

(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

-JANUARY 4, 2021-

A Special meeting of the City Council was held on Monday, January 4, 2021 via Zoom Webinar at 7:00 P.M.

Dennis DeJesus, Master of Ceremonies, welcomed everyone and announced the opening of the 2021 Fifty-Eighth Inaugural Program. He acknowledged that while this is the 58th Inaugural Ceremony, it is also an unprecedented one. Mindful of protocols to keep us safely and socially distanced, much of the ceremony will be managed virtually. He thanked Jeff Butler of New England Audio Visual Services for providing video streaming services across several media platforms (Facebook Live, YouTube, Zoom) for the purpose of keeping the program as virtual as possible while simultaneously allowing access to family, friends and constituents near and far.

Mr. DeJesus asked audience to stand for the presentation of the colors by the Cranston Police Department and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance, National Anthem, Invocation and posting of Colors.

Mr. DeJesus asked Mayor-Elect Hopkins's grandchildren Lillian, Kenneth, Jr. and Chloe to step forward and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. DeJesus introduced Marissa DiBiase, who sang the National Anthem.

Mr. DeJesus introduced Reverend Anthony W. Verdelotti, Pastor of Saint Mark's Church for the Invocation.

Mr. DeJesus asked the Color Guard to post the colors and thanked the Cranston Police Color Guard.

Mr. DeJesus acknowledged dignitaries who have tuned in and are in the viewing audience.

Mr. DeJesus introduced Leanne Zarrella, City Clerk, to read the Certificates of Election of Mayor Kenneth J. Hopkins.

Mr. DeJesus introduced former Mayor Michael Traficante to administer the Oath of Office to Mayor Kenneth J. Hopkins.

Mayor Hopkins delivered his Inaugural Address.

Mr. DeJesus reintroduced City Clerk, Leanne Zarrella to read the Certificates of Election of the School Committee-Elect.

City Clerk read the Certificates of Election of the School Committee-Elect.

Mr. DeJesus introduced Mayor Hopkins to administer the Oath of Office to the School Committee-Elect.

Greetings given by School Committee Chairperson, Daniel Wall.

-JANUARY 4, 2021-

Mr. DeJesus reintroduced Leanne Zarrella, City Clerk, to read the Certificates of Election of the City Council-Elect.

City Clerk read the Certificates of Election of the City Council-Elect.

*NOTE: The Council Members-Elect were sworn in by the City Clerk prior to the commencement of the meeting, per City Charter.

Mr. DeJesus introduced Mayor Hopkins to administer the Oak of Office to the City Council-Elect.

Mr. DeJesus reintroduced Leanne Zarrella, City Clerk, to call to order the meeting of the Cranston City Council.

Leanne Zarrella, City Clerk, called the meeting of the Cranston City Council to order and asked Clerk to take the roll. The following members were present: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Paplauskas -9.

APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT

City Clerk announced the election of Council President is now in order and asked for nomination and second to the nomination.

Councilman Brady nominated Councilman Paplauskas as Council President and Councilwoman Renzulli seconded the nomination. No other nominations were made. Roll call was taken and motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Paplauskas -9.

COUNCILMAN PAPLAUSKAS was appointed ***COUNCIL PRESIDENT***.

Ms. Zarrella virtually handed gavel to Council President Paplauskas to conduct the business of the Inaugural Meeting.

Council President Paplauskas presided and recognized the following, who are on the call this evening, his wife Judy and their children Aiden and Sophia, who without their unconditional love and support, it would be impossible to serve. He also recognized his mom and dad for their love, guidance and hard work and civic duty that they instilled in him as a young boy and have made him the person he is today. He also acknowledged State Treasurer Seth Magaziner, former Mayor Michael Traficante, State Representative Brandon Potter, Warwick Mayor Frank Picozzi, members of the City Council past and present, members of the School Committee past and present and also sent best wishes to Mayor Allan Fung, who he just saw on social media, had to leave and hopes he is well. Council President Paplauskas also offered his remarks.

APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL VICE-PRESIDENT

Council President Paplauskas called for nomination and second for Council Vice-President.

Councilwoman Renzulli nominated Councilman Brady. Councilman Reilly seconded the nomination. No other nominations were made. Roll call was taken and motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

COUNCILMAN BRADY was appointed ***COUNCIL VICE-PRESIDENT***.

-JANUARY 4, 2021-

APPOINTMENT OF MAJORITY LEADER AND MINORITY LEADER

Council President Paplauskas stated that these appointments will be announced at a later date.

COUNCIL RULES

Council President Paplauskas stated that the Rules Committee will meet at a later date for discussion and adoption of the Council Rules for the 2021-2023 term and in the interim, the City Council will continue with the current Adopted Rules. He also stated that a motion and a second must be made to keep the present Council Rules in effect until such time any amendments thereto may be adopted by the full Council upon majority vote.

On motion by Council Vice-President Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to keep the present Council Rules in effect until such time any amendments thereto may be adopted by the full Council upon majority vote. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

COUNCIL LEGAL COUNSEL

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to appoint **STEPHEN ANGELL, ESQ.** as ***CITY COUNCIL LEGAL COUNSEL***. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

COUNCIL AUDITOR/BUDGET ANALYST

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to re-appoint **DAVID DIMAIO** as ***CITY AUDITOR/BUDGET ANALYST***. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

REGISTRAR

On motion by Councilman Donegan, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to re-appoint **NICHOLAS LIMA** as ***CITY REGISTRAR***. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

Council President Paplauskas administered the Oath of Office to the City Council Legal Counsel, City Council Auditor/Budget Analyst and Registrar.

HARBOR MASTER

On motion by Councilwoman Vargas, seconded by Councilman Donegan, it was voted to re-appoint **TED WESTCOTT** as ***HARBOR MASTER***. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

Council President Paplauskas administered the Oath of Office to the Harbor Master.

-JANUARY 4, 2021-

APPOINTMENT OF PROBATE JUDGE

Council President Paplauskas stated that the next order of business is the election of the Probate Judge. City Clerk read letter of recommendation from the Probate Judge Advisory Commission.

On motion by Council Vice-President Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to re-appoint **GEORGE M. CAPPELLO, ESQ.** as ***PROBATE JUDGE***. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

APPOINTMENT OF MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGES

Council President Paplauskas stated that a motion is now in order for the appointment of Chief Municipal Court Judge.

On motion by Council Vice-President Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to appoint **RAYMOND COIA, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT CHIEF JUDGE***. Motion failed on a vote of 4-5. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilman Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -4. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Vargas, Germain and Councilman Donegan -5.

On motion by Councilwoman Renzulli, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to appoint **ANGELYNE COOPER, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT CHIEF JUDGE***.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Vargas stated that while she supports Angelyne Cooper, her nomination this evening is to nominate Angelyne Cooper for one of the Associate Judge’s position and if this motion fails, she will be nominating her for that position and that was a conversation she had with each of the Council Members on the phone.

Councilman Donegan echoed fully the statements made by Councilwoman Vargas and stated that he will be supporting Ms. Cooper for one of the Associate Judge position. He also stated that this process is broken and it is something we need to visit as a Council to ensure a transparent and through process of vetting of Municipal Court Judges. These are important positions in our City and they deserve a public transparent review.

Councilman Reilly stated that he appreciates Councilwoman Vargas putting forth Ms. Cooper. A few weeks ago, they had requested from the Democratic colleagues names from people, but we just received Ms. Cooper’s the other day and, being an attorney himself and reading her resume and reading the tens, twenty, thirty letters of recommendation that were put forth for her today, reading Councilwoman Vargas’s press release that she put out for her, he was convinced that she is a great attorney and could do wonders for our Court and having the opportunity in this day and age with everything that is going on to put a diverse candidate in the driver’s seat of our Court, he thought it was a miraculous thing for us to do.

Councilwoman Marino stated that as to the statement made by Councilman Reilly that Ms. Cooper’s resume was submitted today, that is not true, that was submitted in more advance than that. In fact, it was the resume of Ray Coia that we just received a few hours ago. In terms of this nomination, she echoed the sentiments of Councilwoman Vargas and Councilman Donegan. She believes that Ms. Cooper is qualified, but she thinks she is best suited at this time for Municipal Associate Judge.

-JANUARY 4, 2021-

Councilman Brady stated that he agrees that the system is broken and this Council should do its due diligence moving forward to fix it and move forward.

Roll call was taken on the motion nominating Angelyne Cooper as Municipal Court Chief Judge and motion failed on a vote of 4-5. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilman Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -4. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Vargas, Germain and Councilman Donegan -5.

On motion by Councilwoman Vargas, seconded by Councilman Ferri, it was voted to appoint **MATTHEW SMITH, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT CHIEF JUDGE***. Motion passed on a vote of 5-4. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Vargas, Germain and Councilman Donegan -5. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilman Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -4.

Councilman Ferri nominated **RAYMOND C. COIA, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT SENIOR ASSOCIATE JUDGE***. No one seconded the motion. Councilman Donegan stated that he was going to second Councilman Ferri’s motion for the purposes of discussion. He explained why the motion did not receive a formal second. He stated that the Council received Mr. Coia’s resume late this afternoon and he does not feel the new members of the Council had enough time to review Mr. Coia’s resume.

On motion by Council Vice-President Brady, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to appoint **STEVEN MORETTI, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT SENIOR ASSOCIATE JUDGE***. Motion failed on a vote of 4-5. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilman Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -4. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Vargas, Germain and Councilman Donegan -5.

On motion by Councilwoman Marino, seconded by Councilman Donegan, it was voted to appoint **MICHAEL FORTE, JR., ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT SENIOR ASSOCIATE JUDGE***. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to appoint **NICHOLAS SOLITRO, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT ASSOCIATE JUDGE***.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Marino stated that she respects Mr. Solitro’s years of practice, however, his serving as an attorney for only approximately seven years is something she deems as insufficient, while technically it conforms with the rules, which require two years as an attorney. She would be happy to entertain it in the future, if he is still interested in serving, but at this time, it is not something that she would be in favor of.

Roll call was taken on motion to appoint Nicholas Solitro, Esq., as Municipal Court Associate Judge and motion passed on a vote of 5-4. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilman Ferri, Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilman Reilly, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -5. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwomen Marino, Vargas, Germain and Councilman Donegan -4.

-JANUARY 4, 2021-

On motion by Councilwoman Vargas, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to appoint **ANGELYNE COOPER, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT ASSOCIATE JUDGE***.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Vargas gave Ms. Cooper's background.

Roll call was taken on motion to appoint Angelyne Cooper as Municipal Court Associate Judge and motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

On motion by Council Vice-President Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to appoint **JOANNA ACHILLE, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT ASSOCIATE JUDGE***. Motion passed on a vote of 8-1. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -8. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilman Ferri -1.

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to appoint **MAUREEN SLACK DICRISTOFARO, ESQ.** as ***MUNICIPAL COURT ASSOCIATE JUDGE***. Motion passed on a vote of 8-1. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -8. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilwoman Marino -1.

APPOINTMENT OF AUXILIARY JUDGE

On motion by Council Vice-President Brady, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to appoint **ROBERT RAGOSTA, ESQ.** as ***AUXILIARY JUDGE***. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Marino, Councilman Ferri, Councilwomen Renzulli, Vargas, Germain, Councilmen Donegan, Reilly, Brady and Council President Paplauskas -9.

Council President Paplauskas administered the Oath of Office to Municipal Court Judges Smith, Forte, Solitro, Cooper, Achilles, and DiCristofaro, Auxiliary Judge Ragosta and Probate Judge Cappello.

Council President Paplauskas stated that standing Committee appointments will be provided to the City Clerk within the next day or two.

Council President Farina thanked everyone for putting this meeting together and also all everyone for watching at home and for their participation and wished everyone a Healthy and Happy New Year.

Council President Farina called upon Father Ledoux to offer Benediction.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Leanne Zarrella, JD
City Clerk

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees