

(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 6, 2023-

A Special meeting of the City Council was called held on Monday, February 6, 2023 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 P.M. by the Council President.

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

Also Present: Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff; Daniel Parrillo, Director of Personnel; John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor; Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel.

-FEBRUARY 6, 2023-



***AMENDED**
CRANSTON CITY COUNCIL
Special Meeting - Docket
Council President Jessica M. Marino

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023 @ 7:30 p.m.

Special meeting of the Cranston City Council will be held **in the Cranston City Council Chambers, Cranston City Hall, 869 Park Ave., Cranston, RI 02910**, *in accordance with the RI General Laws Chapter 45-24-53 for the purpose of considering the ***following items listed on the docket.***

*If remote participation is required under the Governor's Executive Orders due to Covid-19 restrictions, login information will be used and agenda will be posted at the Cranston City Hall, on www.sos.ri.gov and www.cranstonri.org.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88904162503?pwd=TWRpcnllL3UvaXVKNIp2Zk8zOHhyQT09>

Passcode: 325500

Or One tap mobile :

US: +16469313860,,88904162503#,,,,*325500# or
+13017158592,,88904162503#,,,,*325500#

Or Telephone:

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

US: +1 646 931 3860 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 305 224 1968 or +1 309 205 3325 or +1
312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 689 278 1000 or +1 719 359 4580 or +1 253 205
0468 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 360 209 5623 or +1 386 347 5053 or +1
507 473 4847 or +1 564 217 2000 or +1 669 444 9171 or +1 669 900 9128 or 833 548 0282
(Toll Free) or 877 853 5247 (Toll Free) or 888 788 0099 (Toll Free) or 833 548 0276 (Toll Free)
Webinar ID: 889 0416 2503

Passcode: 325500

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88904162503?pwd=TWRpcnllL3UvaXVKNIp2Zk8zOHhyQT09>

Those participating by telephone who wish to speak during the public hearing are asked to press *9 to "raise hand" to be recognized by the Council President. Those participating via the web may utilize the "raise hand" button.

Youtube Live Stream

The meeting will be live streamed on YouTube. Click the link below to view the meeting. You will only be able to watch the proceedings.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtE9vwA1B1PQHuftrNPcZjg>.

Agenda and Docketed Matters Before the Council

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

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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 **Monday, February 6, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.**

- **Appointment of City Clerk – term ending January *4, 2027.** (*Vote will be taken*)

EXECUTIVE SESSION Pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel to discuss applicant qualifications in an interview setting.

Vote to be taken to go into Executive Session

Vote to be taken to Come out of Executive Session

Votes taken in Executive Session reported out in Public Session.

Vote to be taken to seal minutes of Executive Session.

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

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

Executed at Cranston, Rhode Island, this 2nd day of February, 2023.

/s/ Jessica M. Marino, Council President

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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, February 6, 2023 at 7:30 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers, 869 Park Ave., Cranston, Rhode Island and via Zoom Webinar, was delivered via regular mail and electronic mail on the 2nd day of February, 2023 to the addresses listed below.

Council President Jessica M. Marino
799 Natick Ave.
Cranston, RI 02921
marinoforcranston@gmail.com

Council Vice-President Lammis Vargas
35 Betsey Williams Dr.
Cranston, RI 02910
Lammis.vargas@gmail.com

Councilman Robert J. Ferri
2426 Cranston R.
Cranston, RI 02920
robferri2426@gmail.com

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

Councilwoman Aniece Germain
53 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 Christopher G. Paplauskas
14 Highland St.
Cranston, RI 02920
chrissaplauskas@gmail.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 President Marino stated that this Council has conducted interviews of the candidates by a sub-committee session with HR and through the full City Council in late January. She asked for any motions to the appointment of City Clerk.

Councilman Donegan stated that having sat in on the interview process and subsequent meeting with the candidates, he finds both candidates to be highly skilled, intelligent and experienced individuals.

Councilman Donegan motioned to appoint Sofia Millham as City Clerk.
Councilwoman Germain seconded the motion.

Councilman Paplauskas motioned to appoint Tracy Nelson as City Clerk.
Councilwoman Renzulli seconded the motion.

Council President Marino deferred to legal counsel as to the proper procedure in competing motions. Attorney Angell stated that the Council has to vote on the first motion first. Council President Marino asked if there was any discussion on Councilman Donegan's motion.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked Solicitor if it is proper for the City Council to have this discussion here because she sees an Executive Session on this agenda. She asked if she can discuss the two candidates now in Open Session. Attorney Angell stated that presently there are two motions on the floor to appoint. The first would be appointing Sofia and the second would be appointing Tracy. Right now, what is open is discussion is the first motion on the first candidate. Councilwoman Renzulli stated that she was also part of the sub-committee who interviewed these candidates and, again, they interviewed them in person here for the public viewing and while the candidate that Councilman Donegan nominated has a good legal background and a lot of experience in various roles, she has no experience as a Clerk so she would like to note to everyone the significance of this position and she is unsure that any bright candidate could pick up the skills to do the job, but why we would chance that when we have a competing motion for someone who was a Clerk for many years and who is on different Clerks Associations who knows various people in the State and in New England in this role who could get the help she needs with one phone call if Rosalba decided to retire any day, she does not know why. Councilwoman Renzulli made it clear that this is a very important position and it makes no sense to take anyone who has never done it before.

Councilman Reilly concurred with Councilwoman Renzulli and stated that both candidates were very nice people, customer service wise they were great, but he does not think there is anybody that would deny that there is one candidate that stood far and above and he thinks the person we should really defer to is our Acting Clerk who does the job and has done the job for many many years and it was clear to her who had the correct experience to step into, like Councilwoman Renzulli stated, probably the most important role in City Hall. He thinks we are doing a big disservice now for whatever the reasons are that we are doing this, but it was blatantly obvious that anyone standing there, there is someone who was a paralegal compared to someone who was a Clerk, someone who ran the Clerk and the Canvassing Department and she has also transitioned from one municipality to another with ease. He does not think you could create a better candidate with better experience than Tracy. He hopes everyone does the right thing this evening for the right reasons.

Councilman Donegan stated that there were close to fifty applicants. Some were JD's, some were graduate level, some had experience as Clerks in other municipalities, some had no relevant experience whatsoever. He had never met either of these individuals before they came in to interview. He wants to make it really clear because there is some insinuations that there is something going on here and he wants it to be abundantly really clear that he is making his decision based on the interview process, the resumes and his perception of who he thinks will be able to do this job at a higher level.

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He feels confidently based on the work experience of the individual that he made a nomination for that given their proven track record to take on new roles and challenging tasks and feels that they will be able to learn the job. He wants to be really clear and people can check campaign finance that he does not know either of these people so any insinuation that there is anything nefarious going on he wants to be really clear that it is insulting.

Councilman Paplauskas stated that we have two great candidates and he thanked them both for applying and for going through the process, but what sets it apart for him is the Certified Master Clerk Certification that Tracy has. That is the difference maker for him knowing that that certification is not easy to get and that is a big selling point for him and reason to support Tracy.

Councilwoman Germain stated that both candidates are great candidates and congratulated both of them. She stated that often time we do not give people chances to learn. No one here started a job with experience. You learn on the job. With all due respect to Tracy, she is great and she is qualified, but she has been doing it over and over. She may want to retire not for long so giving somebody a chance to learn, she thinks we can contribute to that. That is why she seconded the motion for Sofia. She feels Sofia can learn the job.

Councilman Campopiano stated that as probably the only one on the City Council that has hired and fired somebody over forty years, he knows the difference between somebody with experience to do the job and somebody can learn the job. He is fully confident Sofia could learn the job., but it would be like him hiring a mechanic to be a tool maker. There is going to be a lot of pitfalls and it is not the same. He thinks Tracy is more than qualified to do the job and is confident that she can step into the role immediately which is very very important at this time in the City so for him, he thinks Tracy is the person for the job.

Councilman Reilly agreed that learning on the job is important and giving people chances is important and that is all well and good if it is our own private enterprise. We are playing with taxpayers' money here so we need to hire the best person who has the most experience and can do this job right now and that is clearly Tracy.

Council President Marino stated that both candidates are good candidates and qualified for the position. In terms of the task at hand and the ability to do the job, he thinks that both are able to do the job. Both spoke at the last Council meeting and they both stated that they would need training. Neither one of them is going to take on this role and just run with it. In terms of Clerk experience and experience in the past, it has been mentioned that both candidates have attributes for this role. Sofia has mentioned that she has worked in the City of San Francisco, which is a far cry from our little City of Cranston. To Councilman Campopiano's point of hiring and firing people, she has over the course of her career, interviewed many people for the role of legal assistants, so this is not uncharted territory for her and we just have a disagreement and this is going to be something where we may agree to disagree if this Council happens to be split, but we should all do so in a dignified way. To Councilman Donegan's point, it is a sad reflection and feel as though we have to explain whether or not we have a personal relationship with someone. No one on this Council has a personal relationship proprietary or otherwise with either of these candidates or any of the candidates.

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Council President Marino asked the Clerk to take the roll call on the first motion.

Motion failed on a vote of 4-5. The following being recorded as voting “aye”:
Councilwoman Germain, Councilman Donegan, Council Vice-President Vargas and Council President Marino -4. The following being recorded as voting “nay”:
Councilman Ferri, Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilmen Campopiano, Paplauskas and Reilly -5.

Council President Marino asked the Clerk to take the roll call on the second motion.

Motion passed on a vote of 8-1. The following being recorded as voting “aye”:
Councilman Ferri, Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilmen Donegan, Campopiano, Paplauskas, Reilly, Council Vice-President Vargas and Council President Marino -8. The following being recorded as voting “nay”:
Councilwoman Germain -1.

Council President Marino announced that Tracy Nelson has been appointed City Clerk.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 P.M.

Rosalba Zanni
Acting City Clerk