

(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 FINANCE COMMITTEE

Special meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, September 25, 2023 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 P.M. by the Chair.

Present Councilwoman Aniece Germain
 Councilman Robert J. Ferri
 Councilman Richard D. Campopiano
 Councilman Christopher G. Paplauskas (appeared at 5:42 p.m.)
 Council Vice-President Lammiss J. Vargas, Vice-Chair
 Councilman John P. Donegan, Chair
 Council President Jessica M. Marino

Also Present: Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli
 Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff
 John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor
 Steven Angell, City Council Legal Counsel
 David Dimaio, City Council Budget Analyst
 Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

I. PUBLIC HEARINGS* and/or NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

A. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearings held under “New Matters Before the Committee”.

B. NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

- *Learn365 Grant Money*
- *Reports that the Mayor is planning to propose the City purchase the Park Theatre*
- *Community learning center grant*
- *RI municipal education compact*

Chair stated that this special meeting was called this evening after reports in the paper regarding a potential purchase of the Park Theatre through grant funding from the State and this is what has brought forth the meeting this evening. Since then, it has been indicated publicly by the Administration that that plan is not moving forward and the aim this evening is to have a conversation about what the grant funding should be used for if the City accepted it and appropriate location for that moving forward.

Chair asked CEO of CCAP, Joanne McGunagle, who had asked to speak, address the Committee followed by Mr. Ed Brady and then the public will be allowed to speak.

Joanne McGunagle, President and CEO of Cranston Community Action, appeared to speak and stated that recently a needs assessment was conducted by the Health Equity Zone that we have in the City and the results revealed a surprising amount of isolation among our residents. When asked what the major issues in Cranston were, the summation was an overwhelming lack of community, a lack of resources and a lack of access to those resources, so CCAP would like to provide access. In a new Community Center, they would like to create training programs for out of School youths and adults. These would include Hospitality, Culinary, Teacher Assistant, IT Tech, Medical Translation, Dental Assistant and Medical Assistant. Once completed, they will be helped in job placement. They would also like to expand their GED Program and also create a Triage Center for all CCCAP services. They would also create a site for Health and Wellness Screening. Training and funding would be from DHS as well as Workforce Investment Act Funds. Health funding would come from the various grants that support their four federally qualified centers. For over income residents, there would be a minimal fee. This is all for 2026, so it does give us time to plan, to secure funding and to find a space that makes sense for all this. In her opinion, Johnston was a little short-sighted to turn down those funds because there are agencies there that could provide these very very needed services in that area.

Ed Brady appeared to speak and stated that he is a former colleague who resigned approximately two years ago on a relentless pursuit to save the building across the street. He met with the Ethics Commission as a reminder and they told him that the only path to saving the Park Theatre was resigning. At the time, he did not necessarily agree with their assessment because he thought he still would be able to serve his City and buy a business and try to revive a theatre and the reality is they made the right decision. Theatres across the Country are struggling and ticket buyers are down and grant funding is not available, banks are not lending. He cannot think of a better site that everyone should consider as a future community through a \$6.5 million of federal grant funding that won't cost local City or State taxpayer dollars that gives us the best opportunity that this grant would be achieved. Education, jobs, mental health, all pillars that we know need to be continued to be invested in. He was not walking away. He read so many things in the press about himself that were rumors. He read about a quarter tax bill that was behind and then all of a sudden, articles began to appear about how we should do housing redevelopments next door and the doors were already shut. Producers and promoters started running away from the Park Theatre. It basically killed his business overnight. Ten events just departed from speculations of privately leaked conversations. The Learn 365 grant is a good grant. He pleaded with the Committee and the City council to give this opportunity a chance.

Superintendent Jeannine Nota-Masse appeared to speak and stated that she has been part of the discussion about a Community Center since the beginning and late August with Ms. McGunagle. She stated that they would partner with the City of course in any kind of Community Center because it would not only benefit our students but also benefit their families. They have been asked to assess the Arlington School as well as part of the initial discussion. They are building a new Gladstone Elementary School, which will be ready in September of 2025, therefore, the Arlington School would be open and available. She assured the City Council that if they are looking at the Arlington School, they will work with the City Council on that and any other site that may be considered. She was asked to speak on when the Arlington School would be available and that would be in June or July of 2025 once Gladstone is ready.

Pastor Allan Pangburn of Praise Tabernacle Church, appeared to speak and stated that if you want to know if Ed Brady is a man who can be entrusted to oversee a Community Center in our City, come ask the volunteers from our food trucks who serve the homeless population seven days a week. They will tell you that Ed Brady, his support for counseling and resources are paramount in enabling them to do what they do. Come ask those struggling with drug addiction, depression and mental health getting off our buses having just enjoyed a day of food, laughter and community in one of our quarterly dinners organized and put on by Ed and his amazing team. Their full bellies speak of his commitment to our community. Their new hair cuts from local barbers, salons speak to his commitment to our community. Come ask the kids playing basketball in one of the local parks like Beachmont. The flowers and trees planted by volunteers and organizations who gather together in this labor of love speak of his commitment to our community. The Park Theatre is a piece of property that his church has always eyed and at one time even sought to purchase because of its strategic location on a central crossroad in our City. He believes Ed Brad pursuing this Learn 365 grant and passing this idea to the City is exactly what this location needs and exactly what this City needs. A new and powerful beacon of home for our community in the heart of the City. A project that will enable Ed and his team to do what they do best and love most, helping people. Ed Brady is not just a father, husband, son, friend, businessman, he prays for the City, he layed down his life for the City, his legacy even as his position as former Council Member to serve his City. His tireless efforts point and witness to his commitment to people over politics. The best you can do for the City is to continue to believe in Ed Brady.

Jim Birchfield appeared to speak and stated that he has known Ed Brady since he was a little boy. He has never worked with anyone who has been more dedicated to Cranston and the building across the street than Ed Brady. He would support Ed Brady that that building would benefit the City of Cranston. He thinks that when you put good knowledge together you can come up with god solutions. He hopes everyone comes up with good solutions and not let all that work and money at the Park Theatre go down the drain.

Colleen Mullholland appeared to speak and stated that there are so many memories going back to the Park Theatre as being a place where everyone could walk to with their friends and go to the theatre and hang out. There aren't too many places anymore where people can gather as a community. When she heard about the grant money available and about the availability of the Park Theatre being a possibility, she was thrilled. She asked that everyone write down all the advantages and all the disadvantages and she thinks that you are going to find there are far more advantages then disadvantages.

Justin Erickson, 20 Primrose Drive., appeared to speak and stated that he represents Cranston CARES as President. He stated that it is not a red or blue thing or red and green thing, it is a Cranston thing and a community thing. People do not want to see a gas station or condo, they want to see a community building with community people doing community things.

Pat Cruz appeared to speak and stated that the building itself and the historic value itself, there are so many stories that that building has and it would be a shame to see it turned into whatever that may be. It is such a perfect spot in the center of a beautiful City to put something that is needed by so many. Why not take advantage of that property and bring something in that everyone else would be in awe and say 'look what goes on here in Cranston'. We have wonderful community members, community members who would lay down for the City like Ed Brady. There is not another person that she would trust to help pull that together and pull a team together to make that work.

Nick Oletto appeared to speak and stated that as a professional in the real estate business, that building, the highest and best use is what Ed is proposing. Not only is it going to contribute to the community, it is going to do far greater things. Ed is the guy to see that all the way through. The City has an obligation to step forth and help out.

Fallon Davis, 20 Laure St., Johnston, appeared to speak regarding her experience working at the Park Theatre since Ed Brady took over the building two years ago. Aside from the Theatre, they also run the events, which is where her role is and they have hosted countless reunions for both Cranston High School East and Cranston High School West and they have hosted sports banquets, children's movies and the most rewarding experience for her was when people would leave the building saying 'thank you guy for putting the effort into saving this'. All the feedback and thank yous they have received for keeping the building alive, she thinks that that is enough for everyone to consider this grant.

Martina Javid, 1221 Reservoir Ave., appeared to speak and stated that Ed Brady is not just a successful business person, he is a tremendously caring individual who consistently demonstrates his dedication to the community and the welfare of his residence. She met Ed through many networking events and she can state the support for organizations like Mae Organization for the Homeless, which she founded in 2008, and organizations like CCAP and so many others, is really a testament to his compassion and his commitment to improving not just the lives of many but the City that he loves. The Park Theatre is an iconic landmark in Cranston. She cannot see how the residence there would want to tear it down and make it anything else other than an arts community and a community where you can gather so many under one roof to take advantage of learning programs.

Henry Palazzo, Natick Ave., appeared to speak and stated that he has known Ed Brady since they were in their teens early 20s and from the second he met him he realized what an incredible person he was. How devoted he was to his fellow citizens, his friends, pretty much everyone. Ed Brady should not be penalized because he happens to know people who are part of the City Council or part of any decision making process. The reality is this grant money is not something that Cranston already has. This is something that Mr. Brady sought out and his idea is something that was favorable throughout the State agency who is giving it out.

We can't look at it as how do we want to spend this money. This is not our money already. We need to really make sure that if we are going to apply for this grant, it is going to be something that we are realistically going to get. Also, we need to look at what the negative impact is of having this project.

Nicole Ramirez, owner of donut shop in Tiverton, appeared to speak and stated that she met Ed Brady approximately one year ago and he gave her a business opportunity to open a popup storefront and use the Park Café for a month which turned into three months and really gave her exposure for her business and can't thank him enough for that. She has been in the building many times and fell in love with the building. If Cranston is looking for a Community Center that is available for education and mental health, why wouldn't you choose the Park Theatre? It is available and it is in the middle of Cranston and she thinks it would be the best decision for Cranston.

Ann O'Grady, Executive Director of RI Youth Theatre, appeared to speak and stated that she operates after school programs and summer programs across the State in theatre. The Park Theatre is already a Community Center. She has seen the difference for kids walking in a theatre versus walking in a school. Put a poll out to the kids of where they want it. The Park Theatre becoming a Community Center would be dynamite with the kids.

Taylor Brady appeared to speak and stated that her husband does everything he does for the community because he wants to and he genuinely cares about this community. She truly believes that the Park Theatre is a great location for this grant and asked that everyone consider it.

Chair asked Administration to provide background information regarding the grant procedures moving forward, timeline and any requirements that we would have to meet.

Director Moretti stated that in terms of the whole grant, it is coming together very quickly. The Mayor did sign-on to the Governor's Learn 365 Compact Initiative, which enable the City the opportunity of two grants at this point. One is a \$50,000 grant for encouragement driving student enrollment. Secondly, assisting students that they go on to secondary education and post-secondary education in helping them with their FASA applications. Those programs will be developed, he believes, sometimes next fall. The larger grant opportunity, should we wish to go forward with it, started out at approximately \$6 million and whatever communities decide not to take advantage of the grant, the money gets redistributed to the remaining communities and the numbers go up. Three weeks ago, the amount was approximately \$6 million and today, the number is \$6,970,791. We have applied for the \$50,000 grant and now we also have submitted the Phase I application for this now \$6.9 million, which is a facility grant. Approximately two weeks ago, the deadline was September 29th and since then, they have extended the deadline for the application for Phase II to October 10th. If we are to proceed, regardless of facility, it needs to be expedited soon. The grant is provided through the US Department of Treasury and administered through the State of Rhode Island Pandemic Recovery Office and if the City wishes to go forward, a Community Center would need to be established to all people, all races, ages, all demographics to be available to the public for free. Programming must encompass educational component, a health monitoring component and a job development component. In terms of a facility, in order to receive the money, it would have to be completed by October 31, 2026 with programming up and running by no later than December 31, 2026.

Chair stated that the potential location, if all the \$6.9 million of the funds, if they were not necessary for the acquisition or rehab of property “A”, could any remaining funds be allocated towards appropriate programming at other locations, such as libraries, CCAP, or school, properties that met the criteria of the grant? Director Moretti stated, no, no programming funds are available. It is fundamentally for bricks and mortar and furniture and fixtures for a facility. He believes it would have to be for one facility.

Council Vice-President Vargas stated that she learned about this ongoing story that has been taking place about the Park Theatre trying to solicit the grant with the blessing of the Administration through the press. She knew about the grant, but she did not know Park Theatre was seeking this grant at all. Somehow the press found out about the fact that Mr. Brady wanted to move forward and have the blessing of the Administration and possibly of the Council. she received a few emails from constituents in the City of Cranston telling her that it was a bad idea because of the Projo article. Once she started receiving these emails she went on the Projo website, unfortunately, you have to pay to read some of their articles so she managed to get it another way. She heard and read comments about some of the folks saying that they thank the Administration by not going forward with this. As a Ward 1 Council Member, whether she gets re-elected or not, she wants to make sure that she is very local in what she says. The fact that she did not know all the full details and she is getting asked questions as to why she is in favor or in support, she could not give a response. She was not present in any of the meetings, if there were any, with the Administration and whoever else was involved in that room. So, she can't provide or share her opinions without doing her due diligence and ask questions. She has questions she would like to ask because one of the things she heard was that the grant was actually going to be using ARPA money and now she is hearing that that is not the case. Director Moretti stated that it is not part of the ARPA money that everyone is familiar with, however, if the acquisition of any property from the City would be with the approval of the City Council. Council Vice-President Vargas stated that in order for Mr. Brady to move forward with the grant application, she asked if it would need full authority of the City Council. Director Moretti stated that City Council approval is necessary to acquire any facility. Council Vice-President Vargas stated to Director Moretti that the Community Center would be free. She asked, if the City was to be awarded the grant and the Council and Administration seeked this Community Center space, how would this be sustainable if it is free to the public? Director Moretti stated that the facility and furnishings would come with this grant. The programming and any overhead costs would not be part of this grant.

Councilwoman Renzulli indicated that this item is also listed on the Council docket for later this evening and public can speak at that time also.

Director Moretti stated that he would like to address the facts and timeline. The Mayor never did propose purchasing the Park Theatre facility even at zero cost to the taxpayers rather he was tasked by several key community stakeholders to perform limited due diligence to determine if the Park Theatre building should be considered as a viable site for a possible Community Centre under the guidelines of Governor McKee's Learn 365 Initiative. On June 14, 2023, the Mayor signed the 365 Compact with the Governor at City Hall. On August 7, 2023, the Administration received an email notification of the availability of the facility grant from the Governor's PRO Officer. On August 10th, the Administration submitted a one page online

application State 1 Municipal Grant application. On August 17th, the Mayor and members of the Administration met with key people at the Pandemic Recovery Office in City Hall to seek information about this grant opportunity. On August 28th, member of the Administration sat in a grant information zoom session sponsored by PRO to all municipalities. On August 28th, the Mayor and members of the Administration met with the President CEO of CCAP to determine if CCAP had an interest and had the capabilities for sponsoring programming in a Community Center if it came about. On that same day, he came before the City Council to inform them of these two grants. At the time it was \$50000 for the FASA and in school attendance grant and then at the time, it was just over \$6 million for what we are speaking about now in terms of a facility for education, jobs and health monitoring. At that point, it was stated that public input was desired and actually required for the programming aspect in order to qualify. The Mayor is also soliciting key stakeholders including the City Council and he made that known at the time. He also stated at the time that September 29th was the deadline for the Phase II submission, which obviously as he mentioned earlier, was extended to October 10th. On October 29th, the Mayor, himself, and other Administration personnel met with the Superintendent of Schools and the President and CEO of CCAP to further discuss possible programming. Critical meeting was on August 28th. The Mayor and members of the Administration met with the Council President, who was available via telephone, the Council Minority Leader, School Superintendent, School Committee Chair and President CEO of CCAP. What came out of that, as participants and leaders of both parties on the City Council, these leaders had the opportunity to share the contents of that discussion with their respective caucuses. He realizes there are concerns that the Mayor did not share that information, but that was the idea of having senior members of both parties there to be able to spread the word as to what was going on. The Mayor apprised all attendees of the grant opportunities and communications to date. The consensus of this, and there was no dissent, was support for CCAP to lead programming and administration. At that time, relative to sites, the Mayor offered four possible sites for a Community Center and solicited other input. No other viable alternatives were offered at that time. One was the Park Theatre as possibility with an opportunity as a revenue generator to offset loss taxes and overhead operational costs. Another possible site was Arlington School when it would be decommissioned expected in June or July of 2025 as stated by the Superintendent earlier. Under consideration there was a concern given that timing, can it be executed, can it be renovated if it can be renovated by October of 2026 realizing that if we are not up and running by October 31, 2026 and we invested any money, we are at risk of losing all that money if we are not operating at that time. In speaking with the Facilities Director for the Schools, he has concerns for the structure of the facility in that the roof is not in good shape and it probably requires roof repairs, HVA system is in bad shape and also the insulation factors are poor in that building, so he is not sure if renovating is an alternative or possibly might be less expensive to demolish the building. Two other thoughts that came up is a City-owned land in Knightsville to build and another would be there was a parcel of land available in Knightsville if you want to purchase it and build. Basically, without any dissent, the Mayor was tasked by this group to perform limited due diligence regarding the Park Theatre building as to (a) would it be suitable to accommodate a Community Center and (b) what would be the estimated cost of required improvements. The concept with the Park is we would have the grant money upfront. If the City were to take it over, we would obviously lose tax revenue, but a thought for revenue generator would be either

through form of rent or ticket sales to help pay for loss of taxes, help pay for repair and maintenance of the facility and staffing. At no time did the Mayor nor anyone else on the steering committee recommend the Park Theatre for facility purchase. It was just looked at as a possibility. Obviously, things got blown out of proportion once that diligence hit the press and people got the misconception about what was going on, but in no means was this behind closed doors. The Mayor continues discussion with key stakeholders as we move forward to determining the best course of action with these generous funds.

Chair stated that since the initial reporting, the Mayor has stated that the Park Theatre would not be an option moving forward. He questioned what brought the Mayor and Administration to that conclusion. Director Moretti stated that fundamentally, it was the feedback in the media, from Council Members was quite strong opposing this and given that timeframe and what needed to be done, he does not want to fight a battle that was not going to be able to tackle it. Also, there was a study done by contractor, as requested by the steering committee, and it came up with an estimate of \$3.2 million for improvements to put in place in mint condition so the numbers may be able to work, might not be able to work given the cost of acquisition and improvement remain to be seen. If the feedback from the public and Council is that they want it, he will proceed.

Council President Marino stated that the only item n the Council docket for later this evening is Learn 365 grant money, it is not Community Learning Center grant or the RI Municipal Education Compact. She deferred to legal on that to avoid an Open Meetings violation. Also, this specific grant money is limited to \$50,000, from her understanding. The \$6.1 million plus is the Community Learning Center grant money earmark. Attorney Angell stated that that is correct. The Council agenda addresses the Learn 365 as an agenda item. Regarding the Community Learning Center grant, the Council Vice-President raised an issue and he asked to be allowed to speak regarding that. The Community Learning Center grant money is in fact part of the ARPA fund, but it is a special allocation given to the Governor's Office. The Governor has made the allocation of those grant proceeds so we are talking about a grant of ARPA money to a Community Learning Center grant program that is applied for and essentially given by the Governor's Office. There is no solicitation of a grant. It is a grant of money if you choose to partake. There are communities in Rhode Island who chose to refuse participation in the grant program. Those funds went back into the Governor's pool of money to be redistributed proportionally among the other cities and towns that chose to partake in those grant funds. There are particular earmarks with respect to these funds and he knows Mr. DiMaio had looked into the particulars of that and has had some discussion with Executive level folks at the State. When he states earmarks, the money must be used for particular purposes. It is a brick and mortar grant and whatever programming resides in the area where these funds are expended, that programming must remain in effect continuously for a period of time. If it is not, then the State can come in and ask for their money back. As to the acquisition of the property, the City does not yet own it, that is a Council matter. The Council, by Charter and Code, would have to vote to acquire any property for expenditure of these grant proceeds.

Council President Marino stated that the Mayor invited herself, Councilwoman Renzulli and other members, such as Superintendent of Schools, CCAP, Tax Assessor and other people within the Administration, to a meeting on August 28th. At that time, the Administration revealed for the first time this \$6.1 million going to Cranston and threw out a few proposals that they were thinking of, one being the Park Theatre, one being Arlington School. She herself pitched the idea of potentially the libraries, but that was dismissed. Mr. DiMaio will speak about his conversations and research that he did with respect to the Pandemic Resource Office with respect to these funds. The Administration at that time knew that they had to do a lot more before there would be anything substantive to come forward. They would have to give exact deadline, which they did not have at the time of the meeting, formulate how they were going to do that and once they had a plan A and plan B, then we would be having Council sessions to put forth what exactly the Administration was proposing we would do potentially with those funds. There has been a lot of discussion about purchase, but what has not been discussed is we can renovate an existing property and does not have to be a purchase.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked what the current revenue is that is coming in.

Chair asked Mr. DiMaio to speak.

Mr. DiMaio stated that he reached out to Paul Dion, Director of the Pandemic Recovery Office so he could be more knowledgeable about the plan when reporting back to the Council. There are three options to allocate the money. It is actually buy land and building, purchasing an existing established building within the City and remodel or if the City has a capital asset on their roll, they can remodel the capital asset and use that. A few points that came up were there was concern that any project that gets done has to be completed and paid for by 12/31/2026. Concern is to make sure that whatever project gets submitted, the attainable goal is because the consequence is even if the project is 99% complete, if it does not have the programs in place and it is not complete, you have to refund the full balance and not just the 1% that is not complete. Along with the requirement is the programs have to be served for five years. If they are not served for five years and does not pass requirement, the money has to be refunded. There is also one other item and that is that asset has to be maintained as a City asset from anywhere depending on whether it is remodeled, whether it is improvements or a purchase, from 15-30 years. It is not an asset that can be rolled out. Other consideration is that the City is going to have the expenditures of that asset for no less than 15 years and no more than 30 years. Other thing that they had mentioned is because of the deadline, they want the goal to be specific and concise, but they did say that you could submit more than one plan, but if you submit more than one plan and they get funded, the plans all have to be completed by 12/31.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked what the revenue is that is coming in and what sites the Mayor is considering. Mr. DiMaio stated that only revenue to be attributed to what the Director stated that the tax value of the land that they said was in Cranston, that is on the tax roll. The only other revenue would be the tax revenue from the Park Theatre. Basically, any asset that is currently on the tax roll would be used for this grant for the only revenue that is coming in currently from that asset.

Council Vice-President Vargas stated that there is a survey that went out today from the Administration and she asked if that survey had to do with this particular matter. Director Moretti stated that the survey was initially developed by CCAP. They gave a proposal and submitted it to the Mayor's Office. The Mayor's Office tweaked it a little bit and then sent that draft out to each of the people that were in that steering committee to give them the opportunity to review it. It was happening very quickly because of the October 10th deadline. He apologized in haste of having to do what they are doing, but if they do not do it, then all bets are off if they do not ask for public input. Every diligent honest attempt transparent welcoming approach has been executed.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked what the next step would be after this evening and when does this have to be decided. Council President Marino stated that to make sure it is abundantly clear, despite the Mayor's intention, herself as the Council President, as a Democrat to go back to the caucus of five, she cannot do that legally. The only way for us to discuss it would be in a meeting and she takes that very seriously and she specifically stated in that thinking tank that the Council, as Council President, she would be open to having whatever meetings we need to have as a Council including special sessions if that was required because of the tight deadline and she still commits to doing that,, but the Administration needs to give us the pertinent information and assess it from there.

Director Moretti stated that the steering committee will be recommending on Wednesday so whatever input anyone has, the Mayor would be more than happy to do whatever you would like to do.

Councilman Papluskas thanked everyone in the audience for attending this meeting. He also thanked Director Moretti for timeline and facts he gave. He does not have a lot of thoughts on this other than the fact that if we are going to consider the Park Theatre, he thinks the location is second to none just for the ability of the students of Cranston East to have that for use and City Hall to possibly use as like an annex in a way. Having CCAP and Cranston Public School Department represented here by their heads, that is great and help us as a Council. they never steered us wrong in the past, but he does think that we should try to figure this out. We really should probably focus on one location. He personally does not like the idea of two locations. His only question he would like brought back to the steering committee or to look at in the future is to look at the ongoing overhead. That is what he thinks about is maintenance, utilities and staffing going forward, but the health portion, the job portion, the education portion, he thinks is really important and is glad that was discussed this evening.

Councilman Ferri stated that he will agree to any plan that shows us the additional costs involved with whatever we decide to do. Until we know what we are going to do and how much it is going to cost, he does not think we should be considering any capital expenditures.

Councilman Campopiano stated that he knows Ed Brady and considers him a friend and his biggest flaw is probably his heart is too big, but he thinks we are losing focus. This has nothing to do with Ed Brady. This has everything to do with the community and what is good for the people of Cranston, what is good for the kids of Cranston. It is something supported by CCAP and he thinks it is supported by the Schools and as a businessman, he sees this strictly as a business decision. We have an opportunity to acquire property at what is a reasonable cost.

Also, it is money that is coming from the federal government and it is a once in a lifetime opportunity. He would like to hear more about the finances and if it works out, he would be in support of it.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked Mr. DiMaio where he found the 15-20 years about this asset because the information she has from the Pandemic Recovery Office states ‘program support under the US Treasury Guidance needs to demonstrate ability to provide services that jointly and directly enable education, work and health monitoring for at least five years post construction or renovation’. Mr. DiMaio stated that the five-year program is the grant and that is the commitment at a minimum for five years. If you decide after the five years and all your requirements are met, you can stop the programs and the asset that you purchased or you remodeled, but you cannot liquidate that asset. That asset can be used for anything else the City wants to use it for. Before you can liquidate that asset, it has to come in between 15-30 years service with the city of Cranston.

Director Moretti concurred with Mr. Dimaio and stated that the asset can be sued by the City, but it has to be open to the public.

Councilwoman Renzulli stated that she knows Ed Brady as everyone else here. He has donated money to her campaign as well as John’s, Robert’s, Chris’s and Richard and she used to work at the Thirsty Beaver approximately seven years ago. As she received an email stating that maybe she should not be allowed to talk about this, but ethically she has checked that and it is fine for her to participate in this discussion and it is fine for her to vote on this if this goes forward and she is pretty sure that whoever wrote that email can’t find them on the voter rolls or anywhere else other than a deceased person so this seems to her that what is unfortunate here is she feels like sometimes the Mayor’s Office and the City Council have good ideas and they die because this came out in the press in a negative light by the City Council members who only one of them had any idea about this project. No one else had presented anything other than herself until tonight. She thinks this sets a really bad precedent to put out into the social media universe and into the newspapers misinformation. We can’t say that we want to be open and transparent and listen to the people if we kill ideas before they even have been presented to all of us. That is not fair, that is not why we were elected. We were elected to responsibly consider things and put them forward or approve them or not approve them for the City of Cranston. She was recently embarrassed as members of this Council came out to the press against this 100% and stating that they had hundreds of emails against it. She would like to see those hundreds of emails because she did not receive them. Maybe someone should make them part of the record. We really need to consider things going forward. This is an asset of the City, of the people and has been here for 99 years. How do we know that in one year it could not be designated as a historical property. Maybe we should look into that. She would like this to be brought up for reconsideration with every other building that anyone has a good idea for, but good ideas should not go to die with our City government.

Councilwoman Germain stated that she is really disappointed because as Ward Council Member, that Park Theatre is located, she was at least expected to be at the table at the time of the preliminary conversation. As the person representing that Ward, she should have at least been allowed to be at the table. She also learned about it in the press. She feels embarrassed. Some of her constituents call her and she did not know what to say because she has no information whatsoever. We have lack of leadership in our City. Why did the Mayor just flip flop? One press release stated something and another stated something different. Is there a concrete plan or a proposal? We should all sit down in the next few days and find out what we can do because she does not want to see the Park Theatre come down because Ed Brady is owner, because he was a former Council Member or because he was friends with someone. She does not want to see that because this is for the community. That is her position. Also, it is close and accessible and what she heard from CCAP, they can utilize it very well. One thing she knows is Park Theatre should be saved. If there is money that can help a small business recuperate, she does not care if it is a friend or not. If they go through the proper process and are eligible, they should be able to do it. We need to get together to get things done as grown up people. This is what we can do as a Council and as a City. We should have a report and a meeting. Let's start doing things for the good of the people.

Chair stated that he called this meeting knowing that we have a very tight deadline to move forward. The opportunity to receive a grant, at the time \$6.1 million and now \$6.97 million, is certainly something that the City should take seriously and continue to look into. He has made his opinion on the matter clear and made it privately to Mr. Brady and the Mayor well before any public comments. He personally feels that utilizing the \$6.9 million, whether it is coming from the Federal government or State government or City government, he thinks that we get a better bang for our buck by rehabilitating existing city property. He welcomes further financial information to make a sound decision for the City moving forward.

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Paplauskas, it was voted to accept Mr. Brady's email to the Committee into the record. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees