

*~AD HOC REPORT~*  
**Request to Change Ordinance (Article IX Sec. 30 – 265):**  
**Danbury Museum & Historical Society Authority**  
*Wednesday, July 26, 2023*

Chairman DiGilio called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Present were Committee Members Emile Buzaid and Paul Rotello. From the City were Les Pinter, Corporation Counsel; and Dan Garrick, Director of Finance; Sean Hanley, Superintendent of Public Buildings. Petitioner Brigid Guertin, Executive Director of DMHS Authority; Shay Nagarsheth, Director of Economic Development.

Ex-Officio members Warren Levy, Ben Chianese and Duane Perkins. Also present were several members of the public.

Councilman DiGilio read the meeting notice and provided an overview of the ad hoc process. Attorney Pinter discussed the local and state provided powers of Authorities and the process of changing an ordinance.

Mr. DiGilio noted that the Authority is looking to transfer the maintenance and all budgetary demands of their historical properties to the City. Ms. Guertin provided an overview of the programs that the museum currently runs and discussed the museum's challenges including maintaining the historical buildings that house historical documents and archives. Mr. Doyle discussed the "cash flow" problems that the museum faces. He noted, existing problems before Covid and those that were created due to Covid. He noted PPP and ARPA funds that have helped the museum stay afloat. He inquired about the Authority's responsibility for paying the insurance on the properties, and noted the struggle of paying the bills including; utilities, security, telephone, garbage, cleaning, sewer & water, emergency maintenance. He noted the difficulty of fundraising when monies are being used for payroll needs. The explained that the City provided 4 payments of \$25,000 per fiscal year, and that the museum has had to provide the January installment of funding early two years in a row so that the museum could stay open through the holidays.

Mr. Rotello asked how much it costs to run the buildings, Mr. Doyle confirmed it is about \$75,000; the remaining \$25,000 goes to payroll. He explained that the revenue comes from: Rentals: \$10,000 Ives, \$4,000 Huntington Hall; Membership is \$10,000; Gift Shop income is about \$1,000. Ms. Guertin noted that there are additional fundraising events coming up but those funds are not guaranteed. Ms. Guertin noted that the museum does receive grants and receives additional funds on occasion from the state and local businesses. Mr. Doyle confirmed the total expected loss for this year is \$108,000.

Mr. DiGilio noted that the balancing of the operational budget is a priority and programs should be offered as long as they are not creating a deficit. He asked about a lease agreement with the adjacent property that housed a grocery store, an income of \$12,000, with the expectation of extending the lease at a higher rate that did not happen.

Mr. Hanley indicated that there is an inventory of properties (7) but that the department does not offer much assistance for maintenance.

Mr. Buzaid asked if the city could provide immediate funds to the museum? Mr. Pinter noted that the city can increase the budget to the museum which is authorized by the council. Mr. DiGilio noted that the museum seems to need twice the city's contribution. Mr. Garrick explained that funds would need to be taken from Contingency or Unreserved Funds, both are frowned upon. Mr. Chianese noted that a previous ad hoc confirmed that the buildings do revert back to the city if the authority is dissolved. He noted that an authority needs to be able to raise monies, if the authority can not do that, then a city department could be considered to run the properties. He also inquired about a million-dollar donor who Ms. Guertin confirmed is still alive, and noted there are existing structures that are expected to be willed to the Authority. She verified that there are two museum boards including the Authority Board and the Friends of the Museum Board.

Mr. Hanley confirmed his existing budget of \$60,000 for building maintenance is not enough to maintain the museum's buildings. Mr. Perkins asked about the benefits of a non-profit status. Mr. Pinter noted that the Authority can apply for grants.

Mr. DiGilio noted that the importance of the museum is not being questioned, however, the business of the museum is the focus and a sustainable operating model is needed. He asked that a model be presented and reviewed.

**A motion was made by Councilman Rotello and seconded by Councilman Buzaid, to extend, to continue this committee subject to the Chair's call until we have additional information and can talk about it more. The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Buzaid noted that the Authority needs to be a permanent plan and asked about emergency funding until the plan is completed. Mr. Doyle explained that the museum should be able to stay afloat until May. Mr. DiGilio noted that emergency funds do not need to be allocated at this time. Mr. Rotello asked that a concrete proposal from the board be brought back to this committee with details of how they want the city to act.

**A motion was made by Councilman Rotello, and seconded by Councilman Buzaid, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Vinny DiGilio, Chair  
Emile Buzaid  
Paul Rotello