

City Council 2017 Policy & Issue Discussion Notes: 06/21/17

City Council Members Present:

- Jeanette Heron - 133rd District
- Denese Taylor-Moye - 131st District
- Evette Brantley - 132nd District
- Eneida Martinez - 139th District
- Milta Feliciano - 137th District
- Jack Banta - 131st District
- Jose Casco - 136th District

Democratic Empowerment/Good Governance/Transparency/Accountability

- **Democratic Town Committee:** Our research showed that the DTC is not an open, democratic institution. Chair has been in place for 18 years of the last 25. By 2007, more than 80 percent of the DTC either worked for the city, had relatives who worked for the city, collected city pensions, were former city employees, held elected positions, or served on influential boards or commissions.
 - How did you navigate the decision about which party to run under?
 - With the DTC or other political parties in Bridgeport, what is your perception of how they operate? Is change needed?
- **Jeanette Heron (133rd):**
 - Took 10 years to get on the DTC slate
 - Dedicated to the Democratic Party
 - Encourages all to come to committee meetings
 - Stenographers don't take appropriate/word for word notes - minutes aren't accurate
- **Denese Taylor-Moye (131st):**
 - Took a long time to break into the DTC - lots of years of public service
- **Evette Brantley (132nd):**
 - Worked hard to make sure black and brown folks were on the DTC, not too long ago it was all white. Interested in winning those seats for POC (people of color) who were there first.
 - Patronage might be a problem - if "they" (the DTC) give it to you, they can take it away.
- **Eneida Martinez (139th):**
 - Old school money + old school politicians = corruption
- **Absentee Ballots:** Important but problematic. CT Post article showed 14 violations in Bridgeport resulting in fines and suspensions between 1998 and 2004.
 - What do you think about voting by absentee ballot in Bridgeport? Is this an issue you are concerned about?

- **Eneida Martinez (139th):**
 - Old school politicians take advantage of the seniors, give them the applications, help them fill it out, and then put it in the mail = violation. Need to follow up with Registrar of Voters as they are returned.
- **Milta Feliciano (137th):**
 - On the East Side, there is a lot of AB fraud with senior centers. A lot of fraud in families. This is how they've been educated to vote! They receive a turkey or a dinner. There is clear supervised AB voting
- **Eneida Martinez (139th):**
 - Also they are worried they will lose their rent rebate
- **2017 Budget:** The current City budget has a \$39M assumption built into it. The State has not released its budget yet.
 - If we receive less, will the City cut funding in other areas, or will it all come from the Board of Ed's budget? What is your plan as City Council?
 - The City Council has already approved the City's budget. What is the legislative process is to amend the budget since we've passed the deadline?
 - What actual oversight is in place to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent according to the budget that was passed? What happens when a line item is overspent (i.e. Police overtime)?
- **Evette Brantley (132nd):**
 - No tax increase and no BOE shortfall. It will be cut from other departments, we will call a Special Meeting.
- **Denese Taylor-Moye (131st):**
 - Need more organizing and marching to send more \$\$ to BPT public schools
- **Financial Task Force:** BPTGN Members have done research and believe that we need an ordinance, and eventually charter reform, to establish a permanent Task Force that would advise City Council and the Mayor on the City Budget.
 - What do you think of this idea? Would you support it?
 - Are there other ideas that would support City Council in drafting and passing our budget each year?
- **Eneida Martinez (139th):**
 - We have requested a Financial Advisor's help
 - Agrees to a Financial Task Force (FTF)
 - Need to get rid of the "made up" jobs in the administration
 - As co-chair of the ordinance committee, she would support a FTF
- **Denese Taylor-Moye (131st):**
 - \$7500 was wasted on a "friend of a friend" who advised them last year
 - Major disappointment in this advisor's work

- **Jack Banta (131st):**
 - Worse corruption he's seen
- **All city council members present support a Financial Task Force**
- **Parking Meters:** Given the two resolutions proposed at the City Council meeting Monday night to place a moratorium on the meters and to terminate the LAZ contract...
 - What are your thoughts on this issue? What questions did Monday's meeting raise for you?
- **Jack Banta (131st):**
 - Wanted new meters for credit cards only
 - Outside of Council's realm
 - Merchants in downtown started complaining, administration stalled reforms
 - 14 council members are in favor of the 2 resolutions
 - Special Ordinance Committee meeting on Tues 6/27 to discuss resolutions

Equity/Justice

- **Racial Equity in Education:** We've been doing voter canvassing weekends. Last weekend, one of the residents we met works as a nanny in Fairfield and talked about the stark inequity in that 4-mile radius.
 - What do you think the greatest barrier preventing Bridgeport students from receiving everything they need to be successful?
- **Evette Brantley (132nd):**
 - We need more teachers that reflect the community
- **Jeanette Heron (133rd):**
 - We don't get the right support in the classroom
 - Supply budget is a disaster, but getting better with school-based budgeting for supplies
- **Denese Taylor-Moye (131st):**
 - BOE isn't meeting the needs of our special ed students
 - Teachers are afraid of our children
 - Suspending children for 2-5 days and calling the police of kindergarteners
- **Eneida Martinez (139th):**
 - BOE members are very dysfunctional, not modeling good behavior for students
- **WPCA:** Our research has shown that WPCA is foreclosing on homes at a rate inconsistent with surrounding communities, for less than \$1000 in back taxes. There have been allegations of foreclosures on the basis of age, race, and location.
 - Are you aware of what's going on with WPCA foreclosure process? What would you do to address this issue?

- **Eneida Martinez (139th):**
 - WPCA puts liens of properties and violates its own protocol
 - Supposed to follow a policy of \$250 (1st notice) > \$500 (2nd notice) > \$750 (certified letter). Not following this policy
 - City Atty Liskoff has dealings with Judah Epstein, sends accounts over to Epstein
 - American Legion is a good example - put a lien for \$2800 past due, but then \$18,000 total with Epstein's fees
- **Evette Brantley (132nd)/ Milta Feliciano (137th):**
 - Held a forum at City Hall Annex - attorney fees are doubling & tripling bills
- **Eneida Martinez (139th):**
 - Moratorium is in Ordinance Committee
- **Sanctuary Cities:** We were excited to see the resolution pass City Council last month, thank you to everyone who supported it! This is an important first step for protecting all Bridgeport community members.
 - Will you support the ordinance to codify this resolution as local law?
- **All city council members present support a Sanctuary City ordinance**
- **Jose Casco (136th):**
 - Everyone supported the SC resolution except 3 or 4 members
 - Municipal ID - project of Martinez/Feliciano
 - Working with business owners to get information about the ID program out there
- **Police Accountability:** We are still in the educating phase on this issue, spurred by Jayson's killing last month.
 - What concerns did that event bring up for you?
 - What opportunities do you see to address this issue in Bridgeport?
- **Denese Taylor-Moye (131st):**
 - Laying on the street with nothing to shield him
 - Really concerned about keeping people calm
 - What to do for the family?
 - Concerned about transparency, how to get all the information correct when this happens
- **Eneida Martinez (139th):**
 - Former Chief Guadette came to Council with a grant for body cameras 2 years ago, City Council approved
 - Officers (the union) had issues with it, fought against it
 - BPT did not receive the grant
 - Concerned that officers are not trained properly
- **Jack Banta (131st):**

- Held a forum with State Reps, state police - bill that would not allow the body to lie there
- **Milta Feliciano (137th):**
 - Every time the city of BPT gets sued because of our police officers do something wrong - we need to bring in outside training.
 - We need an accredited police department, would hold us to higher standards and allow to access funding

Livability

- **Public Arts:** One of our core values is the belief that public art is a necessary tool for economic and community development. Many public art initiatives are driven and fundraised for by citizens, but it's necessary to have City support for permitting, advocacy, and preservation. (Ex. Downtown steps, Downtown West crosswalk art / underpass murals.)
 - Are you an advocate for public art in Bridgeport?
 - For example, the public murals in Downtown North were supported by a previous mayoral administration/City Council and attracted music videos, school tours, broad outside interest. Members of the community were upset that they were painted over without any public input. Who could we have talked to about this issue when it happened?
- **All city council members present support Public Art**
- **Food Policy:** The Food Policy Council is working on a number of recommendations in the areas of urban agriculture, food-based entrepreneurship, school wellness.
 - Do any of these issue areas resonate in particular with you and members of your district?
- **All city council members present support Food Policy recommendations**
- **Environment/Energy:** Our members have been closely watching developments with No to O&G, the new natural gas plant, UI cutting trees across the city.
 - Do you think environmental issues are important to the city/your district?
 - Any other issues happening in your district?
- **All city council members present support environmental reforms /recommendations**