

(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 23, 2022-

Regular meeting of the City Council was called held on Monday, May 23, 2022 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 869 Park Ave., Cranston, Rhode Island.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by the Council President.

Roll call showed the following members present: Councilwomen Marino, Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Reilly, Council Vice-President Ferri and Council President Paplauskas (left at 7:40 p.m.) -9.

Also Present: Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff; Christopher Rawson, Assistant City Solicitor; Mike Igoe, Acting Finance Director/City Controller; Steven Paiva, Mayor's Office; Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel; David Dimaio, City Council Budget Analyst.

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Council Vice-President Ferri, 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": Councilwomen Marino, Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Reilly, Council Vice-President Ferri and Council President Paplauskas (left meeting at 7:40 p.m.) -9.

I. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND COMMENDATIONS

None.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS & PUBLIC COMMENT

PRESENTATION BY CAITLYN BLANKENSHIP FROM STEM IN REGARDS TO SURVEY RESULTS FROM THE CRANSTON SUMMER OF 2022 FAMILY SURVEY

Caitlyn Blankenship, 35 Sherwood Dr., Westerly, from STEM, appeared to speak and give results of survey from the Cranston Summer of 2022 Family Survey and presented survey results.

III. RESOLUTIONS

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

On motion by Councilwoman Renzulli, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, the above Resolution was adopted on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwomen Marino, Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Reilly, Council Vice-President Ferri and Council President Paplauskas -9.

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IV. REPORT OF COMMITTEES

FINANCE COMMITTEE

(Council Vice-President Robert J. Ferri, Chair)

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING MOTOR VEHICLE TAX ABATEMENTS

On motion by Councilwoman Marino, seconded by Councilman Reilly, the above Resolution was adopted on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwomen Marino, Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Reilly, Council Vice-President Ferri and Council President Paplauskas -9.

TAX INTEREST WAIVER APPROVALS

On motion by Councilwoman Marino, seconded by Councilman Donegan, it was voted to approve the Tax Interest Waiver Approvals list. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwomen Marino, Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Reilly, Council Vice-President Ferri and Council President Paplauskas -9.

CLAIMS COMMITTEE

(Councilman John P. Donegan, Chair)

REPORT OF SETTLED CLAIMS (Informational purposes): Charles Sun \$279.39 Vehicle Damage; Keven Ferro \$50.00 Property Damage; Rebecca Perentin \$1,367.64 Vehicle Damage; Carolyn Bibeault \$414.60 Vehicle Damage; John Costa \$50.00 Property Damage; Cathy DiRaimo \$50.00 Property Damage; Carmen Pierce \$273.34 Vehicle Damage; Anthony DeFusco \$567.34 Property Damage; Charles Casale \$50.00 Property Damage; Susannah Schutt \$148.73 Vehicle Damage; Pentagon Properties \$7,000.00 Property Damage. (No votes taken)

No action needed.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR UN-DOCKETED ITEMS

Sheila Resseger, 50 Malvern Ave., appeared to speak and stated that this is the third meeting in a row she has attended to ask the City Council to have a binder of two years’ worth of emails to the Cranston Council Members to be entered into the public record. Now that this topic is on the docket, she hopes that there will be steps taken to accept this information formally. As co-founder of 5G Free RI, Ms. Staudmeuller and she have been providing information to the City Council since the Spring of 2020 on the harms of pulse modulated radio frequency microwave radiation emitted from cell towers from so-called small cells for 5G smart meters and other wireless devices. On June 22, 2020, she had a phone conversation with Jason Pezzullo, City Planner, on the topic of 5G towers. He said that actual cell towers can be regulated for height, etc., but the small cell antennas are not actually towers and so are not under the City’s jurisdiction. Recently, the Board of Health of the City of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, after eighteen months of consulting scientific and medical experts, issued a Cease and Desist Order for the cell towers operating adjacent to a residential neighborhood that has been making residents sick and forcing them out of their homes. Considering these developments, she urged the members of the City Council to avail themselves to the information already provided on this topic and to pursue ways to protect Cranston’s residents, businesses and environment from the pollutant of wireless radiation emitted from cell towers, WTFs and smart meters.

Claire Staudmueller, 963 Seven Mile Rd., appeared via Zoom and stated that she will be sending information via email, but shared preview of that.

On motion by Council Vice-President Ferri, seconded by Councilwoman Marino, it was voted to take the docket out of order so a vote can be taken on this item. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwomen Marino, Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Reilly, Council Vice-President Ferri and Council President Paplauskas -9.

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On motion by Council Vice-President Ferri, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to submit correspondence from 5G Free Rhode Island as part of the record.

Under Discussion:

Councilman Donegan stated that a question he has is has the City Council ever entertained something of this nature? Council President Paplauskas stated from his experience being on the Council, this is highly unorthodox. seeing that 5G is not something that is regulated by the City Council.

Councilman Donegan asked legal counsel if this is something that is within the City Council's purview. Attorney Angell stated that we do not regulate cellular communications and, typically, this body accepts information relative to business items and that before the City Council and so this item is on the agenda at the request of Council Vice-President Ferri for the purpose of the Council entertaining whether or not this presentation of information would be available as part of the City Council record. It is just like any other information that you would accept as part of the record.

Councilman Donegan stated that respects the research that the 5G people are doing and the efforts to raise awareness about an issue that they care deeply about, but he will be voting against putting this on the record this evening.

Council President Paplauskas stated that he appreciates the hard work of 5G Free Rhode Island, but he will be voting against this because it does not fall under the purview of the City Council. it really belongs in the Board of Health.

Roll call was taken on above motion and motion passed on a vote of 5-4. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwomen Marino, Renzulli, Vargas, Germain and Council Vice-President Ferri - 5. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Reilly and Council President Paplauskas -4.

VI. ELECTION AND/OR APPOINTMENT OF CITY OFFICIALS

SMALL BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

- *Appointment of Joann Johnson for term to expire 1/2/2023 (Councilwoman Germain).*

No action needed.

VII. REPORT OF CITY OFFICERS

None.

VIII. EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

LEGAL FEES REPORT FROM 7/1/21-4/25/22 (Informational only no vote will be taken)

No action needed.

IX. COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

Council President Paplauskas wished everyone a wonderful Memorial Day weekend. He also reminded everyone of the 250th Gaspee Days coming up and parade is on June 11th and the City Council was invited to march and hopefully everyone can make it.

Council President Paplauskas stated that he would like to send thoughts and prayers to the Thornton Family. One of his friends, Matthew Thornton, who was thirty-three years old, passed away recently. He will actually be leaving the meeting in a few minutes to go to a remembrance for him and will pass the gavel to Council Vice-President Ferri to finish the meeting

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Council President Paplauskas left meeting at 7:40 p.m.

X. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

COUNCILMAN REILLY:

- *Small Business Advisory Commission – update, status and plans*

Councilman Reilly stated that he would like an update on this Commission. He had appointed someone back when this board was created. That person has called him numerous times asking what is going on with this board. He stated that he did receive a letter stating that he was appointed, but it has been fourteen months since the board was created and pursuant to the Code, the Economic Development Director shall be the Chair of that Commission. Section 2.58.03 states that the Commission shall meet monthly and produce a report of findings and recommendations quarterly, so there should have been approximately fourteen monthly meetings and four reports. He asked what the status is on this.

Director Moretti stated that this is a City Council Ordinance that established this Commission, so it is not an Executive, it is not an Administrative matter, however, Councilman Reilly mentioned that the Economic Development Director is Chair and so he will follow up on this with him.

Councilman Reilly stated that he was hoping that the Economic Development Director would have been present this evening since this is on the docket. Director Moretti stated that he was not sure what the content of this was. Councilman Reilly stated that he will continue this until next month and he will ask that the Economic Development Director attend that meeting.

COUNCILWOMAN VARGAS:

- *City of Cranston Boards and Commissions (Cont. from 4/25/2022)*

Councilwoman Vargas stated that she does not see this item updated on the City's website yet. Mr. Paiva stated that this is updated on the City Clerk's page on the right hand side and at the bottom there is a blue button called 'Boards and Commissions' and it will take you to a google drive folder with the most recent updates that he has.

- *Oakland Cemetery*

Councilwoman Vargas stated that back in 2019, she sent pictures to the Administration at that time. The Inspector went out to the cemetery and brought the matter up before Municipal Court locally and she believes that that case at some point then going up to the State level. She asked where we are on that and if we are able to discuss that and if we have to go into Executive Session for some reason, she would like to request that we get an update on that. Also, she is receiving phone calls on the ongoing trash problems there. She asked if the City is taking action on this even though it is private property. Director Moretti stated that he does not know the exact status. He believes it is at Superior Court where the owner of the property is suing the Trustee for not releasing more funds for the maintenance of the cemetery. Councilwoman Vargas asked that this be continued to next month and possibly get an update from the City Solicitor of where we are on the Municipal Court component as well. Director Moretti stated that in the meantime, he will have DPW go there and see what can be done about the trash and the Building Inspector to also go by there.

COUNCILMAN DONEGAN:

- *Overnight Parking Plan*

Councilman Donegan stated that he had asked for this item to be placed on the docket with the anticipation that some people from the community were going to attend this meeting to speak. He does not see any of them present this evening and he asked that this be removed from the docket for now.

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COUNCILWOMAN MARINO:

- *Discussion regarding the \$5.9 million deficit of fiscal year 2020-2021 for hospitalization/medical/claims*

Councilwoman Marino stated that this item was placed on the agenda because there is an identifiable deficit that it is cause for concern and she thought it was important that we have a discussion on this this evening. She asked that Administration identify with clarity basically what that Internal Fund is comprised of. Mr. Igoe stated that he submitted a printout to the Clerk for the last several years. This problem began back in FY 2019. As you can see on page one of the printout, our beginning balance at July 1, 2018, we were a positive \$18,000 balance, through that year we ended up having a \$1.4 million loss so that year the ending balance was \$1,404,000. He explained how this works. He stated that in that year, we had a \$1.4 million more in expenditures than we did in revenues. In that year, there was a chemical fire on Elmwood Ave. and there were a couple of dozen Firemen that were injured in that incident. That was a driver in that Fiscal Year that caused the deficit. On the second page of the handout, which is right out of the Audit, that shows our deficit of that year of \$1.8 million and is comprised of Hospitalization that he just spoke of and of our Claims. Claims is a separate fund, but it is also part of the Internal Service, which means that it is a service that is provided by the City for the benefit of the City, but primarily the only revenues going into that fund are revenues generated from the City. So, in the case of Hospitalization, each payroll, the City deposits money into the funds. Similar to Claims, each quarter we deposit money into the Claims Account and then based on the number of claims that we have plus the insurance policies, that also runs through there, we ended up with a deficit in that fund as well of \$436,000 making the combined Internal Service Fund a loss in 2019 of \$1.8 million. Page three of the handout shows FY 2020, which he highlighted on the bottom of the July 1, 2019 balance. It is the same balance as the ending on page one of June 30, 2019, so we ended FY 2019 with a \$1.4 million loss. That is the starting point for FY 2020. In FY 2020, we had a \$2.2 million loss bringing the total \$3.6 million at the end of FY 2020. Again, we all know that in March of 2020, which leaves approximately the last quarter of the year, we had COVID hit. We had additional expenses from COVID that went through that FY. The next page of the handout shows the Internal Service Fund at the end of FY 2020 being \$3.9 million deficit. Going into 2021, our beginning balance in the Hospitalization Fund was \$3.6 million deficit. We had another \$1.5 million deficit through the year leaving the ending balance of \$5.1 million. Again, in FY 2021 primarily a large concern was COVID. There were several employees that were in the hospital for months on end so that brings us to the end of FY 2021 of \$5.1 million deficit. On the following page of the handout, the Audit showed a \$5.6 million at the ending balance, \$5.1 million from Hospitalization and \$500,000 from Claims. That brings us into the beginning of the current FY we are in. At the beginning of FY 2022, we had a \$5.1 million deficit and to date we had a \$900,000 loss so currently we are showing a \$5.9 million deficit in the Hospitalization Fund. As part of the FY 2023 budget, we had put in \$7 million into the budget to rectify these losses within Hospitalization and Claims. If we hadn't been fortunate enough to have that money, the only other place that that could have come from was from the taxpayers.

Councilwoman Marino stated that she will take issue to that statement made by Mr. Igoe that the only other source would be the taxpayers. She does not think that that is entirely accurate. The other source would be collecting appropriate premiums from the workforce so it does not fall on the burden of the taxpayer. Mr. Igoe stated that the makeup of the Claims are 80% from the City and 20% from the employee so the majority of that money, the 80% of it would have to come from the City. Councilwoman Marino stated that in terms of this deficit and where it has been in the last few years, she went all the way back to 2013 and that is what gives her great concern is that this number has been ballooning over the years. In 2013, there was no deficit in this fund. In 2014, we did not have a deficit in this fund. In 2015, she also does not believe we did not have a deficit in this fund. Mr. Igoe stated that it really did not start occurring until FY 2019. Councilwoman Marino asked what the plan is with respect to this growing deficit because we all know that we are not going to have the ARPA funds to put towards this in the future. Mr. Igoe stated that we know we are going to get rid of the beginning balance the beginning deficit of what we are at now, \$5.96 million in this fund and then in the current budget we increased the premiums by 10% so we wiped out the deficit in the fund and we increased premiums by 10%.

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COUNCILWOMAN GERMAIN:

Acknowledgment of:

- *Asian American and Pacific Islanders Heritage Month*
- *Haitian Heritage Month*
- *National Mental Health Awareness Month*

Councilwoman Germain acknowledged the above three events for the month of May.

XI. COUNCIL BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER

None.

XII. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COUNCIL*

- 5-22-01** ***ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF TITLE 6 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CRANSTON, 2005, ENTITLED “ANIMALS”. Sponsored by Councilman Campopiano. Referred to Ordinance Committee June 16, 2022.***
- 5-22-2** ***ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF TITLE 10, CHAPTER 12 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CRANSTON, 2005, ENTITLED “MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC – TRAFFIC REGULATIONS FOR SPECIFIC STREETS” (Milton Ave.). Sponsored by Councilwoman Vargas. Referred to Ordinance Committee June 16, 2022. [***
- 5-22-03** ***ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF THE 2010 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE CITY OF CRANSTON, AS AMENDED 2012 (0 Comstock Parkway, 2184 Plainfield Pike and 2174 Plainfield Pike – Assessor’s Plat 36, Lots 5, 36, 38, 51, 52 and 53). Petition filed by Elizabeth Paul, KM Realty LLC and Alwoodley Realty LLC. Sponsored by Council President Paplauskas. Referred to Ordinance Committee July 14, 2022.***
- 5-22-04** ***ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF CHAPTER 17 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CRANSTON, 2005 ENTITLED “ZONING” (Change of Zone - 0 Comstock Parkway, 2184 Plainfield Pike and 2174 Plainfield Pike – Assessor’s Plat 36, Lots 5, 36, 38, 51, 52 and 53). Petition filed by Elizabeth Paul, KM Realty LLC and Alwoodley Realty LLC. Sponsored by Council President Paplauskas. Referred to Ordinance Committee July 14, 2022.***

REQUEST FROM NATIONAL GRID FOR POLE LOCATION AT WILBUR AVE. Referred to Public Works Committee June 16, 2022.

REQUEST FROM NATIONAL GRID FOR POLE LOCATION AT STRATHCONA RD. Referred to Public Works Committee June 16, 2022.

REQUEST FROM NATIONAL GRID FOR POLE LOCATION AT BURLINGAME RD. Referred to Public Works Committee June 16, 2022.

On motion by Councilman Campopiano, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to refer the above new business to the respective Committees. Motion passed on a vote of 8-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwomen Marino, Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Reilly and Council Vice-President Ferri -8.

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XIII. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS ON CLERK'S DESK

3-22-02 ***ORDINANCE TRANSFERRING APPROPRIATIONS AND AMENDING THE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING JULY 1, 2021 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2022 (Administration Position Changes – Finance Director – General Fund). Sponsored by Mayor Hopkins. Tabled 4/7/2022 Special City Council***

No action taken.

Ordinance remained tabled.

RI STATE FIRE MARSHALL BLASTING PERMIT NO. BP-22-18

- **1584 Scituate Avenue 5/6/2022 – 6/30/2022**
Western Mass Blasting Corp. (Blasting Co.) (Informational Only)

No action needed.

SUBMISSION OF CORRESPONDENCE FOR PUBLIC RECORD FROM 5G FREE RHODE ISLAND. (Council Vice-President Ferri).

Discussion and voted taken earlier in the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 P.M.

/s/ Rosalba Zanni
Acting City Clerk

(See Stenographic Notes of Ron Ronzio, Stenotypist)