

*(The following is not a verbatim transcript of comments or discussion that occurred during the meeting, but rather a summarization intended for general informational purposes. All motions and votes are the official records).*

## **SPECIAL MEETING – CITY COUNCIL**

**-MAY 10, 2021-**

A Special meeting of the City Council was called held on Monday, May 10, 2021 via ZOOM webinar.

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 P.M. by the Council President.

Roll call showed the following members present: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

Also Present: Anthony Moretti, Director of Administration; Christopher Millea, City Solicitor; Robert Strom, Director of Finance; Michael Igoe, City Controller.



**-MAY 10, 2021-**

# **CRANSTON CITY COUNCIL**

## **Special Meeting - Docket**

### **Council President Christopher G. Paplauskas**

**MONDAY, May 10, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m.**

**Virtual ZOOM Webinar Meeting**

You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

When: May 10, 2021 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: Special Council meeting

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87287657193?pwd=V0xVdmVhd20zTDVvVbEJUZzYyeiVhQT09>

Passcode: 023950

Or One tap mobile :

US: +13017158592,,87287657193#,,,,\*023950# or +13126266799,,87287657193#,,,,\*023950#

Or Telephone:

Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 669 900 9128 or 888 788 0099 (Toll Free) or 833 548 0276 (Toll Free) or 833 548 0282 (Toll Free) or 877 853 5247 (Toll Free)

Webinar ID: 872 8765 7193

Passcode: 023950

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87287657193?pwd=V0xVdmVhd20zTDVvVbEJUZzYyeiVhQT09>

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## **Agenda and Docketed Matters Before the Council**

- **Call to order** by Council President; council members attendance taken  
(No votes taken)

In Accordance with Section 3.07 and 6.10 of the Home Rule Charter, I hereby call a special meeting of the City Council to be held on Monday, May 10, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. at which meeting the following items of business shall be transacted:

**To consider override of any Mayoral vetoes of any increases, decreases or additional appropriations approved by the Council in the 2021-2022 Budget.** (Votes to be taken)

**The meeting will be cancelled if there are no Mayoral vetoes to consider.**

And I hereby request the City Clerk to notify all Council members of the Call of the special meeting.

I hereby request the City Clerk to notify all Council members of the Call of the special meeting.

Executed at Cranston, Rhode Island, this 4th day of May, 2021.

- **Adjournment:** (Vote will be taken)

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/s/ **Christopher G. Paplauskas, Council President**

**-MAY 10, 2021-**

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that a true copy of the attached Notice of a Special meeting of the City Council to be held on Monday, May 10, 2021 at 5:00 pm. via Zoom Webinar, was delivered via regular mail and electronic mail on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2021 to the addresses listed below.

Council President Christopher G. Paplauskas  
14 Highland St.  
Cranston, RI 02920  
[chrispaplauskas@gmail.com](mailto:chrispaplauskas@gmail.com)

Council Vice-President Edward J. Brady  
12 Thunder Trail  
Cranston, RI 02921  
[Brady4cranston@gmail.com](mailto:Brady4cranston@gmail.com)

Councilwoman Jessica M. Marino  
799 Natick Ave.  
Cranston, RI 02920  
[marinoforcranston@gmail.com](mailto:marinoforcranston@gmail.com)

Councilman Robert J. Ferri  
2426 Cranston R.  
Cranston, RI 02920  
[robferri2426@gmail.com](mailto:robferri2426@gmail.com)

Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli  
54 Massachusetts St.  
Cranston, RI 02920  
[nicoleforcranston@gmail.com](mailto:nicoleforcranston@gmail.com)

Councilwoman Lammis J. Vargas  
35 Betsey Williams Dr.  
Cranston, RI 02910  
[Lammis.vargas@gmail.com](mailto:Lammis.vargas@gmail.com)

Councilwoman Aniece Germain  
53 Dale Ave.  
Cranston, RI 02910  
[aniecegermain2@gmail.com](mailto:aniecegermain2@gmail.com)

Councilman John P. Donegan  
60 Packard St.  
Cranston, RI 02910  
[JohnDoneganForCranston@gmail.com](mailto:JohnDoneganForCranston@gmail.com)

Councilman Matthew R. Reilly  
27 Dellwood Rd.  
Cranston, RI 02920  
[mreillyesq@gmail.com](mailto:mreillyesq@gmail.com)

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/s/ Rosalba Zanni  
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Comm

**-MAY 10, 2021-**

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilman Ferri, it was voted to override the Mayor's vetoes as a block related to group #1108 Board of Canvassers line items #51100 Salary Schedule, #51200 Part-Time Help, #51300 Payroll Taxes, #51301 Pension Contribution, #51302 Hospitalization and #51304 Group Life Insurance. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to approve as a block and override the Mayor's veto.

Under Discussion:

**Director Moretti** stated that the Mayor feels that the position in the Canvassing Office is unnecessary at this time especially in a non-election year. The resources the Administration currently has with bilingual people that the Mayor has hired, he feels is more than necessary support for that and perhaps next July would be more appropriate time.

**Councilwoman Renzulli** stated that she is in favor of this position, but not until it is mandated that we fill it.

**Councilwoman Vargas** stated that, as far as adding another position, there has been other salary increases elsewhere earlier on this year and title changes as well. She does not think this is about money. She thinks the Administration just does not want this position right now and she is in full support of adding this position.

**Councilwoman Germain** stated that in her experience with Mayor Hopkins, he shows his disrespect for a Mayor to her personally. In his narrative of the veto message, he shows disrespect to most of the City Council members. She is really stunned by the tone of this narrative. This being her first budget, she sees a bi-partisan budget. She does not agree with everything in the budget, but she does agree in compromise. She believes that the City Council came up with a budget where we have a bi-partisan vote and that is a reflect of all of us in the City. That is what she believes in and she does think that that should be respected and the way the Mayor spoke of in his justifying to veto those amendments that failed and that reflects the needs of the population is really disrespectful and she does believe that we need respect from the Mayor as well even though we are not from the same political party.

**Council Vice-President Brady** stated that he still feels that this position may not be needed until next year, but he is in support of his colleagues and this position would be a great addition to the City of Cranston. The Mayor continues to contest that this is the most diverse Administration that Cranston has ever seen and at times we have to give him a little credit for that because it truly is and it is a fact.

**Councilman Reilly** stated that with regards to the entire package for the Canvassing Office, he wants to be very specific for everyone and for the public about what is being requested here. What is being requested is taking a part-time employee, a part-time bilingual employee that is already in the Canvassing Office who works 20-30 hours a week. They are asking for an additional ten hours. So, for that 10 hours, we are asked to pay hospitalization, benefits, pension and salary. That is why he is against this in this current year. He is all for bilingual elections. He is all for anyone walking into City Hall to have access to their government as well as to their elections, but that is not what is before us tonight. It is not about not respecting diversity, it is not about not respecting bilingual people, it is about ten hours versus the amount of money that is requested so for those reasons, he will be sustaining the veto this evening.

**Councilman Ferri** stated that the City Council found the money to fund for this position and approved it, he does not understand why the Mayor vetoed it. Director Moretti stated that the Mayor felt that the decision of the City Council to create a new full-time position related to salary amendments in the Board of Canvassers is not needed at this time. To add to City payroll and the salary and benefits associated with this, he feels is not justified in a non-election year. The Canvassing Clerk could have spoken to the Mayor directly to maybe work something else out, but he chose not to. The Canvassing Clerk has been assured that there will be staffing if they are short on staffing, bilingual or not, the Mayor will be sure to add that staff. Mayor Hopkins respects each and every person on the Council. Mayor Hopkins respects each and every position on the Council. Mayor Hopkins respects the City Council, its governance and its responsibilities and for anyone to suggest that he has been disrespectful is propaganda and out of line.

**Council President Paplauskas** stated that he will be supporting the override. The Council did find the money. The money is there. It is time that we have a full-time bilingual person in this department.

Roll call was taken on motion to approve as a block and override the Mayor's veto. Motion passed on a vote of 7-2. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Vargas, Germain, Councilman Donegan, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -7. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilwoman Renzulli and Councilman Reilly -2.

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On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to override the Mayor's veto related to Account #1102-52212 City Council – City Council Legal Counsel.

Under Discussion:

**Director Moretti** stated that the Mayor feels this is very unnecessary. That \$18,000 or 75% increase for this part-time position of \$42,000 is disproportionate to other outside attorneys employed by the City. We are only five months into this and 75% increase seems a bit unusual and unnecessary.

**Councilman Donegan** stated that, to him, based on his experience he has had with Attorney Angell over the past four months, he has been worth that amount, he is our only legal resource as a City Council and it is money well spent for us as the legislative body of the second largest City in the State to pay that for a part-time attorney who is doing close to full-time work for us.

**Councilwoman Marino** echoed Councilman Donegan's sentiments and pointed out that the Mayor and City Solicitor receive approximately \$90,000 a year so she does not believe that \$42,000 a year is an egregious sum particularly given the work that is entailed for this Counsel as our only legal source.

**Councilman Ferri** echoed the sentiments of Councilman Donegan and Councilwoman Marino and stated that he feels that, as a new Council person, Attorney Angell is his only legal resource when he has a question. He does not think \$42,000 a year is excessive. He is working for nine people and he does not bill the City for any other services. He does not support the veto at this time.

**Council Vice-President Brady** stated that his initial amendment of \$3,000 he thought was fair but Councilman Ferri decided \$3,500 was what he wanted it to be at. He understands why the Mayor vetoed it. \$6,000 is \$6,000, but at the same time, he stands by the work that this Council did for the last six weeks to diligently go through this budget to find ways to improve it and work with the Mayor's Office. Does he think \$6,000 is too high, probably, but he will probably be in support of it this evening based on compromises and conversations.

**Councilwoman Germain** echoed her colleagues' statements and stated that she supports the override.

**Councilman Reilly** stated that as he did on amendment night, he did not support this for a number of reasons. We are coming out of a pandemic, financial times are tight, but in this situation, a month or so back we were debating raises of 2% neutral raises, taking from one position to the other. To so freely be handing out 75% raise, he is baffled. Not only is that number beyond the market average, the argument that he does his job and therefore deserves a raise, that does not fly with him either. He thinks Mr. Angell is a great guy and a great attorney, he knows his stuff, he has been able to guide the Council, but looking at this financially, he can't take into effect that he is a nice guy. A 75% increase is a slap in the face to the taxpayers, but he would have been open to something a little higher than just the \$2,000 a month, but going to \$4,000 a month when we are in other aspects stealing people's paper and paper clips and then finding over 2% increases, something is just not adding up. He will vote to sustain this veto.

**Councilwoman Renzulli** stated that she would have been on board with a raise, but she finds this raise to be too high. She just cannot vote for this.

**Councilwoman Vargas** asked that everyone keep in mind that we are voting just on the salary for City Solicitor who has been in four or five months. We voted in confirmation on new Directors and other people with increased salary immediately without giving them the benefit of the doubt in how their work was going to be or performance base so the fact that we are talking about salary she understands that right now may not be the right time, but perhaps the Administration should have thought of that when they were giving increases earlier this year.

**Councilwoman Renzulli** stated that she agrees that our attorney does a great job and she would give him a raise, but she just thinks that this went too high and as far as individual Committee meetings, she actually gets most of her advice from the Solicitor that is on those meetings and she, as Chair of Safety Services, gets her legal advice from Attorney Verdecchia.

**Councilman Reilly** stated that he fully agrees with Councilwoman Vargas that everyone should tighten their belt, however, he thinks there is a big difference between a full departmental restructuring that is not neutral. This is a single person asking and looking for more money.

**Council President Paplauskas** stated that he certainly does not like giving raises out and certainly advocated for them in the past and he has advocated for them when he thought they are justified. When he came on the City Council approximately six years ago, the position of our legal counsel was strictly parliamentarian. He never attended Committee meetings, he never remembers getting legal advice or ever remembers him drafting Ordinances for the City Council. He thinks the position has changed a lot over the years and he will be voting in favor of this. He wishes the raise was a little lower, but we have no one else to write legislation or do research or be on call 24 hours a day.

Roll call was taken on motion to override the Mayor's veto related to Account #1102-52212 City Council – City Council Legal Counsel and motion passed on a vote of 7-2. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Vargas, Germain, Councilman Donegan, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -7. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilwoman Renzulli and Councilman Reilly -2.

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On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to override the Mayor's veto related to Group #1102-52215 City Council – Council Contingency.

Under Discussion:

**Councilman Donegan** stated that the night of the budget adoption, the City Council found approximately \$18,000 and he feels it should be used at a later time as authorized by the majority of the City Council.

Roll call was taken on motion to override the Mayor’s veto related to Account #1102-52215 City Council – Council Contingency and motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

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On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to override the Mayor’s veto relative to Group #1102-52214 City Council – Order of the Council.

Under Discussion:

**Director Moretti** stated that for the prior vote and this vote, the Mayor feels the City Council should appropriate funds and not administer funds. \$35,000 is an excessive amount given to the City Council for administering.

**Council Vice-President Brady** stated that in an essence to balance of this budget, he will vote in favor of this override, but in an Ordinance form, he would hope that his colleagues will compromise and find a way to give the Mayor back the money to allocate to the direct departments.

**Council President Paplauskas** stated that he agrees with Council Vice-President Brady and he thinks there were some other small items that they had made as amendments the other night that he would like to reverse by Ordinance next month, such as office supplies and bank charges that we should give back.

Roll call was taken on motion to override the Mayor’s veto relative to Group #1102-52214 City Council – Order of the Council and motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

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On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to take a s a block the Mayor’s veto relative to #1101-52110 Executive – Contingency and #1101-52213 Orders of the Mayor. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilman Ferri, it was voted to override the Mayor’s veto relative to the above line items. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

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On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to override the Mayor’s veto relative to line item #1107-42150 Municipal Traffic Court Fines. Motion passed on a vote of 8-1. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilman Donegan, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -8. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilman Reilly -1.

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On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Vargas, it was voted to take as a block the Mayor's veto relative to #1112-52900 Finances; #1113-52000 Accounts and Control and #1115-52000 Contract and Purchases. Motion passed on a vote of 8-1. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilman Donegan, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -8. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilman Reilly -1.

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to override the Mayor's veto relative to the above line items. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

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On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to override the Mayor's veto relative to #1105-42128 City Clerk – Miscellaneous Licenses. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

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On motion by Councilwoman Marino, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to override the Mayor's veto relative to #203 Parks and Recreation Project – Bike Path Beautification with Western Cranston Recreational Impact Fees. Motion passed on a vote of 8-1. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -8. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilwoman Renzulli -1.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 P.M.

/s/ Rosalba Zanni  
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committee