

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 11, 2011**

ATTENDANCE: Angel dePara, Co-chair; Robert Curwen, Co-chair; Susan Brannelly, Lydia Martinez, Council President Thomas McCarthy

OTHERS: Council Member Andre Baker, Council Member Robert Walsh, John Marshall Lee

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman dePara called the meeting to order at 6:46 p.m. and introduced those in attendance. He noted that Council Members Walsh and Baker were present and had authored Resolution 22-10.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES JUNE 13, 2011

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JUNE 13, 2011.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

22-10 Request concerning independent auditor's review of City of Bridgeport Monthly Financial Reports on a Quarterly Basis

Council Member Walsh said that he had spoken about the item at the first meeting, so he simply just asked that the resolution be approved. At the most recent meeting, there was no one was present to speak about the item. Council President McCarthy said that his recollection was that there were some details that the Council Members wanted clarified. He added that the administration needed to be aware of the resolution and have a chance to give input.

Council Member Martinez asked who would be conducting the review. Council Member Baker said that he would like the auditor to come to the Committee and answer the Committee's questions as to whether the City is on target financially. Council Member Martinez asked how much it would cost to hire an independent auditor. Council Member dePara said that the cost would be determined by the City. Council President McCarthy said that it would be determined by the Purchasing Department. Council Member Martinez said that she was in favor of it, but had concerns about the cost.

Council Member Baker said that he was also frustrated because he had expected the administration to provide some input. Council Member Martinez said she would like to know

how much money it would cost but was willing to vote in favor of it. Council Member Walsh said that the cost would be determined by the Committee simply by setting a cap on the amount that could be spent. He said that the Council would benefit by having an auditor look at the budget and insuring that there was nothing seriously out of line financially. Council President McCarthy suggested that the Committee could go through the RFP process by authorizing him to do this; the Committee could vote it out of Committee and requested that the Committee set a dollar amount for the audit.

Council Member Curwen said that there was an audit three years ago at the Committee's request. It would be important to keep continuity on who the auditors were reporting to and also to keep the process as transparent as possible.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia pointed out that this would add more rules and regulations in to the book. She said that she couldn't see adding more rules that might not be followed. She said that if the Council has the power to do something, so they shouldn't have to have a resolution added.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that if this was brought up without knowing how much it would cost, it would be opposed. Money is tight. She said that she wants transparency, but felt that until the Committee knew the scope of the audit and what it would cost. Council Member Baker said that he was also aware of the Council Members' responsibility to the residents. Having the firm present three years was really helpful and helped Council Member Baker understand the process more clearly. Council Member Baker asked Council President McCarthy if there was money available to do this.

Council Member Brannelly said that she agreed with Council Member Baker and respectfully disagreed with Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia. She said that it was an important item to put into place to establish the pattern. While Council Member Brannelly agreed that there were resolutions on the books that were not enforced or followed, it was still important to have this in place.

She then had a question about paragraph 6 of the Resolution. She wanted some clarification as to whether it would be a totally separate CPA firm from the one that does the year end review. She also had a question about the difference between a "review" vs. an "audit".

Council President McCarthy said that he had some concerns about the word "audit". Council Member Curwen said that "audit" would entail more detail, while a "review" would give more of an overview.

Regarding the firm, Council Member Curwen said that there was a law on the books requiring the CPA firm to maintain their integrity. He then gave a few examples. He said that also it would be important to increase the Council's budget so that the Council could have more audit

work. He added that the Bridgeport Legislative Office only has \$220,000 budget while New Haven has a 3.6 million budget. He said that he would like to lock down the dollar amount for the auditors before approving the resolution.

Council Member Martinez asked if there was another city that was doing audits like this. Council Member Curwen said that Bridgeport was the only city that had done this. A discussion followed about the process that took place four years ago. Council Member Curwen said that last year there was an 8 million dollar deficit that the Mayor had to reconcile. Discussion followed about how the Council's budget process works.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia asked about the firm that was hired four years ago. She pointed out that the reason that firm was hired was because the project was on a short time frame. She said that she was a rule follower and felt that it would be important to have an estimate in case there was another situation that the Council had to deal with.

Council President McCarthy said that he would like to have a different firm conduct the audit rather than using the same audit firm that the City uses. He added that he would like to know what the Committee wanted him to do in terms of presenting this to the Council.

Council Member Brannelly said that she had some difficulty with the wording in paragraph #2 and paragraph #4. Discussion about the wording then followed.

Council Member Baker said that he wanted the word "audit" should be included so that future councils could request an audit. Council Member Curwen suggested that it be changed to "review or audit".

Council Member Curwen said that what the creators of the resolution were looking for was to have someone on staff who could go through the budget with the Committee and explain the items. He said that if an independent auditor was hired, that auditor would be given the same documents everyone else got and it would come back with the same results.

Council Member Martinez said that there was no independent attorney for the Council. Council President McCarthy said that the City Charter requires that the attorney be hired by the City.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that she believe that the Committee needed more information on the language and the amount. Council President McCarthy said that he needed to know if he was going to be working on an RFP or just going out to find out how much it would cost. Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that the resolution was incomplete and needed more work.

Council Member Brannelly asked if the wording of the resolution would be done now or later. Council Member Baker said that people could digest the information and any wording changes could be discussed.

Council Member dePara said that it would be important to clarify what information was being requested. It was suggested that Council Members Curwen, dePara and Council President McCarthy to check the scope of the resolution, the potential cost and the dollar amount available while the Committee works on the wording of resolution. Discussion followed.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO TABLE THE RESOLUTION IN ORDER FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS CURWEN, DEPARA AND COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY TO CHECK THE SCOPE OF THE RESOLUTION, THE POTENTIAL COST AND THE DOLLAR AMOUNT AVAILABLE WHILE THE COMMITTEE WORKS ON THE WORDING OF RESOLUTION.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Informational Discussion regarding the current and upcoming fiscal year

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO TABLE THE INFORMATIONAL DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CURRENT AND UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services