

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CONTRACTS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Matthew McCarthy, Co-chair; Jeanette Herron, Co-chair (6:12 p.m.); Ernest Newton, Alfredo Castillo, Jorge Cruz, Rosalina Roman-Christy, Samia Suliman (6:12 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council President Aidee Nieves, Council Member(s): M. Brown, M.E. Brantley, E. Martinez, M. McBride-Lee, M. Pereira & M. Valle; Atty. Mark Anastasi, City Atty's Office; Atty. Tyisha Toms, City Atty's Office; Ebony Jackson-Shaheed, Acting Health Director; Thomas Gaudett, Mayor's Aide; Eric Amado, Acting Personnel Director

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 6:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES:

• **May 11, 2021 (Regular Meeting)**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MAY 11, 2021.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

The following correction was noted:

Page 1, under **ATTENDANCE**, please add "Alfredo Castillo"

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 11, 2021 MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

106-20 Nomination of Ebony Jackson-Shaheed for Appointment to the City's Director of Health Position.

Atty. Anastasi said that he was present on behalf of the City Attorney's Office and this request was being submitted on behalf of the Mayor's Office and Labor Relations. He reviewed the documents which included Ms. Jackson-Shaheed's resume. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed is qualified for the position.

Atty. Anastasi reminded everyone that the Mayor nominates a candidate and submits it to the Council for approval. He noted that Mr. Amado and Ms. Jackson-Shaheed were present to answer questions.

Council Member Brantley requested that the Committee support Ms. Jackson-Shaheed for the position because she has been respectful and has been doing an awesome job on behalf of the City of Bridgeport.

Council Member Valle, Suliman and Herron joined the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

Council Member Cruz said that he felt it was a great honor to be part of the meeting and to speak on behalf of Ms. Jackson-Shaheed. She has been openminded regarding the homeless issues. He added that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed was already working on moving to Bridgeport.

Council Member Roman-Christy asked Ms. Jackson-Shaheed if the Council would be receiving reports about the COVID levels in the water. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed said that they test for the bacteria levels in the water and they are making these reports public. There will be links on the website for COVID-19, vaccination rates and other testing information.

Council Member Castillo said that this was great but the last director did not live in Bridgeport. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed has stated that she lives in Hamden and her house was up for sale. She is actively looking for an apartment in Bridgeport. Council Member Castillo said that he was just going by the Charter and wanted a commitment in writing.

Council Member Herron said that the last Director that was here never committed to move to Bridgeport and it was never in the contract. Now this contract has been changed to include a residency clause.

Council Member Herron asked if there was an emergency, whether Ms. Jackson-Shaheed would come to Bridgeport. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed said that she would.

Council Member Newton said that the Council owes Ms. Jackson-Shaheed a debt of gratitude because she was willing to step in when the previous Health Director left unexpectedly. While the Charter does say the Director should live in Bridgeport, he pointed out the City Council can actually waive the residency requirement if the situation requires it. He said that he would take Ms. Jackson-Shaheed at her word.

Council Member Newton went on to speak about the BOE staff that had to move to Bridgeport when they came to work in Bridgeport.

Council Member Pereira said that the City Charter was Bridgeport's constitution that was ratified by the voters. She said that there was no ability to waive any provision in the Charter [inaudible] constitutional requirement for the municipality. It does say that all Cabinet level positions must be residents of Bridgeport. The Superintendent of Schools is not a Cabinet level position for a

Mayor, they are not even part of his administration. Council Member Pereira said that she did feel that the Superintendent should have to live in Bridgeport as they are the highest paid employee of the City.

Council Member Pereira said that she had read the Mayor's entire letter and while it speaks about salary and benefits along with other items, it does not mention a timeline for a requirement for Ms. Jackson-Shaheed to move to Bridgeport. She wished to know why the Mayor wrote such a long letter about the agreement and omitted the residency requirement within a certain timeline.

Atty. Anastasi said that the Charter indicates that this position is the least likely to require residency. He cited 19-A-200, which establishes qualification, but does not establish residency. He said that he could forward the legal opinion about residency which was stated when the previous Health Director was in the nomination process.

Council Member Pereira said that she and her constituents will not be supporting this because Ms. Jackson-Shaheed was not a resident.

Council Member Pereira asked if Ms. Jackson-Shaheed had her Master of Public Health since 2019. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed said that she had her master's since 2019.

Council Member Pereira said that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed did not appear to have experience in a municipal health director position. She said that it was important to have the experience to oversee the largest city in the State. Council Member Pereira said that she had issues with this.

Council Member Martinez said that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed came in when the City needed her the most and for that she thanked Ms. Jackson-Shaheed. Regarding Ms. Jackson-Shaheed's experience, Ms. Jackson-Shaheed took charge when someone else left. The Council is here to support Ms. Jackson-Shaheed along the way to help Bridgeport. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed has Council Member Martinez's support 210%.

Council Member McBride-Lee said she was happy that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed was present. She reminded everyone that she had not been comfortable with the previous director. Council Member McBride-Lee said that she was nervous that the City did not have a Health Director during the pandemic but was glad Ms. Jackson-Shaheed was now going to take the position.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she would be voting for Ms. Jackson-Shaheed. She said that there were some vicious people on the Council and if someone gives Ms. Jackson-Shaheed a hard time, she should go to the Mayor. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed earned her degree.

Council Member Brown said that he would like to correct a few things for the record. He said that the former Health Director never committed to coming to Bridgeport because her children were in school in Danbury. However, Council Member Brown noted that the former Health Director did not hesitate to move to a new community when a better job was offered two months

later. Council Member Brown said that it spoke volumes that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed has committed to moving to Bridgeport despite the administration's belief that it is not a Charter requirement.

Council Member Brown went on to say that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed should update her resume because she does have experience as a Health Director and leading the largest city in the State of Connecticut. She has been the Acting Health Director for the last four months.

Council Member Brown said that there were some statements made that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed's resume does not reflect that of a Health Director. However, Council Member Brown reminded everyone that the former Health Director's resume included every qualification anyone could want in a Health Director, but this did not prevent her from leaving the City in the middle of a global pandemic. It's not just about what the resume lists, it can be about someone's character. After Ms. Jackson-Shaheed in action and attending community events, it speaks volumes to her character. She also speaks multiple languages and can communicate to the various groups in the City. He said that he hoped that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed could find a place in his district because they would be lucky to have her.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 106-20 NOMINATION OF EBONY JACKSON-SHAHEED FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE CITY'S DIRECTOR OF HEALTH POSITION.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAN-CHRISTY SECONDED.**

Council Member Newton asked what was the most challenging moment so far in Bridgeport. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed said that she had received a great deal of support since she arrived. She added that she was really hands on and did not feel that there was a challenge she wasn't able to handle. She is working on re-organizing the department.

Council Member Roman-Christy asked whether Ms. Papa who is the Acting Health Director would be stepping aside. Atty. Anastasi explained that presently Ms. Jackson-Shaheed was the Acting Health Director. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed said that Ms. Papa was the Acting Deputy Health Director.

Council Member Brantley said that Council Member Brown had summed up Ms. Jackson-Shaheed's experience very well since she had run the Department for the last four months. She has some core values and Council Member Brantley was looking forward to working with Ms. Jackson-Shaheed,

Council Member Pereira said that four months as an Acting Director is not sufficient experience. She said that she bases her decisions based on the merits. She also asked how many applicants applied for the position.

Mr. Amado said that there were approximately 10 applicants and only 7 engaged in the written process.

Council Member Pereira said that Ms. Papa's position was as the Acting Deputy Director of Public Health Operations, which doesn't exist in the Charter or the Ordinances, a bargaining unit contract and is not listed in the City Budget.

Council Member Pereira said that previous to her position in Bridgeport, how many staff members Ms. Jackson-Shaheed oversaw. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed said that it was 30.

Council President Nieves said that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed had arrived in the middle of the pandemic. Council President Nieves said that she had sat in meeting with Ms. Jackson-Shaheed where she was able to assure the State officials about the vaccinations. Most municipalities have been struggling to address the vaccine hesitancy. Ms. Jackson-Shaheed has been working on the Health Department accreditation. This is a direct result of having foresight and management. She has been working with Ms. Papa and Mr. Applebee. Council President Nieves said that she supports her and recognizes that Ms. Jackson-Shaheed is actively working on moving her family to Bridgeport.

Council Member McCarthy said that he was supporting Ms. Jackson-Shaheed and she has been responsive to his questions. He added that because they don't have a Personnel Director and they can't work on appointing a Police Chief.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 106-20 NOMINATION OF EBONY JACKSON-SHAHEED FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE CITY'S DIRECTOR OF HEALTH POSITION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (HERRON, NEWTON, CRUZ, ROMAN-CHRISTY, AND SULIMAN) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (CASTILLO).**

108-20 Proposed Resolution regarding the Internship Agreements with Sacred Heart University.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ADD AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY DOCUMENT REGARDING THE INTERNSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY AS EXHIBIT 08-10-21-A.**

Associate City Attorney Toms said that she had to come to the Council every year to get an agreement. This agreement would be for three years. Sacred Heart provides the indemnity insurance and carries far more insurance than could be ever needed for the students. The students will be receiving a learning opportunity.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAN-CHRISTY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED AGENDA ITEM 108-20 PROPOSED RESOLUTION REGARDING THE INTERNSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAN-CHRISTY SECONDED.**

Council Member Newton said that he would be in favor if the attorney would inform the Council if there were any changes. He said that he was cautious about granting a blanket approval before this was brought to the Council.

Council Member Roman-Christy asked if the internships were paid. Atty. Toms said that the internships are not paid and were specific to the Health Department and Sacred Heart.

Council Member Roman-Christy asked what the term was for the internships. She was told that they would be for 6 to 8 weeks.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 108-20 PROPOSED RESOLUTION REGARDING THE INTERNSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services