

(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).

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Regular meeting of the Public Works Committee was held on Thursday, March 12, 2020, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by the Chairman.

Present: Councilmember John P. Donegan
Councilmember Edward J. Brady
Councilmember Christopher G. Paplauskas, Vice-Chair
Councilmember Kenneth J. Hopkins, Chair

Absent: Councilmember Lammis J. Vargas

Also Present: Council Member Paul J. McAuley
Council Member Steven A. Stycos
Council Vice-President Michael W. Favicchio
Daniel Parrillo, Director of Administration
John Psilopoulos, Deputy Director of Administration
Kenneth Mason, Director of Public Works
John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor
Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees
Heather Finger, Stenographer

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Councilmember Brady, seconded by Councilmember Donegan, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE:

PUBLIC HEARING:

Resident of 1900 Broad St., appeared to speak regarding the trash receptacle at Commercial St. Playground and stated that it is poorly sighted and the Edgewood Community Garden Club would like to have it moved.

Gail Harvey, 505 Meshanticut Valley Parkway, appeared to speak regarding Northeast Tree and stated that the owner, Mr. Sepe and his son have contributed to every elected official from Cranston from the Mayor, City Council, to Rhode State House and Senate.

James Walsh appeared to speak regarding Northeast Tree and stated that his property abuts Northeast Tree. The grinding going on there shakes the ground and shakes his house. Mr. Sepe is a friend of his, who bragged to him that he had laws passed to protect his business. The neighbors do not want to put him out of business. He should move. He should not be in a residential neighborhood.

Richard Reyes appeared to speak regarding Northeast Tree and stated that he hold the City Council accountable. He is a Cranston resident and pays taxes to Cranston and it is a Cranston problem and not just residents' problem. What is going on at this business is unhealthy and stressful for him and it is unacceptable.

Margaret Donnelly, 8 Harvard St., appeared to speak regarding Northeast Tree and asked if the zoning issue has been determined because at the last meeting, someone from the City was to go to the site and research on the zoning. She stated that the grinding is very loud and can be heard from the other side of Pontiac Ave. and it is distressing and discerning. The residents are asking the City to protect their interest.

OLD BUSINESS:

- ***Northeast Tree (Councilmember Stycos). Continued 1/16/2020 & 2/18/2020 for report from Law Dept.***

Councilmember Stycos stated that he agrees that this is a Cranston problem.

Director Parrillo stated that on February 28th, the Tax Assessor, Deputy Assessor Cole and Building Official Rodio went to the property and reviewed the parameters of the operation of the property. He stated that the Tax Assessor believes a portion of the property, approximately five lots, should be re-assessed as Residential Mix-Use and he will work with Vision Appraisal to make those changes, but that won't take effect until 2021 as far as financials. He does believe we cannot go back go prior years. Director Parrillo also stated that Building Official Rodio looked at original Zoning Certificate from 2005 and determined that two lots that are being used were legal non-conforming use. Building Official Rodio will be sending the business owner a letter tomorrow stating that those two lots cannot be used as they are used until he applies for a Variance to the Zoning Board of Review.

Solicitor stated that as to the assessments of the lots, in general, the Statute of Limitations is ten years, but under what circumstances, he would have to check with the Tax Assessor.

Councilmember Stycos questioned why the business owner would have to file for a Variance. He questioned whether that would be considered a Zone Change if the property owner is changing from Residential to Commercial for the two lots. Solicitor stated, yes, but he would have to look into this further.

Councilmember Stycos indicated that the Zoning Certificate Director Parrillo indicated to is false because it states that it is an agricultural operation, which it is not. That type of business is not covered under the Freedom of Farm Act. He thinks the 2005 Zoning Certificate is invalid. Director Parrillo stated that he will have the Solicitor look at it.

Councilmember Stycos stated that at the last meeting, he questioned vehicles being parked on residential property. He asked if the City has looked at that. Director Parrillo stated that that is part of the notice Building Official Rodio will be sending out because those vehicles are parked on one of those two lots that he can't have. Councilmember Stycos asked that when the letter goes out to Mr. Sepe, Administration send a copy to the Committee.

Councilmember Hopkins addressed the remarks made by one of the speakers that the City Council is not doing anything to help the residents. That is not true. He, Councilmember Stycos and Councilmember McAuley have worked on this issue since they have been on the City Council and have visited the area and met with residents. He has continued to argue about this issue in particular the large piles and danger and also the smell of fumes from the mulch. He is concerned about the health risk and quality of life of this neighborhood. As to the remark of campaign contributions, it is part of the democratic process. Some of the members sitting here this evening have not received one cent from the owner of this business. He also stated that he will support 100% anything that we can do to fix this problem.

- ***Peveiril St. speeding (Councilmember Brady). Continued 1/16/2020 & 2/18/2020 for update from Administration.***

Director Parrillo stated that the City is looking to move forward with the bump-outs. Public Works Director Mason has put some money aside and should start sometime in the next Fiscal Year.

Councilmember Hopkins asked that the Administration continue to look into the study of three dimensional sidewalks. He asked if anything has been looked at and also in the towns of Massachusetts that have them.

Director Mason stated that the City has conversed with the Town of Medford and have checked with National Transportation Safety Board and they do not recommend this because of potential vehicles suddenly stopping and not slowing down. As of now, there are no plans for this. Councilmember Hopkins asked that the Administration pursue to get an answer of why the Town of Medford was allowed to install the three dimensional sidewalks and is it working or not.

Councilmember Brady asked that this item be removed from the agenda.

Petition for Abandonment of Golini Street. Petition filed by Peter Franco. Cont. 2/218/2020 for appraisal from applicant.

Director Parrillo stated that appraisal has been received and the Administration has no problem moving this forward, but the petitioner is not present this evening. He suggested holding off on this for the opportunity to discuss this further with the petitioner.

On motion by Council Vice-President Favicchio, seconded by Councilmember Paplauskas, it was voted to continue this item to the next month's meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

Trash receptacle at Commercial St. Playground. (Councilmember Hopkins)

Director Mason stated that the City will be more than happy to relocate the receptacle. He asked that the resident contact him to discuss this.

Request from National Grid and Verizon for joint pole location at Batcheller Ave.

On motion by Councilmember Paplauskas, seconded by Councilmember Hopkins, it was voted to approve this request. Motion passed unanimously.

Request from National Grid and Verizon for joint pole location at Reservoir Ave.

On motion by Councilmember Brady, seconded by Councilmember Paplauskas, it was voted to approve this request. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees