

**CITY of BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SPEAKING SESSION
MONDAY, JANUARY 7, 2013
6:30 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Brannelly, Banta, Taylor-Moye, Olson, Brantley, T. McCarthy, Austin, Lyons, Bonney, dePara, Ayala, Martinez, Paoletto, Curwen, Baker, Holloway

ABSENT: Council members: M. McCarthy, Blunt, Silva, Vizzo-Paniccia

Council President McCarthy called the public speaking session to order at 6:35 pm.

The city clerk took the roll call and announced there was a quorum.

Council President McCarthy announced that the following council members were absent for the following reason:

Council member Silva was ill; Council member Vizzo-Paniccia was ill and Council member Blunt was ill.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSON HAS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, JANUARY 7, 2013 AT 6:30 P.M., IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 45 LYON TERRACE, BRIDGEPORT, CT.

NAME

SUBJECT

Cecil C. Young
99 Carroll Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06607

The NAGE Union Contract.

Mr. Young stated that he brought a video to show that the snow blowers didn't do a good job on his street on December 10.

He went on to speak about his wife's asthma pump, noting that although she has medical coverage now; he has still been dealing with his termination issues for seven years. He recalled once again how he was supposed to return to work on March 16 of the year he

was terminated, but he didn't and he was subsequently terminated unjustly and denied his benefits. He emphasized that his medical needs and his wife's have been disregarded. He further mentioned that he felt the city council should investigate what he deemed an unjust termination.

The following persons signed up to speak before the city council prior to the session:

Clyde Nicholson

Mr. Nicholson spoke about being confronted by someone last week about why he is so hard on the Mayor and why he didn't like him. He said he was questioned what he would do better. He clarified that he doesn't dislike Bill Finch; however, he dislikes Mayor Finch. He made the following suggestions and steps that the city council should take to improve what's going on in the city:

- Get involved in the schools
- Pay the Superintendent of Schools based on performance
- Bridgeport should be a gun-free zone and people should be licensed to purchase a gun
- There should be a penalty imposed of fifty years hard time for anyone that kills another person
- Homelessness should be addressed by renovating vacant buildings to be used for housing
- All the schools should be equipped with metal detectors and a security monitored camera

He proposed that each council member should become a full-time paid employee of the city.

He mentioned that he thought it was a wasted expense to operate another city hall building.

Amos Brown

Mr. Brown spoke about city government and the way it's being run. He stated that the state receives millions of dollars, but he questioned where the programs are that are supposed to be funded by the dollars received. He emphasized that the dollars haven't been seen and he thought the State of Connecticut should investigate itself to find out where the money is going. He further questioned why so many youth are dying through gun violence. He estimated that there are (325) guns on the street illegally that are related to unsolved crimes. He stressed that it was time for America to wake up and govern all the people!

John Marshall Lee

(below is Mr. Lee's statement that he presented to the city council)

Comments to City Council Meeting January 7, 2013 (John Marshall Lee)

- **Some of us have monitored the Budget and Appropriations Committee when they choose to meet. They are the only oversight in the City on the way taxpayer money is spent by the administration. They review the proposed budget in the springtime. Then they vote on it for final approval before it goes to the Mayor, essentially and usually intact. Then we assume that they serve as watchdogs of operating budgets, capital budgets and overall City finances for the rest of the year. They would like to be considered watchdogs. We find that they are untrained, rely on the City for any and all info (never using the annual budget they give themselves under OTHER EXPENSES of about \$90-100,000 to develop other info or professional comment) and in so doing have no focus on trends, the reduction of expenses, understanding of variances, etc.**
- **The City operating budget is over a half billion dollars today, with the education budget usually about half of that amount roughly depending on grants in a given year. The City Charter directs the Mayor to deliver a report 12 months of the year by the fourth Friday of the following month to include revenues, expenses and variances. This is accomplished by the Finch administration less than 50% of the time in the last few years. This is a partial excuse for why the B&A group do a poor job of monitoring. But B&A does not complain officially at their meetings, so they remain blind and toothless to a great extent.**
- **In the Charter review process last year a close reading reminded us that there is a required meeting on the operating budget each year, but it does not provide any feedback to the public who shows up at that meeting in terms of response to questions, Council members exhibiting a comprehensive knowledge of their task at hand, or any pursuit of trends in lessening the burden on taxpayers annually (or the pension, other post employment benefits, debts or other responsibilities placed on taxpayers. Why no? - That is what a credentialed, responsive, knowledgeable, and non-conflicted group with minority party representation would do, by the way in the form of a Finance Board.**
- **A reading of the Charter and Ordinances also showed language calling for community outreach and another meeting annually regarding the capital plans and budgeting for the City. This has not been lived up to for a number of years.**
- **What does the annual external auditor think about the state of City internal controls when they send their Management Letter along with the audit**

report?? The City may have lost one or more of these letters and have been unwilling to provide their response to Blum Shapiro.

- The Comprehensive Annual Financial Review is provided to the Mayor's Office around the New Year. It was not available as of January 5, so it can be anticipated certainly in the next week or so. (Previous CAFR documents, including the single audits of State and Federal funds have been archived on the City web site. However, with the inauguration of a new web site, many documents previously archived and available including Council and Committee minutes and CAFR documents, as well as budget approvals in previous year are not available or not easily found. Why not?
- Finally, as of today, the City monthly financial report last delivered to the Council and community at large is for September, 2012. It was dated December 6. By now October and November data should have been provided. More importantly even the September report containing significant variances has not comments about said variances. Curiously critics of the budgeting process have pointed out the number of department positions each year that are vacant and remain vacant all year. We have called them "ghost positions" because those salary dollars (Line Item 51000) when budgeted for a vacant position, are spent elsewhere and no one can see the effect. When B&A approved the budget early in May to September is a short time. What happened to have the City decrease this funding? Was anyone terminated? What about budgeting for health care and pension benefits for those "ghost positions" that were not changed in September? No explanation from the Mayor! No meetings of B&A in December! Two scheduled meetings! Two cancellations!

Does anyone on the City Council care to respond? Does anyone on the City Council care? What do you think taxpayers think as they hear or read these facts? Time will tell.

The public speaking session closed at 7:00 pm.

Council President McCarthy called for a caucus prior to the city council meeting at 7:05 p.m.

The caucus ended at 7:15 pm.

CITY of BRIDGEPORT

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, JANUARY 7, 2013

7:00 PM

City Council Chambers, City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace

Bridgeport, Connecticut

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Brannelly, Banta, Taylor-Moye, Olson, Brantley, T. McCarthy, Austin, Lyons, Vizzo-Paniccia, Bonney, dePara, Ayala, Martinez, Paoletto, Curwen, Baker, Holloway

ABSENT: Council members: M. McCarthy, Blunt, Silva

Mayor Finch called the meeting to order at 7:20 pm.

Prayer - Council member Olson offered the prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance - Council member Curwen led the pledge of allegiance.

Roll Call - the city clerk took the roll call and announced there was a quorum.

City Council Citation: In Recognition of Classical Studies Academy for its outstanding growth and high achievement in reading, math, writing and science.

Superintendent of Schools Vallas and members of the academy came forward. Mayor Finch, Council President McCarthy and Council members: Lyons, Brantley, Bonney, dePara and Olson came forward to present the citation.

Council President McCarthy stated that many times they see great results in the Bridgeport schools, noting that Classical Studies Academy is one of his favorite schools in the city and they have broken the record for test scores.

Council member Lyons read the citation. She expressed that the success of the school wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for the teachers and students. She said they have all

worked hard over the past year to make it possible to go on to achieve a higher level of excellence that has all been team work. She said it was great to acknowledge the students as #1 in Bridgeport and she was proud to be a part of the work that is done there.

Principal Giles thanked everyone for the recognition. She expressed that although the recognition they received isn't the same as it would be athletes; what makes them go on is knowing that they have touched the mind of a student. She thanked her staff, the student and parent body, all of whom care about the success of the students. Overall, she said it was a strong foundation and the high expectations result in the high achievement of the students. She urged everyone to come and visit the school.

Mayor Finch expressed that the school is like a family and through his administration; he has seen the teacher staff dedicated to the students and they have done a great job. He stated that he believed in the public school system. He mentioned that Bridgeport has received recognition due to the hard work done at Classical Studies Academy.

Council member Brantley thanked Principal Giles. And she mentioned how Delta Sigma Theta has been involved in the success of the school.

Superintendent Vallas stated that the school is a classic example of what can be accomplished if they believe in the students. He further stated that they are looking to exceed the standard in all Bridgeport schools. He congratulated the school on their achievement.

Council member Olson mentioned that the parents are dedicated and work at the school for forty hours per year. He expressed that this dedication might be a good guideline to follow for all schools.

Mayor Finch presented the citation to Superintendent Vallas and Classical Studies Academy.

City Council Citation: In Recognition of Jerry's Shakespeare Pizza No. 2 for its contributions to the Bridgeport Community.

Mayor Finch expressed that there was another institution in Bridgeport being recognized. The owners of Jerry's Shakespeare Pizza No. 2 came forward to accept the citation.

Council President McCarthy stated that many people in Bridgeport commit themselves to the city and they thrive to do good things for the residents; as well as helping city's tax role.

Council member Lyons stated that Jerry's Shakespeare Pizza No. 2 has been a place of refuge for her and her family on Friday night. She said it's a great family atmosphere and there is always pleasant friendly service. She encouraged everyone to visit.

The owner of Jerry's Shakespeare Pizza No. 2 thanked the City of Bridgeport for the honor. She shared a brief history of her life and her family and how the business was started during 1999 when they bought the pizza place. She expressed that she loved the

neighborhood, the customers and residents that patronized the restaurant. She thanked Mayor Finch, Council member Lyons and Council President McCarthy for their friendship and patronage through the years. She expressed in Italian...Ciao Bella, Graci!

Mayor Finch relayed his congratulations and he stated that he hoped the restaurant continues to service Bridgeport for the years to come.

Announcements:

Council President McCarthy stated that the following council members were absent due to illness: Council members Silva, Blunt and Vizzo-Paniccia.

03-12 Public Hearing re: Partial Tax Abatement for Affordable Rental Housing at 810 Boston Avenue.

Mayor Finch asked if there was anyone present to speak in favor or against the item.

Hearing none, the public hearing was closed.

04-12 Public Hearing re: Partial Tax Abatement for Mixed Use Development at 930 Main Street and 114 State Street (The Former Mechanics and Farmers Bank Building).

Mayor Finch asked if there was anyone present to speak in favor or against the item.

Hearing none, the public hearing was closed.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

Approval of City Council Minutes: December 3, 2012

- ** **COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**
- ** **COUNCIL MEMBER HOLLOWAY SECONDED**
- ** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Council member Holloway requested a Point of Personal Privilege: he recalled a statement that he recently heard that Bridgeport is the fourth dirtiest city in the United States. He said he took offense to the statement. He noted that although this may have been the case in the past, he recalled that he and other council members hammered out a plan to address the issue in the past. They had trucks go throughout the communities and conduct a clean up that was very successful. He went on to address what happened noting various reasons, but he said that the clean up project is still intact and should be utilized again. The program that was implemented back in 1995 was "*Trash for Cash*" and he emphasized that it should be activated again to address the problem.

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES:

- 17-12** Communication from OPM re: Proposed Budget Modification to the FY 2012-2013 General Fund Budget: Increase Appropriation for the Board of Education and for the Position of Deputy CAO for Education/Youth (\$3,649,575), referred to Budget and Appropriations Committee.

- 18-12** Communication from Central Grants and Community Development re: Connecticut Main Street Organization for a "Little Asia" Improvement Project – 2013 Preservation of Place Grant, referred to Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee.

- ** **COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO REFER COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES**
- ** **COUNCIL MEMBER McCARTHY SECONDED**
- ** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

RESOLUTIONS TO BE REFERRED TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, ETC.:

19-12 Resolution presented by Council Member Lyons re: Request that Stop Lines and Crosswalks be painted in designated locations in the 134th District.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER T. McCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER dePARA SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON (CONSENT CALENDAR):

Mayor Finch asked if there were any items to be removed from the consent calendar.

Council members Baker and dePara requested to removed items *03-12 and *04-12.

The city clerk read the remaining items into the record.

***03-12** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Partial Tax Abatement for Affordable Rental Housing at 810 Boston Avenue. - *removed*

***04-12** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Partial Tax Abatement for Mixed Use Development at 930 Main Street and 114 State Street (The Former Mechanics and Farmers Bank Building). - *removed*

***157-11** Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Settlement of Pending Litigation with Teresa Lisi.

***02-12** Miscellaneous Matters Committee Report re: Appointment of Robin Shepard (D) to the Zoning Board of Appeals Commission.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO APPROVE**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSD UNANIMOUSLY**

Mayor Finch returned to item:

***03-12** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Partial Tax Abatement for Affordable Rental Housing at 810 Boston Avenue.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER HOLLOWAY SECONDED**

Bill Coleman came forward to address questions from Council member dePara.

Council member dePara asked why this was the best deal. Mr. Coleman stated that the property borders two streets. He said the analysis was based on economic development due to the fact that it's a dismal building with houses next to it. So they conducted the cost to demolish the building taking other considerations into account.

Mr. Coleman reviewed the numbers and he stated that it would be strictly affordable housing with a focus on the veteran population. He relayed that no one was willing to invest in the building and they received \$2 million from the re-investment housing fund. He explained how they arrived at the analysis according to bank guidelines that outlined qualitative and quantitative factors – *the spreadsheet that outlined the information was distributed.*

Council member dePara stated that the fact that the housing will be for veterans was supported by him.

Council member Baker asked who the owner of the property was. Mr. Coleman stated that it was a joint venture with Alpha Community Services who is a non-profit organization and Ted Lazarus. However, he clarified that their rental properties pay taxes.

Council member Baker asked about the parking situation. The response was that there is plentiful street parking.

Council member Baker asked the number of disable units there would be. The response was that there will be 24-units all subsidized and all handicap accessible. Mr. Coleman added that lower East Main Street had dedicated handicap spaces.

Council member Baker stated the he wasn't opposed to affordable housing; however, he said he had a concern about the parking. He questioned if there were any plans to acquire parking space in the future. The response was that handicap parking hasn't ever posed a problem at their other housing sites.

Council member Olson asked for clarification if Alpha Community Services was a non-profit organization and if they have rental properties; is taxes paid on those properties. Mr. Coleman verified that was correct.

Council member Lyons asked if the housing would be used for veterans. The response was yes, that is the main goal.

Council President McCarthy stated that it was a good project taking an abandoned building, getting rid of the blight and putting it back on the tax role. He stated that it starts

the process of building up the area with good solid partners running it. He said he strongly supported the project.

Council member Martinez expressed that she was excited that the project was happening on the east side, which is her district. She said she always wanted the area to be fixed up and become a viable part of the community and she was glad it would be geared towards veterans.

Council member Paoletto echoed Council member Martinez's comments that the entire project was good. He recalled that the property has been derelict for years and he was in 100% support of the project.

Mayor Finch stated that there were hundreds of properties in the city that require attention, but the staff was limited to address the complicated deals that are required. He urged the council members to get involved if they can and he said he appreciated all the feedback.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mayor Finch returned to item:

***04-12** Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Partial Tax Abatement for Mixed Use Development at 930 Main Street and 114 State Street (The Former Mechanics and Farmers Bank Building). - *removed*

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO APPROVE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER McCARTHY SECONDED**

Council member dePara asked for details of the deal. Mr. Coleman said the project represented the historic Mechanics & Farmer building. It's a \$6 million project and the analysis was put together as it was outlined *and distributed*. He stated that there were eight different funding sources –*as outlined in the information on page 2*.

Mr. Coleman explained that some façade work would be required. He continued to review the information sheet that outlined the following:

- Tax schedule
- Cash flow – *referenced on the last page*

Overall, he said the city will receive more funds than they have in past years. He reiterated that the building has been vacant for over twelve years.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Moment of silence:

Council member Bonney asked for a moment of silence for Cynthia King Jenkins, a member of the district that recently passed away.

Mayor Finch expressed that she was a wonderful, good loving woman that loved her church and her family.

New business:

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES FOR THE PURPOSE OF REFERRING AN ITEM TO COMMITTEE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER McCARTHY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNELLY MOVED TO REFER THE MATTER OF THE STATE LOBBYING AGREEMENT TO THE CONTRACTS COMMITTEE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER McCARTHY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (ITEM # 20-12)**

Other business:

Council President stated that ribbons were distributed in honor of the Sandy Hook School students that passed away. He expressed that it was a small gesture to recognize the tragedy that occurred. He encouraged everyone to think of the children when they wear the ribbon!

Council member Curwen stated that he has served on the city council representing the 138th District for seventeen years. He further noted that he was the longest reigning Co-chair of the Budget & Appropriations Committee. He shared that he got involved in politics to be a part of and see the city's rebirth and although there have been many distractions; there have been both sad and good times. He stated that politics is a difficult job and having to balance decisions for constituents was challenging at times. He said he wanted to publicly thank the voters of the upper east side, Mayor Finch, Council President McCarthy and the city clerk; Fleeta Hudson. He further expressed that he wanted to

acknowledge his colleagues truly as work horses that are worthy of serving the city. He further expressed that unfortunately, the position compelled him to inform them that he will be retiring from politics due to a family illness.

He emotionally thanked everyone for their tireless work to the city and he asked that they all continue to put forward the hard work for the sake of the city.

Council President McCarthy expressed that Council member Curwen has been a hard worker involved in the budget process for many years. He expressed that he has left a mark on Bridgeport and the 138th District and the city council. He further expressed that he was proud to have served with him and proud to call him a friend. He commented that he is a fabulous father and someone who puts his family first and above all, he should be commended for those virtues.

Mayor Finch stated that it has been a pleasure and honor to have served with Council member Curwen in many capacities. He said he has seen the trust that his constituents has had in him and he was confident that all the skills that he used to help the city in the past, will serve him in his dedication to his family. He expressed that although it's bittersweet; it has been an honor to share this part of his life with him!

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT BRANTLEY MOVED TO ADJOURN
** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services