

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARINGS
JANUARY 3, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Richard Paoletto, Chairman; Warren Blunt, Martin McCarthy, Howard Austin, Lydia Martinez, Robert Curwen

STAFF: Thomas White, Legislative Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER.

Chairman Paoletto called the hearings to order at 6:20 p.m.

19-11 Proposed amendments to the Municipal Code of Ordinances, amend Chapter 2.38, Code Ethics.

Council Member Paoletto opened the hearing on Agenda Item 19-11. He asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak about the Ethics Ordinance.

Mr. Cecil Young came forward and briefly asked about the Ethics Ordinance. Council Member Paoletto said that the public hearing was for the changes to the Ethics Ordinance and not about the Ethics Commission.

Ms. Lisa Parziale came forward and asked if there was anyone present who could speak about the changes in the Ethics Ordinance. Council Member Paoletto said that he did not think there was anyone present to give the update. Ms. Parziale said she did not feel it was out of order to ask for an update on the change in the Ordinance. She then appealed to Council President about this matter to see that this was done. Council President McCarthy said that he would support Council Member Paoletto. Ms. Parziale said that she was disappointed with Council President McCarthy and Council Member Paoletto and it would have never have happened on her watch.

Mr. Ianniello came forward and introduced himself as the Chairman of the Ethics Commission. He then gave a very brief overview of the changed in the Ordinance. The biggest change would be the annual training for the employees and the ordinance language changes in order to make it easier for the employees to understand the ordinance. A webpage has been put up for the residents.

Mr. Young came forward again and said that the discussion was about the Ethics Ordinance was being changed, but the Ethics Commission needed to be changed. He went on to say that there was an incident on his webpage involving two Council Members. He then said that the Ethics Commission should be changed because he was attacked and nothing was done about it. He then spoke about how the taxpayers' money was being wasted.

Ms. Lisa Parziale came forward and said that she thanked Mr. Ianniello for his work. She said that she does support the measure based on Mr. Ianniello's explanation.

30-11 Proposed resolution concerning the Creation of a Charter Revision Commission for the City of Bridgeport.

Council Member Paoletto said that the Ordinance Committee had met prior to this hearing and that the Committee had tabled the item. He asked if there anyone present who was in favor of the item. He repeated this twice more. He then asked if there was anyone present to speak against the item. He then repeated this two more times.

There was a brief discussion about whether or not Council Member Paoletto had asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak against the Ethics Ordinance. Council Member Paoletto said that since there had been a misunderstanding about this, he would reopen the Ethics hearing to allow anyone who wished to speak against the Ethics Ordinance to be heard.

Council Member Curwen came forward and said that he was against the measure since the item had been tabled.

Council Member Paoletto then asked if there was anyone present to speak against the item two more times. No one came forward.

19-11 Proposed amendments to the Municipal Code of Ordinances, amend Chapter 2.38, Code Ethics. CONT'D.

Mr. Robert Walsh came forward and said that he was against the proposed ordinance. He said that there was a number of phrases and sentences that were being removed from the Ordinance that gutted the ordinance. He then those sections. He said that when the Ethics Code was approved, it was felt that the language was deemed appropriate. Now the language was felt to be overdone and confusing.

Mr. Walsh went on to say that when the Commission on Ethics was formed, it was felt that it was so important that it had term limits. However, the members continue to serve past their term limits. He also objected to the changes in the Probable Cause section. He said that the changes were a joke and were just an attempt to lighten the weight of the original ordinances.

Council Member Paoletto asked if there was anyone else present who wished to speak about the Ethics Ordinance. No one else came forward.

18-11 Proposed amendment to Municipal Codes of Ordinances Chapter 2.36, amend Section 2.36.010, Officers' and Unaffiliated Employee Salaries.

Council Member Paoletto said that there was a sign in sheet for those who wished to speak. Since there were a number of names on the list, he requested that each speaker limit their remarks to three minutes.

Council Member Paoletto asked three times if there was anyone present to speak in favor of the amendment. No one came forward. He then asked if there was anyone present to speak against the item.

Mr. Ernest Newton came forward. He said that he lived on Reed Street and was a former State Senator and Council Member. He said that this amendment sends the wrong message. The message sent states that the City could not find the dollars to cover the shortfall of the BOE, but could find the funding to increase the salaries for the top City Administrators. He pointed out that when the budgets are cut, the people on the low end of the salary scale are the ones that are laid off.

Mr. John Marshall Lee of 30 Beacon Street came forward, and spelled out the word "respect". He asked who the Council Members wished to have the respect from, their fellow Council Members or their constituents. He said that the public needs to have the Council Members to shine the light on this issue. Council Members should be open, accountable and transparent. Mr. Lee then listed a number of white papers that should have been submitted to the Committee for their consideration. The Committee should have a monthly report showing where the vacant salary funding was going. Last year, Mr. Lee claimed, the City created over 60 unnecessary positions.

Council Member Paoletto pointed out that Mr. Lee's three minutes were up. Mr. Lee then said that he had prepared for a five minute presentation. He then spoke about the budget and said that he would be at the North End Library on 12, 2012 at 6:00 P.M. to speak about the Bridgeport City Finances using a PowerPoint presentation and hosting a question and answer period after it.

Mr. Donald Greenberg of Balmforth Street, came forward and said that the procedures for this amendment were a sham and a disgrace. He said that he was told that the City would lose the "best people". He said that he did not believe that Bridgeport had the "best" people, the people who work for the City do so because they love it. He said that the Council Members do not have the right to their seats. and that he and many others felt that if there were unaffiliated workers who felt they could do better elsewhere then they should leave and take those positions.

Ms. Mary Pat Healy of Bridgeport Childhood Advocacy Coalition said that she found it curious that the City could not find the money to help the schools, but that the Mayor could find funds for raises. She wanted to know why these select employees were being given raises. "The old Board of Education was dissolved during the Fourth of July weekend," she said "The interim school Superintendent Paul Ballas was appointed just before the Christmas holiday. And now this salary issue and charter revision matter is being discussed right after the New Year." She then asked if there was a pattern and what the residents should we expect next.

Mr. Clyde Nicholson came forward and said that the City couldn't find the money to fix the sidewalks, teach the kids or stop the killing. However, the poorer people are being thrown out of their homes because of the higher taxes. It was not fair to the tax payers to pay more. He pointed out that New York City has one City Hall, but Bridgeport has two. He then asked if the employees were so good, why weren't they working on Wall Street or New York City. Mr. Eagleson said that the citizens pay the city employees, not the Mayor.

Ms. Karen Nieson, came forward and said that she had attended the Ordinance meeting last Thursday and had time to think about the issues. She said that the data for the grid came from 2007-08, but the economy crashed in 2008. Ms. Nieson said that she was not comfortable with the idea of giving raising. She said that if any one of the Mayor's appointees wished to go, they should go.

Mr. David Nieson of Prospect Street came forward and spoke against the proposed raises and is in favor of check and balances, and merit raises.

Ms. Carmine Lopez came forward and said that she was a resident of Bridgeport. She said that it was outrageous that the Council was being directed to sanction pay raises three months after the election. If the Mayor feels that there is a need for salaries, he should come before the Council or Committee for approval. Any request like this should require a 2/3rd vote. She felt this was an insult to the budgetary process and an insult to the Council. This could be another sad chapter to the disregard of the democratic process. She suggested that if the Council passed this, they given proxies to the

Ms. Mary Jane Foster, came forward and said she seconded the earlier sentiments expressed. She said that the Finch administration was showing its disregard for the residents. She asked where the money was coming from and whether there was money for it. Residents were making sacrifices but the administrators were being given retention raises. She added that there were a number of Council Members had conflicts of interests and this will be remembered.

Mr. Charlie Deloutte, 319 Sailor's Lane. He moved to Bridgeport 7 years ago with the hopes that the City would improve in its performance. He moved here with the hopes that Steele Point would help the tax base, but that hasn't happened. He then asked Council Member McCarthy what the criteria was for raises. His world is one that has performance based raises.

Another resident came forward and wished everyone good health, but wondered about good wealth. He then said that the taxpayers would be receiving something in Yiddish that sounded like "shot". He then compared the problem with the Gammon administration with what was happening at the Council.

Marilyn Moore of 666 Clearview Avenue, came forward and said that she had read the meeting minutes and said that she was present to address Mayor Finch about their right to give the

Administrators their 15% raises in the face of forced furloughs, and layoffs. She then asked if the Council Members had informed their constituency that they were not working to better the residents. She spoke about the Mayor's statement about retaining the top employees, but those jobs are for promoting the Mayor's administrators. Those jobs are filled with the politically connected. She then said if the employees were looking elsewhere, let them go.

Mr. Joe Calzone came forward and said that he had a business in Bridgeport. He said that after reading the article in the newspaper, he was compelled to come to the meeting since his business was in survival mode. He said that he had not realized Bridgeport was doing so well. While he had no problem with raises for the the Police Chief and Fire Chief, but had some problems with the other positions. The average pay for the Mayor's staff was \$80,000, but wondered what the average pay for residents was much lower. He added that jobs were tight and that if there were better positions offered down the line, the employees should take them. He added that his employees have additional duties, just like the Mayor's. However, his raises come from performance.

Council Member Carlos Silva of Fairview Avenue came forward. He said he was on the Budget Committee, but was trying to figure out where the financing for these raises were coming from. When he asked that question, he was told that the City would find a way to cover. There are many people in Bridgeport who are living the same way. If the 'very best' people can't live on the City, then they shouldn't take the job. He pointed out that the employees who make \$30-\$40,000 and were laid off. He then urged his colleagues to take this back to Committee to redo the ordinance the way it should be. Someone asked Council Member Silva if he was going to be the new Bob Walsh. He said that he didn't need to be Bob Walsh because there were many Bob Walshes, as he gestured towards the members of the public that were present for the hearing.

Mr. Charlie Covello came forward and said he couldn't believe that this was being discussed because the City doesn't have enough money for the BOE, while others don't have money for heating fuel and still others have lost their homes. He then spoke about some of the residents who had large tax increases and the fact that the grand list was decreasing. The City was supposed to move the economic development ahead, but the grand list was shrinking. He then suggested the residents form an Occupy Bridgeport movement in Beardsley Park across from the Mayor's house.

Mr. Peter Joseph George came forward and said that he had only seen two names on the list when he went to sign up. He said that taxes were being raised and people are struggling, but the salaries were being discussed. Mr. George said that he had been at the meeting and there had been a discussion about a vacant position and keeping the job on the list because it might need to be filled. Mr. George said that regarding the ethics concerns, there are council members who are elected but are also City employees. As a home owner, taxpayer and resident, he has seen his taxes double in the last few years. He said that there must be a solution. It is up to the Council to find it.

Mr. Robert Walsh came forward and asked "Who said you can't fight City Hall?" He had sent an email to Mr. White on this topic and would just review the key points. This is the City that said it had no more money for education, that doubled the insurance contributions for employees and demanded pay concessions from the unions. He reminded everyone that the Governor has said that Bridgeport needs to do more to fund education on its own. He added that the Council could knock this down by making the Mayor come before the Council when he wants to give his staff raises. He said it was dangerous and should be killed.

Mr. Jeffrey Kohut came forward and said that it was a question of stewardship since residents are losing their homes. The residents need the Council to say no to these raises. He said that this City was being turned over to the suburbs as workforce housing and service quarters. He said that Bridgeport maintains the lifestyle for people in the suburbs on its account. He said that on behalf of those who live in the city, this has been going on for many years. Holding down the salaries will hold down the taxes. He said that the City was in bad shape and headed towards being in worse shape. It's time to get serious.

Mr. Robert Halstead came forward and said he was a life long resident. He then recounted an incident where Mr. Nunn supposedly made a phone call and removed him from a Committee. He said that he does not believe that these people deserve raises.

Ms. Cecalie Cooper came forward and said that on behalf of the residents of Bridgeport who were born and raised in the City, she wanted to know why the school system does not have the books and supplies that they need. She said that administrators who live out of the City are getting raises. This may be a democracy but it is being run like a dictator ship. She also wondered why the Mayor was not present to hear what the residents had to say.

Mr. Marc P. Delmonico came forward and said that he was the Republican Town Committee Chairman. He asked if there was one thing that was working in City. He said that the residents were working hard, but getting very little for their tax dollars. He said that in his opinion, only the soldiers in Afghanistan deserved raises.

Ms. Marie Pires of NAGE came forward and said that the union employees were told to do more with less. There are understaffed departments, like the Assessor's, Housing Code, Zoning and various others. She wondered why raises were being discussed when there were so many departments struggling with too few staff members.

Rev. Claytor came forward and said that she had attended many Council and BOE meeting. She then bowed toward Council Member Silva in respect. She recounted the conditions at P.T. Barnum and how residents are going without food. She thanked God that she is able to help these people. When someone wants to be elected, they go to P.T. Barnum for support. It's time for Bridgeport to make a change. She then asked people to ask for a heart for giving and sharing rather than fighting.

Mr. John Gomes said he was a business owner and a parent. He said that as a taxpayer he can't believe that the Council is considering this when taxes are going up. Some of the salaries are more than he makes in four years. He respectfully requested that the Council kill or table the amendment because of the disrespect to the residents.

Mr. Curtis Lamb, from the North End came forward and said he was against anything that gave the Mayor more power. He said that the last three hires should be let go. He said that his retired income is under \$20,000, which is the same amount of the raises. His highest income was \$60,000 a year, as a truck driver. He said that the Council Members were representatives of the residents, not the Mayor, not the Democratic Party or the Town Committee.

Mr. John Soltis of 93 Ellsworth Street came forward and said that he knew the Council Members were basically decent people. He said that he was a City employee and had to give back to the City. Now he was asking the Council Members to do their job and protect the residents.

Council Member Paoletto asked if there was anyone else present who wished to speak to the Council. No one else came forward. Council Member Paoletto closed the hearing on the Proposed amendment to Municipal Codes of Ordinances Chapter 2.36, amend Section 2.36.010, Officers' and Unaffiliated Employee Salaries at 8:05 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AUSTIN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services