

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 12, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Jorge Cruz, Co-chair; Fredrick Hodges, Co-chair; Samia Suliman; Maria Pereira; Michelle Lyons (6:11 P.M.)

STAFF: Thomas Gaudett, Deputy Chief of Staff

OTHER: Vincent Santilli

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Cruz called the meeting to order at 6:08 P.M. There was a quorum present.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2023 (REGULAR MEETING).

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PEREIRA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2023 (REGULAR MEETING) AS SUBMITTED.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SULIMAN SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

INFORMATIONAL SESSION WITH VINCENT SANTILLI, CEO/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HOMES FOR THE BRAVES REGARDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS AND LACK OF ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Council Member Lyons joined the meeting at 6:11 P.M.

Council Member Pereira asked Mr. Santilli to speak on people who live at poverty or below poverty level, who may have disabilities, and are veterans.

Mr. Santilli came forward to discuss this item. He said there was a lack of clean, safe, and affordable housing for all income levels. He recounted the difficulties that people can have finding housing if they have poor housing histories, prior evictions, poor credit scores/histories, or other related issues. He noted that, while there were programs in place to help veterans, many did not qualify for various reasons. Waiting lists for subsidized or senior housing can be months, years, or even decades.

He noted that landlords occasionally charged application fees which were too much for people living in poverty to afford. Since the landlord is not required to rent out the property, they could utilize it as a revenue stream. There were also issues with credit reports and their costs that could keep people from finding affordable housing.

Co-chair Cruz said he felt the system was taking advantage of the vulnerable and was an injustice.

Council Member Pereira asked what percentage of veterans had a disability that would require apartments with accommodations for the disabled. Mr. Santilli provided information regarding the required accommodations. He noted that many were past working age and couldn't be employed. Further discussion followed.

Council Member Lyons asked if there were any finances that the government could assist with. Mr. Santilli provided information regarding their budget status including their own fundraising efforts. He noted that there were tiny home villages popping up, but they didn't have the funds to support that yet. He provided more information regarding what those were. Further discussion followed regarding organizations that were helping Mr. Santilli.

Council Member Pereira asked if he felt that they should be requiring developers who get massive tax breaks to both set aside units for veterans and that they would not be able to use criminal and eviction records when it came to leasing the apartment.

Co-chair Cruz voiced his own support for tiny homes. Further discussion followed regarding positive impressions of them.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER PEREIRA SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:39 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted

Ian A. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services