

SPECIAL MEETING – CITY COUNCIL

-JANUARY 31, 2003-

The Special Emergency meeting of the Cranston City Council held on Tuesday, JANUARY 28, 2003 in the Cranston High School East Auditorium, 899 Park Ave., Cranston, Rhode Island was recessed to Wednesday, January 29, 2002.

The meeting for January 29, 2003 was cancelled. See attached notice.

The January 28, 2003 and January 29, 2003 Special Emergency Meeting meetings were reconvened in order to formally adjourn.

On motion by Councilwoman O’Hara, seconded by Councilman Fung, it was voted to adjourn the meeting of January 29, 2003. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

Also Present: Mayor Stephen P. Laffey; Paul Grimes, Director of Administration; Robin Muksian-Schutt, Deputy Director of Administration; Jametta Alston, City Solicitor; Jerome Baron, Director of Finance; Carlo DelBonis, Tax Assessor; Karen Grande, City’s Bond Counsel from Tillinghast.

The meeting was called to order at 6:27 P.M.

Roll Call was taken and the following members were present: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

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Council President Pastore stated that a vote will be taken on Amendment #1, 2 and 3. We will hold on vote on main motion until copies are distributed to the audience.

Council President Pastore stated that penalty for late payment will only be on the supplemental tax.

“RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ASSESSMENT OF VALUATIONS AND LEVY OF TAXES” was read into the record by the City Clerk.

Council President Pastore asked Solicitor if it is possible to tie into the vote later on rather than to re-read later on so that public can speak. Ms. Alston stated that she believes it can be done.

“ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING JULY 1, 2002 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2003” was read into the record by the City Clerk.

“RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE FIVE-YEAR FISCAL RECOVERY PLAN” was read into record by the City Clerk.

Public Speakers:

Christopher Buonanno, 572 Laurel Hill Ave., appeared to speak and asked if this supplemental tax is a one-time payment. Council President Pastore stated that this is a one-time payment and then it will be permanently added to the yearly taxes in the future. Mr. Buonanno asked where the cuts from the City side would be coming from. Council President Pastore stated that the cuts will eliminate the City deficit. Mayor Laffey addressed the question of the \$11 million in City cuts. He stated that he cannot speak on the specifics of where the cuts will be coming from because of sensitivity of the issues, and he will be speaking with all the City unions on the specifics and will make these public once negotiations are done.

Aram Garabedian, 173 Belvedere Dr., appeared to speak. He asked what the Mayor's and the Council's intentions are regarding raising taxes across the board on Real Estate, Motor Vehicles and Tangible. Mr. Baron stated that everything except Motor Vehicles will be raised. Mr. Garabedian questioned how much is raised currently by the City in Motor Vehicles. He stated that the reason for the emotion of the audience is due to probably the lack of information and time frame of making the payments and penalties and this was never advertised. He stated that the income for tax freeze for seniors is a low amount and this should be looked at. Ms. Grande stated that the Tax Levy Resolution on the agenda tonight has language that addresses the issue of tax freeze for seniors.

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Resident of the City appeared to speak and asked if the July, 2003 tax bill will increase due to the revaluation. Council President Pastore stated that the Council has not looked at the new tax rate to include the revaluation. The Resident asked how the City officials expect to get all this money in such a short period of time when the City has a big percentage of seniors and are on a fixed income. Council President Pastore stated that the City is very cognoscente with the concerns stated and the Mayor is in the process of creating an assistance program for the seniors that need help. The Resident asked if the City unions' contracts can be looked at and try to eliminate something immediately. Council President Pastore stated that this is something that will be looked at in the near future. The Resident also questioned the need for City vehicles, cell phones, beepers and other extra fringe benefits. Mayor Laffey stated that since he has become Mayor, it has been hard to tell who has cell phones or vehicles. Data is being collected and something will be done about this.

Paul Fox, 39 Strathmore Rd., appeared to speak and asked where the rest of the money is coming from in cuts.

Gino Costantino appeared to speak and asked if the Police, Fire and Teachers contracts are going to be filed and placed in the newspapers so the residents can see what everyone is getting.

Resident of the City appeared to speak and stated that he and his family are going to be taxed out of the City of Cranston and you will not be able to attract people or businesses in the City.

Albert Benetti, 24 Concord Ave., appeared to speak and stated that the State Legislature passed the Qualified Bond Act Resolution unanimously because it is not costing them a dime, they are letting us bail ourselves out. He proposed in the form of a Resolution, asking for General Assembly to adopt the law to allow the Mayor to go back and open all negotiations with all contracts in the City. Mr. Benetti also stated that there are two unions in the City, the employees in City Hall and the Librarians. The employees in City Hall have been hit hard every year. The Librarians have in the past given up a pay increase and have a 20% co-pay. We know who the top three are – the Police, Fire and Teachers - and we need to get to them to help the City.

Garry McDonough, 23 Edge St., appeared to speak and asked what is being proposed, for most people is not realistic. Retirement packages need to be looked at.

Tomasso Packard, 102 Mountain Laurel Dr., appeared to speak and asked that when cuts are being made, co-pay, salaries and other benefits need to be looked at. The residents of the City are being asked to make drastic decisions of what they are going to pay and what they are not going to pay.

Jim McElroy, 54 Tome St., appeared to speak and asked if the bond rating will change if we achieve the \$11 million in cuts. Council President Pastore stated that depending upon how quickly we can get the bond rating to look at the recovery plan we have in place, it could have a very favorable effect. Mr. McElroy asked if whether the Superintendent of Schools received a 10% increase this year. Council President Pastore stated he did not know, but 55% of the City Budget goes to the School and 90% of that goes to contractual obligations. Mr. McElroy stated that the Employees of City Hall have taken cuts year after year and they should not even be approached.

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Jeffrey Kelly, 26 Mystery Farms Dr., appeared to speak and asked if there are any State Legislatures present in the audience. There were none. Mr. Kelly stated that back in 1996, he was a member of the CUT (Cranston United Taxpayers) group and issues such as longevity, healthcare and high salaries area still big issues today. He suggested that the City privatize the Fire Department or go back to volunteers or lay off. He urged the Council to stand up to do what they are elected to do, lay off 10% of the work force and do not put this entire burden on the taxpayers.

Louis Rainone, 154 Ausdale Rd., appeared to speak.

Ed McDonough appeared to ask which budget the cuts will be coming from. Mayor Laffey stated that some immediate cuts will be coming from this year's budget, for the most part, the cuts will come from the 2003-2004 fiscal year budget.

Sharon Ventura, 50 Castleton Dr., appeared to speak and stated it is outrageous that a home assessed at \$200,000 pays taxes of \$6,000. People cannot afford all this.

Richard Adamo, 21 Buxton Dr., appeared to speak and questioned the severance package approved for Mr. Baron. He also stated that Auditor General should be present at this meeting.

Judy Elwood, Rugby St., appeared to speak and questioned the pension and whether the City will take over the pension. Council President Pastore stated that this is something that will be looked at.

Frank Colabrino appeared to speak and stated that unions are the problem. The taxpayers realize that everything goes up, but you have to be reasonable.

Geralyn Souvalian, 189 Alpine Estates Dr., appeared to speak and suggested that Police, Fire and Teachers be layed off for two weeks and this will save the City a lot of money.

Grant Derderian, 25 Buxton Dr., appeared to speak and questioned the status of the Homestead Exemption.

Paul Gibbs, 97 Orchard St., appeared to speak and asked that common sense be used when raising taxes and property value be maintained.

Resident of the City appeared to speak regarding union contracts and stated that they need to be looked at.

Brian Beauregard appeared to speak and questioned the Property Tax Classification. He stated that the Mayor is correct in saying that he cannot negotiate contracts in a public forum. He suggested to the Mayor to use the transcribed minutes of this meeting as a weapon, as a tool, when negotiating.

Tom Healey appeared to speak.

Michael Rossi, 1705 Pippin Orchard Rd., appeared to speak against the supplemental tax.

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“RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ASSESSMENT OF VALUATIONS AND LEVY OF TAXES”.

On motion by Councilwoman O’Hara, seconded by Councilman Ferolito, it was voted to accept the above Resolution as presented January 28, 2003 with amendment. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

On motion by Councilwoman McFarland, seconded by Councilman Jackvony, the above Resolution was adopted as amendment read by City Clerk on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

“RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE FIVE-YEAR FISCAL RECOVERY PLAN”.

Council President Pastore asked if there were any objections to the Unanimous Consent of this Resolution. No one objected.

On motion by Councilman Lanni, seconded by Councilman Ferolito, the above Resolution was adopted on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

“ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING JULY 1, 2002 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2003.”

On motion by Councilwoman O’Hara, seconded by Councilman Jackvony, the above Ordinance was adopted as amended and read by the City Clerk. Motion and second were withdrawn. Roll call was taken on the withdrawal and motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

Councilman Lanni motioned to approve this Ordinance, Councilman Jackvony seconded this motion.

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Under Discussion:

On motion by Councilwoman McFarland, seconded by Councilman Jackvony, it was voted to amend the above Ordinance as follows: Section 1, first line, amend amount to **\$11,466,540** and second paragraph amount changed to **\$11,466,540**; “School State Aid” change to **\$466,474**; “Total” change to **\$11,466,540**; Section 2, first line change amount to **\$11,466,540**. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

On motion by Councilwoman McFarland, seconded by Councilman Jackvony, it was voted to amend the above Ordinance as follows: Section 3 under ‘deletion’ add “**Administration**” **\$7,191,492** and under ‘addition’ add “**Administration**” **\$7,354,693** for ‘total expenditures’ to be **\$186,482,871**. Motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

Roll Call was taken on the main motion to approve as amended and motion passed on a vote of 9-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Fung, Jackvony, Councilwoman O’Hara, Council Member Fogarty, Councilwoman McFarland, Councilman Ferolito, Lanni, McDonough and Council President Pastore –9.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 P.M.

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

Maria Medeiros Wall
City Clerk

(See stenographic notes of Ron Ronzio, Stenotypist).