if an employee transfers to a new municipality before a set time, the new municipality is responsible to pay the cost of the training back to the City. Mr. Amado said that the various municipalities don't have a problem paying for the training. He said that they would continue to work with the legislature on this.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that the evaluations should be on-going. She asked for clarification about Second Chance hiring. Mr. Amado said that the community has a number of individuals who have been incarcerated and that they need to take a strong approach to hiring those who had been formerly incarcerated. It will be important to evaluate the person's ability to perform the job functions and bring it before a peer committee. He gave examples and potential scenarios.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that they should also be sure to hire young people who may not have been incarcerated but need jobs.

Council Member Newton said that when individuals pass the written and physical tests, but are eliminated at the psychological testing phase. He said that the Department has to check into the number of candidates that are being eliminated because of the psych evaluation.

Council Member Newton pointed out that the City may be hiring 16 new employees but there are 25 retiring. He asked if they would ever get caught up.

Mr. Amado said that POST requires the psychological evaluation but his office now reviews some of the disqualifications. He then outlined the process of now using three providers which they have been using to address this. The Civil Service does have an appeal process, also. Candidates are being given as many opportunities as the Department can offer.

Regarding the retirees, Mr. Amado said that with so many people retiring, the City is trying to hire enough so that there are more people that can't retire than there are of those who can retire.

Council Member Newton noted that past administrations hurt the City by not hiring new police officers and firefighters.

Council Member Pereira had a detailed question about the positions within the Department. Mr. Amado reviewed the details of the reallocating of one of the positions listed on page 106 with the Committee.

The discussion moved to the security for the on-site testing rooms and why this was important.

Council Member Martinez said that she was glad that there were other psychologists that a candidate could be referred to for the psychological evaluation.

Council Member Martinez said that she would like to know how the Department director evaluated his or herself. Mr. Amado said that right now they do not have a process in place for a supervisor review. The main focus is on having the regular evaluation reviews done. He added that everyone should have a supervisor other than the Mayor, who is accountable to the constituency. Right now, there is no formal process but he will be working on that. Discussion followed.

A question was asked about sexual harassment. Mr. Amado explained that sexual harassment reporting was mandated by the State. That and DEI will be part of the supervisor's tool kit and having the documentation such as evaluations will help with this. Every year, HR is tasked with providing a spectrum of training. He spoke of creating a Total Quality Management team and a morale team. A survey was done in January with the staff and supervisors about the types of training that people felt they needed. Some of the training is mandated either by the State or the collective bargaining agreements.

At the conclusion of his comments, Mr. Amado left the meeting.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED "CIVIC SERVICE PRESENTATION" AS EXHIBIT 04-08-2024-A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED "CIVIC SERVICE EMPLOYEE RATING FORM" AS EXHIBIT 04-08-2024-B.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

LABOR RELATIONS

Atty. Skyers greeted the Committee. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia announced that the information was on page 118.

Atty. Skyers distributed copies of a document to the Committee.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED “LABOR RELATIONS PRESENTATION” AS EXHIBIT 04-08-2024-C.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Atty. Skyer explained that Labor Relations encompasses Benefits Administration, Human Resources and Labor Relations. Ms. Miles is the Benefits Administration Manager and Ms. Sandra Ferreira is the Human Resource Manager.

Atty. Skyers then gave an overview of the organizational chart. He said that there was a Labor Relations Director vacancy and he has been in contact with a potential candidate. An offer letter has been sent and Atty. Skyers expects to have an affirmative reply in the near future. The Labor Relations Administrative Assistant position is also currently vacant. He explained that he has a plan to reconfigure that position.

Regarding the Benefits, there is a vacant position for Benefits Coordinator. This position has been posted internally, but there has been no response. It will be released for external posting.

He then gave an overview of the Human Resources department. The Human Resources Coordinator position is vacant and will be eliminated.

Labor Relations administers the collective bargaining agreements and negotiations. There are three contracts that are open. Two of the three “open” contracts actually have a June expiration date and discussion have already started. During Atty. Skyers’ tenure, the Department has settled four bargaining agreements, all of which involved expired contracts.

Atty. Skyers then reviewed the details for converting the Administrative Assistant to an Executive Assistant position. This change will result in some savings for the department. He explained that while he did need some assistants, he did not think he needs an administrative assistant.

In the Benefits/Human Resources area, the position for the Human Resources Coordinator could be replaced with a Clerk 1 position. The new hire has proven to be a very good employee and can handle the position.

Atty. Skyers said that there were part time floaters that could work in different departments and there has been a shortage of part time clerks. Atty. Skyers was requesting two additional part

time floaters. He reviewed the details of the finances. The floaters learn about the various departments and potentially could be a future full time employee.

BENEFITS AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Benefits and Human Resources are the added value for Bridgeport City employees. The health care cost continue to increase. Atty. Skyers briefly spoke about 2022 Inflation Reduction Act that will increase costs.

Ms. Miles then spoke about the grandfathered retirements plans that the City is obligated to fund and the Municipal Retirement Plans. She gave a brief summary of the updated changes and explained that because of these recent changes, she does not have firm figures for the prescription plans. There will also be some changes regarding the rebates and there will be a meeting in the near future to give more of the details.

Discussion followed about the Beacon Plan and the BOE paying for their retirees. Council Member Pereira asked for a report on the BOE changes.

Atty. Skyers said that the department would like to emphasize wellness. They want this to be part of the Human Resources in terms of added value and gave a brief description of this program. They are requesting to use the Linked Learning System that would provide training to employees. This request would be for an additional \$40,000 for in house wellbeing program. The Linked to Learning system cost \$20,700.

Council Member Hodges had questions about the benefits listed and noted that his insurance through his employer covers this. Ms. Miles said that when the City was self-insured, these benefits were included but when the City switched over to a partnership, they were not.

Council Member Hodges said that he had heard a number of complaints about implicit bias. Atty. Skyers said that it was most likely included in the Linked In Learning under Equity training. Council Member Hodges wished to know if that training would be mandatory. Mr. Paoletto said that there was a unit that had been mandatory and covered the topic.

Discussion followed about who would have access to the data, bid requirements, the cost and potential customization of the program and course reimbursements.

Council President Nieves spoke about a previous incident where an employee left the job because of the way the supervisor spoke to him. She said that having mandatory training would result in employees that were more content and stay longer.

Council Member Newton said that people need to remember that the City is actually a corporation and that they can't go on just placing people in positions without training.

Council President Nieves asked if the unions could require their employees to attend mandatory training classes. The discussion moved to reimbursement for courses.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that they have to start this when the new contracts begins. She added that she would like to put a cap on educational compensation for this. Discussion followed about the details of mandatory training.

Council Member Burns asked for a more detailed break out on the number of individuals who had taken the training modules, the number of hours that might be required for mandated training and if there would be the opportunity for employees to take the courses outside of work hours.

Council President Nieves asked about having the Council Members included in the training along with other groups. Atty. Skyers said that he realizes that the front line workers need the training but they need to advocate for respect and dignity with every conversation, it will benefit everyone.

Council Member Burns asked about the upcoming retirement changes slated for June 26th. He said that the State retirement plan was scheduled to change and go into effect that day. He asked if Labor Relations had come up with a plan for this change. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia reminded everyone that these changes will affect all the departments, not just police and fire. Often the Council Members hears about Police and Fire, but not about the smaller departments.

Mr. Paoletto said that the changes will affect Public Safety the most because it changes the retirement from the top three years of employment to the last two years of employment.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 18, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Mary McBride-Lee;
AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Council Member(s): M. Valle & R. Smith; Curtis Denton, ITS Director;
Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Acting Fire
Chief Lance Edwards

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and greeted everyone. He then asked the said that Committee members and representatives of the City administration identified themselves. Council Member Burns noted that the Committee Co-chair, Council Member Newton, was absent due to receiving an award for his work and that Council Member Hodges was absent due to a death in the family.

Mr. Curtis Denton, the Director of Information Technology Services (ITS), greeted everyone and distributed copies of the ITS Department Budget Presentation.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE ITS DEPARTMENT BUDGET PRESENTATION DOCUMENTATION AS EXHIBIT 04-18-2024-A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Denton explained his org chart, noting that a PRF had been submitted for the Security Specialist and that he was waiting to post the Support Specialist until Civil Service updates the job description. Mr. Denton later explained that a PRF is a Position Request Form, an official request to fill a position. Council Member Burns asked whether the interns were properly vetted; Mr. Denton confirmed that they were.

Mr. Denton continued to explain his presentation regarding accomplishments, including the rollout of a second IP datacenter location; assisting Civil Service and Labor Relations with recruitment and retention; and upgrading the City Council center and the Wheeler Rooms.

A discussion department challenges followed, including being on call seven days a week, all year long; inflation; and cybersecurity. Council Member Valle asked about cybersecurity risks that she learned about at NLC. Mr. Denton acknowledged the threat, noting that New Haven was recently hit with an expensive hack and even MGM in Las Vegas lost out on \$100 million.

Mr. Denton reviewed the Grants related to ITS. He noted two major increases to the ITS budget, including specific licenses as well funding for the Permitting study. Council Member Burns

asked about whether OpenBridgeport was actually used and at what cost. Finance Director Ken Flatto said he would look into it.

Mr. Denton went on to discuss a new Time Entry/Leave Mgmt. Council Member Herron noted that the Board of Education uses a similar program for the BOE, using the state contract rate. She also asked about ‘work from home’ practices and the possibility with this technology. Mr. Denton noted that similar WFH practices could be handled there. Council Member Herron noted that matters of fairness and equity as well as unions need to be taken care of on this policy.

Discussion followed regarding ParkCityPortal.com. Mr. Denton noted that the system seems to be working well, but could not comment on why the Permitting Study needs to go ahead.

A discussion about phones and other tech hardware followed. Budget Director Nestor Nkwo explained that all IT requests need his signature and all necessary for any such purchases.

Council Member McBride-Lee explained that the ITS office had been helpful to her directly. Council Member Herron asked about desktops vs laptops in terms of cost. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about making the basement of the Annex more secure. Council Member Burns asked about whether the Council would be able to access the skills of the GIS technician. Mr. Denton explained that that could be possible.

Mr. Denton left the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Acting Fire Chief Lance Edwards then joined the committee at the committee table. He distributed copies of his budget presentation and an Open Grants document.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE BRIDGEPORT FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET PRESENTATION DOCUMENTATION AS EXHIBIT 04-18-2024-B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE BRIDGEPORT FIRE DEPARTMENT OPEN GRANTS DOCUMENTATION AS EXHIBIT 04-18-2024-C.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chief Edwards noted the five current vacancies in his department, plus 12 vacant firefighter positions. He also shared that Bridgeport’s Fire Department staffing is much lower in personnel compared to New Haven and Hartford. He pointed to page 189 in the budget book to the request for three additional positions: one firefighter, one Fire Inspector, and one clerical assistant.

The intent behind the request for a new firefighter was to help with lowering overtime costs. Mr. Nkwo explained that his intent of adding the position was to reduce staffing shortages. Chief Edwards explained that that position could be used in that way only if shift totals were reduced below 63 firefighters per shift. Mr. Nkwo went on to question whether that new position would help with overtime. Discussion followed.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about the time needed for firefighter trainees to join the force. Chief Edwards explained about it included about 11-13 weeks of training, and about five-six months before becoming fully active.

Chief Edwards explained the need for an additional Fire Inspector to deal with the increased need for safety inspections and highlighted information in the budget packet. The clerical position is requested to address Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests that are now forwarded to the department, rather than handled directly by the City Attorney Office. Currently about 150 requests are in the backlog, and three different people are working on it. Mr. Nkwo explained that police are using an officer to address the Police Department backlog.

Chief Edwards also addressed the ethnic makeup of the department and highlighted that the staff included 10 women, including four women in promoted ranks.

Chief Edwards went on to address some of the public outreach and data on victims in fires. The outreach included a visit to PT Barnum Apartments at the request of residents and the EDITH program with flyers in English and Spanish. Council Member McBride-Lee explained that she tries to teach her students to listen and follow directions during fire drills, and that she would leave them behind if they didn't listen.

The after-hour task force including Bridgeport Fire and Police Departments, the Health Department, and CT Liquor Control has been effective. Council Member Burns asked about coordination and cooperation with the state liquor office. Chief Edwards explained that the Police Department has a good relationship with the Liquor Control office. Council Member Burns expressed his appreciation for their support.

Chief Edwards added that the City had 25 burn victims in the last year, and that all were the result of kitchen fires. Two fatalities also occurred.

Additionally, the Training Division engaged in cancer awareness and cancer screening efforts. PFAS (the so-called 'forever chemicals') continue to be used in the firefighter equipment because it is effective in keeping firefighters' gear dry and not heavy while fighting fires. Council Member Burns asked about PFAS being used in foam firefighting materials. Chief Edwards replied that those have been completely phased out.

Youth training and outreach has also continued. Council Member Herron noted that the Wakeman Boys and Girls Club on Madison Ave is part of the Cadet Program. Swim lessons through the Y are also part of the support program.

Dealing with the opioid epidemic continues, and there were 309 incidents last year. The Police and Health Departments continue to coordinate on the program. Mr. Flatto noted that the Finance Department is managing the funding that is part of a federal settlement. Chief Edwards added that a grant is helping support the use of Narcan by fire personnel.

Chief Edwards addressed the grants in the department. Some date back to FY21. LUCAS devices used for CPR were acquired three years ago. The department declined the same FEMA grant in FY22 since it was a duplicated. The Tech Rescue Grant has not yet been drawn from, but classes

are expected to begin this fall. The FY23 Port Security Grant has also not been drawn, but is intended for boat training.

Mr. Nkwo addressed some of the vehicle expenditures, including four vehicles at a total of \$160,000. There is a request for FY26 for a new fire engine for Engine 10 for \$1,000,000, which would cover the vehicle and its fit-up.

Mr. Flatto and Mr. Nkwo discussed how past CDBG funds had been used on a previous fire truck, and that the authorization remains in place. They discussed whether the item should be included in this year's capital budget. Chief Edwards noted that the delivery of such vehicles now takes 42-45 months. He also asked that the City plan to fund a new ladder truck for Tower Ladder 5, the busiest in the City. The estimate is \$2,700,000.

Chief Edwards also emphasized the need to replace Station 12 on Beechmont Ave. At 106 years old and lacking modern facilities, including for women firefighters, the building needs to be upgraded.

Discussion followed about budgetary line items. Council Member Burns asked about Floor Plan review fees. Chief Edwards explained that the process is digital today, but requires training and the additional inspector position would help this effort. Mr. Nkwo noted that the rates have not been changed since 2016. He added that overtime is sometimes used to manage these applications.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about whether propane tanks were regulated and inspected by the Fire Department. Chief Edwards replied that the department does not inspect those. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia also expressed concerns about natural gas. Chief Edwards explained that natural gas is safer than propane in some ways because natural gas tends to dissipate while propane sinks because it is heavier than air.

Council Member Burns asked about management of OT and its relationship to the new contract ratified a year ago.

Mr. Nkwo then shared a document outlining historic overtime trends, and noted there is much work to be done to get OT expenses under control by the end of the fiscal year.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENTATION OUTLINING HISTORIC OVERTIME TRENDS AS EXHIBIT 04-18-2024-D.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chief Edwards noted that more suspensions of firefighters for abuse of overtime have occurred this year, and that those should have an impact on overtime numbers. Mr. Flatto added that the OT is hurting the City budget.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia added that the committee had not spoken on the request for 100 units of SCBA gear for FY2028. Council Member McBride-Lee added that she is appreciative of the Fire Department's efforts.

Mr. Nkwo also noted that there are actually two in the Deputy Chief vacancies as long as Chief Edwards remains as Acting Chief.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 20, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Mary McBride-Lee; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia; Frederick Hodges (10:35 a.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): Council President A. Nieves; E. Martinez; M. Pereira; D. Spell (10:30 a.m.) & M. Lyons (10:45 a.m.); Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Anthony Paoletto, Mayor’s Office

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. A quorum was present.

Co-chair Newton then reviewed the rules and noted that Committee members would be allowed ask questions first.

GENERAL BUDGET REVIEW: PUBLIC FACILITIES

Council Member Burns said that he was submitting four documents that were produced in answer to questions that had been sent to the Chairs. He explained that they had invited Public Facilities to come and speak about the Capital Plan. However, the Public Facilities staff were not available to attend the meeting.

The following documents were entered into the record as follows:

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “ESTIMATED COST OF RECONSTRUCTION” AS EXHIBIT 04-20-2024A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “KLEIN BACKGROUND REPORT” AS EXHIBIT 04-20-2024B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “CITY OF BRIDGEPORT UNION MEMBERSHIP” AS EXHIBIT 04-20-2024C.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “CITY OF BRIDGEPORT UNION EXPIRATION, SHIFT DIFFERENTIAL.” AS EXHIBIT 04-20-2024 D.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “JUDGE FERRANTE/KLEIN COMMUNICATION.” AS EXHIBIT 04-20-2024E.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PRESS RELEASE.” AS EXHIBIT 04-20-2024F.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “WOODROW AVENUE OVER ISLAND BROOK.” AS EXHIBIT 04-20-2024G.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

CAPITAL PLAN

Mr. Nkwo then greeted the Committee and gave a brief overview of the Capital Budget grants documents.

Council Member Spell joined the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Council Member Burns said that the City Engineer is aware that the Council would like to hear more about the bridge projects. He explained that Mr. Urquidi has not had the opportunity to get back to the Committee with the information on the Island Brook project.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia spoke about the construction project near her District where a number of trees were removed for a new development. She said that this new construction could bring more issues to that particular area. She felt that the project should move forward so that the new development will not cause additional problems.

Council President Nieves said that she believed this should be part of the Island Brook project because it was so narrow.

Council Member Hodges joined the meeting at 10:35 a.m.

The discussion moved to issues regarding the Board of Education projects. Council Member Newton said that one of the projects was done in 2018 and there were design mistakes made.

Council Member Herron said that noted that in the past, several of school projects ended up with items that were wrong because the BOE had appointed an educator to the Building Committee. She gave an example of a HVAC system that was installed that was obsolete within 10 years. Council Member Newton said that it was important to have someone to know the ins and outs of construction, which he believed was Mr. Garcia.

The discussion then moved to asbestos, which was described as a runaway train. Council Member Pereira said that if they started during the summer break and opened up a wall, the project could rapidly expand. She wished to know what would happen then. Mr. Nkwo said that if they find out they were in a mess, they could apply for additional funding.

Council Member Lyons joined the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

Council Member Pereira felt that the asbestos project qualified as a Capital Budget item. Mr. Flatto pointed out that the bonds would not be issues for some time. He suggested that they allow \$50,000 to start the project. Mr. Nkwo said that if they started the project and discovered a major mess, they could use the General Fund and use the time to find money.

The Committee returned to their review of the proposed Capital Project Budget.

Council Member Burns said that there was a class action lawsuit linked to the Black Rock HVAC system similar to the issue at Harding. He noted that Mr. Garcia was now in charge of these project. Since Black Rock is an expanded school, there were issues joining the parts together. Mr. Flatto said that this would be one of the schools that money might come back from.

Council Member Pereira asked who the plaintiff was in the class action lawsuit. Council Member Newton said that it would be best to ask the City Attorney.

Mr. Nkwo continued his overview of the various projects.

Council Member Lyons asked if the BOE projects were submitted by the various building principals. Mr. Nkwo said that the Buildings Managers go to the site and inspect the area. Mr. Nkwo said that he was not clear on all the steps but knew for a fact that there would be an inspection before the City was informed.

Council Member Newton left the meeting at 11:00 a.m. and Council Member Burns assumed the Chairmanship.

Council Member Pereira noted that many of the students that attend the Aquaculture School are from the suburbs. She asked if the State had any responsibility for the

maintenance costs. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the State did not have any responsibility because they consider the school the same as the Discovery Magnet School.

Council Member Burns said that he had asked the same question and suggested that they discuss the matter with the State delegation.

The discussion moved to the Skane School.

Council Member Pereira said that when the BOE was present, she had asked where the South End School was. Several Council Members thought it might be BMA. Discussion followed about the current BMA location becoming the swing space when additional renovations are done on other schools.

Council Member Herron noted that on the proposed Capital Plan listing a number of the projects had already been completed. These projects need to be double checked to confirm that they are done.

Council Member Pereira said that several people had mentioned the use of ESSER funding and wished to clarify whether that funding was available. Council Member Martinez said that there was some funding left over from another project. Council Member Burns said that Mr. Garcia was very forth right and usually excellent about tracking the funding spent.

The discussion moved to a site in Council Member Spell's district where basketball and summer camps were held.

The Committee then reviewed the proposed projects for the various playground including concerns about the play surface material and the proposed repairs to the playground near P.T. Barnum.

Council Member Lyons asked for clarification on the status of Blackham School. Mr. Nkwo explained that due to issues with steam, the school was closed.

Council Member Pereira noted that ceiling tiles often indicate that there were leaks and she wished to know what was happening at Marin that required the installation of ceiling tiles. Council President Nieves said that when a walk-through had been done, a number of missing ceiling tiles were noted after the roof work in 2019.

Council Member Burns said that it was good to have reviewed the list since the Board of Education had been before them two weeks earlier. He said that they would follow up with Mr. Garcia about a few things that might be moved back a few years.

Council Member Burns said he had spoken with Mr. Burgos when he found out that no one would be available to attend the meeting and requested that they forward the information that they have regarding the Capital projects.

There are not too many Capital Project requests on City side other than the bridge projects and the Klein.

Mr. Flatto updated the Committee on a change for the WPCA request from \$1.9 to \$1.5 million.

RECESS

Council Member Burns announced a recess at 11:51 a.m. He reconvened the meeting at 12:04 p.m.

The Commission continued their review of the Capital Budget Plan for the City. The discussion moved to the ventilation system for the garage underneath the current Police Station. Council Member Burns and Mr. Nkwo will get more information about this project.

Council Member Pereira pointed out that if they identified a new location for the Police Headquarters and approved a plan, it would still take a few years before the building was ready. So, she felt that they should continue to consider a long term repair.

Council Member Herron agreed and said that Mr. Nkwo had mentioned liability issues. She also reminded everyone that the City did not have a site for the new Headquarters or the money for the construction.

Council Member Lyons asked for clarification on the change for the WPCA request. Council Member Burns explained that it was due to on-going upgrades at the facilities. Mr. Nkwo reminded everyone that they had reduced it from \$1.9 million to \$1.5 million. He said that they would take the debt service fees from the WPCA revenue.

Council Member Lyons also asked for clarification on the Fire Department request. Mr. Nkwo said that the Committee had moved the item to the General Fund.

Council Member Pereira asked for confirmation that the WPCA funding that was being allocated was being spent on repairs for the plant. Council Member Burns said that it was. He added that Council Member Newton was the WPCA Liaison and that both systems were being upgraded in stages. The design plans for the West Side plant have been received.

Council Member Pereira said that when Tom Bucci was Mayor of Bridgeport, he created the WPCA and it was just a separate tax. Discussion followed.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked for an updated list with the new figures. Council Member Burns said that they would have an updated list available before voting.

Council Member Herron left the meeting at 1:05 p.m.

The discussion moved to the use of police vehicles and the cost associated with the abuse of those vehicles. Council Member Hodges said that the Police Department is engaging in Gestapo type reactions and recounted how he saw four patrol cars go flying down the street.

Council President Nieves replied that this was an issue that needed to be brought to the Public Safety Committee and also mentioned to the Chief.

Council President Nieves encouraged the Committee members to review the requests from Public Facilities so that when the staff comes before them, they will have notes and questions ready to be asked.

Council Member Martinez asked why certain Public Facilities staff do not have to go through HR to be hired. She felt that all the hiring should go through Mr. Amado's office. Council Member Martinez asked for statistics and information on how the Office Manager at Public Facilities is able to hire who she wishes to.

Mr. Nkwo explained that there is funding allocated for the Department and as long as the funding is there, they can hire. Council Member Burns said that they would check with HR about this.

Council Member Pereira said a certain department had been requesting funding for years and she wished to have more information. Council Member Burns reminded everyone that they don't have every department come in, but if there were questions, the Council Members should email him so he can contact the director of the department for the information.

He noted that Council Member Herron had asked about the amount of electricity that the Board of Ed was using at the various buildings. He said that he had received the 20 page document and sent it to the Committee members, but pointed out that they don't have input into that budget item.

Council Member Lyons asked for information on recycling. Council Member Burns made a note of this.

Mr. Nkwo said that he would be sending an updated list to the Committee soon.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Bridgeport
Budget and Appropriations
Special Meeting
April 20, 2024

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 25, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Richard Ortiz,
AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the Public Hearing to order at 6:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

CAPITAL PLAN HEARING

Council Member Burns asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Committee regarding the Capital Plan.

Mr. Anthony Paoletto of 321 Lynne Place in Bridgeport came forward and said that he was in favor of the Capital Plan. He also thanked the Committee for all of their hard work on the Plan and the budget.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 25, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia; Mary McBride-Lee (6:50 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): E. Martinez, M. Lyons, R. Smith, A. Castillo (6:41 p.m.) & Council President A. Nieves (7:05 p.m.); Nestor Nkwo, OPM; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Anthony Paoletto, Mayor's Office; Thomas Gill, OPED Director; Bill Coleman, OPED Deputy Director; Arben Kica, Building Department Official; Paul Boucher, Zoning Official

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. A quorum was present. He noted that Council Member McBride-Lee had contacted him to say that she would be arriving late due to work obligations.

ZONING DEPARTMENT

Council Member Burns said that the Zoning budget was on page 342 in the Budget Book.

He also announced that the meeting would be recorded and the microphones were on. He asked Mr. Boucher if he had any documents he wished to share with the Committee.

Mr. Boucher said that his department had updated the budget document. He explained that when Mr. Minor, the Environmental Department director, retired a number of years ago, the Zoning Department inherited the Historical Commission and Inland Wetlands Committee as part of their department. This means that the clerical work is currently handled by Zoning, but Mr. Boucher has suggested to Mr. Gill that they combine those two budgets into one and move it into the Zoning budget. Mr. Boucher said that he had spoken with Mr. Flatto, Mr. Nkwo, and Council President Nieves about this. No one had any objections. This is why Planning and Zoning has an increase in the budget, which includes public hearings and Committee meetings.

Mr. Gill, Mr. Nkwo and Mr. Coleman joined the meeting at 6:37 p.m.

Council Member Burns asked about the Enforcement Officer who might be required to testify in court. He wished to know if they had all the staff needed. Mr. Boucher said that they do.

Council Member Burns asked whether the City should have their own Conservation Commission since there is such a large amount of wetlands in Bridgeport. Mr. Boucher replied that the Planning and Zoning Commission doubles as the Inland Wetlands

Commission. He noted that the Inland Wetlands Commission does not receive as many applications as Planning and Zoning. The Inland Wetlands consultant functions as an advisory to the Planning and Zoning Commission as to whether there should be a public hearing. This system seems to be working well. He asked if there were specific issues of concern.

Council Member A. Castillo joined the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

Council Member Burns explained that his District was Black Rock and that the Harbor is part of that District. He said that the residents were concerned about the environment and the land use in his District. Several constituents had asked him if the administration had thought about establishing an Environment Conservation Committee. Mr. Boucher pointed out that some of the issues were handled by the Harbor Commission.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about having a staff member available after hours when other zoning issues happen. Mr. Boucher said that there were union issues after 4 p.m. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia pointed out that there had been a staff member who was willing to work evening hours but due to sick time and retirement, that person is no longer on staff. She asked if the position still existed. Discussion about the details followed.

Council Member Herron said that the evening inspector was paid through grants funding. She also noted that in Trumbull, the Zoning official goes out in the morning and takes photos of hot spots. In Bridgeport, illegal construction is reported but nothing is done until the building is complete and the owner has to ask for a variance, which is wrong. The illegal construction needs to be stopped in the early stages. The City needs to be more pro-active than reactive. Her District and Council Member Lyons District are both experiencing a lot of activity in this area.

Mr. Kica then gave an overview of how the Building Department handles these issues and what the legal requirements and State statutes are. They have to be careful to follow the regulations otherwise the case will be thrown out of Housing Court. The Enforcement Officer is going out to visit sites as much as possible. Unfortunately, the process takes time because of the way that the law is written.

Mr. Kica explained that during the COVID shutdown, the court cases piled up. He suggested that the Council start thinking about changing the ordinance so that he could issue fines. There is nothing in the State Building code that would allow Mr. Kica to fine someone. Since there is no deterrent there so people will start a project without the proper documents.

Council Member Martinez said that she sends a lot of emails to the Building Department and noted that Mr. Kica responds promptly. She said that both the Zoning and Building Departments were on an antique system. One inspector is not enough and this is unacceptable. Mr. Boucher said that there were three inspectors. Council Member Martinez said it was still unacceptable to only have one Building Inspector. Mr. Kica said they had asked for an inspector two years ago and they finally got the staff member last

year. Council Member Martinez said to Mr. Nkwo that the Zoning and Building Departments were like the Health Department and have high volume. She said that their budgets should be higher with additional supportive services for their departments. Discussion followed about the budget on page 333.

Council Member Burns asked what happens when a case goes to the State Prosecutor. Mr. Kica said that most people come in to file for permits and very few cases have gone up to the State since the inspector has started working. Then the State will fine the individual and the State takes the money. Mr. Gill said that there had been a question asked to the City Attorney about being able to fine residents a few years ago but nothing ever came from it.

Council Member Castillo said that the Building Department was a real money maker for the City. He pointed out that there were only two electricians on staff. Mr. Kica said that they were fully staffed. However, since COVID, they are still catching up. The office was shut down for a full two weeks and during the following six months, only half of the staff was allowed to come in. Even so, the projects never stopped coming in. The hiring process takes time since the employees are on probation for six months. Discussion followed about staff being out on extended leave and which positions were vacant.

Council President Nieves joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Gill pointed out that when a Building Code violation comes in, it involves five different departments: Zoning, Fire Marshal, Engineering, WPCA and Building. The process can get bogged down in any of those five departments.

Council Member Castillo said that there is only one staff member in Building that speaks Spanish. Mr. Kica said that all their documents are in Spanish and pointed out that this can be a problem whenever there is difference in primary language.

Council Member Herron said that since the application computer has been available, it has been much better. She noted that many people do not know that if they want to renovate their kitchen, they have to have a permit. There are more than one permit needed like electrical and building. She said that the department was doing a great job and she would support more staff requests. These are the departments that bring in revenue.

Council Member Lyons asked if the Council Members could get some guidelines about the permitting and the areas where the Building Department is not allowed to interfere.

Council Member Lyons said that she did not like the new Planning and Zoning regulations. The Zoning Regulations were done during COVID and there were very limited questions asked during that time, mostly focused on downtown and Remington Woods. Now there are situations where people are moving houses to allow other houses to be built behind them. There are so many issues and Council Member Lyons said that they should put a moratorium on the Zoning until the Council can reconsider the Zoning Regulations.

Council Member Burns suggested that this issue be put on the Economic Development Committee agenda. Council Member Lyons said that this was fine but it will affect revenue.

Council Member Castillo left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

The Committee then moved to page 332 which listed the revenues. Mr. Nkwo then gave a brief overview of the various items listed on that page. Mr. Kica said his department had generated about \$4.4 million and there were still two months left in the fiscal year. He said that he believed that there was still another \$80 to \$90 million out there in unpaid permits. Mr. Gill said that there were projects that had unforeseen delays such as contamination. Mr. Kica said he was not sure if they would reach the projected \$4.8 million for revenue.

A discussion followed about some of the upcoming construction projects such Steel Point and a soccer stadium.

Council Member Martinez asked if the City pays for permits when projects are done. Mr. Kica said that if City employees do the work, such as a renovation to City Hall, the permit fee is waived. However, if the City contracts the work out, then the City pays for the permits.

Council Member Martinez asked about permits that had not been picked up by the applicant. Mr. Kica said that they are often aware of projects that have been stalled because of financing, but others they will send someone out to check.

Council Member Burns asked for clarification on how a fine would be applied for someone who started work without an application. Mr. Kica reviewed the details of how they would handle these situations. He added that often when they send someone out for a violations, when they go back for a follow up, they find the situation has been corrected, so they wouldn't issue a fine in that case.

Council President Nieves asked how long it would take someone to obtain a permit using Intergov. Mr. Kica said that it would be hard to say because an applicant might come in with a project to build a structure and find out that they have to get approval from ZBA which happens three months later. Then they have to go back to Zoning and are directed to Engineering, followed by the Fire Marshal, which requires a 30 day window for a review. In the past, the Building Department would not accept an application until it had already been approved by Zoning, Engineering and the Fire Marshal. Discussion followed about the time line involved and the role of Intergov.

Mr. Kica said that currently they are slightly behind the 30 day mark and they are looking to improve their efficiency. However, he noted that they are required to comply with the statutes.

Council Member Burns asked if an applicant would be given a list of the various items that have to be done. Mr. Kica said that when an application comes in, the system now

emails one of the staff and informs them that the project has been assigned to them. When the applicant goes to Intergov to apply, they set up an account and once that is done, they can go to review the progress on their application. The applicant can also see any uploaded comments and which department is reviewing the application. He also explained that an applicant can only upload documents from the outside source so the document goes through a firewall. While they can apply for the permit at the Building Department Office, they cannot upload their documents from that computer.

Council Member Herron said that when she started her process, it was before Intergov was active and she was given a paper checklist to follow. Now it is much easier online and very user-friendly. Mr. Kica said that it was still not a perfect system and still evolving.

Discussion moved to the recent hiring of a consulting company for a study and the fact that Mr. Gill, Mr. Kica nor Mr. Boucher were aware of this project. Mr. Coleman said that the thinking behind this consulting project was that the system was up and running, so now was the time to bring in a consultant to review it. The consultant will be interacting with all the departments as the study moves forward. Council Member Herron said that the study had been discussed in other committees a year ago.

Council Member Castillo rejoined the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Council President Nieves said that six to nine months ago, there were still issues with Intergov and the former CAO communicated with ITS about this problem. Discussion followed.

Council President Nieves asked for clarification on how the reporting process worked when people had construction materials in their yards and it was reported. Mr. Boucher explained that they send out a Code Enforcement Inspector. Council President Nieves said that it would be important to coordinate information between Blight and Zoning. There are a lot of repeat offenders. Discussion followed about the upcoming re-evaluation and the details of the study. Council Member Martinez said that the previous CAO should not have been undermining department heads.

Council Member Burns thanked Mr. Boucher and Mr. Kica for their time.

OPED

Mr. Coleman came forward and handed out several documents.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “ OPED ORG. CHART, FY 25” AS EXHIBIT 04-25-2024A.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “ OPED DEMO PROJECTS” AS EXHIBIT 04-25-2024B.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Gill greeted the Council Members and gave a brief overview of information in the Organization Chart.

Council Member Burns expressed concern about the fact that the position of the Planning Director and the Deputy Director for the Department have been vacant for so long. Mr. Gill said that they had held interviews for both positions and two candidates were in the approval process.

Council Member Burns directed everyone to pages 324 & 325 and 329 in the budget book. Mr. Nkwo reviewed the information on the budget with the Council Members. A discussion followed about the details of some of the invoices for special events that were submitted including DPW and Fire such as including the cost of benefits.

Council Member Lyons left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Council Member Herron asked if copies of the invoices for the special event could be presented. She felt that the Budget Committee should see those documents.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia had several questions about the parking revenues. Mr. Gill explained that the City receives a document from the State about the number of cars and the revenue that was brought in. The contract states they should deduct the expenses from the operator on site and the remaining revenue is split 50/50. When the garage is used by the Amphitheater uses the garage for overflow parking, the State reports the number of vehicles and the City also receives 50% of that revenue. The City receives revenue if the Arena has an event or when the Amphitheater have overflow parking. The Arena sends the City revenue for parking on the surface lots. Discussion followed.

Mr. Gill explained that the Amphitheater was just starting their season and the last events were held in September He added that the City should be receiving some revenue from that soon. He also pointed out that there were also 13 concerts scheduled in the coming weeks until the close of the budget year in June. He said that OPED anticipated the parking revenues to exceed the forecast.

Council Member Herron said that there were a number of events at the Amphitheater where no parking fees were charged. There is some limited VIP Parking in the first three rows in the surface lot near the Amphitheater but she added that the charge was minimal.

Council Member Castillo asked where the people would park when the surface lots are developed. Mr. Gill said that an RFP would be released for those who have private parking garages. Council Member Castillo asked why the City wasn't generating the parking fees itself. Discussion followed about the details involved with having the City handling the parking requirements.

Council Member Castillo asked why the City did not have a Parking Authority. Mr. Coleman said that this had been discussed years ago.

Council Member Burns said that if they had been originally told that the surface parking at the Amphitheater would be free but now they are charging for VIP parking for the first three rows, when the contract is renewed, that should be part of it.

The discussion moved to parking meters kiosks downtown. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that this was nothing new and that Norwalk, New Canaan and Stamford have these systems installed. She urged the staff to looking their systems.

Council Member Burns had some questions about the Amphitheater and Arena R&R accounts, which Mr. Nkwo and Mr. Gill reviewed with him.

Mr. Gill then gave a brief overview of three upcoming demolitions, which the Building Official has deemed unsafe. He reviewed the estimated cost of these demolitions and some Capital funding that might be repurposed for these hazards. He explained that when these buildings have been demolished, the sites can be developed. Once all the calculations on this \$11 million dollar project were completed, it became evident that the City was short by approximately \$4.5 million. He explained that it was concerning that not only are these structures at risk of collapsing, but there might be someone, such as kids or homeless individuals, inside when they do.

Discussion followed about the use of taxable vs. non-taxable bonds to cover the shortfall. Mr. Flatto said that they could discuss with Bond Counsel but also noted that these projects would be taking place on private property. He added that doing the demolitions would benefit both the City and the New York property owners. Council Member Herron asked about using eminent domain. She reminded everyone that the City was on notice.

Additional discussion followed about the details of one of the parcels which had been put on the court docket and recently heard by a judge. Mr. Coleman gave the Council Members an update and said they were waiting on the judge's decision. He added that once the 30 day period is over, the City can go in demolish the building, which would be cheaper for the City than declaring the eminent domain.

Council Member Burns then asked about the environmental issues and potential contamination abatement in the soil. Mr. Gill then noted that OPED had been meeting with the developers on a regular basis. He gave the details about the structures involved.

Council Member McBride-Lee left the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

The discussion moved to the issue of liability and public safety. Mr. Gill pointed out that with these properties, there were a number of contingencies that come into play. He said that any actions that the City takes regarding these properties has to be on behalf of the residents, not a future developer.

Council Member Castillo asked which property they would start with. Mr. Gill said that they might start with Warnaco and then possibly move to Cherry Street. Council Member Castillo asked whether having half the money would help and by the time the two parcels were completed, it would be a new budget year. Mr. Gill said that if they were able to start the project, the contractor would have to secure the site. The City Attorney's Office would have to look at the liability issues. Without the funding, they can't issue a Purchase Order. Discussion followed about re-evaluating the finances on some of the other projects and reallocating the funding to this project.

Mr. Coleman warned everyone that depending on the amount of deterioration they find in the buildings, the cost may increase if they have to "drop" the building. It seems like the City is treading water.

Council Member Burns said that he would like to see more jobs available in Bridgeport and that the City was trailing their peers in this area. He would like to see more jobs created. He asked what OPED was doing to attract big businesses and employers.

Council Member Burns also noted that over the past 10 years, it appears that the Grand List had flat lined. This affects the bonding issues. When there are staffing shortages, routine processes take longer.

The discussion moved to the Grand List.

Mr. Coleman said that they were looking towards doing more work with the MBEs. He said pointed out that out of the 48,000 working residents, approximately 36,000 residents work outside the City and there are 12,000 employed in the City.

Mr. Coleman said that the City is ahead of projections on the Grand List in the area of Building Permit revenue and activity. When sites like the Remington site are developed, there will be more economic growth. Council Member Castillo said that the company had received a grant, but they have to raise matching funds.

Council President Nieves spoke about a potential employer who would need students with STEM skills. The company should be up and operational in about four years.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED " BRIDGEPORT GRAND LIST" AS EXHIBIT 04-25-2024C.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED " CT DATA LABOR FORCE" AS EXHIBIT 04-25-2024D.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 27, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Richard Ortiz, Mary McBride-Lee; AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Council Member(s): A. Boyd, J. Cruz, M. McCarthy, D. Spell, Council President A. Nieves (10:20 a.m.); R. Smith (10:20 a.m.); M. Lyons (10:40 a.m.); E. Martinez & M. Pereira; Nestor Nkwo, OPM; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Anthony Paoletto, Mayor's Office; Bill Gaffney, Interim Tax Assessor; Veronica Jones, Tax Collector; Lisa Farlow, Acting Purchasing Agent

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. A quorum was present.

Co-chair Burns announced that Council Member Hodges had an excused absence due to a schedule conflict and Council Member Herron had an excused absence due to family matters.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT – VOTE ON CAPITAL PLAN

Mr. Flatto greeted the Council Members and gave a brief overview of the six different units of the Finance Department and includes the Print Shop, the Mail Room and Purchasing.

Council Members Martinez and Spell joined the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

He reminded everyone that the Finance Department is involved with all of the Departments in the City administration. He gave an overview of the positions that were in the City in 2017 when this administration started and which ones are still active in 2024.

Mr. Flatto then distributed a PowerPoint document on the Finance Department to the Council Members. He also updated the Council Members on some of the recent Civil Service testing for the Purchasing Department and the Tax Collector. He noted that there has been difficulty to fill other positions by other municipalities in the State. Mr. Flatto then continue to review the various positions that the Finance Department is responsible for with the Council Members.

Mr. Flatto said that his department was not asking for a lot of new money other than for one item. He noted that there would be a re-evaluation period starting next fall, which would be effective October 2025. It takes about a year to 15 months for the process to be

completed. He said that he hoped that the re-evaluation staff would have more access to buildings than they did in the previous re-evaluation. Mr. Flatto said that they have estimated the cost for this re-evaluation and that is the one item that has increased in the budget based on Mr. Nkwo's figures.

Mr. Flatto explained that the re-evaluation process was starting now with Purchasing and gave a brief overview of the overall system.

Council President Nieves and Council Member Smith joined the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Mr. Flatto said that he was grateful for his staff and all their hard work.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED "FINANCE BUDGET PRESENTATION" AS EXHIBIT 04-27-2024A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Burns asked about the billing process in Purchasing. Mr. Flatto explained the new electronic process and said that most of the submissions are routine and the unusual ones are reviewed by the staff to insure that the proper signatures are there.

Council Member Pereira said that she had a question about page 4 of the document. She said that the Grand List decreased and that should honestly be included on the record.

Council Member Pereira asked what the current bond rating was. Mr. Flatto said that he believed that Bridgeport was slightly below the AAA rating. He gave the details of the factors that are used to calculate the City's rating. He noted that the values of the properties were based on the values from 2020.

Council Member Pereira said that in 2020, the real estate property values were out of this world. She felt that when the re-evaluation happens, the value of the property will have decreased.

Council Member Lyons joined the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

Discussion followed about the key drivers, tax abatements and market values.

Council Member Burns pointed out that the re-evaluation was released in October of 2020 and he felt that it did not reflect the changes in the property values. He had questions about the value of new construction that happened since 2020. Mr. Gaffney gave a brief overview of how that value would be calculated. He added that when residents build something without a permit, it will be taxed. Council Member Pereira said that when she sees construction and does not see the permit posted in the window, she reports it to the Building Department. Mr. Gaffney said that she should also let the Tax Assessor's Office know.

The discussion moved to the tax status of properties purchased by Sacred Heart University along with what the current State reimbursement was. Mr. Flatto said that the State used to reimburse the cities more but it has decreased over the years.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked Mr. Gaffney for details regarding the property taxes on rentals which he reviewed with her. He said that he would speak with Mr. Flatto to make sure the information is accurate. Mr. Flatto reminded everyone that a person who has a summer rental would have to be in Bridgeport for six months in order to prove residency.

Council Member Lyons asked what would happen with college students who bring out of state vehicles to school. Mr. Gaffney said that the students would have to reside in Bridgeport for six months before they can be required to change their vehicle registration. Discussion followed about third party owned residences and tax exempt properties. Mr. Flatto said that they would ask about having the assessment company look into information about out of state vehicles.

Council Member Burns asked for more information about the Purchasing program, what it would cost and how it would enable the City to become more efficient.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “ OPENGOV” AS EXHIBIT 04-27-2024B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Farlow then greeted the Council Members and spoke about the Purchasing process and noted that the problem comes when the bills need to be posted. It is important to have all the steps and all the information on the request so that when the documents gets to the buyer, all the needed procurement information and insurance information is there, which will give the City a wider net for the vendors. The current system is antiquated. The new program will streamline the process and make it more efficient. The requesting department will also become more efficient because they will be able to spend more time on their other tasks.

Council Member Burns asked about Contracting Officers. Ms. Farlow said that this would be the program manager in each department. Mr. Flatto said that the Contracting Officers don't decide who gets the bids, but they review the information for accuracy before it goes to Purchasing. Discussion followed about the details.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that there were many who believed that Bridgeport was not a city where education was a priority, but she pointed out that the Council Members barely even deliberate on the BOE budget.

Council Member Burns asked about LOCIP funding and what kind of additional projects could be leverage. Mr. Flatto reviewed the amount of funding and the other details involved with this funding. He noted that one of the final payments from last year had just been received.

Council Member Spell left the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

Council Member Martinez asked how the City tracks the license of out of state vehicles. She said that she has seen a number of vehicles in the upper parts of Bridgeport with out of state license plates such as Alabama and South Carolina. Council Member Martinez said that it was clear these were homeowners since the vehicles don't move and the vehicles aren't being registered in CT.

She said that she did not think that the City informs the veterans about the tax breaks available.

Council Member Martinez asked Mr. Gaffney if she could contact him via the City web page when she sees additions being built onto existing buildings. Currently, she informs the Building Department. Mr. Gaffney said that his contact information was on the City website and she could contact him through that.

Council Member Lyons asked if there was a way to get taxes from property owners who rent their properties. Mr. Gaffney said that it would be very difficult to do since the property owner is already paying taxes on the property. He added that he did not think the City would have the authority to do that.

Mr. Flatto said in that in some communities, the Health Departments issue permits to make sure the property is safe before it is rented. The discussion moved to the Health Department issuing a Permit of Occupancy.

Council Member Lyons asked what would happen if the BOE had a separate tax line for the mill rate similar to what the Library currently has. Mr. Flatto said that he would look into it but believed that it was not allowed by the statutes. Council Member Pereira pointed out that the Library mill rate was approved by referendum. Mr. Flatto explained that the State allows the municipalities to tax residents for real property and personal property. They don't allow separate tax lines. Mr. Nkwo explained that if a mill rate was set for the BOE, it would create problems, especially if the taxes decreased in the City.

Council Member Lyons asked how long it takes to produce the budget book with the figures because there are many changes that happen between the time the figures are submitted until the Council receives the printed copy. She wished to know how accurate the figures in the budget book were.

Council Member Martinez left the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Mr. Nkwo pointed out that the figures were submitted and had been audited numerous times over the years. The proposed budget is formally adopted and if there are changes in the figures, transfers are done within departments. He noted that there was no way to predict a retirement or a death.

Council Member Burns explained that this was a snapshot of the financial number on March 1, 2024. Therefore, the figures are two months old. Council Member Newton

pointed out that there wasn't a way to show the real time figures because the changes happen daily. The Council may believe that a figures should be higher, and they can increase the proposed amounts.

Council Member Pereira has several detailed questions about the PILOT payments on page 60.

Council President Nieves and Council Member Cruz left the meeting at 12:16 p.m.

Council Member Pereira asked how the PILOT payments appear to go up and down. Mr. Nkwo explained that the PILOT payments are calculated with different rates and terms.

Council Member Smith left the meeting at 12:18 p.m.

Mr. Nkwo reviewed several of the specific properties. He explained that the Council votes on the overall construction, but if the financing is not available, the PILOT conditions have not been meet. That means that the revenue is not there. Other projects have a particular, set revenue threshold. Ms. Jones also explained that there was a set PILOT tax collection schedule when the City can start collecting taxes. Council Member Pereira said that nothing in the contract speaks about getting Building Department documentation. She added that this was not okay because the Council reviewed the schedule and approved it. Whatever the Council votes on should be what is done. Council Member Pereira stated for the record that she votes against every PILOT Payment that is presented for approval. Discussion followed.

Council Member McCarthy asked about the construction manager and the collection process, which Mr. Flatto reviewed with him. A discussion followed about how the finances are handled between the General Fund, bond money and what the State reimburses. Mr. Flatto explained that the State often changes the paperwork that has to be submitted for reimbursement, which means that it take more time to process things.

The discussion moved to Public Facilities. Council Member Pereira spoke about how O&G had offices in 999 Broad Street and were informed that they had to move out within 48 hours. She noted that all the Council does is appropriate funding but this was displaced by the School Building Committee.

RECESS

Council Member Newton announced a recess at 12:30 p.m. He reconvened the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED "PUBLIC FACILITIES CAPITAL BUDGET REQUEST" AS EXHIBIT 04-27-2024C.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Newton said that the positions of Director of Public Facilities had just been filled.

Council Member Burns said that they had hoped to vote on the plan at this meeting but the Council Members had just received the Public Facilities requests. Mr. Nkwo then gave a brief overview of the Public Facilities Capital Plan budget requests. Mr. Flatto reminded everyone that this was a wish list.

Council President Nieves rejoined the meeting at 12:50 p.m.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the five year plan was a guess-a-met, but also pointed out that it gives the Budget and Appropriations Committee an outline and a plan to work towards. Discussion followed about the various items included on the list, such as the City wide security improvements and the drop boxes. Mr. Nkwo said that there was funding left in this year's budget to adjust the cameras on the drop boxes. Council Member Newton said that they would look into this.

The discussion moved to the paving issues and lawsuits about potholes.

Council Member Burns asked for a listing of the vehicles that the City had purchased in the last year. Mr. Nkwo reminded everyone that Public Facilities was in charge of purchasing all the vehicles for the City except for Police and Fire.

Council Member Pereira then spoke about the details shown on the January 19th wish list and the \$2 million request for equipment. She noted that the request was not just cars, but mail room equipment, a fork lift and other items.

The discussion moved to the funding amounts that is held in reserve for contingency. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that she would like to have copy of the paperwork involved with issues like the Klein Memorial.

Council Member Pereira had several questions about the equipment that the Golf Course was requesting. Council Member McCarthy said that there was a great deal of work needed at the course. Council Member Lyons pointed out that the course generates revenue. Council Member Burns said that when the Golf Course staff was present in the future meetings, they could ask those questions. Discussion followed.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she was concerned about the amount of flooding that was happening in her district and also that when the funding comes it, it is disturbed equally.

Council Member McCarthy asked for a list of how the grant funding was distributed to the various Districts. Council Member Newton said that he would check into this.

Council Member Lyons said that the flooding on the Rooster River had funding allocated for it some time ago. She said that she did not want to hear any more excuses. All the districts are suffering with the flooding. One of the reasons is because the staff is changing during the project.

Council Member Lyons asked what the status was for Old Town Road because there was supposed to be some kind of agreement with Trumbull about the road's condition. Council Member Newton said that the City Engineer would be meeting with the Committee in the coming days and they would ask for an update on that then. Council Member Pereira said that she had spoken with someone from Trumbull about Old Town Road and she was told that Trumbull had done their side of the road but Bridgeport had not.

Council Member Pereira asked about the \$5 million dollars that former Representative Jack Hennessey had gotten for the City and \$43 million in funding that Marilyn Moore had also secured for the City. She said someone was supposed to follow up on that funding.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia spoke about cleaning out the pipes that handle the water so that the flow is not impeded. She said the WPCA should be asked to help with updating their piping underground. Council Member Newton said that he was the liaison for the WPCA and explained that they had been waiting for over 2 years for the permits. The discussion followed about the long term issues with the surrounding towns not helping Bridgeport with the flooding issues, so Bridgeport should be charging these towns that have sewage coming into the Bridgeport system.

The Council Members then reviewed the Capital project funding listed on page 9 including the Island Brook project along with the projections for the outlying years.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER ORTIZ MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 29, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Scott Burns, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron
AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the public hearing to order.

Dr. Levy-Davis, the Superintendent of Schools, came forward and greeted the Council Members. She stated that the District currently serves students from over 80 different countries. The District's role is to assist the students with achieving the American dream. They also have several priorities that include case management for each and every student. The speaker said that they wish to track the students long after they left the schools to determine exactly what the data set is and how successful they are as a result of receiving an education in the District. Many parents, teachers, community members are looking forward to a new era of education for the Bridgeport Public Schools and this is what the staff is striving to do. It will take time and Dr. Levy-Davis is dedicated to do this, which will require no less than 10 years.

Dr. Levy-Davis said that this work also requires that they provide their teachers with competitive salaries and adequate facilities. Every teacher needs to be provided with adequate support and training so they can deliver clear instruction and information to the students the first time.

The District also needs to be accountable to the divergent students with Special Needs and need a completely different type of support. They are working towards greater inclusion and limiting the amount of time the divergent students spend in self-contained classrooms. This will provide them with greater opportunities to interact with their peers and requires an innovative approach in how the teachers deliver instruction, how they communicate and inform parents and how the teachers are trained to support the students.

Dr. Levy-Davis said the curriculum that the District uses requires a complete overhaul. It has to be coherent, challenging and innovative for the students, and also provide instruction for the English language learners who arrive in the District. They have a great need of support in language and adjusting to a new culture.

Dr. Levy-Davis said she is committed to delivering these services to the students, but was looking for the same level of commitment from the City Council. It does not have to happen all at once, but it should increase over time. This will help the students attain success over a long period of time.

Dr. Levy-Davis thanked the Council Members for their consideration and support.

The next speaker, Ms. Christine Baptiste-Perez, came forward and greeted the Council Members. She stated that she was the Chair of the Board of Education. She said that she had done some background research because she hears the same narratives that the Council Members do, including the underfunding of the District and other things. The majority of the School Board is looking to move forward and in order to do this, they need funds. She added that she does understand the Council Members' perspectives.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez noted that there have been five Superintendents since March 2014, which means that there has been a new Superintendent every two years. The average tenure of a Fortune 500 CEO is about 10 years. The Board will be using the allocated funding wisely because they have a highly qualified and certified Superintendent and a well-equipped District Office that can address all the needs. It may be hard to think of the investment now, but as Board Chair, she has noted some issues that have come to her attention. The Board understands the Council's position and they are working on a plan to change things. This includes providing teacher education and better training. They need the investment now, but they will be using the money wisely and directing the funding thoughtfully to insure student success. With the pattern of the two year turn over, it is hard to make the investment, but this is the first time that Ms. Baptiste-Perez can promise the Council to see a return on their investment. Bridgeport will be that turn around where students walk with their heads held high and the pride when they say "I am from Bridgeport."

Ms. Baptiste-Perez thanked the Council Members for their time.

Ms. Jennifer Perez came forward and greeted the Council Members. She stated that she was the Board of Education secretary and a lifelong resident, who attended the Bridgeport Public Schools. Underfunding has been a long term issue. During her time as a teacher, she paid for many supplies out of pocket and worked two extra jobs on week-ends. During her last year teaching, there were massive cuts and para professionals were eliminated from the District. With the COVID relief funds, they were able to hire back some para professionals and support staff. This budget would allow them to just maintain the staff they already have. \$3 million is just not enough. They need additional dollars to work towards the future for successful student outcomes.

Mr. Joseph Sokolovic came forward and greeted the Council Members. He stated that he was a member of the Board of Education. He said that he did not disagree with anything that anyone has said thus far. He said that he hoped that the City Council and the Mayor would take care of Bridgeport's children by not closing the schools, but by properly funding them. He noted that he had previously testified before the Council about the funding in past years. The Council bears the responsibility for the 25/26 Fiscal Year. This year, the District needs \$41 million dollars just to keep afloat with what they currently have. He spoke about past freezes and cuts. He said that there would need to be an increase of \$52 million dollars from last year's budget. There are no savings to cover the gap. If nothing changes, they are looking at six school closures in the 24/25 school year. Please remember this moment.

The next speaker was Albert Benejan Grajales came forward and addressed everyone in Spanish.

At the conclusion of his remarks in Spanish, Mr. Benejan Grajales said that this was not the first time that he was present to address the Council Members. There is something going on in the

Bridgeport Schools. They need to be sure that the schools are funded. Schools need to be prepared to educate the students. It is not for the Council to say that the District does not know what to do with the money. This is not the first time that they have spoken to the Council about this issue.

Mr. Robert Traber was the next speaker. He greeted the Council Members and stated that he was a member of the Board of Education. He said that his first time of speaking before the Council was about 30 years ago and since then he has testified as a parent, as a teacher and union leader. Now he is a member of the Board of Education. He requested that the Council allocate the District the \$16.7 million in requested funding. This will, as Mr. Sokolovic said, keep the District even with the services they are currently providing.

He said that over the years, he has dreamed of the Bridgeport students receiving the same level of services and education as those in the neighboring towns of Fairfield, Westport and Darien. Everyone would like to see the students receive those levels of services, but right now, the request is for the students to continue to receive the current level of services. The Mayor has offered \$3 million, but if they don't get more than that, they will have to take between \$12 and \$13 million out of their ISF savings account. There will be about \$3.5 million in service and turn over cuts already. That will leave the District with about \$1.5 million in the savings account for the next year. This will result in cuts next year of about \$40 to \$50 million dollars. Instead of kicking the can down the road, they are asking the Board to chip in \$13 million above what the Mayor has suggested.

Mr. Traber said that he has worked with Council Member McCarthy, Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia and Council Member Herron in the past. If the Council could continue to contribute \$1 million a year, which is very doable. If this was done, they would be able to offer the same services that the students in Fairfield, Westport and Darien receive. Right now, they are working on closing the ESSER gap and fund the budget that the Superintendent has requested.

Council Member Burns called Mr. William Medina forward. Mr. Medina greeted the Council and said that he would like to have the Council just spend some time imagining what a great school environment and a great education looks like to the Council Members. Now he is here six years later, still asking the same question. He asked the Council what they thought the schools would look like in five years. He noted that Waterbury spends \$30 million dollars in education and this is more than they spend on their Police officers.

Mr. Medina said that he had been challenging the Council Members to do the right thing for many years. Everything is on the table. Under the Superintendent's Budget, it shows that the District has received less than a 3% increase over the last ten years. People receive raises, but the City does not invest in their schools. He urged the Council Members to think about what an excellent school system looks like and said that Bridgeport has not cut the mustard in this City. Bridgeport is the largest city in the State and now they have to build a foundation that has never been built before. They have been short in their funding for education for decades. Now they may have to close down schools because of funding. The change has to start sometime and let's make this year the year.

Mr. Medina said that there had been a list published of the top 100 earners in Bridgeport and 99 of them were police officers. The City spends over \$7 million dollars just on overtime. How many better buildings and teachers could the District have with \$7 million dollars?

Mr. Medina thanked the Council Members for their consideration and time.

Council Member Newton said that he had forgotten to announce that the speakers should give their names and addresses when they came forward to speak to the Council Members.

The next speaker was Kendra Brewen, who came forward and greeted the Council Members and said she was present to speak about the Youth Powers Meeting. She asked the Mayor and the Council to invest more money in the education initiative. She said that she was a Special Education student and was worried about her education. She would rather spend her time working on her education and would like to become an aesthetician. This was not easy for her because she doesn't want to fall behind. The education budget has fallen behind since 2014, but the Police budget has kept on track. She asked why the Mayor was not supporting students like her and said it was disappointing. The Council needs to work with the Mayor to allocate more funding for the students' budget.

The Youth Power Committee is looking to open the first youth led, College and Career Counseling Center program, which will be led by trained high school students. In order to create this program, they need the support of the Mayor, the Council, the Superintendent and the Board of Education to increase the budget.

Ms. Arensa Gonzalez was the next speaker. She greeted the Council Members and said that she was also a member of Youth Power. She said that she was disappointed with the Mayor's Budget with only \$3 million for the education budget. She is personally affected by the underfunding of the school budget and was calling upon the City Council to allocate more funding to education and specifically to the College and Career initiative.

Ms. Gonzalez said that she was no longer a Bridgeport school student because she attends a technical college in Milford to learn about architecture. She left the Bridgeport Public Schools because her experiences there were not good at all. Each year, she started off learning the same material repeatedly. This has an impact when she started 6th grade in a Charter School. When she was finishing up 8th grade, she started looking at the various schools in Bridgeport, which were not promising at all. This is why other students like herself are leaving for other schools outside the City. She noted that there had been a drop in school enrollment of over 1,000 students. Students are leaving because they feel they cannot succeed in the Bridgeport Public Schools. This shows that the schools need to do better.

She said that the Youth Power program is focused on the College and Career Counseling program that they want to open in 2024/2025 at Harding High School. She was calling on the Council and the Mayor to increase the funding for education.

Ms. Emily Revera came forward and greeted the Council Members. She said that she was speaking on behalf of Maritiza Contradas of Saunders Avenue. Ms. Contradas' daughter is a student in the Bridgeport Public Schools. She said that their goal is to achieve a fair and

equitable education for all students no matter where they come from or what language they speak.

Ms. Contradas arrived in Bridgeport seven months earlier from her native Venezuela. She heard about the Welcome Center for newly arrived parents and they helped her register her daughter for school. Unfortunately, the bi-lingual schools are over-crowded because the students need to learn English and have fewer opportunities than their peers. The funding will end this year and the program will stop.

Ms. Contradas also had concerns about students who have part time educational days. Many students have to wait a long time for a seat in those programs. The schools do not have the resources for educational success. Increasing the funding by \$3 million dollars will not solve the problems that the educational system has.

Ms. Contradas was calling on the Council Members and the Mayor to provide the funding for all the students so they have good educations. When Ms. Revera finished reading Ms. Contradas' comments, she thanked the Council Members for their time.

Ms. Leslie Carabya was the next speaker and came forward to greet the Council Members. She lived on Howe Street in Bridgeport. She remained silent for approximately 30 seconds and said that the silences was intentional because that is what the parents receive from the Superintendent.

She said that she was present for more than what the Superintendent gives the parents. Year after year, they come to the Council to ask for more. There is an on-going issue that Dr. Levy-Davis will not discuss with people about closing a school this summer. Ms. Carabya said that in a recent article, Dr. Levy-Davis had called others liars. Ms. Carabya asked if the District cared about the students or cared about their pockets.

Ms. Carabya said she was fed up and asked the Council to please support the students and give more funding because the Superintendent's math never adds up correctly.

Ms. Mona Mon was the next speaker. Ms. Mon said that she was Connecticut born and a native. She grew up in Bridgeport, attended the Public Schools and the Lighthouse Annex program. She ended up continuing her education in Trumbull due to the lack of education in Bridgeport. Her parents moved the family to Trumbull. The neighboring towns provided better educations. She went on to speak about Park City Magnet School. Currently, Ms. Mon said that she was studying for her Master's in Public Health at the Reed School in New York. She loves Bridgeport but noted that a neighbor moved to Fairfield due to the poor quality of education in Bridgeport. In order for Bridgeport to produce scholars like her and those standing behind her, the Council needs to allocate more funding to the schools.

Council Member Newton commented that Ms. Mon was a prime example of what a Bridgeport student can become if they want to. He congratulated her on her achievements.

Ms. Cass Shaw was the next speaker signed up. Ms. Shaw greeted the Council Members and said that she lives in the Brooklawn section of Bridgeport. Ms. Shaw said that everyone had mentioned that the City was between a rock and a hard place when it comes to the budget and

also acknowledged that it was the students – the children and youth of Bridgeport who pay the price. She said that she had seen the Board Members and others begging the Council for more funding. If the District doesn't allocate more funding, they will have to draw down on their savings just to get through the year. But she asked, what about next year and the year after that? She asked the Council Members to be pro-active as they look towards the future. They need to create a long term plan – 3, 5 or 10 years. They need to recognize that they don't have the resources by themselves. It will be important to find partnerships to create a sustainable pathway. It won't help this year or next year, but they are faced with this issue every year. They have to find a way to make this work for the future.

Just Resto came forward and gave their address in the East End and said that they were from the Park City Path and was an advocate for all the schools. They said that the current proposal lacked essentials and the potential school closure was a wake-up call for many people. The parents are panicking and rightfully so. How can the City expect meaningful change without providing the necessary funding and resources. The schools are underfunded. She asked what would become of the dedicated staff members and others if they close schools. Regardless of political affiliation, the primary concern was always the well-being of and the future of the children. The school buildings have endured years of neglect and underfunding. It is time to provide the fundings for generations to come.

Council Member Burns called the next speaker, Ms. Callie Heilman, forward.

Ms. Heilman came forward and greeted the Council Members and gave her address. She said that she was a Bridgeport parent and usually brings typed out remarks to the meeting. This is her eighth year coming to the Council for more funding. This is too depressing, particularly in terms of the financial challenge. She asked the Council Members what their plan was for next year. She said that since 2017, they had cut 243 positions and this has been discussed before, including kindergarten paraprofessionals, math coaches and many others. In 2019, there was a discussion about having the students walk 2 miles to school in order to save money. There was also a discussion about closing schools back then.

This crisis has been coming for years, but the pandemic delayed everything. Now the chickens have come to roost and you are reaping what you sowed. Pick your phrase. It's time to face the truth and it is time to make a plan. The plan can't be that next year 100 more positions will be cut because at the current staffing levels, the students are not receiving the services that they deserve and need. Everyone knows this because it is the truth of the situation. If the Council doesn't come up with a funding plan for the District, the Council is saying that it is okay that they lose these additional positions and that the education system continues to decline.

Ms. Heilman said that she knew that the Council Members do not believe that their role is to make the education system even worst. This requires a radical plan. She suggested that the Council asked every department to cut their budgets by 10% and that savings amount is combined together and given to the District. This year is the year it must be addressed. The time for waiting is over.

Ms. Gemime Davis of Cottage Place came forward and greeted the Council Members. She said she did not come with prepared remarks, but would agree with Ms. Heilman. She said that she had been coming for the last eight years to ask for more funds. Now she is asking for solutions.

Ms. Davis said that after George Floyd was murdered, they came together with the Council to discuss the budget and increase funding. There was a detailed look at the Police Budget and some changes were made. Now it is time to look at that budget again and make more changes.

Ms. Davis said that the Council consider the Superintendent's suggestion about the mill rate. It is time to think creatively. Ms. Davis said that she was born and raised in Bridgeport and attended the Bridgeport Public Schools in the 80's. It is sad to see what has happened since then. She said she would encourage them to follow the same process that they did in 2020. The Mayor has proposed \$3 million, but it is time to think outside of the box.

Ms. Shyla Robinson of Trumbull Avenue was the next speaker. She said that she was coming to express how tired she was. She has raised four children, two of which have graduated from the schools and two of which are still in the District. She said that she was tired of coming to beg for money for her children's education. The parents come every year and the conversation is always the same. The common denominator across the board is that the students need their services, the bi-lingual and SpEd students need their opportunities. The teachers need support.

The community spends more time attending funerals and supporting people when they lose someone than they do supporting teachers. The community expects teachers to show up and be amazing but are not providing support. If the children don't attend school, the parents receive visits, email and threats when children miss too many days of school. But the system doesn't provide the children with an education. Instead, they are closing schools and the parents are begging the City to provide the funding.

Ms. Robinson said that in the proposed budget there were some things that needed to be reallocated because she doesn't believe in a top heavy budget. Those who make the top dollars like the Mayor and the Police Chief need to have their budgets cut.

Mr. Chris Caruso was the next speaker. He came forward and greeted the Council Members and said he lives on Beechmont Avenue. Mr. Caruso said that after one of the meetings when Mr. Caruso had suggested to the Charter Revision Commission that they abolish the Taxation Enforcement Commission and give the power of the budget to the City Council. However, the Council Members are policy makers and Mr. Caruso felt that the Council Members have greater power than the Executive branch. They have the ability to change the budget to reflect the concerns of the City.

Mr. Caruso then spoke about how the ECS funding had not increased and gave the details. He said that they need a vision of where they want the City to be, but added that the tax base was shrinking because the grand list was also shrinking. The base has changed from home ownership to 55% rentals. There is less and less development happening in the City. Where does education fit into the vision? He reminded everyone that when people are looking to move to a new location, they look at the education system. That is why people are looking to the suburbs. There are many bright stars in the system, but not every child has access to them.

He went on to give some suggestions. The Mayor said that he wanted a legacy, but here are some suggestions. Mr. Caruso said that over 9,000 people had driven past stopped buses that were discharging students and had their stop signs out. 9,000 drivers. If they charge \$250 per vehicle that would generate \$2.2 million dollars. Senator Gaston has submitted some legislation that would allow the municipalities to collect that money. Mr. Caruso suggested that they have a City attorney in charge of collecting that money and any funds collected go right to the Board of Education. The Council has the power to create that policy and to hold the administration accountable.

Secondly, he suggested a hiring freeze across the board. Next year, if the taxes increase, the room will be packed with people.

Look at last year's budget and take any surplus funding and send it towards education. It's time to tap into the reserve. He also mentioned allocating the interest that the City is making on that reserve funding to the Board of Education.

The Council's budget should be clear and show what direction the City is going in. How does the role of education fit into the plan for the City? If they allocate \$3 million dollars, that will be a temporary stop gap. The ECS formula needs to be revised and the City needs more money for education.

The Council is the policy making board. The Superintendent of Schools is trying to do her best and the City should meet her half way about the budget.

Council Member Maria Pereira was the next speaker called forward. She greeted the Council Members and said she resides on Granfield Avenue. She said that there were so many young men present and asked how many had received a great education. Some go off to college, others to the military and others become a trades person. Many think they don't have what it takes and they end up incarcerated or in the cemetery. The Amphitheater and the soccer teams will not change the trajectory of the City, its residents or its youth. The City has to invest in the public schools. There is nothing negative that comes with that because it will affect every neighborhood and every community by giving the most important constituency a solid education.

Council Member Pereira said that she had attended public schools and received a great education. She said that out of the 169 district in the State no district, no city, contributes less to the public schools on a percentage base than Bridgeport. Only 28% of the funding for public schools comes from the City and 72% of the funding is from the State.

If the \$3 million that the Mayor has allocated is divided by 19,500, which is the projected enrollment, that allocates \$154.00 per student extra next year. If you divide that amount by number of school days, each child is receiving an extra .84¢ a day. How could this change anything them? This administration has been in office for 8 years. Over that period, the administration has given the students an extra .46¢ a day. The first three years, the administration proposed \$0. Council Member Pereira said that she was on the Board of Education when that happened. Math specialists, reading specialist were all let go.

New Haven will receive \$2,800 more per pupil than Bridgeport. If Bridgeport received the same amount that New Haven is getting for Bridgeport's enrollment, that would be an extra \$54 million per year. Hartford is getting some \$5,534 per student than Bridgeport. That would be \$108 million per year.

Where is Bridgeport's delegation? Council Member Pereira said part of the problem is that they may not feel like Bridgeport has skin in the game because of the low percentage that the City contributes to the schools. She said that she would not vote for a budget that does not truly fund the schools.

Ms. Kayla Medina was the next speaker. She came forward and greeted the Council Members and said that she was present to address the Council Members about the fact that they need to be transparent about how the City's finances are managed. Despite the calls for greater transparency, the schools and the children continue to suffer. Closing schools is unacceptable and indicates a severe flaw in governing. The Superintendent cooperates with both the Council and the Mayor, yet despite the alignment, the District still struggles to address the financial needs of the schools. She encouraged the Council Members to extend the support to address the urgent needs of the schools.

The recent proposal to allocated a mere \$3 million dollars to the schools is insufficient and is simply a band aid where a real solution is needed. Some Council Members profess dire ignorance regarding the condition of schools in their districts. However, as elected officials, they are entrusted with the well-being of their constituents and it is clear that their duty to the schools is being neglected. As residents and taxpayers, she said that she recognized that the budget is more than just a number, it is a reflection of the City's values and priorities. It indicates where the resources and allocations are. What does the budget say about Bridgeport's values, and economy? The advocates shouldn't have to keep coming to the City year after year and asking for more money.

Ms. Medina said that she had three daughters and has been here year after year, fighting for more money. Her daughters are now 25, 22 and 19, but Ms. Medina is still here asking for the same budget increases. When is enough enough? She said that there should be more transparency and accountability. They should work together as a community.

Council Member Newton thanked everyone for coming out to share their concerns about the budget. He said that in the last eight years, this has been a much better and more experienced Committee. Council Member Newton said that they would take the comments expressed into consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services.

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 30, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia; Mary McBride-Lee (6:06 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): A. Castillo, E. Martinez, M. McCarthy, M. Pereira, D. Spell, R. Smith (6:11 p.m.); Council President A. Nieves (6:27 p.m.) & M. Lyons (6:33 p.m.); Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Luis Burgos, Director, Public Facilities; Paul Catino, Public Facilities; Bret Caulfield; Luann Conine, Recreation; Aaron Curry, Deputy Director, Public Facilities; Greg Dancho, Beardsley Zoo; Angel dePara, Public Facilities; Lee Grisby, Parks Commissioner; John Hosier, Parks Commission Chair; May Myers, Lee Nastu, Parks; Anthony Paoletto, Mayor's Office; Steve Roach, Fairchild/Wheeler Golf Course; Joe Tiago, Deputy Director, Public Facilities

CALL TO ORDER

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

Co-chair Newton announced that Council Member Hodges had an excused absence due to illness.

PUBLIC FACILITIES : PARKS ADMINISTRATION

The Committee turned to page 286 which listed the administration.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT INTO THE RECORD TITLED "PARKS AND RECREATION PUBLIC FACILITIES PRESENTATION" AS EXHIBIT 04-30-2024A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Burgos gave an general overview of the Parks Department and the budget requests to the Council Members.

Council Member Smith joined the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

Council Member Newton had several technical questions about the staffing which Mr. Burgos answered.

Council President Nieves joined the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked about the vacant positions, which Mr. Curry reviewed with her.

Council Member Castillo asked about the work staffing for parks maintenance. He pointed out that the seasonal workers were only employed for four months and don't care if they destroy the equipment.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about how people obtain information about using the parks and ball fields. Mr. Burgos and Mr. Curry reviewed the details on 286 with the Council Members.

Council Member Lyons joined the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

Mr. Curry added that there was also maintenance included in part of the usage contract. Discussion followed.

Council Member Newton asked about the park check points. Mr. Nkwo gave an overview of the revenue that comes in via the checkpoint.

Council Member Spell asked about the number of part time and full time employees. Discussion followed about the staffing listed on page 243.

The discussion then moved to the concession stands and vehicles parking on the lawns. Council Member Herron pointed out that the Seaside vendor trucks had not made much money because they were totally inside the park where if they were parked closer to the streets, they would do more business.

Council Member McCarthy had several questions about the maintenance requirements and tracking employees' work time, which Mr. Burgos reviewed with the Commissioners. Council Member McCarthy said that he would like a more formal discussion on how the work time is managed.

Council Member Martinez congratulated Mr. Burgos and Mr. Curry. She said she had issues with seasonal workers. Council Member Martinez stated that it was her opinion that it was frustrating for the Department to constantly bring in seasonals, did not provide consistent service and was a political maneuver for positions. The time management is a waste because they have to keep training them and the temporary employees are not likely to maintain the equipment carefully. Full time staff can be held accountable. There is a lack of training for seasonals and there are liability issues.

Council Member Martinez said that the Parks Directors can't do it all. She said that the City had just lost the Fire Marshal, who was the only one who knew how to read the building blueprints and specs. She said her concerns was if they only have one Parks Director and something happens, the City will lose all the knowledge and skill. There should be funding for the departments that needs it.

Council Member Pereira read the section from the Charter about the appointment of the Director of Parks every three years by the Board of Park Commissioners and approved by the Mayor. She reminded everyone that this was a Charter requirement, not her personal opinion.

Council Member Pereira asked why the park cleaning crews don't clean the dog park while they are on site. A separate group of people have to do it. She said that it was being treated like a stepchild. Mr. Burgos said that when a crew is sent to clean the park that is what they have to do. However, a separate crew handles the bags and other items. Council Member Pereira said that if a crew is there, they should do everything. Mr. Burgos said they could look at this again.

Council Member Pereira said that seasonals were terrible. They are unreliable, and don't care. She said that she believes in quality. She asked why they can't raise the pay rate for seasonals. Mr. Burgos said that part time and full time come in a higher level. Discussion followed about which union was involved and what kind of incentive they were offering for CDL license holders.

Council Member Burns said that in the past, they had a Public Facilities Director with two Deputies and then there was a Superintendent of Parks and a Parks Manager. Currently, the City does not have a Parks Manager. He noted that Mr. Caulfield joined the staff a few years ago as a certified Tree Warden. There is a great deal of work to be done and they need someone who can oversee all the parks. He asked if they were tracking the efficiency of their work. Discussion followed about adding more maintainer positions.

Mr. Curry explained that they often lose qualified people to the State because of the much higher pay rate.

Council President Nieves reminded the Council Members that approximately half of the elected Council Member that were in the room had voted to eliminate the Parks Director position back in 2016. She also pointed out that all the Council Members, along with Mr. Nkwo and Mr. Flatto are aware of what is in the Charter but they didn't do it. The Parks Maintenance Positions only increased by 1 position since 2018. She reviewed the various changes since 2018 and suggested that they consider re-purposing positions. Mr. Nkwo and Mr. Catino reviewed the details on page 299 with the Council Members including the revenue from Sound on the Sound event, maintenance of City owned properties and tree trimming.

Council Member Lyons noted that one of the parks by 90 Acres took seven years to get the signage installed.

Council Member Lyons pointed out that there was an area where there was a lot of student parking and it needed to be posted with "No Parking" signs.

Council Member Castillo then spoke about some vehicles that were being used by businesses but not being taxed. He said that there were vendors from the East End were

coming in to use the parks and wanted to know where the revenue from those sales was going. Council Member Castillo said that the revenue from the food truck sales should be given back to the Parks Department rather than being put in the General Fund.

The discussion moved to the Contingency Fund and golf course maintenance and the sidewalk program.

Council Member Pereira has some detailed questions about the information on page 136. She wished to know why the golf course projection was \$2.2 million after four solid years of revenues that were over budget. Mr. Flatto and Mr. Nkwo reviewed the details and spoke about the driving range project.

Council Member Pereira asked why there was a lease from WICC included in the budget. Mr. Flatto said that there was a cell tower that they lease.

Council Member Martinez asked Mr. Catino if there were statistics available on advance services that were provided for tree stump and tree removal. Mr. Catino said that he did not but he could generate a report on it. Council Member Martinez said that Mr. Catino had mentioned earlier that Council Members had been calling him about having trees and stumps removed. She said that she would like to know which Districts this was happening in.

She asked if they were bidding the tree trimming jobs out or using one vendor. Mr. Caulfield gave the figures for 2023 that they had spent on tree trimming and noted that the number of trimmings had increased. He said that he did not have any information on stump removals, but could get that information for the Committee.

Council Member Martinez then said that there were trees planted along the State roads but that the City was not maintaining them. The City should not be planting trees unless they are going to maintain them. It is wrong to make the homeowners responsible for the trees that the City is planting. Mr. Caulfield said that in the past, the City would plant a tree for those who asked for them just to make people happy, but that is not the direction he would be moving in. Discussion followed.

Council Member Burns asked about the seasonal employee pay as grant funded that was listed on page 276 under Recreation. Mr. Nkwo gave the Committee a general overview of the process. One of the staff members apologized for the confusion regarding the labeling of that particular line item.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ENTER A SPREADSHEET TITLED “A COMPARISON OF FY18 TO FY 24-25” AS EXHIBIT 04-30-2024-B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Burns had several questions about adding maintainers to the department. He said that they had added a maintainer but discovered later that the employee was working behind

a desk rather than out in the field. He said that if another position is approved, they would like that new employee to be out in the field.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia expressed concerns about the liabilities of tree trimming and removal. Mr. Caulfield said that he agreed with Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia's safety concerns. He explained that he reviews the jobs on a case by case basis to determine whether it should be done by staff or by a contractor. If the removal is along a roadway, he leans towards using a contractor that has a trained and experienced crew to handle the job. This is one of the increases in the budget.

Council Member Castillo said that his next door neighbor had some overgrown trees that had surrounded a transformer and the sidewalks buckled. Mr. Caulfield had staff remove the trees and the pole was so old that it had to be replaced. Now they are waiting for the stump to be removed by the energy department.

Council Member McCarthy had some questions about the various job responsibilities. Mr. Burgos gave a brief overview of the jobs.

Council Member Newton asked about the Zoo accreditation. Mr. Dancho updated the Committee about where the Department is regarding that year-long process. Mr. Dancho listed a number of new goals such as identifying and labeling the trees and other plants. He noted that there were large number of school groups expected and explained that the tiger's habitat was being renovated. He encouraged everyone to come and see the new Andean Bear exhibit. Bridgeport residents had free admission on Saturdays. They will be spreading this program out over the year.

Council Member Pereira said that Mr. Dancho was a consummate professional. She asked if there was anyone trained to take over if Mr. Dancho retired. Mr. Dancho said that the Zoo suffered a major loss when the Deputy Director, passed away. Mr. Dancho said that the search for a new CEO is underway.

Council Member Herron thanked Mr. Dancho for all his hard work. She noted that the Zoo staff had changed the procedures to allow the animals to have more autonomy and leave the viewing area if and when they wished to do so.

Council Member McBride-Lee said her class had recently toured the Zoo and they loved it. Mr. Dancho said that they had renovated the Rain Forest Exhibit four years ago and just finished the Andean Bear habitat. Council Member McBride-Lee said that Mr. Dancho was doing a great job.

Council Member Burns asked about the free compost that the Zoo had received. Mr. Dancho then said they received some compost from Black Rock, used the compost on the zoo grounds and it had worked out well.

Council Member Pereira asked Mr. Caulfield about the tree removal and leaving the stumps behind. She noted that some of the stumps still had live roots that were growing and damaging people's properties. When there are vehicular accidents that end up damaging trees, the City will

often come in and remove them, but they do not replace them. She gave several examples of where trees were removed and caused additional problems.

Mr. Caulfield replied they are trying to hold people accountable when they damage trees that ultimately require the tree to be removed. He said that he does look at the area and while they may not put the tree back in the exact same spot, because of sight line issues and other factors. He said that they will continue to work on this.

Council Member Pereira said that the more trees they have, the cooler the City will be and gave some examples.

Council Member Burns said that there were some of the Parks Commissioners present who wished to speak to the Committee.

Council Member Burns asked about a particular restaurant being bid out. Mr. Flatto updated the Committee on the lease conditions.

Parks Commissioner Chair John Hosier and Parks Commissioner Vice Chair Lee Grisby greeted the Council Members. Commissioner Hosier said that they have several large tracts that are parks and that when the Department asks for boots on the ground, it's important to remember how large of an area that they are maintaining.

Commissioner Hosier then asked about the \$50,000 a year that Sound on Sound was supposed to generate. He said that the Parks Department had not received any funding from that event. Mr. Nkwo said that last year, they had received the money.

Commissioner Grisby asked if there was a particular line item included in the budget for this. Mr. Nkwo explained the process. Commissioner Hosier noted that there was a contract in place with legal conditions. Discussion followed about the details.

Council Member Herron noted that Mr. Nkwo had not received invoices from the various departments. Mr. Nkwo sent out the bills two months ago. In her opinion, this is ridiculous. The Parks Department should get the funding. She said that she will be reviewing the invoices and criticizing them carefully.

Council Member Pereira said that Mr. Nkwo had stated that Public Facilities didn't issue an invoice. She said that she had never heard of a contract that required an invoice. Mr. Nkwo reviewed the details with her. She said that the contract states what the developer owes the City. Mr. Nkwo said that the City must issue an invoice to remind the entity that they owe the City the money. Council Member Pereira said that the City should not be required to send the contractor an invoice since it is stated in the contract.

Council Member McCarthy asked if they would be able to have a group of maintainers. Mr. Burgos gave an overview of the current employees. Mr. Caulfield said that they have to work on retaining employees. Discussion followed about recruiting employees. Mr. Curry also said that they have contacted CCM about what other towns were doing.

Council Member Pereira said that in 2009, the BRBC had received a grant to evaluate all the schools and ascertain where there were needs. She said that the Parks Department did not appear to have had this type of analysis done.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 1, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Scott Burns, Co-chair; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia; Mary McBride-Lee (6:06 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council President A. Nieves; Council Member(s): A. Boyd, J. Cruz, M. Lyons, E. Martinez, M. McCarthy, M. Valle, D. Spell (6:09 p.m.); & M. Pereira (6:25 p.m.); Nestor Nkwo, OPM; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Luis Burgos, Director, Public Facilities; Aaron Curry, Deputy Director, Public Facilities; Jon Urquidi, City Engineer; Thomas Gaudett, Chief Administrative Officer; Ted Ferrente; Paul Catino, Public Facilities; Tom Noriko, Sikorsky Airport; Michelle Otero, Associate Director, Public Facilities; Joe Tiago, Deputy Director, Public Facilities; Lawrence Cass

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

Co-chair Newton announced that Council Member Hodges had an excused absence due to illness.

Council Member Lyons was then recognized by the Chair to address the body. Council Member Lyons said that she appreciates everything that everyone is doing on the Budget Committee. She said that she is not on the Budget and Appropriations Committee but felt it was wrong that she had wait an hour to have one of her questions answered.

Council Member McBride-Lee joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

Council Member Newton said that the Committee members ask questions first and that there is no time limit on the questions. He reminded everyone that if he goes to another Committee, he has to wait until the other Committee members speak first before he can ask questions.

Council Member Lyons said that while she agrees with Council Member Newton, the same question is asked repeatedly so that the Committee member can sneak in personal concerns.

Council Member Newton said that the Committee members would continue to have the right to speak first on Committee business and this would not change.

Council President Nieves then thanked everyone for coming and said everyone had a budget book. She said that she had spoken to Council Member Burns about allowing

anecdotal questions because the meetings are running until 9:30 or later. If there are individual issues, the Council Members should contact the Department Directors directly. She said that when OPED was present, there were so many individual concerns, the Committee did not vote on the Capital Budget. Because of this, the Saturday meeting will include the vote on the Capital Budget.

The staff from Public Facilities then introduced themselves to the Council Members present.

Council Member Newton said that the Engineering Department to present first. He stated that all the questions should be related to the budget.

Mr. Urquidi greeted the Committee and said that he would give a General overview first and then speak about Island Brook. He said that they expected \$900,000 from FEMA for City wide flood studies. The studies will focus on the Rooster River and have been started. Island Brook does not have any data available at this time because the studies have just started for that area. While the City already knows where the problem areas are, funding for these problem areas has not been available until the last few years. The Rooster River is quite long and there are multiple engineering project being worked on by Fairfield. The Ox Brook is in the final stages of Phase 1.

The projects take a long time because they have been neglected for some 50 plus years. Once the studies are done, the City will have to go through a process with DEEP before the work starts. These projects will most likely be over \$100 million dollars.

Council Member Newton said that one of the major concerns was that the money that was allocated for Island Brook stays with the project. Mr. Urquidi said that past allocations for that project would remain with that project.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she had been told that the money allocated for Island Brook had been transferred over to Ox Brook. Mr. Urquidi explained that he has nothing to do with moving funds, he is just the City Engineer. However, he added that he was aware that there was between \$250,000 and \$350,000 allocated specifically for Island Brook in Year 2 of the Capital Budget. Mr. Nkwo reviewed the details and said that there was no reason to bond for the funding until the City is ready to start work on the project. Discussion followed.

Council Member Burns asked for confirmation regarding the flood projects that were in the Capital Budget. Mr. Urquidi said that they were Island Brook, Ox Brook, Rooster River and one additional one. He said that the City had received some FEMA funding and some of the allocated amounts will be needed for matching grant requirements.

Council Member Burns asked about the timing of the various projects and the bonding status.

Mr. Urquidi said that the Ox Brook project was the one that was most advanced. The plans have been submitted to the State and the ACOE for final permitting. The

environmental impact statement is already completed and \$1 million is the contingency for the \$5 million bonding. He cautioned everyone that the \$6 million funding may not cover the entire cost of the project.

There is a potential project involving the Rooster River at the Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course. That project is in the permitting process also. There is also a dredging project for the back area of the Rooster River. The remaining projects are still in the study phase.

Council Member Martinez said that twenty minutes was not enough time for reviewing a department budget. She said that often emails aren't answered and this was poor representation of the department.

Mr. Urquidi said that he has always been very responsive to all the Council Members when they send emails or call.

Council Member Pereira joined the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Mr. Urquidi explained that the General Fund contains a line item for a position, but the salary is not attracting qualified candidates. The staff member that is leaving has qualified to process reimbursements for State and Federal funding. He requested that the Council consider filling the position with a comparable position.

There was also a request for an increase for the Traffic Superintendent that did not make the Mayor's Recommended Budget. The staff member is qualified but is being paid less than the commercial market.

Council Member Burns said that there were a number of excellent Department Directors in the City and Mr. Urquidi is one of them. He handles multi-million dollar projects and has also taken on additional duties over the years without extra pay or complaint. Now a key staff member is leaving.

Council Member Burns said that he was advocating that the Committee reinstate the Department position that was eliminated. Council Member Martinez seconded. Council Member Newton said that they would consider this when the time comes.

Council Member Martinez left the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Council Member Pereira asked if there had been any additional information on the \$43 million that Marilyn Moore had spoken about last year and Rep. Jack Hennessey had talked about many years ago. Mr. Urquidi said that some money was being used for Ox Brook and that project was nearing the finishing line. He said he did not believe that the \$43 million had been bonded yet. The funding will be needed for some property acquisition, for the design and for permitting.

Council President Nieves has several questions about the various bridge assessments, replacements and the status of the boat ramp, which Mr. Urquidi and Mr. Nkwo answered.

Council Member Cruz asked about demolitions and Mr. Urquidi gave a brief overview of the process.

Council Member Pereira asked about the funding for Congress Street Bridge replacement. She pointed out that the bridge was critical to connecting various districts and said she was concerned about what would happen in the event of a major fire at Harborview.

Council Member Pereira said that if they don't have permission, they cannot demolish a private developer's personal property.

She asked for clarification on the position that Mr. Urquidi was asking for. Mr. Urquidi said that he was just asking to replace the employee that was leaving. Council Member Pereira said that Engineering got a 9% increase since 2008 which was more than other departments. Mr. Urquidi said that he had assumed the responsibilities for a number of different roles such as handling the traffic signal maintenance and licensing and permits.

Council Member Pereira asked for clarification on the use of State Bond funding and if there is a time limit. Mr. Urquidi said that with one project which has gone on for 8 or 9 years, every time the City gets close to the finish line, DEEP changes the requirements. Discussion followed.

Mr. Urquidi left the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she felt Mr. Urquidi had been flip with her when she asked about one of the project funding. Council President Nieves pointed out that when a bond package is presented, the funding may not be authorized by the Bond Commission for some time after that. Council Member Newton said that he had been on the State Bond Commission and gave her a brief overview.

Council Member Pereira said that she felt it was wrong for Senator Moore to make an announcement that she had secured \$43 million for general flooding. Mr. Gaudett said that the Governor controls what projects are included in the bond package. He added that he did not doubt that Senator Moore received some type of commitment for the funding. The question is when it will be included in the bond packages.

Regarding the Congress Street Bridge, Mr. Gaudett explained that the City had been working on grants and had \$12 million from the State and \$12 million more from the City but the Federal Government is holding things up. There was a meeting about this and one grant they thought that they were going to be awarded did not come through. He went on to give a brief overview of the project, which should be done in two parts: demolition and the second part would be design and construction. Mr. Urquidi had been correct in that his department was doing whatever they could to move the project forward but until the Federal Government gives the funding, the City won't be able to replace the bridge. Discussion followed about the details.

Council Member Pereira noted that when the Mayor was running for re-election, he had promised to work on flooding but that there had not been one dollar spent on fixing the problem. The flooding has gotten worse. \$43 million would be a major step forward in fixing the issue.

PUBLIC FACILITIES : ALL NON -PARKS DIVISIONS

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED “ POSITIONS REQUEST – PUBLIC FACILITIES” AS EXHIBIT 05-01-2024A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Burns directed everyone to page 211, which was Public Facilities Administration.

Mr. Burgos greeted the Council Members. He said that he could not stress the need for the maintainers for the department. He was requesting four additional maintainers. Bulky Waste Pick up has been very successful.

Council Member Burns noted that there was a clerical assistant listed on the first two pages and then a roadway maintainer and another maintainer position.

The discussion moved back to the Council’s concerns regarding hiring individuals as seasonal maintainers.

Council Member Burns wished to know why Mr. Burgos was asking for four positions, not two or eight. Mr. Burgos said that they do shift people around as needed. Council Member Burns said that the Department had the same number of staff members for a number of years, but they added to the staff over the last six years.

One of the staff members pointed out that they needed a Maintainer 4 to handle a front loader; a number of CDL licensed drivers. The demand for pick-ups has increased from 50 daily to 250 daily. Council Member Pereira said that she had a crew pick up something and they did a great job. She noted that the crew needed about five people to handle all the bulky items. She said she was really happy with the door knob hangers because so many people aren’t on social media. This major, additional service has been a big benefit and the Department needs more people to do the job.

Council Member Spell directed everyone to page 211 and said that she had added up the figures that were in the budget. The City is spending a lot of money on this section. She said that there was a major portion of expense on Special Projects. ‘

Mr. Curry explained that Bridgeport was the largest city in the State and that most of the projects take a team to accomplish rather than one staff member. Public Facilities is the largest department in the City. Mr. Nkwo also gave a brief overview of the figures on page 211.

Mr. Tiago said that when he joined the department, they needed more staff and since then, some of the new supervisors have been able to redirect the work more efficiently.

Mr. Catino said that by sharing the work, they produce more value. He reminded everyone that the numbers do not reflect the amount of work that is handled by the department. He said that he has been handling the payroll reconciliations since he started in the department. There are between five and seven people doing roadwork every day. The budget provides finances, but doesn't reflect the actual service. The service is provided by manpower. There are always trade-offs.

Council Member Cruz then spoke about his viewpoint from the outside of management. In his past jobs, Council Member Cruz said he had operated almost piece of equipment that Bridgeport owns. He reminded everyone that Public Facilities deals not only with the roads, but with the trash, the buildings and so much more. If the Department says that they need more people, they need more people.

Council Member Newton said that this was not an easy budget this year and if they want more people they will have to go without in others. Council Member Cruz said that Public Facilities was like the Police and Fire, their work benefits everyone.

Council Member Herron reminded everyone that the ARPA funding will not carry over into next year. Any positions covered with ARPA funding will no longer have funding.

The discussion moved to the services provided by the City, such as evictions, what the State Statutes cover and whether or not the evicted tenants should pay for the storage costs for their possessions. Council Member Pereira said that she felt the City should get a legal opinion as to whether the items should be auctioned off to cover the cost of storage, which the statutes allow or if the City is allowed to charge the tenant the cost of the storage.

Council Member Pereira said that last year, she had submitted her list of roads for repaving. She said that during that time, she had noticed many streets that were repaved and said that the DTC leader was involved in that. She then spoke about the legislature had given the City the power to do this. There were streets that were paved that were not on her list and other that were on the list were taken off. If this happens again, Council Member Pereira said that she would hold press conferences about it.

One of the staff said that some of the streets that were repaved might been done because of utility work. Further discussion followed about the various funding allocations.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED " FT MAINTAINERS" AS EXHIBIT 05-01-2024B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Burns asked about the transfer of two workers into the Lines and Signs division. He was told that the two workers also handle complaints when items like Stop

Signs or street signs go missing and assist with crosswalks for the Board of Education. There is a foreman and the two workers.

Council Member Burns asked why some jobs took so long to do and mentioned a job that had been approved by the Police Commission and involved a school. It took three years to actually have the job completed. The staff member said that there have been times when the Police Commission has approved a project, but the City Engineer disagrees, so Public Facilities may not hear about the project until much later. The staff member gave a brief overview of the approval process.

Council Member Newton said that it was important to have someone look at the schools because there have been people hit by cars speeding near the schools. The staff member said that he would send all the Council Members an application for Lines and Signs requests. Discussions followed about the schools that need attention.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia had several questions about revenue that the City generates from mulching. Mr. Tiago and Mr. Nkwo reviewed the details with the Council Members.

Council Member Burns asked about the status of the Klein AC unit. One of the staff members gave a brief overview of the situation. The department is working on a solution.

Mr. Tiago said that last year, the system died and work was underway to secure a brand new unit. The new unit will arrive at the end of July and they are anticipating that it will take six weeks to install the unit and have it start functioning. The temporary unit will be on site for the summer and will be located where the new unit will be installed. The rental will cost \$73,000 for the three month rental.

A representative of the Klein thanked Public Facilities for handling this issue. He said that if the building gets too hot, the performers could faint on stage and reminded everyone that there are also the stage lights to consider. There are 70,000 people coming through the doors every year. A problem with the lime leaching out of the mortar has also developed.

Council Member Newton said that one of his pet peeves is that the City of Bridgeport has buildings and they don't keep them in good repair. Discussion followed.

Council Member Pereira asked for details on page 8 of the Capital Budget and the line item that had to do with tennis courts. Mr. Burgos was told that the allocated funding had to do with the upkeep since many of the courts have programs that are held on them. He added that it may also cover ball courts and the ones on school grounds.

Council Member Pereira asked whether the request for the \$2 million dollar for the Police Headquarters ventilation issues was real. Ms. Otero replied that it was very real and not all the windows close properly. Council Member Pereira said that it bothers her to spend that much on a building they will be replacing in the future. Mr. Tiago pointed out that

the façade on the Police Headquarters was bowing out and would cost \$50,000 to repair. He gave the details about the failing concrete and other areas of concern.

Council Member Burns wished to know about garbage pick-up and the recycling pick up and the amount of time involved. Mr. Burgos said that it depended on the route itself and gave an estimate of about 6 to 7 hours per route. A staff member explained that as the City grows, the amount increases. For Sanitation alone, they need 24 workers but only have 20. Discussion followed about the details of the pick-up times and various routes.

Council President Nieves had a number of detailed questions about Sikorsky Airport, which was listed on page 302 of the Budget book. Mr. Norko reviewed the details with her. She also wished to know the status of the Museum at the Airport. Mr. Norko said that they had received the funding and were waiting to start work.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about some property that the Town of Stratford had but belonged to the City of Bridgeport. Mr. Norko said that he would look into this.

Council Member Burns had some questions about the various airport line items. He asked if the Airport could provide the Committee with a monthly report for the Landing Fees and other revenue increases from the newly negotiated leased contracts. The discussion moved to the different amounts listed in the budget.

Council Member Pereira wished to know if the airport was bringing in revenue. Mr. Nkwo said that it was.

Council Member Burns asked for an update on the tipping fees and recyclables. Mr. Catino explained that in the past, recycling used to generate about \$130,000 annually, but now there has been a change and it has become a \$600,000 expense. It costs the same amount per ton as solid waste. The State and DEEP require the City to recycle and to enforce the recycling. Not recycling is not an option. Only the #1 and #2 are actually able to be recycled. Glass is a problem because there is no real market for recycled glass and often has to be picked out by hand. Mr. Catino said that the biggest complaint from the recycling plant is when residents put plastic bags in the recycling bins. He asked the Council Members to make their constituents aware of this. The Department has reached out to the public in a number of ways about this.

Mr. Catino went on to speak about the solid waste issues. A new organization has taken over the operation and they are not investing in the same type of plant that Bridgeport has. Hartford has had some problems and now is shipping their recycling out of state by train to Pennsylvania or Ohio. Bridgeport has very limited options now. The City has gone out to bid on this, but there are no real options. Bridgeport is in better shape than most of the State, but the situation is not producing what everyone had hoped for.

Council Member Burns said that the rates had increased by about 20% and this was a good rate compared with others. Mr. Catino confirmed this was so. Mr. Nkwo gave a brief overview of the expected tipping fees.

Council Member Pereira said that she had a copy of the recycling report that illustrated the need to have some central data base that would contain information for the Department Director regardless of who it is in the future rather than storing information on a personal Excel spreadsheet. She said that she had thought they were getting this type of program and gave examples of this about the street paving program. Mr. Curry said the Department was working on partnering with OPED in terms of tracking things.

Council Member McBride-Lee thanked the Public Facilities for their patience since they have been with the Committee for the last two nights. They have not developed an attitude and have provided the Committee with the information they've asked for.

Council Member Newton said that Public Facilities does the best job that they can with the resources that they have.

Council Member Pereira spoke about a parking lot in her District that was in poor condition and mentioned that the railing in front of City Hall at Lyon Terrace become sheets of ice when there is sleet. Mr. Tiago said that any metal railing will become a sheet of ice when there is sleet.

The discussion moved to the Municipal Garage on page 217. Mr. Nkwo reviewed the details with the Committee. When asked why the vehicle maintenance had increased so much, Mr. Catino pointed out that the cost of the vehicle parts had increased.

Mr. Curry added that as the vehicles age, the parts become harder to locate. Many of the vehicles are customized for the City of Bridgeport and many of the parts are very large and very heavy. Public Facilities is involved with every department.

Council Member Burns asked for clarification on the increases in the gas and diesel figures, which Mr. Nkwo and Mr. Curry said that they would review.

Council Member Spell asked how many cars the City would be ordering and how many of those were replacements. Mr. Curry explained that they drive City vehicles until the wheels fall off. When a vehicle reaches the end of useful life, it is put out to auction. Currently there are about 15 vehicles that are out of service and will not be replaced.

Council Member Pereira asked where the revenue from vehicles and other items are shown in the Budget Book. Mr. Nkwo indicated where that line item would be found. Discussion followed about the amount that the City might receive from these sales.

Council Member Pereira wished to know how many cars the taxpayers were funding for the Mayor. Mr. Curry said that he was not sure since not all the vehicles that were assigned to him were for him. A number of those vehicles are for his staff. Mayor Ganim only has the Edge. Mr. Curry said that he really couldn't speak to it, but there were only two vehicles assigned to his office. There are other vehicles assigned to departments.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she did not mind paying taxes to make sure that the City runs properly.

Council President Nieves said that she had tried to contact the Harbor Master, but he was not there. She said that she would like to know what the revenue was and who was collecting the mooring fees. Mr. Nkwo said that the funding goes into a budget to buy their boats and the gasoline. Discussion followed.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 2, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Mary McBride-Lee, Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Council Member(s): Council President A. Nieves, A. Boyd, E. Martinez, R. Smith, D. Spell & M. Valle; Nestor Nkwo, OPM; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Anthony Paoletto, Mayor’s Office; Thomas Errichetti, Bridgeport Library Board; Elaine Braithwaite, Bridgeport Library Director

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. A quorum was present.

Co-chair Burns announced that Council Member Hodges had an excused absence due to illness.

LIBRARY

Council Member Burns directed everyone to the Library budget listed on page 428. Mr. Nkwo gave a brief overview of the information to the Committee. He reminded everyone about the previous referendum that allocated funding directly to the Library.

Mr. Errichetti said that they had been moving forward since COVID with some dynamic programming. He also spoke about the recently opened library branches and gave a general overview of the various improvements and programs at the libraries. He also reviewed the debt service details.

Ms. Braithwaite spoke about how the Library’s major initiative has been focused on developing staff. She spoke about the workshops and training, which is an important aspect of what librarians do. The staff is being recognized by their peers at the Connecticut Library Association. During the pandemic, the Library was able to take advantage of FEMA funding for the Digital Navigating Program. During the lockdown, many people were not ready to use the digital resources or didn’t have the digital equipment to do so. The Library was able to distribute laptops to residents to use for the library resources. She also mentioned how the library was able to assist residents in obtaining their passports. The Outreach Committee has been making progress in communicating with the public.

Mr. Errichetti said that they had sponsored two concerns, one of which was Spanish and a second concert celebrating Black History Month. The tickets are free to the community. On June 20th, there will be a Juneteenth event. The goal is to get the Library more exposure.

Ms. Braithwaite explained that Bridgeport Library was one of six libraries that applied for a grant to expand Library services. The program would be to show how libraries can expand resources by sharing within libraries. She gave an example of how Bridgeport could share the Digital Navigator that is formatted in Portuguese with another town that only had a few Portuguese speakers.

Mr. Errichetti and Ms. Braithwaite gave additional examples of the various grant opportunities the Library had applied for. Mr. Errichetti explained that when the Library is applying for a major grant, they will work through the City's Grant Department. Smaller grants that are library specific the Library staff will handle. He added that the Library is very careful with their funding and tries very hard to avoid overspending.

Council Member Martinez had some questions about the Maintenance line item. Ms. Braithwaite said that they had to replace a roof two years ago. Mr. Errichetti reviewed the details with the Council Members.

Council Member Martinez said that she appreciates the great leadership that the Library has. She noted that the Library had events going on almost every weekend.

Council Member Spell asked how many libraries were in the City. Mr. Errichetti said that there were six.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she felt that the libraries were very important. There are four schools in her area and they have been trying for over 30 years to get a library in her area. She said that there were two on the East End.

Mr. Errichetti gave a brief summary of where the libraries were located. He explained that two of the new branches were replacing existing branches. Beardsley cost about \$6 million dollars. He said that they had looked at several parcels in Council Member McBride-Lee's area, but not had any success at this time. He said that Council Member McBride-Lee's plea was not falling on deaf ears. They are trying, but this will take time. Discussion followed.

Council Member McBride-Lee wished to have some clarification on the debt service line, which Mr. Errichetti and Mr. Nkwo explained was the repayment for the bond money.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she appreciated Mr. Errichetti and Ms. Braithwaite speaking with her and explaining things.

Council Member Herron asked why every child did not have a library card. She said that with the current Superintendent of Schools, it would be a good time to re-activate that program. Ms. Braithwaite said that they had tried very hard to keep the program going. They are trying to be pro-active. She added that she agreed with Council Member Herron about this. Discussion followed.

Mr. Flatto then spoke about the feasibility study that was done. Mr. Nkwo said that the cost was not to supposed to be charged to the Library. A discussion followed about the details. Mr. Errichetti said that he would contact Mr. Nkwo to follow up on this.

Mr. Nkwo directed everyone to page 432 and reviewed the line items and the information on that page with the Council Members.

Council Member Burns said Council Member Boyd had asked about the Library hours. Mr. Errichetti said that every location is open eight hours a day, Monday through Thursday and part time on Friday and Saturday. He then listed the opening and closing times and explained that they were working on expanding hours with the existing staff.

Council Member Burns thanked Mr. Errichetti and Ms. Braithwaite for their time and encouraged them to keep up the good work.

LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL FUND BUDGET REVIEW

Council Member Burns directed everyone to page 130. He reminded everyone that the deliberations were scheduled to conclude on May 11th, but noted that there was a conference scheduled the same day at the Mohegan Sun. By Charter, the Council must complete the budget by May 14th. There will also be political conventions on the 13th and 14th. In order to meet the deadlines, the Committee will have to accelerate the process by finishing up by next Thursday. An updated schedule will be sent out. Discussion followed.

Council President Nieves said that it was important to think about the budgets carefully because the people that will feel the effect of their decisions will be everyone's constituents. The three biggest budgets are Police, Fire and Public Facilities. The other departments are basically the same. This will be a hard budget. She said that if they can't make a decision by next Friday, everyone will miss the convention.

Council Member Burns said that the Committee had basically reviewed all the departments and discussed most of the key items. However, the elephant in the room was the Cherry Street lot.

Mr. Nkwo then gave a general overview of the Capital Budget along with key considerations.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked whether there had been discussions about removing items from the Capital Budget. Council Member Burns replied that both he and Council Member Newton had reviewed the BOE Capital budget and eliminated anything under \$50,000. Council Member Burns directed everyone to page 4 of the Capital Plan and indicated one of the line items that would be moved back a year. The discussion moved to some of the windows at the schools. Mr. Nkwo said that the item was being moved out to 2026.

The discussion then moved to page 6 and the details of OPED's request. One item was transferred from OPED to page 7 under Public Facilities.

Council Member Burns said that there were a number of meetings that were held about Cherry Street. Some of the SHPO grant funding was at risk. Therefore, it was agreed to add \$2 million to the Blight Demo Fund and if it doesn't work out, the one building that is hazardous can be removed. There are liens on the building that the City has enacted, along with liens from other entities. Council Member Burns asked the Committee to approve the transfer of \$2 million to that plan.

Council President Nieves said that the Mayor had been present at this meeting earlier in the day and she expected the building to be demoed by the end of July along with two other parts. The developer knows that the City will be charging him for this work.

Council Member Herron had several questions about liability. Council President Nieves said that the walls have been shorn up. Additional discussion followed about the details.

Mr. Flatto reviewed the timeline for the bonding involved.

Council Member McBride-Lee left at 7:55 p.m.

Council Member Ortiz asked which account they would be taking the \$2 million dollars for the Cherry Street Project. Mr. Flatto explained that there were some funding left over in another account, but he would have to present the Council with a resolution to do this. He said that they believed they could use ARPA funding, but preferred to wait until they could draft the resolution. There needs to be further discussion with the administration about this.

Council Member Herron asked if the Committee had received a listing of the project that used the ARPA funding. Mr. Flatto said that they had not received responses from all the non-profits, but the listing that he had provided earlier would not change very much once the additional information arrived.

Council Member Herron said that she keeps hearing that ARPA funding "might" go to this project or that project, but she wants to know what the status was with the funding. Mr. Flatto said that the listing he provided was accurate but was not final since some of the organizations may not have spent all the funding. So, the final report may be better than what they expected. The Mayor is looking ahead to 2026 and wants to reserve some of the funding for projects that are scheduled during FY 2025/2026 Budget cycle. Mr. Flatto said that this was not wrong, but the Budget Committee simply considers the current FY 2023/2024 budget and FY 2024/2025.

Council Member Martinez asked about a line item that balanced out exactly. Mr. Flatto said that every dollar spent had to be accounted for in terms of both revenue and expense for the grant funding. Council Member Burns said that they should keep this project as an ARPA grant project. Discussion followed about when the funding would be available.

The discussion moved to the funding allocated for paving. Mr. Nkwo reviewed the timeline for bonding with the Committee. Council Member Burns asked Mr. Flatto to provide him with the actual dollar amount that was used for paving. Mr. Flatto said that he would do so.

Council Member Burns then reviewed the details around the repair of the boat ramp, the City wide buildings, airport improvement and the maintenance equipment including the golf course among other Capital Plan projects. Discussion followed.

Council Member Martinez left the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Council Member Newton said that the NRZs were having trouble accessing their funding. Mr. Flatto said that there was funding in the account but the NRZ had not submitted a request. Council President Nieves reminded everyone that a portion of the ARPA funding was to be used for leadership training. She also pointed out that some of the projects have to be handled through OPED because of the planning requirements.

The Committee continued to review the proposed Capital Plan allocations.

Council Member Herron requested that Council Member Burns check with Michelle regarding the repair of some exterior doors and the windows that Council Member Lyons had spoken about at another meeting. There are some repairs that need to be done now. Council Member Burns said that he would look into this as soon as possible.

Council President Nieves had some questions about the repairs to the bathhouses and the concession stands at Seaside Park. Discussion followed about the details and who would be doing the study on the concession stands. Council Member Burns said that it would be important to be clear why the study was being done when the RFP was issued.

The discussion then moved to the Council Members' stipends and expense cards.

Council President Nieves then spoke about the discussions she had with the Mayor's Office regarding the budget the Mayor proposed including the job description and job title for the position of Legislative Aide.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE POSITION AS LISTED IN ORDER TO MOVE ON.**

There was no second or vote on the issue.

Council President Nieves then reviewed the remaining positions and details for the position along with the Council's budget allocations.

Council Member Burns spoke about a communications outreach tool and explained that it would not be difficult to use. This would be a different way to connect with their constituents. The short videos could become a type of library about how a constituent

would be able to reference for FAQs. He said that he would be happy to help with the program in any way he could. This would be listed under Other Services.

Council President Nieves then summarized the changes that the Committee made on the Council's budget proposal. She also gave a brief overview of the interview process for the position and updated the Committee as to where the candidates currently were in the process.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER ORTIZ MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S.L. Soltes

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 8, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia, Mary McBride-Lee (6:13 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): Jorge Cruz, Michelle Lyons, Eneida Martinez, Dasha Spell, Maria Valle, M. Pereira (6:13 p.m.) & A. Boyd (7:15 p.m.); Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Kathleen Brickett, OPM; Dr. Elizabeth Rivera-Rodriguez, Director of Health & Social Services; Sumit Sharma, Deputy Director of Health & Social Services; David Reyes, Nadine Douglas, Social Worker; Jennifer Rocha, Social Worker; Linda Luben, Social Worker; Juan Hernandez, Fair Rent Coordinator; Cindy Anderson, Director of Veterans; Vivian Hernandez, Community Project Coordinator; LaQuasha Bowens, Relocation Specialist, Tshirea Jackson, MIRA; Jennifer Gonzalez, MIRA

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. A quorum was present. Council Member Burns announced that Council Member Hodges was excused due to illness.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT: SOCIAL SERVICES

Dr. Rivera-Rodriguez came forward and greeted the Committee and others present. She then led the presentation of the 2024 Budget Presentation.

Council Member M. McBride-Lee and Council Member M. Pereira joined the meeting at 6:13 p.m.

The staff then answered the Committee and Council Members' questions about the Budget details.

Council Member Boyd joined the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Discussion followed.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED "SOCIAL SERVICE 2024 BUDGET PRESENTATION" AS EXHIBIT 05-08-2024-A.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RECESS

Council Member Burns announced a recess at 7:50 p.m.

Council Members Lyons, Martinez and Valle left the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Council Member Burns reconvened the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

FAIR RENT COMMISSION

Mr. Juan Hernandez, the Fair Rent Coordinator, came forward and greeted the Committee members along with the others who were present. He proceeded to give an overview of the proposed budget and answered the Committee's questions.

Council Member Pereira left the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Discussion followed.

Council Member Cruz left the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Discussion continued.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** THERE WAS A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**
- ** THERE WAS A SECOND.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted.

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 9, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Frederick Hodges, Jeanette Herron, Mary McBride-Lee, Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Dr. Elizabeth Rivera-Rodriguez, Director of Health & Social Services; Marie Heller, Director of Aging; Jennifer Baldwin, Assistant Registrar of Vital Records; Regina Vermont, Director of Youth Services; Mark Harp, Youth Program Manager; Michael Sampieri, City Sealer; Sumit Sharma; Deputy Director of Health & Social Services

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT
(All Other Departments)

Dr. Rivera-Rodriguez and her staff came forward and greeted the Committee Members along with the other Council Members present.

The Health Department staff proceeded to present their proposed budgets for the Department of Aging, Vital Records and Youth Services among others. During the following discussion, the staff answered the questions asked by the Committee members and those of the other Council Members present.

ADJOURNMENT

**** THERE WAS A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**
**** THERE WAS A SECOND.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 10, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Frederick Hodges, Jeanette Herron, Mary McBride-Lee; Richard Ortiz, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

OTHERS: Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Kathleen Brickett, OPM

CALL TO ORDER.

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order and announced that there was a quorum.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED 'REYNOLDS COMMUNICATION' AS EXHIBIT 05-10-2024-A.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED 'PROPOSED POSITION CHANGES' AS EXHIBIT 05-10-2024-B.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS AS EXHIBIT 05-10-2024-C.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

GENERAL BUDGET VOTES.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO APPROVE VOTE A - GENERAL FUND REVENUE INCREASES.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE VOTE B - GENERAL FUND REVENUE DECREASES.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE VOTE C - GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS INCREASES.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE VOTE D - GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS DECREASES.
** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE Vote E - Total Budget.
** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at _____

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services