City of Taunton
Municipal Council Meeting Minutes
City Hall, 15 Summer Street, Taunton, MA
Minutes, February 22, 2022 at 7:40 O'clock P.M.

Regular Meeting
Mayor Shaunna L. O'Connell presiding/Councilor President Phillip Duarte
Prayer was offered by the Mayor
Present at roll call were: ***Councilor Dooner, Duarte, Borges, Pottier, Coute, Sanders, Quintal and Postell***
Councilor McCaul was absent.

Record of preceding meeting was read by title and approved. So voted.

Motion was made to go out of regular order of business to Appointments and Communications from the Mayor. So voted.

Appointments:
Appointment and Swearing in of Four (4) Permanent Full Time Police Officers:

- John Reilly
- Andrew Graham
- Ryan Dykas
- Denzel Santos

Motion was made to approve the list as read on a roll call vote. On a roll call vote, eight (8) Councilors present, eight (8) Councilors voted in favor. So voted. Mayor O'Connell took a moment to thank these young men and their families for serving the City of Taunton. She said we are grateful that they are going to be a part of the Taunton Police Department Family and she wished them many blessings and much safety as they carry out their duties. She also spoke how Ryan Dykas will be a 3rd generation police officer. He is following in the footsteps of his grandfather Theodore Dykas, who served as a patrolmen for 32-years and his farther, Detective James Dykas who served for 35-years and also his mom, Detective Susan Dykas who served for 28-years. The City Clerk then swore in all four Police Officers.

Communications from the Mayor:
Mayor O'Connell gave a special presentation. She said that this month is Black History Month so we continue to celebrate and have folks in here at City Council to educate our public and bring the community together. Their special guests were the Taunton High School African American Club. They help spread the message of inclusiveness and acceptance at Taunton High School and throughout our community. They are very active at the school and in the community. They have done a lot of different events together. Gloria A. Palmer and Maureen Farias, co-advisors and also English teachers at Taunton High School were also present. A few members of the African American Club joined the Mayor at the podium. Condoleezza Dwuye, sophomore and the Secretary of the African

American Club at Taunton High School, read a poem she wrote. Calvinne Dwuye, 8th grade student and member of the African American Club at Taunton High School, spoke about Dr. King. Daequan Ray, Senior and the president of the African American Club at Taunton High School, gave a tribute on Bayard Rustin that he wrote. Borodine Chery, Senior and Vice President of the African American Club at Taunton High School, shared a tribute that she wrote for MLK. Carmela Watson, 8th Grader and member of the African American Club at Taunton High School was also present in the audience to support her fellow members. Mayor O'Connell thanked them all for taking the time to be at the meeting.

Motion was made to take a two-minute recess. So voted. President Phillip Duarte presided at this time.

President Duarte read Mayor O'Connell's communications. He stated that there are twenty-one (21) active Covid cases in the City of Taunton. Test-kits are still available. You can call the Covid info line at #774-406-5277. The City will be hosting a telephone Town Hall to provide the community with info regarding the Bristol Plymouth School Construction Project. The Town Hall will be this Thursday, February 24th from 6-7p.m. The district wide referendum is Saturday, March 5th from 9a.m. – 3p.m. Absentee ballots are available as well. The panelists for the Town Hall will be the Elections Director, the CFO, the Budget Director, the Assistant City Solicitor, the Bristol Plymouth Superintendent and members of the construction project team. If your landline number is publicly available, you will receive the call. If you want to add your landline to the call list, please contact the Mayor's Office. You can also call-in to participate and those details are on the City of Taunton's website and Facebook page. There will be a community info session about the Bristol Plymouth project on Monday, February 28th at 6:00p.m. here at the City Hall hosted by Tom Bernier, Councilor Estele Borges and the Bristol Plymouth Alumni. That meeting, the Superintendent will be there, as well as the architects, the building committee and members of the project team, to discuss and answer questions related to the project. The City of Taunton will be hosting a Black History Month celebration on Friday, February 25th from 6-8p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall to honor Black History and Culture. There will be live music and dance performances, art exhibits and games. The annual city census has been mailed to all residents. You should return it within 10-days, even if there are no changes. If you have any questions, you can call the Elections Department at #508-821-1044. Lastly, the Mayor's Office is working on the Honor Our Military Banners to be displayed downtown leading up to Memorial Day. Applications are available online on the City of Taunton's website and Facebook page. If you do not have access online you can contact the Mayor's office. The deadline to apply is Thursday, April 7th.

Motion was made to revert back to the regular order of business. So voted.

Opportunity for input by the general public.
Haskell Kennedy, business address located at 144 West Britannia Street, spoke about HCA's in Taunton for retail. He wanted to make sure he is still first in line if any new HCA's become available and he will not be shuffled in the process involved in a new ordinance that was passed.

Tim Silvia, 6 Forest Street, spoke about the OIG Report and the Aries Gasification project discussion he witnessed earlier in the evening. He explained why he was disgusted about how people were verbally attacked for doing their job.

Kara Civale, 110 Dean Street, explained after watching the council meetings weekly, she is becoming frustrated that the City Solicitor rarely has the answer. She being a public employee, knows the importance of accurately reporting on the record and the responsibilities of being a public servant.

April Funches, with the Taunton Diversity Network, 20 Kings Court, said they are happy to be partnering with the City of Taunton for the celebration coming up this Friday for Black History Month. She also said, you'll notice today and moving forward you will be seeing some representation of the Taunton Diversity Network at the meetings. They have made a commitment to the city to make sure that they are staying up on what's happening in the city and holding their leadership accountable, that the public is aware of the opportunities that they have to have public input. It is part of their new initiative called "fill the seats". She invited people to network with them and reach out.

Kyra Fernandez, office at 20 Kings Court, read the description of what the OIG (Office of Inspector General) actually does. She explained her frustrations with the lack of communication and how the Aries project is being handled. She suggested that if the OIG won't come to us, we should reach out to them.

Hearings:
On the joint petition of Verizon New England, Inc. and Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant to relocate one pole #45 south 14' near #514 Whittenton Street, Taunton. A map of the location was supplied. **Motion was made to open the public hearing and invite the interested parties into the enclosure. So voted.** James Deiturrondo, of 173 Crescent Avenue, North Attleboro, was present to represent Verizon New England, Inc. He said there is a correction, they are going to be relocating pole #45 west, 14' along Whittenton Street, accommodating the new subdivision Brian's Way. Councilor Sanders asked if they will have adequate ADA access on that sidewalk area. Mr. Deiturrondo said he is not sure what the ADA guidelines are off the top of his head. He does know that the pole is going to be moving 14' west and it is moving in line with the poles that are on the street. Councilor Sanders asked for Mr. Deiturrondo to pass along to whoever needs to hear that the Council's expectations is that there will be wheelchair access. **Motion was made to open public input. So voted.** Nobody spoke for public input. **Motion was made to close public input and approve the petition. So voted.**

Appointments:
Appointment of Barbara Auger, Former Treasurer/Collector and retiree as the representative of the retiree group on the Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) replacing the late Jayne Ross. **Motion was made to approve the appointment. So voted.**

Appointment of Heidi Taylor, 110 Field Street, Taunton to serve on the Taunton Redevelopment Authority for a term of one (1) year expiring in February 2023. **Motion was made to approve the appointment. So voted.**

Communications from City Officers:
Com. from the Safety Officer at the Taunton Police Department submitting a response on the request from Councilor Duarte to asses Wales Street and Mason Street. The only safety upgrades that he suggested is placing a "curve ahead' sign on both Mason Street and Wales Street and also chevrons at the corner of Wales Street and Mason Street to warn motorists of the bad turn. **Motion was to refer to the Department of Public Works. So voted.**

Com. from the DPW Office Manager requesting to pay a prior year's bill to pay previous DOT physical expenses in the amount of one-thousand, five-hundred and sixty dollars ($1,560.00). **Motion was made to refer to Committee on Finance and Salaries. So voted.**

Com. from the City Solicitor submitting Xfinity correspondences in regards to cable television service in the city. A separate packet was provided. The packet relates to channel changes, a report regarding complaint information for 2021, an annual notice of Comcast's policies and procedures, a sample subscriber bill, a work order and a rate and channel lineup information for Taunton. **Motion was made to receive and place on file. So voted.**

Com. from the Budget Director requesting a transfer of funds from the reserve account to fund the retroactive pay increase through June 30, 2022 in the amount of two-hundred and eight-two thousand and twenty-nine dollars (282,029.00). An attachment of breakdowns were provided. Councilor Duarte spoke as the chairman of Finance and Salaries, if it is okay with the council he would recommend approving this on the floor since they did meet on this topic in Executive Session. **Motion was made to approve the transfer. So voted.**

Com. from Senator Marc R. Pacheco submitting a proposed draft of the Taunton City Charter Legislation and Correspondence. A separate packet was provided for the council. **Motion was made to receive and place on file. So voted.** Councilor Borges noted that Senator Pacheco did send all the communications and the redline version to all of the councilors. Councilor Pottier asked if the maker of the motion can add to have the Law Department include the council on their response. **Motion was made to receive and place on file and have the Law Department include the City Council on their response. So voted.** Atty. Costa explained that the Law Department is in receipt of this communication. The comments from Senate Council, so they will be preparing their review and their proposed responses to those questions. They are going to try to move this as quickly as they can due to the timeframe in the Legislative Session. He said they are hoping to have their comments certainly within 2-weeks. Councilor Pottier added that if there are any substantial changes they need to make to the Charter, does that have to come back before the council for review and approval. Atty. Costa said yes, I think that's the case because the motion was on a specific Charter, which is also referenced in Senator Pacheco's letter. They are reviewing right now, some of the questions from Senate Council. The really are just clarifying questions, not really substantive. Some do need to come back before the Council and will be reviewed with the Council.

Communications from Citizens:
NONE

Petitions:

Claims

Claim submitted by Toni Vegiard, 291 Walcott St. Apt. 4, Pawtucket, RI seeking reimbursement for damages to her automobile from hitting a pothole on Bay Street near the 495 North on ramp. *(Already referred to the Law Department and DPW)*

Claim submitted by Joseph Kvilhaug, 315 Scadding St., Taunton seeking reimbursement for damages to his automobile from hitting a pothole near 47 Field St., Taunton. *(Already referred to the Law Department and DPW)*

Committee Reports:

Motion was made for Committee reports to be read by title and approved. So Voted.

Recommendations adopted to reflect the votes as recorded in Committee of Finance and Salaries. So Voted.

The Committee on Solid Waste met earlier in the evening and took two votes. **#1 Motion was made to approve the motion in the Committee on Solid Waste on getting a timeline and ask the City Solicitor to enter into discussions with the Inspector General's Office and come back before the Committee within 30-days with an update to be voted on a roll call vote. On a roll call vote, eight (8) councilors present and eight (8) councilors voting in favor. So voted. #2 Motion was made to approve the motion in the Committee on Solid Waste to invite a member of the Inspector General to come in at that point to further discuss their opinions and recommendations to be voted on a roll call vote. On a roll call vote, eight (8) councilors present and six (6) councilors voting in favor (Councilors Postell, Quintal, Sanders, Pottier, Borges and Duarte). Councilors Coute and Dooner were in opposition. So voted.** Motion passed.

Unfinished Business:

NONE

Orders, Ordinances and Resolutions:

Resolution

Resolution submitted by City of Taunton Trust Funds & OPEB Trust to authorize an account to be opened in the name of City of Taunton Trust Funds & OPEB Trust with National Financial Services, LLC and designating the following individuals to transact on the account: Julie A. Venerus, Asst. Treasurer/Collector, Christine M. Clymens, Treasurer/Collector and Donna J. Andrews, Fiscal Agent/Asst. Treasurer. **Motion was made to approve. So voted.**

New Business:

Council President Duarte requested to refer to the Committee of the Council as a Whole a discussion on hiring an independent consultant to review the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) submitted to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Office by Aries Taunton, LLC. **Motion was made to move approval and refer to the Mayor's Office. So voted.**

Councilor Borges made a motion to notify the residence on Sheridan Street that the DPW is investigating their decrease in water pressure.

Councilor Borges made a motion to the residence on Ashleigh Terrace that the DPW has been contacted regarding all of the potholes that are on the street.

Councilor Borges made a motion that she would like to refer the sharp curve at 1739 Bay Street for investigation to the Safety Officer. She said last night there was a bad accident there again were it took out three lawns and someone hit a bolder. She asked if we could maybe take a look and put a sign with a blinking light or a curve ahead. **So voted.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 P.M.

A true copy:

Attest: Rm Blackwell

City Clerk

RMB/KLD

COMMITTEE MINUTES WILL BE POSTED WHEN RECEIVED