

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CONTRACTS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 13, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Matthew McCarthy, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Co-chair; Jorge Cruz, Michael DeFilippo, Ernest Newton, Alfredo Castillo (6:30 p.m.), Samia Suliman (6:30 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council President A. Nieves, Council Member(s): M. Pereira & E. Martinez; K. Flatto, Finance Director; Atty. M. Anastasi, City Attorney's Office; Atty. T. Toms, City Attorney's Office; T. Gaudett, Mayor's Office; Acting Police Chief R. Garcia; Deputy Police Chief J. Baraja, Eric Amado, Director, Labor Relations; Philip White, Senior Labor Relations; Sherrie Weller AFSCME Local #1522; Kevin's iPhone; Alex Kovtunenکو, Green Bank

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 McCarthy called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES:

• March 9, 2021 (Regular Meeting)

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 9, 2021 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 9, 2021 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

33-20 Proposed Professional Services Agreement with Marshall K. Robinson regarding a Ballistics Expert for the Police Department.

Capitan Gilleran then spoke about how the program can help identify bullet casings and link them to other crimes.

Council Member Newton asked Atty. Toms to give a brief overview of the contract. Atty. Toms explained that she had not been the one to create this contract.

Council Member McCarthy said that Atty. Anastasi had just joined the meeting. Atty. Anastasi said that he had spoken with the attorney who had created the document earlier in the day and that the attorney had not mentioned he would not be present at the meeting.

Council Member Newton said that it was a shame that they were bringing this contract to the Committee without the attorney assigned to the agreement in attendance.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 33-20 PROPOSED PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH MARSHALL K. ROBINSON REGARDING A BALLISTICS EXPERT FOR THE POLICE DEPARTMENT UNTIL THE ATTORNEY WHO CREATED THE CONTRACT WAS ABLE TO BE PRESENT.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DEFILIPPO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Atty. Anastasi said that while this item was on the table, if someone could email him a copy, he could review the contract while the meeting was in session.

Council Member Newton said that the attorney knew the contract was on the agenda and were not present to review it with the Committee.

39-20 Proposed Partial Release Agreement with Connecticut Green Bank regarding the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) Program from 2012.

Mr. Flatto said that Atty. Toms was present to speak about the Green Bank contract along with Alex Kovtunenکو. Mr. Flatto said that this change would be done through a contract and added that the program is continuing. The only part that the City was involved in was billing the property owners for the amount of loan payments. The City then turned the money over to the Green Bank. The Green Bank now has a way to handle their own collection duties. There would not be any costs to the City since it was a pass through from the homeowners to the Green Bank.

Atty. Toms said that Mr. Flatto had summed it up very well. There are 90 municipalities involved in the program and 60 have already turned over collection duties to the Green Bank. The City would still have to be involved in the enforcement aspect.

Mr. Kovtunenکو said that CT Green Bank administers the program and it allows for businesses and non-profits to take out loans for improvements. There are 19 Bridgeport businesses involved in the program. The municipalities are required by law to opt in regarding the enforcement.

Council Member Pereira asked for clarification on the billing system. She wished to know how this change would benefit a property owner. Mr. Kovtunenکو said that it would benefit the property owner because sometimes Green Bank does not receive the check for two or three months after the due date.

Council Member Pereira asked if the property owners had signed an agreement with the City about the payments and if they would have to resign a contract. Mr. Kovtunenکو said that the property owners never signed a contract with the City about the billing. The only contract was between Green Bank and the property owners.

Council Member Newton asked what the benefit for the City would be by changing the system. Mr. Kovtunenکو said that there was administrative work being done by the Tax Collector and they would not have to do any more collections for the Green Bank.

Council Member Pereira pointed out that since the property owners had already signed a contract, they would now have to send their payments to Green Bank. She wished to know if they would be sent out in appropriate languages and whether the Green Bank would levy fines.

Council Member Castillo and Council Member Suliman joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Kovtunenکو said that there were only 19 property owners involved and that there would be no fines levied if the business owners can prove their attempt at payment.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 39-20 PROPOSED PARTIAL RELEASE AGREEMENT WITH CONNECTICUT GREEN BANK REGARDING THE COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ASSESSED CLEAN ENERGY (C-PACE) PROGRAM FROM 2012.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (CRUZ, CASTILLO, HERRON, DEFLIPPO, AND NEWTON) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (SULIMAN).**

Atty. Toms said that she was able to review the professional agreement for Agenda Item 33-20 if the Council Members had questions. She was told that the vote to table the item had already been taken.

Council Member Herron left the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

40-20 Proposed Tentative Agreement with American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1522, Council 4 regarding their Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Mr. Amado said that Mr. White, Senior Labor Relations, was also on the call. This item actually pre-dates Mr. Amado's time in Labor Relations. The members of the union are basically BOE paraprofessionals. The negotiations with the union were extended due to impasses and the State Arbitration Board ended with a mediated agreement. The full contract was sent to the Council Members with a red line copy.

Mr. Amado then reviewed the changes with the Committee Members and reminded everyone that they had separated the Public Facilities members out from this bargaining group.

Council Member Newton asked how long this contract had expired. Mr. Amado said that the contract had expired June 30, 2019 and the new one starts as of July 1, 2019 and runs through June 30, 2024.

Council Member Pereira asked how many members were in the Bargaining unit and how many were BOE members. Ms. Weller said that there were 17 City employees and the 413 were BOE employees.

Council Member Pereira said that this was a contract that had expired for a year and four months and this will financially hit the BOE with retro payments.

Mr. Amado said that there was a timeline for the negotiations for this contract, which he proceeded to review with the Council Members. The two parties hit an impasse and the contract negotiations were forwarded to the State for arbitration. The State was not able to conduct a full panel arbitration and that delayed the contract. He listed the dates. He said that both the TA and the CVA documents were signed by the Mayor and the President of the Union.

Council Member McCarthy asked about points 7 and 8 on page 13. Mr. White said that there was nothing specific due to the pandemic. Once negotiations have begun, there were no items that could be introduced after the second session. COVID hit after that.

Council Member McCarthy asked about the details of the longevity clauses. Mr. White said that those clauses had been negotiated previously and had not been changed during the negotiations. He reviewed the details with the Committee members.

Council Member Pereira said that Mr. Amado stated earlier that there was a TA and a fully executed contract. She said that she had never heard of that. Mr. Amado said that there was a complete bargaining agreement that he had signed along with the Mayor and the Union President.

Council Member Pereira said that the previous Labor Relations Director had reached out to the Union of February 2019, which was only four months before the contract expired. She said for the record that she hoped Mr. Amado agreed that the negotiations of contracts should not start 30, 40 or 50 days before the agreement expires.

Secondly, she wished to know what the top three things in the negotiated contract that would benefit the residents and taxpayers of Bridgeport.

Mr. Amado said that they were able to get immediate settlement regarding [inaudible] There is also a provision for no increase for a year along with a turnover change from a July calendar to a January calendar, which is beneficial from a budget standpoint.

From the employee standpoint, they were able to increase the maximum tuition reimbursement but the allocation for tuition reimbursement remained the same. Also, the contract has been cleaned up and no longer contains language pertaining to Public Facilities.

Mr. White said that the primary thing was five years of stability. The Union knows what the increases will be and the City knows what the expenses will be. He said that the Union was very good to work with. There were thorny issues, such as pay increases that would be over \$6.2 million. The final agreement was \$4.5 million dollars. This is only an average increase of 1.8% a year.

Council Member DeFilippo asked how many employees retired and would receive retroactive pay. Mr. Amado said that they would receive the pay differential and would be mailed out to them.

Mr. White said that someone was concerned about the BOE not getting a large bill. Mr. White said that the Superintendent of Schools and the CFO had been involved in the negotiations and aware of the agreement terms.

Council Member Newton asked Mr. Amado if they would ever get to the point when the Contracts Committee would be able to review the contracts before the negotiations start.

Mr. Amado said that he wished to start when the contracts that would be expiring in six months. He reminded everyone that there were times when the bargaining groups hit an impasse. He said that he expected to have at least two more delayed contracts and then they should be able to work on current issues.

Council Member Newton said that he would like to be notified when there was an impasse with a bargaining unit. Mr. Amado said that he did not have a problem notifying the Committee. He also said that some of the upcoming contracts were difficult ones.

Council Member McCarthy said that Mr. Amado mentioned printing. He said that there were 15 blank pages in the packet.

Council Member McCarthy said that there were clauses about employees going to school and there was a reimbursable expense. He wished to know where the money was budgeted for reimbursement.

Mr. Amado said that each individual employee has a cap per credit. The \$10,000 is for all the membership. Once that maximum is reached for the bargaining unit is reached, that's it.

Council Member Pereira said that the contract contained numerous blank pages. She was concerned that the table on page 1 shows the cost of the negotiated increases including pension and benefits. It states that for five and a half years, the total cost is \$2.5 million. However, Mr. White stated earlier that the cost would be \$4.5 million. She said that the table indicated a different total cost.

Mr. Amado said that the table was provided by OPM who reviews the contract for liabilities, reductions or other changes.

Mr. White explained how he calculated his figures.

Council Member Pereira said that she was concerned that the table they had been provided in the contract stated the total cost would be \$2.5 but Mr. White said that the cost was \$4.6 million. Council Member McCarthy said that Mr. Nkwo and Mr. Flatto were no longer on the call.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 40-20 PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY, AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES (AFSCME) LOCAL 1522, COUNCIL 4 REGARDING THEIR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT.
** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira said that they could not approve a contract with such a disparity between the numbers.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 40-20 PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY, AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES (AFSCME) LOCAL 1522, COUNCIL 4 REGARDING THEIR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT FAILED TO PASS WITH TWO IN FAVOR (NEWTON AND CRUZ) AND THREE (3) OPPOSED (DEFILIPPO, CASTILLO AND SULIMAN).**

Council Member Newton pointed out that both Mr. Nkwo and Mr. Flatto were aware of the amount of money they would have to budget for if the contract was approved. They budget for the pending contracts.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Amado said that he was able to get Mr. Nkwo on the phone. He explained that Mr. Nkwo was not in the office and could not access the necessary information. Mr. Amado was told that the vote had already been taken.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DEFILIPPO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (NEWTON DEFILIPPO, CASTILLO AND SULIMAN) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (CRUZ).**

The meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services