

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

April 5, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

Honorable Mayor, Dean Esposito, called the meeting to order at 7:40 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, Cavo, Eriquez, Knapp, Levy, DiGilio, Rotello, Visconti, Esposito, Halas, Esposito III, Fox, Masi, Palma, Henry, Britton, Perkins, Chianese, Cammisa and Molinaro.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Santos.

PRESENT: 19, ABSENT: 1, VACANCY: 1

ALSO PRESENT: Robert J. Yamin, Corporation Counsel; Les Pinter, Deputy Corporation Counsel; David St. Hilaire, Finance Director, and Elisa Etcheto, Legislative Assistant.

PUBLIC INPUT

Several residents addressed Item # 1 (Education Budget)

Resident, spoke on items #1, 6 and 7.

Resident, spoke on item #1.

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Jimmetta Samaha, Resident, Southern Blvd., spoke on item #18.

Resident, spoke on item #1.

Al Robinson, Resident, spoke on items #1 and 18.

Anne Riddle, Resident, 30 Washington Avenue, spoke on item #1.

Andrea Gartner, Resident, Deer Hill Avenue, spoke on item #18 and praised the new format/standard of the Public Hearing Reports.

BUDGET PRESENTATION:

Mayor Esposito thanked City staff for working hard during the COVID pandemic, and finance staff for putting together the City budget. The budget focuses on Public Safety, Public Health, Education, Taxes, and the COVID pandemic. The Budget priorities include: infrastructure & revitalization, investing in public safety, public health & education, the appropriation of ARPA funds and protecting the interests of the residents & tax payers.

Fiscal Year 2022- 2023 Budget total: \$277,000,500.000 (\$10,500,000 increase from the previous year)

Education Budget: \$141 Million. Plus; \$214,000 to Head Start, \$208,000 for Education Health & Welfare, BOE's annual costs of \$10,400,000, Alliance Grant Funds of \$22.3 Million, ARPA funds of \$36.3 Million and CARES ACT funds of \$4.9 Million.

Mill Rate: 28.22 (increase by 0.62 mills)

The average homeowner will receive a quarterly real estate tax bill with a \$40 increase. The City allocated \$32 million from the American Rescue Plan and the revenue loss due to COVID totaled \$13.1 million. The funds will be used to stabilize several programs and the budget details are available online for the public to view.

Budget Ad Hoc Committees:

General Government 1:

The Mayor appointed Councilman Knapp in the chair, along with Councilmen Halas, Buzaid, Perkins and Santos.

General Government 2:

The Mayor appointed Councilman Fox in the chair, along with Councilmen Henry, Palma, Santos and Britton.

Public Works:

The Mayor appointed Councilman Cavo in the chair, along with Councilmen J. Esposito III, Eriquez, Britton and Chianese.

Health & Human Services & Public Safety:

The Mayor appointed Councilman DiGilio in the chair, along with Councilmen M. Esposito, Masi, Rotello and Visconti.

Re-Announce the Education Budget Committee:

The Mayor appointed Councilman Levy in the chair, along with Councilmembers Fox, Cammisa, Molinaro and Visconti.

MINUTES - Minutes of the Council Meeting held March 1, 2022

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. The motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT CALENDAR

8. COMMUNICATION - Fair Rent Commission Appointments

Receive the Communication and approve the re-appointment of to the following individuals to the Fair Rent Commission, Mrs, Barbara Chianese (noted Scrivener's Error, Affiliation is Republican), Mr. Richard Jannelli and Mr. Philip Kallinikos with terms to expire on 4/15/2023. Ms. Susan Mazzuco, Mr. Kevin Placella and Ms. Louise McMahon with terms to expire on 4/15/2024. And approve the appointment of Mr. Greg Kallas to serve on the Fair Rent Commission with a term to expire on 4/15/2025.

12. COMMUNICATION - Request to Dispose of Surplus Vehicles & Equipment - Purchasing

Receive the Communication from Chick J. Volpe, Jr., Purchasing Agent, and approve the disposal of surplus vehicles and equipment as submitted.

16. RESOLUTION - Historic Documents Preservation Program Grant – Town Clerk

Receive the communication from David St. Hilaire, Director of Finance, and Adopt the Resolution authorizing Dean Esposito, Mayor of the City of Danbury or Jan Giegler, Town Clerk as his designee to apply for and accept funding from the Connecticut State Library.

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

1. ORDINANCE & RESOLUTION - An Ordinance Making Appropriations for the Fiscal year Beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023 and a Resolution Levying the Property Tax for the Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023

A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, to refer this to a public hearing. So ordered by Mayor Esposito.

2. ORDINANCE - An Ordinance Appropriating \$3,000,000 for Public Improvements in the 2022-2023 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 J. Esposito III, to refer the item to a public hearing followed by a Committee Of The Whole. So ordered by Mayor Esposito.

3. ORDINANCE - Sewer Rates as of July 1, 2022

A motion was made by Councilman M. Esposito, to move this to a public hearing and report back to Committee Of The Whole. So ordered by Mayor Esposito.

4. ORDINANCE - Water Rates as of July 1, 2022

A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, to move this to a public hearing and a Committee Of The Whole. So ordered by Mayor Esposito.

5. RESOLUTION - Downtown Special Services District Tax Levy

A motion was made by Councilman Cavo, to table this item until the May 3, 2022, City Council meeting. So ordered by Mayor Esposito.

6. RESOLUTION - Acceptance of funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Of 2021

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Knapp, to receive the communication and adopt the resolution authorizing Dean Esposito, Mayor of the City of Danbury, or his designee to take all actions necessary to effectuate the intent of the resolution; related to the City of Danbury expecting to receive a total of \$32,047,338, in American Plan Rescue Act 2021, ARPA Funds from the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund; and the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund as presented. The motion was superseded by a 2nd motion.

A motion was made by Councilman Chianese, to refer the item to an Ad Hoc consisting of the Committee Of The Whole. So Ordered by Mayor Esposito.

7. COMMUNICATION - Danbury Career Academy & Schools Bond Ordinance & Resolution

A motion was made by Councilman Digilio, and was seconded by Councilman Santos, to waive the reading of the reports that were included that started this, that would be the report of the Public Hearing, the report of the Committee Of The Whole and the Planning Report; as we all have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman Levy, and was seconded by Councilman Rotello, to receive and accept the reports of the Public Hearing, Committee Of The Whole and the Planning Commission as presented; and adopt the resolution and the ordinance entitled, An ordinance approving \$207,900,000; for the planning, design, acquisition, renovation, instruction, equipment, furnishings of the new Danbury Career Academy Secondary School. Various upgrades and improvements at Danbury High School, Hayestown Avenue Elementary School and King Street Primary School; and create and improve classroom space to accommodate district wide overcrowding; and authorize the issuance of \$207,900,000 in bonds of the City to meet set appropriation and pending the issuance of thereof the making of temporary borrowing for such purpose. Adopted by the Council on April 5, 2022, be submitted for approval or disapproval, at special City meeting to be called by the Mayor, pursuant to sec. 7-10a of the City Charter, on June 6, 2022, between the hours of 6 am and 8 pm eastern standard time; that the warning of said meeting state the question to be voted on as stated in the resolution on page 7-10. The motion carried unanimously as amended.

A motion was made by Councilman Rotello, and was seconded by Councilman Digilio, to make an amendment to the Resolution with a new Special Meeting date of Tuesday, June 7, 2022. The motion carried unanimously.

8. COMMUNICATION - Fair Rent Commission Appointments

**CONSENTED* - as received.

9. COMMUNICATION - Request to Opt-Out of State Mandated Allowance of Accessory Apartments

A motion was made by Councilman Eriquez, seconded by Councilman Palma, to receive the communication and recommendation of the Planning Director in conjunction with the Zoning Commission, to optout of the Mandated Accessory Apartments Public Act (21-29). Motion carried unanimously.

Sharon Calitro, Planning Director, explained to Councilman Perkins that the City opted out of the State Mandated parking requirements and amended the zoning regulations, and that the current recommendation is to opt-out of the new accessory apartment regulations.

10. COMMUNICATION - Request to Enter MOA with The Summit – Police Dept.

A motion was made by Councilman Henry, seconded by Councilman Cavo, to receive the communication and approve the memorandum of agreement between the SC Ridge Owner LLC, The Summit, 100 Reserve Road, Danbury, CT, in the City of Danbury; for office storage space, for the Office of Emergency Management; and a separate facility to be used as a Police Sub-Station at no cost to the City, for use of these premises. Motion carried unanimously.

Patrick Ridenhour, Police Chief, explained the City will be supplying the IT equipment to Councilman Rotello. The operation space will provide convenience for Police Officers working on the westside. He responded to Councilman Santos regarding the frequency of the use of the facility.

Mayor Esposito thanked The Summit for providing a service to support the safety of the residents and City of Danbury.

11. COMMUNICATION - Request to Enter MOU with The Amber Room Colonnade – Office Of Emergency Management

A motion was made by Councilman Cavo, seconded by Councilman Visconti, to receive the communication and adopt the MOU between the City of Danbury and The Amber Room Colonnade, to provide meals and distribution; and mass form in case of a disaster, crisis, or other designated emergency. Motion carried unanimously.

Matthew Cassavechia, Emergency Management Director, explained the cost comparison of the Amber Room Colonnade proposal to Councilman Fox. Councilman Rotello noted he favors the proposal. Mr. Cassavechia responded to Councilman Chianese regarding FEMA's (Federal Emergency Management Agency) role during an emergency.

Les Pinter, Deputy Corporation Counsel, explained the long term expectations of the MOU agreement to Councilman Chianese.

Mayor Esposito thanked The Amber Room Colonnade for supporting the community during the COVID pandemic.

12. COMMUNICATION - Request to Dispose of Surplus Vehicles & Equipment - Purchasing

**CONSENTED* - as received.

13. COMMUNICATION - Application for Extension of Sanitary Sewer Main – Miry Brook Rd.

A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, to refer this to the Planning Commission, the City Engineer and Corporation Counsel for reports. The motion carried unanimously.

14. COMMUNICATION - Certification of Funds – Corporation Counsel

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, to refer the item to an Executive Session at the conclusion of our regular business items this evening. So Ordered by Mayor Esposito.

15. RESOLUTION - Neighborhood Assistance Act

A motion was made by Councilman J. Esposito III, to refer item #15 to a Public Hearing followed by a Committee Of The Whole. So Ordered by Mayor Esposito.

16. RESOLUTION - Historic Documents Preservation Program Grant – Town Clerk

**CONSENTED* - as received.

17. REPORT & ORDINANCE - Senior Tax Freeze for Elderly Homeowners

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

A motion was made by Councilman Masi, and was seconded by Councilman Palma, to receive the report and adopt the ordinance as amended to reflect a date correction on page 17-5 in section 9, to the correct year of 2012. The motion carried unanimously.

18. AD HOC REPORT - City Constable Appointment

A motion was made by Councilman Digilio, and was seconded by Councilman Cavo, to waive the reading of the minutes of this Ad Hoc Report; as we all 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, and was seconded by Councilwoman Cammisa, to receive the correspondence from the Ad Hoc Committee Report and approve the appointment of Francis Kieras as Constable for the City of Danbury. I would also, would like to call a roll call vote for the motion. The motion passed on roll call vote. 18 YES, 2 NO (Britton & Molinaro), 1 Absent (Halas).

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

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

Patrick Ridenhour, Police Chief, explained that the data reporting has been rectified despite a continued slow down on the state's end to Councilman Perkins. Councilman Rotello requested that the data be provided to the Council on a monthly basis. Mr. Ridenhour responded to Councilman Chianese regarding the Police Departments efforts on combating illegal drug activity in the City.

Extend all Committees with following edits:

Sunset:

Open Space Oil Mill Road– July 2017 Item #5

Neighborhood Integrity Initiative – September 2017 – Item # 1

Disc Golf– July 2015 Item # 7

Property Transfer - 42 Virginia Avenue – February 2015 – Item # 2

Friends of Danbury Library License – December 2015 Item # 5

Prohibiting Dog Breeds from Public Parks– July 2015 Item # 5

Use of City Land – Old Mallory Hat Factory – October 2014 Item #4

Lease of City Land – 84 Hospital Avenue – November 2013 – Item #10

Sale of City Property – 13 Main Street – February 2012 Item # 8

Community Action Committee of Danbury – October 2012 Item #17

Re-Assigned:

Alcoholic Beverage Consumption/Possession in Public Places – Ordinance Amendment – March 2015 – Item # 3

The Mayor appointed Councilman DiGilio in the chair, along with Councilmen Masi and Rotello.

Regulation of Satellite Dish Devices - August 2016 – Item # 1

The Mayor appointed Councilman Henry in the chair, along with Councilmen M. Esposito and Visconti.

Littering on Public or Private Property – Ordinance Amendment - August 2016 – Item # 3

The Mayor appointed Councilman M. Esposito in the chair, along with Councilmen J. Esposito III and Chianese.

OPEB

The Mayor appointed Councilman Levy in the chair, along with Councilmen Visconti and DiGilio.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, and was seconded by Councilman Rotello, to go into Executive Session to discuss item #14, listed as "COMMUNICATION - Certification of Funds – Corporation Counsel".

Deputy Corporation Counsel Les Pinter identified the topics at hand that need to be mentioned for the record topics: Agenda Item #14 and Various Tax Appeal Cases. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting called back to order.

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, and was seconded by Councilman Rotello, to receive the communication regarding certification of funds from Corporation Counsel and approve the request certified by the Director of Finance to move the monies as specified into the litigation account. As well as approve Corporation Counsel's recommended action with regards to the Danbury Mall LLC, and MS portfolio cases and process. The motion passed. 18 Yes, 1 NO (Chianese), 1 Absent (Halas).

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, and was seconded by Councilman Levy to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

Copies of Agenda Items are available in the Legislative Assistant's Office

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Martinez
Recording Secretary

Attest,
Elisa Etcheto, Legislative Assistant