

(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

-FEBRUARY 10, 2022-

A Special meeting of the City Council was called held on Thursday, February 10, 2022 via ZOOM Webinar.

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 P.M. by the Council Vice-President.

Roll call showed the following members present: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas (appeared at 6:10 p.m.), Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly (appeared at 6:20 p.m.) and Council Vice-President Ferri -8.

Absent: Council President Paplauskas -1.

Also Present: Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff; Robert Strom, Director of Finance; John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor; David Dimaio, City Council Budget Analyst.

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CALL OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

In Accordance with Section 3.07 of the Home Rule Charter and Section 2.04.060 of the City Code, I hereby call a special meeting of the City Council to be held on **Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 6:00 PM.**

Meeting of the Cranston City Council will be held **via the Zoom platform* as allowed per Executive Order of RI Governor Daniel J. McKee No. 22-01, as ordered**, and in accordance with the RI General Laws Chapter 45-24-53 for the purpose of considering the following items listed on the agenda. Remote participation by the public is available by using the logon information provided below as posted on the City's website at www.cranstonri.gov and Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ri.gov.

*POTENTIAL FOR IN-PERSON MEETING: If EO No. 22-01 is not extended, and if no other legal authorization occurs prior to this meeting, the City Council will conduct an in-person meeting in addition to the virtual (Zoom Webinar) format listed below. If required, this in-person meeting will be held at 6:00 PM in the Cranston City Hall, Council Chambers – 3rd Floor, 869 Park Avenue, Cranston, RI. Updated information will be posted on the City's website www.cranstonri.gov

Technology problems should be reported immediately to:
CranstonCityCouncilMedia@gmail.com

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82783509785?pwd=UDBZcVILYk5Ea09EcnU5bjRxWE5vQT09>

Passcode: 286209

Or One tap mobile :

US: +13126266799,,82783509785#,,,,*286209# or
+16465588656,,82783509785#,,,,*286209#

Or Telephone:

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

US: +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 669 900 9128 or +1 253 215 8782 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: 827 8350 9785

Passcode: 286209

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82783509785?pwd=UDBZcVILYk5Ea09EcnU5bjRxWE5vQT09>

at which meeting the following matters will be heard:

Agenda and Docketed Matters Before the Council

- **Call to order** by Council President; council members attendance taken
(No votes taken)
- **City Council Workshop to Consider American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding**
(No Votes To Be Taken)
 - **Presentation from City Council Budget Analyst** (No Votes To Be Taken)
 - **Update from Administration and or Finance Director** (No Votes To Be Taken)

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○ **Public Comment on Use of ARPA Funds**

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

Executed at Cranston, Rhode Island, this 1st day of February, 2022.

/s/ Christopher G. Paplauskas, Council President

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I hereby certify that a true copy of the attached Notice of a Special meeting of the City Council to be held on, Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 6:00 pm via Zoom Webinar, was delivered via regular mail and electronic mail on the ____ 1st ____ day of ____ February, 2022 to the addresses listed below.

Council President Christopher G. Paplauskas
14 Highland St.
Cranston, RI 02920
chrispaplauskas@gmail.com

Councilwoman Jessica M. Marino
799 Natick Ave.
Cranston, RI 02920
marinoforcranston@gmail.com

Council Vice-President Robert J. Ferri
2426 Cranston St.
Cranston, RI 02920
robferri2426@gmail.com

Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli
54 Massachusetts St.
Cranston, RI 02920
nicoleforcranston@gmail.com

Councilwoman Lammis J. Vargas
35 Betsey Williams Dr.
Cranston, RI 02910
Lammis.vargas@gmail.com

Councilwoman Aniece Germain
63 Dale Ave.
Cranston, RI 02910
aniecegermain2@gmail.com

Councilman John P. Donegan
60 Packard St.
Cranston, RI 02910
JohnDoneganForCranston@gmail.com

Councilman Richard D. Campopiano
1640 Pippin Orchard Rd.
Cranston, RI 02921
RD.Camp@yahoo.com

Councilman Matthew R. Reilly
27 Dellwood Rd.
Cranston, RI 02920
mreillyesq@gmail.com

/s/ Rosalba Zanni
Acting City Clerk

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Council Vice-President Ferri stated that Council President Paplauskas is driving from out of State and may or may not be able to attend this evening and he will be conducting the meeting.

Council Vice-President Ferri stated that this meeting is a workshop to consider the ARPA funding. He asked Mr. Dimaio to give a presentation as he did in the last meeting.

Mr. Dimaio stated that his presentation will be on the same issues and same presentation as the last time with possibly a more of an abridged version. He stated that, first and foremost, we have to realize that the funding we are receiving due to the ARPA funds is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the City of Cranston to forge forward in areas that are necessary to the infrastructure and to use the money to grow the City in helping with issues that we had in the past.

Mr. Dimaio addressed some questions that were asked at the last workshop session, which he had to do some research on and is waiting on some of the answers. He stated that some people spoke regarding housing and possibility of using some ARPA funds to address that. There were two people who spoke about broadband and, obviously, broadband infrastructure is one area that would be covered. It is just what plan gets put in place. We had two people speak regarding tree planting. It can be covered, but he thinks it comes along with other projects where additional trees will be planted. He is waiting to hear back to see if there is a specific area that it falls under to allocate funding to do additional planting across the City. One person had a question regarding preparing about the next pandemic. Obviously, that is what the plan is for. One person had a question about solar panels. He stated that he needs to do a little more research, but if there was a capital improvement that fell under the requirements and that was going to be the energy source, he believes it is something that could be adopted, but he does not think grants could be given out to put solar panels on homes. We had revenue loss, which we know is covered. One other person asked regarding indoor shooting range. He has to do more research on that to see if that could be considered public safety. One person asked regarding stormwater, which is covered. Two people asked about grants to local businesses for loss of whether it was replacement of licenses, again, it is something that could be done, but the grant program or plan has to be designed. There was one person who asked about funding the OPEB program and he spoke to Director Strom and if he wants to add to it, but we are on track going forward based on what our percentage of calculation is. Director Strom stated that a few years ago, we did not fund OPEB at 100%. We funded it at 50% to have a balanced budget. We have since made that up in the last year and intend to do it going forward. The actuarial report reflects that short payment so it has been recaptured in the actuarial report and in the ARC that we are going to be paying this year and next year. overall, right now, the pension fund for next year and the OPEB contribution for next year, combined, is going to be less then what we contributed this year so he feels that we have been able to make up that difference and does not think it is necessary to fund the OPEB any more than what we have been doing going forward for 2022 and 2023.

Director Strom stated that the City went out to bid for polling. Two companies responded to our RFP. BOCAP will be meeting on Tuesday, February 15th to award. There is one candidate that he feels is stronger than the other. Both bids, based on the Resolution of \$25,000, is under \$20,000 and that will be disclosed at BOCAP on Tuesday. One of the companies is a minority business and also we will be polling both in English and in Spanish. He has been receiving from various departments, specifically Police, Fire, Public Works and IT for broadband, things that are applicable that could be helpful, specifically in IT, cybersecurity, which is something that we need to upgrade.

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Public Works is looking to do some sewer projects. Fire is looking for some infrastructure and also some equipment and also Parks and Recreation, we are looking for some recreational facilities and think that would enhance the facilities that are currently being sued and possibly adding some additional projects. He asked that everyone be cautious and be somewhat conservative about how we spend the money because we do not want to create any type of structural deficit down the road in two or three years from now.

Council Vice-President Ferri asked if the Administration would like to speak on the ARPA funding. Director Moretti stated that there are no pre-conceived notions as far as the Mayor's Office is concerned. They are happy to hear from the public and their recommendations.

Council Vice-President Ferri asked if any Council Members wish to speak regarding the ARPA funding before the public is asked to speak.

Councilman Donegan thanked everyone from the public for participating.

Councilwoman Renzulli stated that in regards to the survey, she and Councilwoman Vargas have been working with Mr. Dimaio on doing some translation in Spanish and as soon as that is all set, the City will have a webpage up on the City's website, that we can place both surveys up both in English and in Spanish.

Council Vice-President Ferri asked for public comments in reference to how the City should spend the ARPA funds.

Public Speakers:

Claire Stadtmirer, 963 Seven Mile Rd., Co-Founder of 5G Free RI, appeared to speak and stated that on January 27th meeting, she and her colleague Sheila Resseger provided information on why spending ARPA money on broadband must be the safe, fast, cost-effective future proof wired to the premises and not the wireless that is pollutant pulsing microwave radiation at dangerous levels while guzzling energy and enabling surveillance.

Warren Heyman, 78 Arnold Ave., appeared to speak on behalf of the issues regarding trees. Adding trees to our community will help to the mental health of the people that live in the City. He asked that the funding for that be increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year.

Annette Bourne, 51 Community Dr., appeared to speak on behalf of the Cranston Housing Commission as Chair. She referred to a letter with attachments which she forwarded to the Council President and members of the City Council prior to this meeting. She asked that a portion of the City's ARPA funds be used for the City's housing needs.

Harrison Tuttle, 131 Belmont Rd., Executor Director of Black Lives Matter Rhode Island Political Action Committee, appeared to speak. He indicated that his two questions regarding equity and affordable housing from the prior meeting had not been answered. He asked that answers be provided. He stressed the importance of why we need to spend this generational opportunity in a way that centers black indigenous people of color in our City. A recommendation for the use of the ARPA funds would be for the Cranston Equity Rescue Plan, which would create a commission appointed by the Council, which would help identify the disparities caused by the pandemic including economic, educational and health and offer target support to the residents all within the guidelines of this ARPA spending.

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Michelle Steever, 126 Lyndon Rd., appeared to speak and commended the residents who have spoken on their ideas and proposals. She encouraged the City to make our City's properties green and investigate putting solar panels on City properties to lower the costs in maintaining those buildings. She also encouraged the City Council to look at replacement of lead pipes.

Tom Wojick, 11 Hall Place, appeared to speak and stated that he supports housing initiatives and renovating blighted properties.

David Baldwin, 67 Fordson Ave., appeared to speak and suggested using some of the funds to make sure the system is solid so next time this happens, which means making sure that not only do we have safe drinking water but that we can get rid of the water that falls on the City so we don't end up flooding anywhere and putting in good old fashioned ground-based broadband for the City and housing for the people in the City. He questioned if the City has any kind of audit for compilation of effects of the pandemic on the City so we can have some profile of knowing how the pandemic effected Cranston and where it hurt and what we might want to fix so we don't get hurt that bad in that way the next time. Council Vice-President Ferri asked Director Strom and Mr. Dimaio to make note of that question so Mr. Baldwin can be provided with an answer at another time.

Ariana Cunha, 60 Lockwood St., Help Coordinator of Sunrise RI Youth, appeared to speak and stated that it is critical that this State invest in infrastructure to mitigate flooding. The climate crisis is certainly here and effecting families across Cranston. It is critical that Cranston starts to consider clean water and human right. Cranston must invest in creating a fund that would provide grants that would replace private lead service pipes for lower income homeowners. Our City deserves clean drinking water.

Bill McEleney, 45 Pasture View Lane, appeared to speak and stated that his concern is a safety issue regarding the bike path. As a regular user of the facility, there are a lot more people on it that are not on bikes that are on bikes. There are kids on skateboards, mothers pushing babies in baby carriages and seniors walking on a sunny day. He suggested the need for some kind of traffic warning signal at several intersections that would protect these users from vehicular traffic that may be coming through. By way of an example, he recommended Main St. in Coventry where there seems to be some kind of system in place where when someone approaches on the bike path, he believes it triggers either a flashing light or red light or yellow light, but some kind of warning that there are people coming one way or another. From firsthand experience, that is very effective. He suggested four different locations in putting something like that in place: from the North end of the City at Garfield St. outside of Lowes, further South on Dyer Ave. and at Uxbridge St. and also Sherman Ave.

Kristina Brown, 217 Armington St., appeared to speak in favor of using funds for the housing crisis in our City. She proposed \$13 million investment housing. This includes \$8 million in affordable housing, \$2 million for home repair funds and remaining funds would include line items for permits in support of housing and emergency housing solutions to assist our housing and secure unsheltered neighbors. She thanked the City Council in the efforts in engaging residents in their input and survey. She questioned how the City will proceed in engaging residents as it decides to spend these funds. She also urged that the surveys be in more languages other than English and Spanish as we have a significant Asia population and Southeast Asian population in the City.

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Michael Beauregard, 136 Fourth Ave., appeared to speak and thanked Councilmen Ferri, Donegan and Councilwoman Marino for being present this evening and for taking the lead on these meetings. He suggested prioritizing some amounts of the ARPA funds to address the childcare crisis going on across the State and particularly in Cranston. He also stated that he is in favor of using some of these funds for the Tree Planting Program and for the lead remediation problem and also is in favor of the proposal from the Housing Authority to address the housing crisis.

Candace Brown Casey, 68 Knollwood Ave., appeared to speak and stated that she would like to echo most of the sentiments stated this evening and at prior meeting especially in reference to housing and the issues with childcare. She also stated that she is primarily appearing to speak this evening as a volunteer of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. She stated that the ARPA funds allow for local governments to utilize these funds to address gun violence and encouraged Cranston to fund anti-violence programs so that these programs have the funds needed to succeed.

Heather Thibodeau, 137 Blackamore Ave., appeared to speak and stated that she is a volunteer for the Tree Planting Program and asked that the Cranston Tree Planting Program be increased by using some of the ARPA funds. She stated that trees provide a lot of environmental and health benefits. She also stated that trees are essential to consider when building affordable housing or any other structures and they mitigate flooding.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 P.M.

/s/ Rosalba Zanni
Acting City Clerk