

(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).

REGULAR MEETING – CITY COUNCIL

-MAY 24, 2021-

Regular meeting of the City Council was called held on Monday, May 24, 2021 via ZOOM Webinar.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 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; John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor; David Dimaio, City Council Budget Analyst; Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel.

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilwoman Vargas, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and they stand approved as recorded. 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.

I. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND COMMENDATIONS

EMILY SANITA - Citation

Council President Paplauskas asked that this be continued to next month’s meeting.

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilwoman Vargas, it was voted to continue this item to next month’s meeting. 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 Ferri, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to take out of order proposed Ordinance 3-21-1. 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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XIII. COUNCIL BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER

3-21-02 ***ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF TITLE 2 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CRANSTON, 2005, ENTITLED 'ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL – DIVERSITY COMMISSION'***

On motion by Council Vice-President Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Vargas, it was voted to override the Mayor's veto.

Under Discussion:

Director Moretti stated that, on behalf of Mayor Hopkins, he wants to make it clear that this is not a result of opposing the Commission at all. He just wants to strengthen it. He has two appointments that he had in mind he thought to be a major addition to the Diversity Commission to add two of his Directors within the Administration. If the City Council sees fit, he would certainly appreciate having his Diversity Director, Mr. Paulino, along with potentially Sean Holly, Workforce Development Director.

Council Vice-President Brady stated that it is his understanding that the City Council cannot make an amendment this evening to add these two positions. He asked if this could be done at a future meeting. Attorney Angell stated that the purpose of the vote this evening is for veto override only. You can change an Ordinance at any point in the future. Council Vice-President Brady stated that he will be supporting the override tonight, but he would be actively working to include those two positions moving forward through an Ordinance.

Councilman Reilly stated that he is in favor of adding two additional people if it is those two that Director Moretti said. He thinks that would be great addition to the Board. In looking at it now, it does appear quite imbalanced. We have two and two on each side and then the Mayor would have his side, but then we have these two other members from the NAACP and the Cranston Health Equity Zone. He does have concerns about having conflicting goals and we need to be working towards that and he is not that comfortable as he voiced the last time and he voted against that to have the consistency of the Board modified, but he does feel it is important we do need a Diversity Commission. He would be in favor of making an amendment to add those two positions.

Council President Paplauskas stated that he feels it is out of order to make any amendments this evening. This meeting is just to vote on the override. He also stated that he will vote in favor of the override, but he would support those changes in the future if it comes before us.

Councilwoman Marino stated that she appreciates the support of all the Council Members in seeing the need to codify our Diversity Commission.

Councilman Donegan stated that he will be voting to override the veto. The amendments, based on his understanding, that were made was to make the Commission a more community comprised members of the community.

Councilwoman Renzulli stated that she will be voting to override the veto. she does see the intentions of the Mayor and she would be open to speaking about making amendments after.

Councilman Reilly stated that he does have some discomfort in having an outside interest group create policy in the City.

Councilwoman Vargas stated that she will be voting to support the override of the veto. She is definitely open to conversations in the near future, but now, she asked for City Council to vote in support of the override.

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Councilwoman Germain stated that she feels frightened and disappointed through social media and even Twitter. She was sent in this body to do what is right not to please anyone or to take an easy path. She thinks we cannot continue to be led by politics. We came with this amendment based on recommendations of the Cranston residents. It is the right thing to listen to the people who sent us here. This is a new era of politics and she hopes that we will continue to embrace it and move in the right direction to override this veto. The right thing to do is to serve the people who set us in this body, not the ego of any person.

Director Moretti stated that he has a concern, particularly Councilwoman Germain mentioned she was frightened. He just wants to see, is she frightened because of anything that Mayor Hopkins has said or done? We would never want to put her in a position of being frightened so he would just like that clarified. Councilwoman Germain stated that she wants to make sure that what she is saying here, she does not care if someone says something about her because she is here to do the work for the people in her Ward that sent her to do. So when she says she is frightened, she does not want to go back and forth with anyone, from what she saw when she read in the media things about her and see words that are mean, and her name was cited, particularly in the news media and sees such language as like to take gloves off. She is frightened about the politics, the old boy politics. That is what frightens her.

Councilwoman Renzulli stated that it breaks her heart that Councilwoman Germain is coming on publicly at a Council meeting and saying that she is frightened. It also breaks her heart that Mayor Hopkins has said that people have been calling him a racist. She thinks that we are all lacking some communication. We should all be working together for Cranston and she thinks we will ultimately have the same goals and different opinions on how to get there. We need to be better, all of us, need to be better to make this work so no one is feeling the way that they are feeling because this is sad.

Councilwoman Marino agreed with Councilwoman Renzulli in that this whole thing is sad that we have evolved to the stage, however, the harsh rhetoric started with the veto. The Mayor is a former Council Member for many years, he is a Mayor with a staff. He knew about the Ordinance meeting, he knew about the full vote before the City Council. This was not raised and he is also well aware of the process and the veto was not the way to go. We can have discussion, we are open to discussion, but the veto is not the way to go and she is hoping we can all move on and do great things for our community and improve diversity. She also stated that there was discussion about the prior Commission and the need to change it. The need to change it is why we are seeking to improve what was already there. She reminded everyone that the prior Commission was created by Resolution. Our laws and our City allow us to have Commissions by Ordinance, to codify those so that those Commissions by doing great deeds will continue beyond our terms and that is what we are hoping to do tonight.

Roll call was taken on motion to override the Mayor's veto 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.

XII. PUBLIC HEARINGS & PUBLIC COMMENT

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Vargas, it was voted to accept written comments and place them on the record. 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.

Public Speakers:

Candace Brown Casey, 68 Knollwood Ave., appeared to speak in favor of proposed "Resolution declaring the first Friday in June to be National Gun Violence Awareness Day." She also stated that she is a volunteer for RI Chapter of Moms Demand Action. She stated that this Resolution is being considered by cities and towns across the country.

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Michael Favicchio, 153 Belvedere Dr., appeared to speak regarding proposed Ordinance 1-21-05 and stated that he spoke on this matter at the Ordinance Committee meeting and did some research on this and stated that in the last few weeks he has taken a look at what was being done at the State House and he urged passage of this Ordinance.

III. RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION DECLARING THE FIRST FRIDAY IN JUNE TO BE NATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS DAY

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Marino, the above Resolution was adopted 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.

IV. REPORT OF COMMITTEES

FINANCE COMMITTEE OF MAY 3, 2021 (Council Vice-President Edward J. Brady, Chair)

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REAL ESTATE TAX ABATEMENTS

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilman Ferri, the above Resolution was adopted 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.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING MOTOR VEHICLE TAX ABATEMENTS

On motion by Councilwoman Marino, seconded by Councilman Ferri, the above Resolution was adopted 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.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TANGIBLE TAX ABATEMENTS

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, the above Resolution was adopted 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.

TAX INTEREST WAIVER APPROVALS

On motion by Councilwoman Marino, seconded by Councilman Ferri, it was voted to approve the list of Tax Interest Waiver Approvals. 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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**ORDINANCE COMMITTEE OF MAY 13, 2021
(Councilman Matthew R. Reilly, Chair)**

1-21-05 *ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF CHAPTER 17.84 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CRANSTON, 2005, ENTITLED 'ZONING' (Conformance to District Regulations Required & Substandard Lots of Record)*

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Vargas, it was voted to adopt the above Ordinance.

Under Discussion:

Councilman Ferri stated that he voted against this in Committee because he had some concerns. He has some questions for the Planning staff. He is 100% in favor of affordable housing. This is not about affordable housing per se. If we do this, some affordable housing may be built. He asked if this is correct. Jason Pezzullo, City Planner, stated that as far as affordable housing, true affordable housing and subsidized affordable housing is deed restricted. No zero units would result from this that would be affordable housing. What we have been talking about is the modest end of the market rate starter homes is what we are talking about.

Councilman Ferri asked Director Pezzullo, if to his knowledge, is there any plan in progress with a case of someone walking into his office the day after this passes with 50 applications to build houses. Director Pezzullo stated, absolutely not. Councilman Ferri asked Director Pezzullo if he can assure him that this does not affect an area like Alpine Estates in particular Pepper Mill Lane. Director Pezzullo stated that places like Alpine Estates would be 100% unaffected by an Ordinance like this because Alpine Estates was platted in the 1980's and is consistent with the existing zoning. The Ordinance we are talking about are pre-existing non-conforming lots of record things that were platted prior to 1966, mostly in Eastern Cranston.

Councilwoman Marino stated that she does appreciate the work that the Department has put in. she is aware of the inconsistency over the years in the Code and how problematic and burdensome it has been for the Department and is hopeful that this change can alleviate some of that burden.

Roll call was taken on motion to adopt the above Ordinance 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.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR UN-DOCKETED ITEMS

Marcia Fowler, 35 Milton Ave., appeared to speak and stated that there should be a specific calendar of events. This calendar should be different than the City calendar posted on the City's website. This calendar would be for the City Council and the Mayor to share with each other. You could post public events in which you invite the Mayor to speak. The Mayor could also post public events in which he is inviting the City Council Members to attend. By posting these events well in advance, all Council people would have an equal opportunity to attend any public events in which the Mayor is speaking and or attending. No Council person would be left out and each Ward would have the opportunity to be fully represented. As an example, when the Governor visited the Senior Center to highlight how Cranston was doing a great job on vaccinations, it looked as if two Republican Council person were with the Mayor. COVID touched all the lives of every single person in our City and all City Council people should have been invited and given the opportunity to have the experience with their constituent. One additional example where a calendar of events would have been helpful is the recent City cross country meet. The Mayor spoke at this public event. Republic Council people were there, but not one Democrat. That was a City-Wide event. Every single Ward has students in that race, yet not all Wards were represented by Council people. She suggested that the City Council work with the Mayor and each other to ensure that the Wards are represented equally at public events involving the Mayor.

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VI. ELECTION AND/OR APPOINTMENT OF CITY OFFICIALS

PANDEMIC ADVISORY BOARD:

- *Cynthia Capezza, Sponsored by Councilman Ferri*

No action needed.

SMALL BUSINESS ADVISORY BOARD:

- *Steven H. Levy, Sponsored by Councilman Ferri*

No action needed.

VII. REPORT OF CITY OFFICERS

PRESENTATION BY THE PLANNING DIRECTOR (Advancing Policy Ideas)

Director Pezzullo stated that in January, he mentioned that Planning would like to talk about getting together to talk about how we can get some things done this year. He would like to hear from City Council Members about some of the things that they had in mind and maybe work together with his staff to get some of the things done. Council President Paplauskas stated that he thinks that having a workshop is a great idea and he will schedule a workshop session with the Director.

VIII. EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Director Moretti stated that the Administration has communicated with the City Council in regards to problems Public Works is having with Waste Management and the yard waste. They have been telling us that they are experiencing employment problems for the seasonal individuals that they hire for yard waste. We have daily or bi-daily meetings or conversations with Public Works on this. The City is fining Waste Management \$1,000 a day. As of this morning, we have been told that they are down eight people and they just hired more people and they have to go through training, which will help. They are doing Saturday runs, which they normally do not do to catch up, but that is not an excuse. They are promising that within two weeks, they will be up to speed.

Director Moretti stated that the Mayor would like to let the City Council know that Steven Paiva will be stepping up over the next few weeks as Interim Deputy Chief of staff and assume more responsibilities and have him cover perhaps some of the City Council Committee meetings, which he did the other evening.

Director Moretti also stated that June 1st City Hall will be opening to the public. On an honor system, mask wearing will be required for those who have not been vaccinated and optional for people who have been vaccinated.

Council President Paplauskas stated that he will be calling an Executive Session to discuss yard waste pickup with Waste Management.

IX. COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

Council President Paplauskas thanked Steven Paiva for stepping up to help with the hosting of the zoom meetings. He stated tat it is really appreciated. He also stated that we should be getting help coming onboard soon and we are working on getting the Council Chambers ready for when we can return, hopefully, it will be next month. We are waiting to see what the Governor's Orders are going to be on June 28th.

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Council President Paplauskas wished everyone a great Memorial Day coming up and recognized all the Veterans that we have lost in the line of service for this Country.

X. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

COUNCILMAN DONEGAN:

- *Plastic Bag Ordinance Enforcement Update*

Councilman Donegan stated that he had asked that this be placed on the docket prior to the article in the paper. He asked the Administration what the City will do to get the word out about the plastic bag Ordinance because enforcement kicks in July 1st. Director Moretti stated that we will be posting a reminder to the businesses on the City's website and City Facebook account. We will also do a press notification particularly to the Herald. Clerk indicated that from the Clerk's Office, every business who applies for a license or renews their license application, is provided with a copy of the Ordinance.

Council President Paplauskas questioned if this is something we may be able to include with the Mayor's Tax Letter. Director Moretti stated that he would be happy to look into it and will speak to the Tax Assessor about it.

Councilman Donegan indicated to Chapter 3.12.090 "Tax Mailings" which does state that the Tax Assessor shall include a note to encourage recycling and waste reduction in the tax bill.

COUNCILWOMAN MARINO:

- *Status of the executive session on the DPW's independent study providing the list of priority streets in need of repairs/improvements as specifically referenced by Council Vice President Brady at the Finance Committee meeting on April 12, 2021*

Councilwoman Marino stated that this was discussed in Executive Session last month with respect to the study or the list of streets in need of repairs in the City. A lot of residents are concerned about how that determination is made, where is the list that has been referred to? There is a memo from Public Works Director Mason dated May 21st with respect to the independent study and the pave management study and he specifically references in that memo that the document is consisting of two volumes with 368 pages and is available for review at different locations throughout the City, one being his office in City Hall, the other being the Engineering Department on Sockanosset Crossroad and the other the Constituent Affairs Office in City Hall. She asked Director Moretti if an appointment is needed in advance if someone wanted to review these volumes. Director Moretti stated that he would recommend that the person call ahead to the department.

COUNCILWOMAN VARGAS:

- *Pride Flag Raising Ceremony*

Councilwoman Vargas stated that she wishes to invite the Council Members and everyone on the zoom call to the Pride Flag raising at City Hall on June 3rd at 6 p.m.

COUNCILWOMAN GERMAIN:

- *Communication from Police and Fire Chiefs regarding safety concerns*

Council

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XI. COUNCIL BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER

3-21-01 *ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF TITLE 10.32 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CRANSTON, 2005, ENTITLED ‘MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC’ (Baldwin Orchard Drive & Russet Way – 3 way stop)*

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilman Ferri, the above Ordinance was adopted 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.

XII. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COUNCIL*

* These new matters are referred for public hearing to the appropriate sub-committee of the Council. They are listed here for referral to a committee and vote will be taken.

- 5-21-01 *Ordinance authorizing the City to utilize Western Recreational Impact Fees for the bike path beautification and restoration project. Sponsored by Councilwoman Marino, Councilmen Donegan and Ferri. Finance Committee 6/7/2021.***

- 5-21-02 *Ordinance authorizing the City to apply Eastern and Western Police Impact Fees towards rent. Sponsored by Councilman Donegan. Finance Committee 6/7/2021.***

- 5-21-03 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 5 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Business Licenses and Regulations” (Fireworks Vendors). Sponsored by Councilman Donegan. Finance Committee 6/7/2021.***

- 5-21-04 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 13.08 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled Public Services -Sewer Service System”. Sponsored by Council President Paplauskas. Public Works Committee 6/17/2021.***

- 5-21-05 *Ordinance transferring appropriations and supplemental appropriations amending the Budget for the Fiscal Year commencing July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 (4th Quarter Transfers). Sponsored by Mayor Hopkins. Finance Committee 6/7/2021.***

- 5-21-06 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 10.12.260 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Motor Vehicles and Traffic – One Way Streets-Enumerated”. Sponsored by Councilwoman Germain. Ordinance Committee June 17, 2021.***

- 5-21-07 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 10.08.030 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Motor Vehicles and Traffic – Pedestrian Control Signals”. Sponsored by Councilwoman Germain. Ordinance Committee June 17, 2021.***

- 5-21-08 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 10.12.210 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Motor Vehicles and Traffic – Through Trucking Prohibited On Certain Streets”. Sponsored by Councilwoman Germain. Ordinance Committee June 17, 2021.***

- 5-21-09 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 10.32.100 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Motor Vehicles and Traffic – No Parking-Between Signs”. Sponsored by Council President Paplauskas. Ordinance Committee June 17, 2021.***

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Referred to Claims Committee – Thursday, June 17, 2021

- Property Damage Claim:
 - Gene Blanc from alleged incident on October 6, 2018.
 - Steven O’Connell from alleged incident on September 29, 2020.
 - Christine Nolte from alleged incident in February of 2021.
 - David Brodeur from alleged incident on April 19, 2021.
 - Sydney Achille from alleged incident on April 20, 2021.
 - Nicholas Micheletti from alleged incident on April 30, 2021.

Council President Paplauskas indicated that there was scrivener’s error on the original Docket and stated that proposed Ordinance 5-21-04 should state that it is referred to the Public Works Committee.

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Councilwoman Vargas, it was voted to refer the above new business to the respective Committees. Motion passed on a vote of 0-0. 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.

XIII. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS ON CLERK’S DESK

3-21-02 Ordinance in amendment of Title 2 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Administration and Personnel – Diversity Commission” Sponsored by Councilwomen Marino, Vargas and Germain. Co-sponsored by Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas. Mayor’s Disapproval filed 5/7/2021.

Vote taken earlier in the meeting.

• **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

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

(See Stenographic Notes of Linda Cordeiro, Stenotypist)