



CRANSTON CITY COUNCIL

Regular Monthly Meeting

Jessica M. Marino, President, City-Wide
Lammis J. Vargas, Vice President, Ward 1
Robert J. Ferri, City-Wide
Nicole Renzulli, City-Wide

Aniece Germain, Ward 2
John P. Donegan, Ward 3
Richard D. Campopiano, Ward 4
Christopher G. Paplauskas, Ward 5
VACANT, Ward 6

MINUTES

MONDAY, JUNE 26, 2023, at 7:00 P.M.

The regular monthly meeting of the Cranston City Council was held on **Monday, June 26, 2023 at 7:00 PM. in the Cranston City Council Chambers, Cranston City Hall, 869 Park Ave., Cranston, RI 02910** for the purpose of conducting the items of business appearing on the docket.

YouTube Live Stream

This meeting was live streamed on YouTube. Click the link below to view the meeting:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtE9vwA1B1PQHuftrNPcZjg>.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Council President, Jessica M. Marino

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called by the Clerk. Stated as **present**: Councilman Robert J. Ferri, Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli, Councilwoman Aniece Germain, Councilman John P. Donegan, Councilman Richard D. Campopiano, Council Vice-President Lammis J. Vargas, and Council President Jessica M. Marino. **Absent**: Councilman Christopher G. Paplauskas

Also present: Stephen Angell, Legal Counsel; John Verdecchia, Asst. City Solicitor; David DiMaio, Council Internal Auditor/Budget Analyst; Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff; and Tracy Nelson, City Clerk

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the body.

President Marino referred to the appointments to the Canvassing Authority appearing on page 4 of the docket. Due to legal questions, she is withdrawing both requests. She looks forward to further discussion on these necessary appointments, given the upcoming special election.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Minutes of the May 22, 2023 Special Council Meeting

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilwoman Renzulli to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2023 Special Council Meeting as written.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

B. Minutes of the May 22, 2023 Regular Council Meeting

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilwoman Renzulli to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2023 Regular Council Meeting as written.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

V. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND COMMENDATIONS

Citations of Recognition for the State Champion Boys Track Team from Western Hills Middle School were presented by Councilwoman Renzulli.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Blake, 173 Grand Ave., requested the Mayor report back to the City Council within 30 days on four items relative to Budlong Pool: 1) size; 2) review and comparison of water usage bills for June, July, and August of 2017, 2018, and 2019; 3) status of hiring someone to inspect, drain and clean the pool; 4) whether or not the warranty on the new liner has been voided due to willful neglect. She also asked that he directly address the growing number of residents who have signed petitions.

Martha DiMaio, 69 Laconia Rd., spoke on a few points regarding the pool. We are in a climate crisis. We are in a mental health crisis. Loneliness has become an epidemic, especially among youth. One in five have suicidal ideations. The rate of follow through among 10- to 24-year-olds is 62%. We should not destroy a place for the community to gather and combat isolation. The Mayor needs an economic reality check. Wages are stagnant. Many residents do not own a pool. The pool should be repaired to its original footprint. How has the government allowed it to get into such disrepair?

Sonya Poydras, 190 Aqueduct Rd. neighbors the pool. The size of the pool is important. The economic reasons are vital. She recently went on vacation with two teenagers. The facility had an indoor and outdoor pool. They preferred the indoor pool because it was bigger. Budlong pool has been in the community since the 1940's. It is better for the community if the pool can serve children and seniors with both shallow and deep ends.

VII. RESOLUTIONS

None

VIII. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

A. Report from the Chair, Councilman Donegan, on the **FINANCE COMMITTEE** meeting held June 5, 2023

RESOLUTION to participate in the RI Infrastructure Bank's Community Septic System Loan Program; Sponsored by Council President Marino

MOTION made by Councilwoman Renzulli, SECOND by Council Vice-President Vargas to approve the Resolution as presented.

President Marino thanked the Administration for their efforts. This program will serve the residents well. She hopes the Administration will help get the word out to residents about the loan program for replacing existing septic systems. It is not available for sewers.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

RESOLUTION of Support for Grant Funding of CLCF Youth Sports; Sponsored by Council President Marino; Co-sponsored by Councilors Ferri, Donegan, Campopiano, Paplauskas, Renzulli and Germain

MOTION made by Councilwoman Renzulli, SECOND by Councilwoman Germain to approve the resolution as presented.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked to be added as co-sponsor. She is a parent of a child who participates in their community engagement.

Councilwoman Renzulli noted the importance of CLCF. The Rec Dept. does not run sports programs. The building needs ADA compliance. The fields are cared for by CLCF.

Council President Marino thanked everyone for their support. She and her husband have volunteered their time coaching, and other assistance. She gave a shout out to Representative Jackie Baginski for spear-heading the resolution to provide funds to CLCF. They are an all-encompassing sports organization, for both males and females, from all parts of the city.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

RESOLUTION authorizing Real Estate Tax Abatements for the month of June, 2023

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilwoman Renzulli to approve the real estate tax abatements as requested.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

Consideration of Tax Interest Waiver **APPROVALS**

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilwoman Renzulli to approve the tax interest waiver approvals as requested.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

B. Report from the Chair, Council Vice-President Vargas, on the **ORDINANCE COMMITTEE** meeting held June 15, 2023

5-23-01 ORDINANCE in Amendment of Title 2, Administration and Personnel, Chapter 2.16.010 of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled "Police Department Composition"; Sponsored by Mayor Hopkins

MOTION made by Councilwoman Renzulli, SECOND by Councilman Donegan to approve the ordinance as presented.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

5-23-02 ORDINANCE in Amendment of Title 17, Chapter 17.109 of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled "Plan Commission"; Sponsored by Council President Marino and Councilwoman Renzulli; Co-sponsored by Councilman Donegan and Council Vice-President

MOTION made by Councilman Donegan, SECOND by Councilwoman Renzulli to approve the ordinance as presented.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

5-23-03 ORDINANCE in Amendment of Title 6 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled "Animals" (Roosters); Sponsored by Councilwoman Renzulli

President Marino addressed the sponsor, Councilwoman Renzulli. She would prefer the fines read "maximum of" or "up to" so the Municipal Court Judge has some flexibility in cases or hardship.

Councilwoman Renzulli has no objection.

MOTION made by Councilman Donegan, SECOND by Councilman Ferri to approve the ordinance with amended language as proposed by the Council President.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

C. Report from the Chair, Councilwoman Germain, on the **CLAIMS COMMITTEE:** June, 2023 claims settled.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR UNDOCKETED ITEMS

Martha DiMaio, 69 Laconia Rd., referred to the October 24, 2022 Council Meeting at which Dr. Patricia Ricci spoke. She also referenced a NY Times expose on noise pollution. She referred to a letter from Dr. Melissa Jenkins, addressed to the Mayor, that she read for the record at the same meeting. The Cranston Herald referred to the letter as junk science. She suggests they follow up and do some investigative reporting. There were recently two murders in Johnston. The Johnston Police Department received two 911 calls from the area. If those murders had been committed in Meshanticut, no one would have called the police department. All the Council continues to do is sit back. The council took an oath to protect. She wants something done. This is no longer up for debate. Residents are being irreparably harmed.

X. ELECTION/APPOINTMENT OF CITY OFFICIALS

RE-APPOINTMENT of Jack Tregar to the Cranston Library Board of Trustees for the term of August 1, 2023 through July 31, 2026; per Ch. 2.44.020 of the Cranston Code of Ordinances

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Council Vice-President Vargas to re-appoint Jack Tregar to the Library Board of Trustees as requested.

Councilwoman Germain expressed concern with all three individuals being considered for re-appointment. She has not been provided with a resume. She will not vote in favor.

Council President Marino noted these are re-appointments of members already serving. There was a prior opportunity to inquire.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino / Nay - Germain. **Motion carries by vote of 6-1**

RE-APPOINTMENT of R. Drayton Fair to the Cranston Library Board of Trustees for the term of August 1, 2023 through July 31, 2026; per Ch. 2.44.020 of the Cranston Code of Ordinances

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Donegan to re-appoint R. Drayton Fair to the Library Board of Trustees as requested.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino / Nay - Germain. **Motion carries by vote of 6-1**

RE-APPOINTMENT of Michael Goldberg to the Cranston Library Board of Trustees for the term of August 1, 2023 through July 31, 2026; per Ch. 2.44.020 of the Cranston Code of Ordinances

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Donegan to re-appoint Michael Goldberg to the Library Board of Trustees as requested.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino / Nay - Germain. **Motion carries by vote of 6-1**

APPOINTMENT of Kirk McDonough as Democratic Board Alternate Member to the Cranston Board of Canvassers for the term March 6, 2023 through March 5, 2029, as nominated by Council President Jessica Marino, pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws 17-8-1.

Request withdrawn by the Council President

APPOINTMENT of Alice Petrone as Democratic Board Member to the Cranston Board of Canvassers for the term March 6, 2023 through March 5, 2029, as nominated by Council President Jessica Marino, pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws 17-8-1.

Request withdrawn by the Council President

XI. REPORT OF CITY OFFICERS

None

XII. EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. From Planning Director, Jason Pezzullo, update on status of the Comprehensive Plan

President Marino reviewed the email report received from Planning Director Pezzullo. She asked Chief of Staff Moretti if he knows the status of the review of the contract language.

A. Moretti has not seen the language. It was not directed to the Administration. It was directed to the Planner.

Council President Marino requested an item be placed on the next Finance Committee agenda to look at the proposed language. The report indicates the contract will be finalized no later than early July.

Councilman Donegan added there is another matter on that Finance Committee agenda regarding the Comp Plan, from Council Vice-President Vargas, seeking an update on the account. He suggested Planner Pezzullo be present to provide updates.

A. Moretti made note and will relay the request to Director Pezzullo.

B. Legal Expense Analysis for the period of July 1, 2022 – June 26, 2023

No action

XIII. COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

None

XIV. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

A. From Councilwoman Germain: Request for a detailed plan of Budlong Pool Project and what is the timeline for this project? (Cont. from 1/23/2023 City Council and 2/16/2023, 3/16/2023, 4/13/2023, 5/11/2023 & 6/15/2023 Committees)

Councilwoman Germain noted it is now summer and it is getting hot. Her constituents have reached out. They cannot be here, so she is their voice. She will continue to ask questions.

A. Moretti indicated the Mayor has been consistent. He has included the City Council and solicited their advice. The Mayor intends to move forward with the renovation of the bathhouse and construction of a new pool, and not proceed with a short-term band-aid solution for a pool that is oversized for the needs of the city. It will not be a wading pool. It will be a 21st century, ADA compliant pool with plenty of room. Saccoccia & Associates have been charged with the design and plans. The key thing is the pool will be there for generations. The size difference will ensure we can maintain the pool and hire enough lifeguards. Other than Councilwoman Germain and the few constituents

here tonight, they've not heard objections. Moving forward with the plan is the best chance to get a pool open next year.

Councilwoman Germain is the Council person for Ward 2, where the pool is located. Her constituents do not want the pool downsized. They are not willing to spend \$4 million on a pool that will not service the 80,000+ residents. The pool is not just for Ward 2. It is for the whole city. People need a place to cool off.

A. Moretti agrees. The engineering firm and administration are doing research on the size and capacity of other pools in the region.

Councilman Ferri addressed Mr. Moretti. Over 1,000 signatures have been collected. He himself has heard from over 350 people who do not want a downsized pool. How many signatures are needed before the administration listens? He is not in favor of a downsized pool. Have we ever had an expert tell us if the pool can or cannot be repaired?

A. Moretti is hearing of the 1,000 signatures for the first time. Two City Councilors are voicing objections. If the City Council would like further input, the administration welcomes it.

Councilwoman Germain referred to the feasibility study. It never said the pool cannot be fixed. The city website indicates there are three actions they can follow. The administration spent money on this expert. The first option is to fix the pool as is. If that study was wrong, say it was wrong.

A. Moretti noted things evolve. Can it be fixed? He is not an engineer, but he's sure given enough time and money we can solve anything. It is a judgment call. In the last recorded year of use, the pool served 350-400 people. We do not need the current size.

Councilwoman Germain asked why the administration is waiting for all the others to say they do not want the pool downsized.

A. Moretti restated the Mayor has been consistent. He feels a 21st century pool for future generations is the best move forward. That is the charge of the firm. If Council prefers, administration can hold off, awaiting more opinions.

Councilman Donegan referenced the docket. This item has been continued since January because the body is still in need of answers. He personally never voted to reduce the size. He would not vote in favor. The only vote of the Council he recalls is authorizing the Mayor's \$4 million proposal to be taken from ARPA funds instead of bonds. He read from a July, 2022 Resolution of the Council which authorized funds to be used to fix the pool. That is the only time the Council has given guidance. The council did not know the Mayor intended to move forward with a smaller pool. Perhaps the administration has not been as clear as they think they have been.

A. Moretti is happy to report back after reviewing the transcripts for clarity or lack thereof. If the Council wishes, the administration can suspend movement on the pool.

Vice-President Vargas asked A. Moretti when the design plan he just mentioned is expected to be complete.

A. Moretti replied that has not been determined. The firm is in the process of sketching and doing research.

Vice-President Vargas asked what the delay would be if Council were given the opportunity to review the features, design, and amenities. She suggested a workshop session between the community, Council, and the administration to sit down with an open line of communication. All nine Council members will never be satisfied nor will all the residents. She asked the cost if the sketches were sent back for resketch. The funding has been approved. She would like to find a way for everyone to work together and avoid delay.

A. Moretti answered the earlier the better. The clock is ticking. We can wait until the end of the design, but that's not best. Saccoccia is the contractor that worked on the last renovation of the pool.

Vice-President Vargas has heard the community's concerns, especially regarding the downsizing. She wants to hear both sides, but she does not want the administration to blame the Council for delays. She is also concerned about the cost.

A. Moretti stated there are many opinions. We need factual, scientific evidence.

Vice-President Vargas asked how much longer until that is figured out? What is the architect doing now?

A. Moretti responded they are working on the design.

Vice-President Vargas who the project manager is.

A. Moretti answered Public Works.

Vice-President Vargas asked if Public Works is fully staffed.

A. Moretti indicated there are vacancies.

Vice-President Vargas feels a project manager is needed to ensure the project moves along; to be sure every "i" is dotted and every "t" is crossed.

A. Moretti explained hiring professionals in the related field to oversee this project is no different than any other project.

Vice-President Vargas asked how often the administration is checking in on the project.

A. Moretti answered every few weeks. They do not want to cause delays by distracting.

Councilman Campopiano has made phone calls to public and private pool contractors. Pawtucket has a similar demographic. Their pool is smaller. They've had issues staffing lifeguards. They've utilized police and fire personnel. He would hate to see the pool closed because of staffing shortages. We know what the community wants, but what does the community need? He would prefer to see a complex, not just a pool, for all age ranges to enjoy.

Councilwoman Renzulli is under the impression Council approved the money. Budlong pool is owned by the city. It is a city operation. The council can give opinions, but they don't necessarily have a say. She has spoken with the prior Park & Rec Director. The square footage of the current pool can hold 646, by international code. If it's been determined we've not had that many utilize the pool, maybe we don't go with the Mayor's size, but we don't go with something as big as it is now, which is larger than Olympic size. She would like to see swim meets held at the pool. 1,000 signatures is only 1.25% of the population. She agreed we will not make all the residents happy. We constantly talk about diversity. We need to include all.

A. Moretti stated the Mayor has not specified the size of the pool. That is being left to the professionals in the design concept.

Council President Marino hates to sound like a broken record. The council has said what needs to be said. The Council is elected to represent their constituents. Councilwoman Germain and Councilman Donegan's points are well taken. We have never been conclusively told whether or not the pool can be repaired in its current form. We have not been given a reasonable assessment by experts. The council authorized up to \$4 million in ARPA funds to avoid incurring interest. The council has said over and over, the sooner the better, and in the most economical manner. Do not suggest movement be suspended because of inquiries. She wants discussion to be productive, not spiteful. She does not want to hear the City Council blamed for delay again.

Councilman Germain asked if the pool has been drained since 2019. She asked if the study from two years ago is no longer viable. It provides an option that allows for the pool to exist safely and efficiently with core compliance achieved. The cost of option 1 was \$2.5-\$2.8 million. The staffing issue is one thing, but you are saying the pool cannot be fixed. An expert chosen by the administration, and paid with the taxpayers' money, provides an option to allow the current pool to exist and function. She asked what would happen to the basketball courts and parking area if this became a whole complex. She has received emails from constituents. Her intent is not to be an impediment.

A. Moretti does not have an answer to the question about draining. The scope of the work for the engineer is the pool and pool house. There is no objection to receiving Council input. If the Council wants to proceed with a different design or another study, administration will need to come back with another RFP, and will need to find the money for that because it wasn't budgeted.

XV. COUNCIL BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER
None

XVI. INTRODUCTION OF NEW BUSINESS

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Donegan to take the New Business items as a block.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

PETITION of Narragansett Electric & Verizon New England Inc. for installation of pole on Hazelton St.; to be referred to the Public Works Committee meeting of July 13, 2023

CLAIMS to be referred to the Claims Committee meeting of July 3, 2023 as follows:

<u>TYPE OF CLAIM</u>	<u>CLAIMANT</u>	<u>DATE OF ALLEGED INCIDENT</u>
Property Damage	Elizabeth Valente	02/28/2023
Personal Injury	Melissa Greco	05/25/2023
Property Damage	N.E. Disaster Restoration, Inc.	04/26/2023
Property Damage	Kevin Shepherd	12/30/2022

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Donegan to forward all New Business items to their respective committees.

VOTE: Ayes - Ferri, Renzulli, Germain, Donegan, Campopiano, Vargas, and Marino (unanimous of the members present)

XVII. ITEMS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY
None

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Council Vice-President Vargas to adjourn at 8:31 P.M. All Ayes

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy A. Nelson, City Clerk