

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Avelino Silva, Co-chair; Jorge Cruz, Co-chair; Marcus Brown, Michael DeFilippo, Michelle Lyons, Maria Pereira, Samia Suliman

OTHERS: Council Member(s): E Newton, M. Brown, M. Valle, M. E. Brantley, M. McCarthy & Council President A. Nieves (6:30 p.m.); T. Gaudett, Aide to the Mayor; Lieutenant P. Grech, Police Department; L. Schilling, Program Manager, Bridgeport Public Schools; M. Otero, School Construction Program Manager; M. Testani, Superintendent of Schools; M. Anastasi, Esquire (6:46 p.m.); iPhone, iPhone X, Max 1, Barbara, Albert Benejar Grajales, Steve Auerbach

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.
The public was able to listen to this meeting by calling a conference line.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Silva called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2020
(Regular Meeting).**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PEREIRA MOVED THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2020 WITH THE CORRECTION THAT COUNCIL MEMBER SULIMAN WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE MEETING.**

Council Member Pereira stated that Council Member Suliman was not present at December 9th meeting but was listed as being in attendance.

Council Member Silva pointed out that Council Member Suliman was on the call and he asked Council Member Suliman about this. Council Member Suliman said that she had, in fact, attended the meeting on December 9th.

Council Member Pereira said that there had been constant and frequent errors with the attendance. She said that she logs all the attendance, who leaves the meeting early and who arrives late. The City Charter clearly says that the City Clerk is responsible for accuracy of the attendance. These errors are a violation of the City Charter and the Freedom of Information Act. Council Member Suliman stated again that she was in attendance but chose not to say anything. She added that she did not understand why Council Member Pereira was always checking up on her.

Council Member Pereira said this was not personal and stated she had called Council Member Suliman earlier in the day to discuss this. She stated that the attendance needed to be accurate.

Council Member Brown said that he had an issue with other Council Members correcting the attendance of other Council Members. He noted that Council Member Suliman was present on the call and had stated that she had attended the December 9th meeting.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE WITH THE CORRECTION THAT COUNCIL MEMBER SULIMAN WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE MEETING FAILED TO PASS DUE TO A LACK OF A SECOND.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2020 AS SUBMITTED.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

Council Member Newton said that the Council had not elected anyone from the Council to be a Council attendance secretary. He said that if a Council Member states they were at the meeting, then they were. The Council has allowed these corrections to be done in the past, but from now on, they should let the recording secretary take attendance. He recommended that the Council agree that the recording secretary should be the only one taking attendance.

Council Member Brown asked to move the question. Council Member Cruz also requested that the question be moved.

Council Member Pereira objected and stated that she had the floor and accurate attendance was required by the State statute. She said that this was what happens when they have someone as a Chair who doesn't understand parliamentary procedure.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2020 AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (BROWN, CRUZ, DEFILIPPO, LYONS AND SULIMAN) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (PEREIRA).**

Council Member Pereira announced that she would be filing a complaint with the Freedom of Information Commission.

137-19 Proposed Resolution to Review the use of Bridgeport Police as School Resource Officers.

Council Member McCarthy said in order to close this item out, the Committee wanted the Acting Police Chief to be on the call. He did not see the Acting Chief on the call.

Council Member Cruz pointed out that the issue was whether or not the SROs were working within the confines of the building. He said that they did not need the Acting Chief present because Lt. Grech had done an excellent job in providing the information to him. It has been made clear that the SROs are not in the building. He felt that there were people who were abusing the Police Department by continually asking the same question. Lt. Grech was present on the call on overtime and the Council is continually complaining about Police overtime.

Council Member Pereira said that she had many questions about the SRO policy and noted that the item had been tabled at the last meeting with the condition that School Superintendent Testani, Lt. Cotto, Lt. Grech, and Acting Chief Garcia be on the call. However, they were not present. The vote is binding. The Co-chairs do not have the right to determine that the Chief and others do not need to be present.

Council Member Pereira stated that this was not a dictatorship, but a democracy. This is outrageous.

Council Member Brantley said that they had voted on an issue but the chairs had decided it was not necessary to have the named individuals present. She suggested that they move to change their vote to remove the item.

Council Member Lyons asked if there was an attorney on the call that could advise the Committee. She said that they were now looking to make changes and wanted to know what the legalities were in handling this. There was no response.

Council Member DeFilippo said that because they did not have the answers they were looking for he would like to table it.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DEFILIPPO MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 137-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO REVIEW THE USE OF BRIDGEPORT POLICE AS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS WITH THE CONDITIONS THAT LT. COTTO, LT. GRECH, ACTING CHIEF GARCIA, AND SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS M. TESTANI BE IN ATTENDANCE TO DISCUSS THE ITEM AT THE NEXT MEETING.**

Council Member Pereira said for people to think that the Chairs could override the votes of the Committee was outrageous. When the Committee takes a vote, it is binding and the Co-chairs can't override it. Everyone present should know that this is not lawful. Otherwise they should just have the co-chairs on the committees. This is outrageous behavior.

Council Member Brown said that he would like to have the item either tabled or brought to the Council for debate.

Council President Nieves joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Council President Nieves said that she had mentioned previously that the roles of the SROs would be changing. The new COPS grants would prevent the City from having the SROs in the building. She said that she had spoken with Council Member Cruz about this and that Acting Chief Garcia would need some time to review the new legislation. Lt. Grech has been transferred to Community Service, along with all the SROs. She suggested that until there is a clearer understanding of the new legislation, they wait and consider the issue later again in March.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 137-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO REVIEW THE USE OF BRIDGEPORT POLICE AS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO SECOND THE EARLIER MOTION TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 137-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO REVIEW THE USE OF BRIDGEPORT POLICE AS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.**

Council Member Lyons said that they could ask all the individuals to attend the next meeting.

Council Member Pereira said that the motion to table should include the request for the various people to attend the meeting.

**** THE MOTION TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 137-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO REVIEW THE USE OF BRIDGEPORT POLICE AS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS FAILED TO PASS WITH THREE (3) IN FAVOR (LYONS, DEFILIPPO AND PEREIRA) AND FOUR (4) OPPOSED (CRUZ, BROWN, SULIMAN, AND SILVA).**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN REPEATED HIS MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 137-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO REVIEW THE USE OF BRIDGEPORT POLICE AS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira stated again that she did not know how they could disregard the previous vote that was unanimous. She said that they could not pass a motion that violates an earlier vote. Now they want to override the vote. Her questions were not answered.

Council Member Lyons said that Council President Nieves had been the one to sponsor the resolution and explained why she wanted to wait. They should respect this. She said that they have to start doing things in order. She claimed that Lt. Grech's information was not put in the minutes.

Council Member Cruz said that he hoped that they would stick by the vote and they have been working on this for six and a half months. They have exhausted this. If they need to come back to discuss this again in March, they can.

Council Member Brantley said that she would like to encourage them to move forward on this.

Council Member Pereira said she was stunned that they were being so disrespectful to the person who submitted the resolution. She said that she had questions about the SROs policies and Lt. Grech said he would have to defer to Lt. Cotto who handles policy. Lt. Cotto was not present on the call and the following meetings were focused on UB rather than the SROs.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 137-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO REVIEW THE USE OF BRIDGEPORT POLICE AS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS PASSED WITH FOUR(4) IN FAVOR (BROWN, CRUZ, SULIMAN AND SILVA) AND THREE (3) OPPOSED (PEREIRA, DEFILIPPO AND LYONS).**

Attorney Anastasi joined the call at 6:46 p.m.

Attorney Anastasi said they were voting it out of Committee with a four to three approval.

Council Member Pereira said Lt. Grech was present for no reason.

Informational Session with Mr. Larry Schilling and Ms. Michelle Otero to discuss the ongoing projects for school constructions.

Mr. Schilling said they had three active projects.

Council Member Brown, the Chair of the School Construction Committee, said he had asked Council Member Cruz to add this item to the agenda because they had some construction underway. The City Council appropriates the funds for the school construction projects.

Mr. Schilling said they were building a floating classroom that will hold 42 students at a time. It has been in construction for approximately 15 months and should be completed in early spring. The construction is being supervised in Maine and the Coast Guard will sign off on it. The boat is making good progress.

A second project is a replacement of a school roof that will go out to bid in the next few days. Construction is slated to start on June 15th.

The Bassick School project is underway and schematic designs have been completed and are under review. They are about to go to the State for approval for abatement. 115 Broad Street will be demolished and the site will be used as a construction headquarters. They expect to complete this project in 2023.

Council Member Pereira asked how much was spent on the first two designs. Mr. Schilling gave the figures.

Council Member Pereira then asked what percentage the State would be paying for the two sites that they did not use. Mr. Schilling spoke about the details, but the audio was too faint to hear.

Council Member Pereira said the State only reimburses up to 69% so they would not reimburse at 100%. She said the State did not pay 100% for the designs on Harding. She wanted to know under State Statute how much the municipality would be reimbursed.

[Inaudible]

Mr. Schilling said that it would be up to the School Building Committee [inaudible].

Council Member Cruz asked what would happen with the first site that resulted in moving the school to the UB property. Ms. Otero said that the landowner asked for an astronomical purchase price.

Council Member Pereira said that there were three people who objected to the enrollment numbers. She asked if they had received any reimbursement at Harding when they had to redesign the school.

Ms. Otero explained that the auditors can pick and choose what they will reimburse regardless of whether the items were previously approved. Discussion followed.

Council Member Pereira said she would contact the State about this.

Council Member Pereira asked what the cost was for the UB properties. Ms. Otero said that it was \$6 million dollars.

Council Member Pereira asked what the cost was to the taxpayers for the bond. No one had that information available.

Council Member Silva thanked Mr. Schilling and Ms. Otero.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BROWN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services