

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

April 4, 2023 - 7:30 P.M.

Honorable Mayor, Dean Esposito, called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & PRAYER

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Sean Hatch. Councilman DiGilio led all in prayer.

ROLL CALL:

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Buzaid, Eriquez, Knapp, Levy, DiGilio, Rotello, Henry, Britton, Perkins, Esposito, Esposito III, Fox, Chianese, Cavo, Palma, VACANCY, Visconti and Cammisa.

Councilman Britton arrived during public speaking.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Masi, Halas and Molinaro.

PRESENT: 17, ABSENT: 3, VACANCY: 1

ALSO PRESENT: Bob Yamin, Corporation Counsel; Les Pinter, Deputy Corporation Counsel; and Elisa Etcheto, Legislative Assistant.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Farley Santos, Resident, 27 Westview Drive, spoke on items 1, 2, and 9.

Heather Lorenz, Resident, 46 Rolf Drive, spoke on items 2, and 7.

Roberto Alves, Resident, 7 West Redding Road, spoke on items 1, 9, 2, and 20.

Ken Gucker, Resident, 89 Padanaram Road, spoke on items 1, 2, 19, and 20.

Larry Riefberg, Resident, 6 Ervie Drive, spoke on item 2.

Mayor Extended Public Hearing

Jenna Saltzman, Resident, 1 Denver Terrace, spoke on item 2.

Kaitlyn Lee, Resident, 6 Logans Way, spoke on item 2.

William Sweeney, Resident, 19 Ironwood Drive, spoke on item 2.

Kaitlyn Alexander, Resident, 20 Rolf Drive, spoke on item 2.

Kevin Walston (Superintendent), Resident, 26 Lilac Lane, spoke on item 2.

BUDGET PRESENTATION – PROPOSED BUDGET FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

Presented by Mayor Esposito

MINUTES - Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held March 9, 2023

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, and was seconded by Councilman Perkins, to waive the reading of the minutes, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office, as well as accept them as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

10. COMMUNICATION - Appointment to Government Entity – Commission on Aging

Receive the Communication and approve the appointment of Richard Jannelli to serve on the Commission on Aging as presented.

11. COMMUNICATION - Danbury Career Academy – School Building Committee – new members

Receive the Communication and approve the recommendation from the Board of Education regarding the appointments of Ralph Pietrafesa, Board Chair and Michelle Coelho, Sites and Facilities Committee Chair as new Board Leadership members to the School Building Committee-Danbury Career Academy as presented.

12. COMMUNICATION - Donation – Walmart – Public Works / Public Services

Receive the Communication and accept the generous donation from Danbury Walmart of surplus rock salt valued at approximately \$3,200 and send the appropriate letter of thanks.

14. RESOLUTION - CT DESPP/DEMHS Citizen Corps Program – Office of Emergency Management

Receive the Communication and adopt the Resolution authorizing Dean Esposito, Mayor of the City of Danbury, or Matthew Cassavechia, Emergency Management Director for the City of Danbury, as his designee, to apply for and accept funding offered through the State of CT Citizens Corps Program funding in an amount not to exceed \$600 with no local match being required as presented.

16. RESOLUTION - US DOJ – Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) – Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Funds – Police Dept.

Receive the Communication and adopt the Resolution authorizing Dean Esposito, Mayor of the City of Danbury, or Patrick Ridenhour, Chief of Police, as his designee, to apply for and accept funding from the US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services FY 2023 Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Grant in an amount not to exceed \$200,000 with no local match being required as presented.

17. RESOLUTION - CT DPH & CDC Immunization & Vaccines for Children Covid-19 Supplement Grant – Dept. of Health & Human Services

Receive the Communication and adopt the Resolution authorizing Mayor Dean Esposito, or Kara Marie Prunty, Director of Health, as his designee, to apply for and accept funding through the State of Connecticut Department of Health Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Immunizations and Vaccines for Children COVID-19 Supplements in an amount not to exceed \$280,714 with no local match being required as presented.

A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, and was seconded by Councilman Perkins, to accept the Consent Calendar as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

1. COMMUNICATION - Appointment to the City Council

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to receive the communication and approve the appointment of Diana Merchan to fill the vacancy as a Member of the City Council representing the fourth ward. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Britton expressed his support of the appointment.

Ms. Merchan was sworn into office by Corporation Counsel Yamin.

Ms. Merchan took her seat on the dias.

ROLL CALL - UPDATE:

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Buzaid, Eriquez, Knapp, Levy, DiGilio, Rotello, Henry, Britton, Perkins, Esposito, Esposito III, Fox, Chianese, Cavo, Palma, Merchan, Visconti and Cammisa.

PRESENT: 18, ABSENT: 3

2. ORDINANCE & RESOLUTION - An Ordinance Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024 and a Resolution Levying the Property Tax for the Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024.

A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, to refer the item to a public hearing. So Ordered.

3. ORDINANCE - An Ordinance Appropriating \$3,000,000 for Public Improvements Projects in the 2023-2024 Capital Budget and Authorizing the Issuance of \$3,000,000 Bonds of the City to Meet Said Appropriations and Pending the Issuance Thereof the Making of Temporary Borrowings for Such Purpose.

A motion was made by Councilman Buzaid, to refer the item to a public hearing, followed by a Committee of The Whole. So Ordered.

4. ORDINANCE - Sewer Rates as of July 1, 2023

A motion was made by Councilman Esposito III, to refer the item to a public hearing, followed by a Committee of The Whole. So Ordered.

5. ORDINANCE - Water Rates as of July 1, 2023

A motion was made by Councilman Henry, to refer the item to a public hearing, followed by a Committee of The Whole. So Ordered.

6. RESOLUTION - Downtown Special Services District Tax Levy

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to table this item to our May 2, 2023, City Council meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

7. RESOLUTION - American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 – Reallocation of Funds

A motion was made by Councilman Levy, seconded by Councilman DiGilio, to receive the communication, adopt the resolution, to reallocate the amounts designated for certain projects as set forth in the attached communication; it is also further resolved that Dean Esposito, Mayor of the City of Danbury, or his designee, here be authorized to take all actions necessary to effectuate this resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. DiGilio asked for clarification of the ARPA funds received by both the City and the BOE.

Mr. Garrick noted that the BOE did receive separate ARPA funds.

8. COMMUNICATION - Police Department Promotion – Andrew Corrado to Police Captain

A motion was made by Councilman Henry, seconded by Councilman Cavo, to receive the communication and confirm the appointment promotion of Police Lieutenant Andrew Corrado to the position of Police Captain in the Danbury Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

9. COMMUNICATION - Police Department Appointments – Harris, Kozal, Gentile, Rodriguez, Cortorreal, Pico-Cercado, Dotel, Burgato Certified Police Officers

A motion was made by Councilman Eriquez, seconded by Councilman M. Esposito, to receive the communication and confirm the appointment of the following individuals Donald Harris, Steven Kozal, Joseph Gentile, Joseph Rodriguez, Mildred Cortorreal, Moises Pico-Cercado, Jeffrey Dotel, Elena Burga to the position of Certified Police Officers with the Danbury Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

10. COMMUNICATION - Appointment to Government Entity – Commission on Aging

**CONSENTED* - as received.

11. COMMUNICATION - Danbury Career Academy – School Building Committee – new members

**CONSENTED* - as received.

12. COMMUNICATION - Donation – Walmart – Public Works / Public Services

**CONSENTED* - as received.

13. COMMUNICATION - Application for Renewal of Water & Sewer Extensions – Great Plain Road and Great Meadow Road

A motion was made by Councilman Cavo, to send this off to the Director of Public Works/City Engineer, as well as the Planning Commission for reports. So Ordered.

14. RESOLUTION - CT DESPP/DEMHS Citizen Corps Program – Office of Emergency Management

**CONSENTED* - as received.

15. RESOLUTION - CT DRS Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) Program – Finance Dept.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Cammisa, to refer the item to a public hearing, followed by a Committee of The Whole. So Ordered.

16. RESOLUTION - US DOJ – Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) – Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Funds – Police Dept.

**CONSENTED* - as received.

17. RESOLUTION - CT DPH & CDC Immunization & Vaccines for Children Covid-19 Supplement Grant – Dept. of Health & Human Services

**CONSENTED* - as received.

18. REPORT & ORDINANCE – Government Entities Review Committee (G.E.R.C.)

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to waive the reading of the minutes of this report, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman M. Esposito, to send this to a public hearing, and comeback as Committee of The Whole. So Ordered.

19. REPORT - Ad Hoc – Acquisition of Property for Open Space and Public Use (36 Mountainville Road)

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to waive the reading of the minutes of this report, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to receive the report of the Ad Hoc and approve it with the recommendation for the Mayor to move forward with negotiations. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Perkins clarified the next part of the process, consisting of obtaining appraisals and present it back to the council. Mayor Esposito confirmed the City will perform appraisals and send the item back to the council and an Ad Hoc.

Councilman Rotello spoke in support of the acquisition of property for open space and public use.

20. REPORT - Ad Hoc – Reapportionment (2022)

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to waive the reading of the minutes, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office. The motion carried unanimously.

Main Motion:

A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, seconded by Councilman Palma, to accept the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee to readopt the current reapportionment plan, including all current wards and voting boundaries subject only to a public hearing. The motion carried on roll call vote. 12 Yes, 6 No (Rotello, Fox, Britton, Merchan, Perkins, Chianese).

Amendment 1:

A motion was made by Councilman Chianese, seconded by Councilman Perkins, to recommit the reapportionment back to the Ad Hoc. The motion failed on roll call vote. 11 No, 7 Yes (Rotello, Visconti, Fox, Britton, Merchan, Perkins, Chianese).

Amendment 2:

A motion was made by Councilman Chianese, seconded by Councilman Perkins, to Table the item. The motion failed on roll call vote. 12 No, 6 Yes (Rotello, Visconti, Britton, Merchan, Perkins, Chianese).

New motion 3:

A motion was made by Councilman Cavo, seconded by Councilman Levy, to move the question. The motion carried on roll call vote. 13 Yes, 5 No (Rotello, Britton, Merchan, Perkins, Chianese).

(Back to the Main Motion)

Councilmen Chianese, Rotello, Perkins, and Britton spoke in support of recommitting the item back to an Ad Hoc due to the lack of verified data from the hired expert, and noted that there could be a City Charter violation in Ward 6 (greater than 10% population difference between wards).

Mr. Yamin clarified the expert's findings of Map A and B, and his recommendation to keep the existing wards to avoid a violation of the Voting Rights Act. He noted that not meeting the 10% threshold could violate the City Charter.

Mr. Pinter clarified the reasons behind the expert's recommendation to reimplement the existing plan. Furthermore, he confirmed that keeping the existing wards does not violate the City Charter if a proper reapportionment reevaluation does take place in the future.

Councilmen Knapp and DiGilio spoke in support of maintaining the current wards. They noted the reasons for hiring the expert, expressed concerns with the City Charter's requirements for the reapportionment process, and emphasized the need for a Charter Revision.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS - Police, Fire, Health & Human Services, Public Works, Permit Center, U.N.I.T., Elderly Services, Public Library, Tax Assessor

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Perkins, to waive the reading of the minutes, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office, as well as approve them as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Ridenhour discussed the Police Department's training process with Councilman Chianese.

Committees:

New Budget Ad Hoc Committee Assignments:

1. Education Budget: Levy, Chair; Fox, Molinaro, Cammisa, Chianese.
2. Government I: Knapp, Chair; Halas, Buzaid, Perkins, Merchan
3. Government II: Fox, Chair; Henry, Palma, Britton, Merchan
4. Public Works: Cavo, Chair; Esposito III, Eriquez, Chianese, Britton
5. Health & Human Services & Public Safety: DiGilio, Chair; Esposito, Masi, Rotello, Visconti

Mayor Extended All Other Committees.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Palma, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

Copies of Agenda Items are available in the Legislative Assistant's Office and on the City's website.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Martinez
Recording Secretary

Attest,
Elisa Etcheto, Legislative Assistant