

(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).

SAFETY SERVICES & LICENSES COMMITTEE

Special meeting of the Safety Services and Licenses Committee was held on Thursday, November 3, 2022 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 869 Park Ave., Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by the Chair.

Present: Councilman Richard D. Campopiano
Councilwoman Lammis J. Vargas
Council Vice-President Robert J. Ferri
Councilman Matthew R. Reilly, Vice-Chair
Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli, Chair
Council President Christopher G. Paplauskas

Absent: Councilwoman Aniece Germain

Also Present: Councilman John P. Donegan
Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff
Christopher Millea, City Solicitor
Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel
Colonel Michael Winquist, Police Department
Chief James Warren, Fire Department
Rosalba Zanni, Acting City Clerk

I. PUBLIC HEARINGS and/ or NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilwoman Vargas, it was voted to take the agenda out of order and take the Victualling License application first. Motion passed unanimously.

VICTUALLING – NEW

La Bandera Bistro (Yanelby Santos) New Owner 407 Laurel Hill Ave.

Yanelby Santos appeared to speak.

Chair asked Ms. Santos if she understands that her license application is not complete. Ms. Santos stated that she is in the process of completing her application and is in touch with the Clerk's Office as well and is trying to get everything and all her licenses together. She should have it in by the end of this week.

Attorney Angell stated that based on the requirements of the approval process, the applicant is missing the minimum, the Health Department approval, so his recommendation would be to continue this to the next meeting until all approvals have been met.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to continue this license application to the November 14th meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Resolution opposing the establishment of Pallet Housing Villages at the Pastore Center. Sponsored by Councilman Reilly and Councilwoman Renzulli.

Councilman Reilly stated that every year when it comes time for winter, we face the same issue. The State has waited until the last minute again to attempt to set up temporary or permanent housing for the homeless this winter at the Pastore Complex. Last year, the Governor had reached out to us as well and the Mayor and he were able to dissuade him from coming to Cranston. They were attempting to put a shelter in the former Citizens Bank building that was at the time the COVID hospital. Once they went from there, without telling anyone, they set up at the Nilo Hotel and overnight that neighborhood was overtaken. Although that is in Warwick, the location does abut Cranston and specifically his Ward. He spoke to numerous residents in the area who reported increase in break-ins, people roaming the streets and all of it without any notice to them and this happens year after year especially in his Ward where we have the Pastore Complex also. This year, a few weeks ago, the Governor's Office reached out and said that they were once again thinking about putting it in Cranston. We have learned year after year what that means. Those exploratory or preliminary especially when it is two weeks before November and the pledge was to have these put together by the end of November, so we are far past any exploratory phases here. The plan was to put them in the Pastore Center and that negatively affects the people in his Ward. Currently, the Harrington Hall homeless shelter sits in that area. We house 131 men in that shelter. That is the largest men's shelter in the State. He is not here tonight to debate State homelessness policy. He is not here to say that Cranston does not want to lend its hand in helping in the State's homelessness problem. He agrees there is a crisis. He agrees things need to be done and more needs to be done, far more than waiting to the last minute and throw on some sheds in an open field for these people to live in in the winter. It is just unacceptable to put it all on Cranston. We already do our fair share. The Governor has even said as much, however, the Governor, the Czar and anyone else still will not say that they will not put them in Cranston. Cranston is already overburdened. Our Fire Chief and Police Chief can speak to the safety services that have to go there and all the tax that have to go to that, for which we receive no reimbursement. This is something that Cranston already does help. It is time for the other 38 cities and towns to help as well. If they each did what Cranston already does, then this problem would be well underhand, so coming back to Cranston year after year because they have that State planned is not the right answer. It hurts Cranston and they really are not doing anything to help the homeless, but for a month or so. In addition to that, there has been a lot of talk about characterizing the homeless population and we are not doing anything of the sort. There are certain facts that exist. There is a population within the Harrington Hall shelter of high population of registered sex offenders. Just a few weeks ago, the Library he takes his two young daughters to, a gentleman was arrested for masturbating in wide open public in the middle of the Library. We have panhandlers on every corner already in Garden City. We do what we need to do for the homeless. It is time for the State to be proactive for once and actually try to address this issue rather than waiting for the last minute and throwing it here in

Cranston. This is why he put this Resolution together to send a message to the Governor that we already do enough and he has to look at elsewhere for once and that our State Legislatures take a look at what we in Cranston can do in order to oversee the Pastore Complex in some manner. In the last decade, the State has intensified their use twofold and it is getting out of hand with all the burden falling on Cranston. It is time to spread that burden to all the other 38 cities and towns.

On motion by Councilman Campopiano, seconded by Council President Paplauskas, it was voted to recommend approval of this Resolution.

Under Discussion:

Chair asked if the Administration would like to speak before hearing from the public.

Director Moretti stated that this began when the Representative of the Governor's Office and Director Saal had a call with the Administration two or three weeks ago. At that time, the Governor's Office was soliciting input from what the Administration and the Mayor would perceive as should in the event that pallet housing or any other form of homeless shelters be placed at the Pastore Center, how would the Mayor feel, how does he feel, how the residents would feel and what the impact is on the City of Cranston. He thinks it was presented to the City in a very positive way in that respect soliciting input. The issue that really was brought out to the feedback that was provided to the Governor's Office was that the issue of just the housing of additional units in and of itself was not the overall overriding concern. The Mayor is concerned about additional burden added to Cranston. There is an infrastructure burden that this may be placing on the City of Cranston. It is not just the burden of responses of our Police Department and Fire Department in terms of supporting that facility. It infiltrates beyond the facility, beyond the compound of the Pastore Center, into the neighborhoods and affecting the people and the businesses in the nearby area. He also stated that in speaking to the Fire Chief, he was astounded that probably if we do the math, Cranston supports the Pastore Center in its totality with probably the equivalent of one full Rescue. That alone, is probably a burden of over \$1 million on the taxpayers of the City of Cranston. There has been hundreds of runs annually by the Fire Department and just to Harrington Hall alone in terms of Police and Fire runs. The other day we appreciated to hear the Governor was quoted on with Steve Clampton of WPRO when asked the question about having these facilities or potentially being in the City of Cranston, that the Governor appears supportive of what the Mayor advises. He stated that he feels that the City of Cranston has done its part already, which was wonderful news. We believe that respect is there and certainly we trust that the Governor will hold to his word. He clarified that the Administration did receive inquiry. It was not a direct proposal, but it was soliciting feedback as to how the Mayor perceived how he felt.

James Warren, Cranston Fire Chief, 136 Longview Dr., appeared to speak and stated that in 2018, Cranston did 307 runs, in 2019 they did 253 runs, in 2020 they did 209 runs, in 2021 they did 230 runs and as of October 4th of this year, they did 238 runs. That is strictly just to 30 Howard Ave. That is both Fire and Rescue runs, but as he told the Mayor, that Rescue responds throughout Garden City, Glen Hills, Oaklawn Ave. and at all the bus stops. We have a lot of overdoses. We have one of the highest overdoses in that general area for Cranston. It is a very busy truck and it does make a lot of runs to that area. Behind Dunkin Donuts and Sockanosset is another place that they do a lot of runs to so it does tie up those trucks quite a bit especially the runs. He does not know how the housing is. They tried to look into it. They do not know if they have heat, electricity or it is just a small house, so for Fire Department, fire potential, he thinks is not going to be too bad unless there is electricity, they would be concerned about candles, but he feels they can handle it if they have to. They will do it, but the rescue runs, he believes, will increase and that is one thing they are concerned about.

Council Vice-President Ferri asked if the City gets reimbursed any money at all from the State for rescue runs. Chief Warren stated, no, we try to bill, but we usually do not get money. We get Pilot money from the State, but he is not sure what the revenue is. Council Vice-President Ferri asked if we know what the Pilot money is that the State does give us. Director Moretti stated that Pilot money is not based on rescue runs. It is based on real estate and he does not have that amount at this time.

Colonel Winquist appeared to speak and stated that he first wants to state that they are not against the homeless population. There are a lot of good people that are finding themselves living in tents in the woods across Cranston or in Harrington Hall, but we know that there is a segment of that population that is drug addicted or alcohol dependent and we come across those people on a daily basis. As mentioned, Harrington Hall has approximately 150 beds or so, but out of those, there is at least on any given night 37 sex offenders that make that their home and they are allowed to come in at a certain time at night and they are forced to leave in the morning and most of them get on a bus and head to Kennedy Plaza or they end up in Providence and then others are found to be panhandling. Out of those 33 plus sex offenders at night, 10 of them are at a level 3 sex offenders, which is the highest risk assessment that you can have Police spend a lot of time making sure they are in compliance and of course there is a threat to the community that we want to make sure that we are monitoring that activity pretty closely. There are 17 individuals incarcerated right now at the ACI who are going to be registered sex offenders when they are released and what happens when those people are released they go literally from wherever they are being housed they are incarcerated right to Harrington Hall so that number could jump to 47 depending on the release dates that are coming up. His concern is we do not have a lot of information about these pallet shelters or the population that is going to be there. Some of the questions he has is how many are we talking about? Are they going to be identified? When you go into Harrington Hall, you have to sign a register so we know who is in and out of that location. Are these pallet shelters going to have the same rules? Will anyone monitor if they have alcohol or drugs or weapons inside these pallet shelters as they check Harrington Hall? Are the same rules going to be in place? His understanding is there are no bathrooms or running water in these pallet shelters. Where are these people going to go to shower or use the restroom facilities? His concern is they are going to end up at local businesses or, as they have seen in Warwick, using businesses as a shower or to loiter at these places of business? Is there going to be services for these people? A lot of these people are drug dependent or they have mental health or psychological issues that that is why they take the bus to Providence to hopefully get the services that they need. Is there going to be an increase in State Police presence on the grounds? He would hope and implore that if this pallet shelter idea comes through, that the State would come and have some type of presence at that location. Colonel Winquist also stated that they do dedicate a lot of Police safety services at Harrington Hall and across the complex. Last year they responded to 132 calls for services, mostly at Harrington Hall. This year, they have had 64 calls for services so far. A lot of the calls they get to Harrington Hall involve public drunkenness in the neighborhoods and aggressive panhandling. He spoke to his counterparts at the Warwick Police Department, specifically about the Nilo Hotel, and when they had moved in a pretty significant population of homeless people and the large majority of people there were families and were not a problem, but within that population there was a group that had committed a few crimes in the neighborhood. There was a significant spike in crime, car breaks, shoplifting at Warwick Mall and small businesses, loitering and aggressive panhandling. His understanding is the State did not place any sex offenders within the Nilo population and that is because of families obviously that will be placed there. That is another question he has. Are sex offenders going to be housed in these pallet shelters? He agrees that something should be done for the homeless and some type of solution is needed, but his biggest concern is we would have more sex offenders that would be placed in this particular pallet shelters.

Public Speakers:

Al Turner, Jr., 70 Warwick Ave., appeared to speak and stated that he is a homeless advocate. He stated that when the Governor became Governor a year and a half ago, he asked him to be the head of his Homeless Transition Team. What he does now is he works for PONI (Preventing Overdose and Naloxone Intervention). He trains and distributes Narcan. He is concerned and thinks that other municipalities should take on some of the responsibility. It is not really a burden, it is a responsibility that we have to the citizens of this State that are living outside that have nowhere to go that have mental health issues, that have substance use issues, as we all know. These are illnesses. These people are sick and need help. He is still working with the Governor and he helped him and they talked about giving \$5 million last year to put people in hotels, which they did. When Crossroads ran the Nilo Hotel, there were a lot of problems. When the Amos House ran the Hotel, there were hardly any problems. He has come along way himself. He was homeless himself in 2016 for a year. He chose to be there. He could have gotten an apartment, but he chose to be there to help these people because he saw what was going on in the shelter and he saw what Crossroads was doing to these people so he became an advocate and he still does. He is also an outreach person. He is out in Kennedy Plaza almost every day throughout Providence giving people Narcan, he talks to people with mental health issues, he talks to people about substance use because he has been through all of that. He thinks that other municipalities need to take a little responsibility and kind of spread this out, but the issue is the communities. A lot of people do not want sober houses, they do not want homeless shelters, they do not want group homes in their communities so it is very difficult logistically to figure this out. One of the reasons why we have more people homeless is that they are being evicted from their apartments because the landlords are raising the rents and people are getting thrown on the street. We need to find a place for these people.

Danielle Barbusci, 56 Tweed St., appeared to speak and stated that she thinks that this is a bigger problem than housing the people for just a couple of months that was mentioned. As to the rescue runs made to the facility, that and cost, is spreading the problem across the State and the communities and she agrees that we do our fair share. She thinks that in regard to the runs to the prisons, we are stretched.

Jennifer Barrera, Chief Strategy Office for the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness, appeared to speak and stated that she has worked doing street outreach and in Cranston as well. the issue at hand here is that someone's daughter and someone's sons do not have a place to live tonight. In Rhode Island tonight, 425 people are experiencing homelessness. She understands that there is a concern about the municipality of Cranston, but she runs the database for the State that collects all of the data on folks that are experiencing homelessness. Cranston is part of Providence County. Providence County has 74% of all of the folks that are homeless and of that, the second highest to Providence's number of people experiencing homelessness is in Cranston and that is 10% of the totality of the folks in Providence County. That represents currently 63 households. We need immediate answers and we need to help these people because winter is coming and people are going to die if we do not have a warm place for them to be in. Rapidly deployable shelters do have heat and they are a safe option that a lot of communities across the Nation are using at this point. Harrington Hall does not have 150 beds, they do not have 131 beds, they have 112 beds. She wants to make sure as information is presented, we have an opportunity to make sure that we are representing accurate information. Some of the information regarding the Police and Fire calls, she thinks, would behoove you to look into the details around those calls because the actual physical site of Harrington Hall is a State owned property.

Fire system also malfunctions so she thinks some of the calls are related to the physical site that is on State property and being kept up by the State. Also, what is important is that these are not sheds. These are houses that can be deployed rapidly that folks can stay in until they seek housing and they can be taken down as soon as the need is no longer. She asked that rather than consider a Resolution just prohibiting this, there be a workshop to understand the data and understand the actuality of what this potential project would bring to the City of Cranston.

Pat Cortellessa, 160 Oaklawn Ave., appeared to speak and stated that he supports the Resolution. We owe it to the residence of the City of Cranston to provide them quality of life and a standard of living. Social illness are unfortunate, but that is a State issue that has to be dealt with on that level with the funds and with the Health Department, but right now, he would say that the residents of our City need us to support them. With the Prison and with Harrington Hall, he thinks that the City of Cranston has done enough. It is time for other communities to take over.

Kristina Brown, 217 Armington St., appeared to speak and asked that the Council oppose this Resolution. At the very least, do what has already been recommended, which is to put it aside and workshop it to make sure the language is correct and accurate to represent the situation at hand. She thinks that all the concerns raised this evening are very valid and certainly safety of the Cranston residents is important to our City and all Wards, but the conversation, as Director Moretti has already stated, a preliminary conversation with the State and she would hope that our leaders in Cranston would be compassionate to this issue of our neighbors suffering and certainly Cranston residents suffering displacement every day due to the Pandemic and economic situation. She feels that the Resolution is a little early in the conversation as the State is just working on their planning and whether or not the pallets are placed in Cranston, she would hope that our leaders would work with the State to find a solution to house our neighbors over the winter.

Harrison Tuttle, 131 Belmont Rd., appeared to speak and stated that as someone who has been unhoused and someone who was raised by a single mother on a fixed income, he knows exactly what it is like to not know where he is going to sleep that night. When looking at people that are unhoused, you have to look at why they are being unhoused and the fact that we have not built any housing that has been affordable in over ten years is certainly an area of concern. When we fall behind what it requires to have affordable housing, we are not able to keep up with the amount of people that are being sheltered at Harrington Hall. We have a situation where poverty leads to crime and crime leads to addiction and that is how people feel and that is how they get by when they are dealing with mental health issues. He, as other people, want to solve this situation, but he believes that it takes both sides that understand that the people are in Harrington Hall, people that are unhoused that will continue to rise in the State are not going to stop just because we have not had enough municipalities support across the State.

Rachul Vanjani, Primary Care and Addiction Medicine Physician, 60 Sefton Dr., appeared to speak and stated that for the past five years, he has worked as a Primary Care Physician overseeing the State's transitions clinic so every medically complex individual coming out of the ACI comes to see him and a group of community health care workers in the clinic. He also takes care a large amount of the homeless population. Every Wednesday night, he goes on street outreach and he was the head of the State's Quarantine and Isolation Facility. He also provided medical care to the folks at the Nilo and he works at Crossroads. His experience in working with people experiencing homelessness has been that they are some of the most special and kind people that he has ever interfaced with and it really has helped him to break down some of the stereotypes that he had growing up about individuals

experiencing homelessness. He has a lot of respect for these people and a lot of respect for the fact that many of them can endure living in shelters. Shelters at Crossroads, Harrington Hall, Emmanuel House, the Woonsocket Family Shelter, the Providence Rescue Mission, these places are incredibly tough to live in. This idea that up to thirty individuals can be housed in our City in pallets that do in fact have electricity and heating and they would have robust case management, means that perhaps thirty people from some of these shelters could come and live in a more dignified way in these pallets. One other way to approach this is to not think about this in black or white terms in terms of like do we oppose it or do we agree with the Resolution, but rather think about what leads to a high quality program. What about thinking about a Resolution where we, as a City, demand that there be high level case management and certain services be put in place? That is the way we can guarantee that the number of Rescues called to the area will be decreased, that the number of people who are successfully housed will be increased.

Councilman Reilly clarified that this body has no control whatsoever on State homelessness policy. Even if we want to do a workshop, it is useless. They decide that. The reason we are here and for the Resolution is whether or not we are just going to allow the State to put them in Cranston as a last resort. Whatever their policy is, he would love to sit down to do that.

David Baldwin, 67 Fordson Ave., appeared to speak and stated that as to the homeless issue, its population needs two things, housing and services. He asked the Council not to put up a Resolution that presents one side and make it a debate and a contest, but talk about it and come up with a Resolution that represents that consensus.

John Buchanan, 163 Garden Hills Dr., appeared to speak and commended the people who work with the homeless people. It is a very difficult job and they should be highly commended, however, the problem is a shed City is not going to cut it either for the people that are homeless or the people of Cranston. Apparently, funding for this is going to be a major issue. It seems like this is a short-cut. Look at San Francisco, look at Los Angeles, look at the problems that they are having with crime from homeless people. You can't even walk the streets of San Francisco, it is so bad. We are setting ourselves up for a possible catastrophe, especially with the crime rate. The people of Cranston want to be safe. The people who are homeless need to be taken care of properly and this is not cutting it on either side.

Duane Clinker, Pastor at Matthews St. United Methodist Church and resident of Cranston, appeared to speak and stated that every Sunday morning he has breakfast with approximately 200 people, mostly unhoused people. He finds himself having breakfast with human beings. We have one fabric in our City or our State or our Nation and that is a fabric of mutuality. This is not about safety because if we do not start addressing the situation of housing, we are not safe in our precious single family houses in Cranston like his. He agrees with people who have stated that it is a little too soon for this, but maybe we can have a conversation and be proud to be a part of some solutions. He thinks we should do something together because in the end, solidarity is all we have.

Mary English, 24 Garden Hills Parkway, appeared to speak and stated that her husband has run CLCF Girls Cranston League for several years and she has found homeless people in the bushes there, which is a scary situation. She supports everything Councilman Reilly, Police Chief and Fire Chief have said. It is not a case of she does not have compassion for those that are homeless, but she also feels like

Cranston has bared a lot of the burden of the Prisons and she feels like she is almost feeling being made to feel guilty if she is not willing to house these people, but she also has a home that she hopes that the value of it someday, if she ever wanted to sell it, would not get affected. She thinks it is time for somebody else to take some of this burden away.

Louisa Dovidio, 40 Midland Dr., appeared to speak and stated that she is opposed to the Resolution and echoed what a lot of people on either side of this Resolution have already said this evening. These people that are homeless are already in our community and just because you refuse to see them or acknowledge them, does not mean they go away. Cranston is where they sleep at night, Cranston is where they access services, where they go to work, it is where their friends live and providing community members with a safer, drier, warmer place to sleep in the winter is truly the least we could be doing for our neighbors who are in crisis. It is very disheartening to her of multiple people talking about the burden that these individuals will be on our community. She thinks it is very callous and short-sighted to reduce an individual down to an economic value that their life is supposed to bring us. Add that 90% of people who are housed are able to stabilize their lives and never return to homelessness again.

Frank Deingenis, 12 Garden Hills Parkway, appeared to speak in favor of the Resolution and stated that at times when Harrington Hall gets out, it is unsafe to go to Brayton Park. He and his wife won't walk at night because they are living in the woods, they are living in the stairwell of the concession stand. He has young children and he gets at least one to two calls every few weeks about registered sex offenders at Harrington Hall. He does not disagree that we have a homeless problem in the State or in the Country, but he does not believe it should be Cranston's problem to take on more of these homeless shelters or sheds in the Harrington Hall area. They are aggressively panhandling at the red lights on New London Ave. and literally tapping on the windows. There is a serious problem, but he does not think we should be promoting it by bringing more into the City of Cranston. There are lot of other Cities that can step up and help. Cranston has already done their fair share in trying to help the homeless.

Michael Favicchio, 153 Belvedere Dr., appeared to speak and stated that this was the hot topic the entire ten years he served on the City Council. During his time on the Council, the big issue was Harrington Hall and the sex offenders. It is still a problem. He knows the Police Department has had a full-time person there monitoring those people. The issue is a Statewide issue. He thinks the State should have a comprehensive plan, but he does not think Cranston should bare the entire burden. He worries about having families, perhaps on those grounds, where you have thirty or forty sex offenders on any given night. He does not think it is fair to burden just Cranston. He thinks before the State jumps into this, they should really come up with a plan. They should examine the impact on every City especially the fiscal impact because we have to implement and use our resources with fire emergency calls and it is a financial burden and we do not get the proper Pilot money for that kind of thing.

Public Speakers Appearing on Zoom:

Pauline DeRosa, 97 Cypress Dr., founder of Garden City Alliance, appeared to speak and stated that we already know there is a chronic homeless problem in our City, but there are those individuals who may have come into hard times or have made poor decisions. There are many lingering questions before any consideration is taken to install these pallet homes, some of which are:

- Will these buildings be used only in the wintertime, if so, are there alternative locations available during the warmer months or will individuals be diverted to other shelters?
- Who decides which individuals would be selected to live in these shelters or is there a first come first serve situation or is there an application process?
- We are also hearing of an increase in loss of housing in the senior citizens population. Will they be included among those individuals since there seems to be no senior housing available in Cranston?
- Will the State allow overflow from other Cities and Towns?
- Who is responsible for the maintenance and inspection of these shelters to see that they are kept in order for the next person that may occupy them?
- The residents are hopeful there will be a security presence on site if there are a substantial number of these units? Will there also be a go to person onsite if there are questions and or concerns posed by those living on the premises?
- Who would be responsible for snow plowing, the City or the State?
- Will there be the same time limits as those imposed at Harrington Hall, in by 5 pm and out by 7 am?

These are just a few of the questions that need to be posed to Governor McKee and his Rhode Island Housing Czar, Mr. Saal, well in advance of any indication of a homeless village being installed at the Pastore Center. As Councilman Reilly has stated, the City of Cranston can do better for its existing homeless population, but pallet houses are not the answer. We need secure housing for these individuals.

Jay Bombadier, Jr., 41 Oak St., appeared to speak and stated that for the last twelve years, he and his family have worked a lot of these shelters across the whole Northeast from Philadelphia up to Boston, they take time out of their schedule every year to work in these shelters. They have actually slept on the floors of a lot of these shelters on just a mat and, yes, there is a problem with homelessness in this Country, in this State and this City and he thinks that the Country, State and City and Towns have to do more to help the homeless. Putting pallet houses in a particular area in Cranston, which he does not agree with because it turns into a safety issue. One main safety issue is the residence of the homeless. We, as humans, need to help other humans. This is not a burden on people itself. It is a financial burden, but Cranston cannot be the only ones hosting this. The City of Pawtucket has converted an old hospital for homeless shelters. We need to have permanent housing or shelters for these people, but he does not think Cranston should be dropped with the complete burden, the financial burden that this will cause.

Patricia Gilmore, 4 Pepper Mill Lane, appeared to speak and stated that she fully supports this Resolution and also is very thankful to our Cranston leaders who are keeping an eye out and making the residents aware and working on our behalf because they truly know what this represents. This is not about homelessness. This is about homeless sex offenders, this is about homeless criminals, this is about, for the most part, people who cannot be rehabilitated based on the type of crime statistics and data proofs that anyone who is involved with this community should be well aware of that. The residents have had many issues over the years, one of which is a lot of these people are able to, despite the level that is assigned to them when they are coming out of Court and she believes it still stands that if their level is disputed, it does not go on record and so they may or may not be monitored. It is very well known that they are a major burden on our Police, Fire and Rescue. This is a burden that Cranston already bears. We do not see any tax decreases for it, we do not get any benefit. This is not about

helping human lives, this is about a City that has already done its share and this is a safety issue. If you really want to understand that shelter, you need to understand that families, women and children won't use that shelter because it is not safe to be there.

Carolyn Medeiros, Executive Director of the Alliance to Save Communities, appeared to speak and stated that they are a State non-profit and they do victim advocacy for victims of violent crime and lobby some of the most serious crime Bills in the State that have passed into Law. She has worked in the past with the City of Cranston and Harrington Hall and she has a question that she has not seen brought up or answered and that is, will these pop-up houses be under the same guidelines as a shelter? There was a Resolution in Cranston that was passed and then on to a State law that a shelter would have to mandatorily notify Police within 24 hours when they had a sex offender join that shelter, so would these pop-up houses fall under that or not? That is a serious question that needs a serious answer. Also, mixed uses of the pop-up houses, she would be concerned if you have females single in these pop-up houses and other pop-up houses with males or sex offenders in the same residence area. She did extensive research for the City of Cranston on the cost on Police, Fire Rescue at Harrington Hall so she already knows and she thinks that everyone knows that Cranston is heavily over-burdened with picking up the cost for these kind of facilities and services. It is a burden that the taxpayers of Cranston simply do not deserve to have like they have been doing right along.

Drake Patten, 684 Natick Ave., appeared to speak and stated that she really appreciates the voices this evening from the community and it makes her value so much living here, but as an anthropologist, which she is, what she fears we are into is a lot of different issues on the table all at once. People this evening have stated that this is a State issue. She agrees with that, but it is also our issue meaning as people and as a community and as neighbors caring for one another. People have questioned what the details of these pallet houses are. We do not know what those details are, so we need to know all the answers in order to make a decision. She really values what people have said this evening, but she is left with more questions than she started out the evening with and she thinks that perhaps the best way that we as a community move forward is to ask those questions more deeply and explore them because the reality is, we as a City, are not addressing the cost of housing which means we are going to contribute to homelessness over time more than we already have and we have not addressed the fact that we have unhoused people in our community appropriately and we can't blame that on the State. Let's not conflate sexual offenders with homeless people because that is not correct and we need to be very careful about that.

Catherine Trimbur, 60 Sefton Dr., appeared to speak and stated that she thinks that it is not just a question of whether we should allow this to happen in Cranston. She has lived in Cranston her whole life. She moved back to Cranston after moving away to raise her kids here and as a Cranstonian, we should actually welcome this.

Councilman Donegan asked Director Moretti if there is any plan that he knows of to move forward with this. Director Moretti stated, no. He stated that there was an inquiry asking the Administration's opinion. The Mayor felt and it was his perception as to what elected officials and the residents would feel if there would be resistance to a concept of probably proposing the vicinity of 30-40 of these pallet houses that could be single units or double occupancy units, but no firm proposal.

It was left that they were considering Cranston amongst other communities and they would get back to us. The Mayor's feeling is that Cranston has already absorbed approximately 125 homeless individuals already. This would add a number that is going to be increasing at to perhaps approximately 160-170. Perhaps the State could be looking into other 38 communities to share that responsibility and not just overburdening Cranston.

Councilman Donegan stated that he is not a member of this Committee and does not have a vote this evening. If he were voting this evening, he would vote "no" on the Resolution. Within our Charter, we have the duty to uphold the safety, health and well being of the City of Cranston and people that are unhoused, fall under that category and whether or not they are living off the old railroad tracks, behind Lincoln Ave. or under the bridge on Niantic Ave. or under Rout 10, they are already here in Cranston. Kids Count has in the past identified thirty children within Cranston Public Schools that are unhoused, so they are already here whether they are living under a bridge in Cranston or they are in a shelter, a shelter that would keep them warm and dry in the winter in New England, they are already here in Cranston. There are issues regarding the specifics of this that need to be flushed out, discussed, workshopped, whatever you want to call it. Those are legitimate questions that need to be addressed if anything were to move forward, but he thinks that some of the language regarding this conflating homelessness and sex offenders and drug addicts, he thinks is dangerous language to use given that we know how many people are homeless and unhoused because of mental illness, because of material conditions that we know economically people have fallen into homelessness. Cranston for the past decade has done almost nothing to address affordable housing. We are at half of what we are supposed to be in terms of permanent LMI housing in the City. We need to do more. It is our responsibility to take care of those people because they are Cranston residents. They live here, they work here, they go to school here, they are members of our community.

Council Vice-President Ferri stated that it looks like there is no plan to do this, so we do not have to worry so much about all the sex offenders that are going to come storming into our City now. We, as a City, have contributed to this problem by doing nothing for the homeless people and not building affordable housing and not giving the people that are a one paycheck away from homelessness, a chance to make it in society. He appreciates the fact that the Police and Fire have protected us every time they go there and stop something from being a problem to him because he lives one and a half mile from this spot and he appreciates that help, but the fact that we have not done enough, we only do what we have to do on that facility in Harrington Hall. Harrington Hall is not a City thing, it is a State thing. We only go there because we have to go there. Shame on us for not doing more and creating this problem and then wanting to do nothing about it.

Councilman Campopiano stated that everyone needs to understand that homelessness is not a Cranston problem, it is a worldwide problem. It is all over the world and he listens to the stories that he heard here today on both sides and it is heart wrenching to hear families that are without homes and he understands firsthand how difficult things are and how high rents are and how one could be one paycheck away, but he also understands that the people who do support this Resolution, they are not bad people either. There are both sides to this. He vowed that if he is given the chance, he will do everything he can to make more affordable housing in Cranston because it is a very important issue, but he does not think that this is the answer. He does not think putting these pallet houses up in this area is the answer. It is a larger problem that needs to be looked at and hopefully they will be given the opportunity to help in the future.

Council President Paplauskas agreed with the sentiments regarding the burden that the Fire and Police have going to the Pastore Complex and the payment in lieu of taxes does not cover all of those runs. His heart bleeds for the homeless and we have to find a solution, but he thinks pallet housing is not the answer. The Fire Chief was concerned about the flammability of the pallet housing and former Council Vice-President Favicchio spoke about families in the pallet housing near Harrington Hall or in the field adjacent to it. That is an issue also. He will vote in favor of this Resolution this evening and he hopes it does force the Governor to maybe pump the brakes if this is going to come to up or come to Cranston. He thinks we can do better and he thinks pallet housing is not the solution and that better housing should be out there.

Councilman Donegan stated that he does not think that anyone that votes against this is inherently a bad person or anyone that votes for this is inherently a bad person. Is pallet housing a permanent solution, no, but when we talk about the fact that they would not have a bathroom or it might be a tight space, what is the alternative? He thinks that would be a lot better than living under a bridge or living in the woods. It is going to be winter in New England. The alternative is that they would be living outside. There are not enough beds, so when we talk about alternatives, unless there is going to be a bunch of housing that is going to be put up, where are they going to live? This is the United States of America, we have people, Veterans, people from all sorts of economic class living under bridges, in the back of alleys, in the woods. He reiterated that it is going to be winter in New England in a month. Alternative is that they are going to be living outside. Then what are we going to do? We might not be getting a call to Harrington Hall or to that complex, but we may be getting a call to someone freezing to death, so what is the alternative? Go somewhere else and freeze to death in another City? What is the alternative?

Councilwoman Vargas stated that one of her questions is, do we not receive funds from the State for the runs to the Pastore Complex? Director Moretti stated that he checked on the Pilot money payment in lieu of taxes and there is approximately \$4.7 million that somebody receives. We do not receive any money for any of our Police and Fire safety support. That is purely on the City. It is based on Real Estate values and so Cranston does bear the responsibility of accommodating the State facilities.

Councilwoman Vargas stated that she does not support this Resolution. She feels that in this Resolution there are too many items under one Resolution that perhaps could be split. There is language in line #80 regarding payment structure, so that is one big issue where if we are providing our Police and our Fire Departments to respond to calls, then perhaps that should be part of the discussion with the Governor's Office. If we do happen to have the pallet temporary shelters in the State property that is located within the City, then we should be able to have some sort of compensation or reimbursement on that. On the permanent housing that is noted on the Resolution on line #23, she does not believe this is permanent housing. This is considered a temporary housing for the winter so she does not agree with that language. She also does not agree to comparing all of our homeless community members to sexual offenders when in fact there are some homeless families who have children in our School Department, there are families who are homeless because they are either victims of a domestic violence including even some Veterans so she is not sure if she is misreading this incorrectly, but just wants to make sure that the way she has interpreted it, she just does not want to compare every person who is homeless is necessarily considered or should be considered a registered sex offender in our City.

Councilman Reilly reiterated that this has nothing to do with the homeless, with homeless policy. This is simply, he is calling for the City of Cranston to stop enabling the State of Rhode Island and for the State of Rhode Island to actually come through with something that is not short-sighted, that is not last minute and maybe just maybe with some common sense actually helps a few people. 426 people are sleeping in the streets, that is unacceptable. Imagine if just four of the 38 other remaining Cities and Towns did what Cranston already did, we would not have this problem. So, no, he won't feel shamed, he won't be told he does not have compassion and just because he is the one bringing it up, that the State continue to just intensify their use of the Pastore Center with whatever they want. It is a pervasive problem. He would love to live in a State where we had a housing Czar that actually puts plans in place and enacted those plans not every single late October or November when the calls come in that we did not do anything again, we are going to throw it at you. Well, that is not going to happen because he is here and he is standing up and he is actually saying 'no' because we do enough and other Cities and Towns have to step up. The time for conversations and workshops, it was said that we are early in the process. Does he need to get a calendar out, it is November 3rd. This is not early. The reason he brought this forward is we are not going to be the dumping ground. We are going to stand up for the people for once.

Councilwoman Vargas stated that she agrees that Cranston should not be the only City that is identified because we have the State parcel land here in Cranston. Other areas should be identified as well since we have 39 municipalities, however, these should be conversations that should be had with other Cities and Towns.

Director Moretti stated that the Mayor supports Councilman Reilly's Resolution for all the reasons we talked about.

Chair stated that she is a supporter of this Resolution because she firmly believes the State of Rhode Island is not doing their job. The State of Rhode Island has a Housing Czar. That is someone's title. They make \$170,000 a year and they have various counsels underneath them and then we have various non-profit that focus on the homeless that share with the Governor and the Housing Czar their opinion on what they should be doing. In May, the Professor from Providence College, Eric Hirsch, suggested to Governor McKee that we put pallet shelters at the Pastore Center, in May. If in May, someone had some sort of plan on this and came to the City of Cranston and engaged in various organizations we have in this City that help the homeless and the Housing Commission and the Mayor and the City Council and Safety Services, then maybe we could have helped them come up with a plan before the end of October and November. So, it is not that no one wants to help the homeless, it is that this is poor planning and now we have to pay for it because she looks bad now like she does not care about homeless people, but she does. She would like to see people actually get help because when people leave Harrington Hall at 7 in the morning and wander around Cranston, they are not getting help, they are not getting help in getting a job, they are not getting services. So, why are we going to cage people in boxes that are just a little bit bigger than a prison cell and pretend that we are really helping people? Let's not pretend that this is actually solving a problem and let's not pretend that bridge or temporary housing leads to a significant amount of permanent housing for the homeless, because it does not.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this Resolution and motion passed on a vote of 4-2. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilman Reilly, Councilman Campopiano and Council President Paplauskas -4. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwoman Vargas and Council Vice-President Ferri -2.

VICTUALLING – NEW

La Bandera Bistro (Yanelby Santos) New Owner

407 Laurel Hill Ave.

Discussed earlier in the meeting.

- **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

/s/ Rosalba Zanni
Acting City Clerk