



# OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK ▪ CITY OF BINGHAMTON

Hadassah Mativetsky, City Council President

Sarah Dinhofer, City Clerk

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## COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BINGHAMTON

### Business Meeting Minutes

City Council Chambers, 38 Hawley Street, Binghamton, NY 13901

6:00 PM Wednesday, February 28, 2024

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

At 6:01PM by President Mativetsky

#### II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by President Mativetsky

#### III. ROLL CALL

Present: Porter, Middleton, Cavanaugh, Hotchkiss, Mativetsky, Strawn, Dundon

Also Present: Sarah Dinhofer (City Clerk), Sophie Bergman (Corporation Counsel)

#### IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of Business Meeting Minutes from 2/7/2024
  - a. Motion: Dundon
  - b. Second: Middleton
  - c. All in favor

#### V. APPROVAL OF APPOINTMENTS

1. Committees:
  - a. Finance: Cavanaugh (Chair), Hotchkiss, Strawn
  - b. Employees: Porter (Chair), Dundon, Strawn
  - c. Planning: Hotchkiss (Chair), Cavanaugh, Strawn
  - d. Municipal and Public Affairs: Middleton (Chair), Dundon, Strawn
  - e. Public Works and Parks: Dundon (Chair), Porter, Strawn
  - f. Rules and Procedures/Special Studies: Hotchkiss (Chair), Middleton, Strawn
2. Planning Commission: Christopher Dziedzic, Emmanuel Priest, Joe DeAngelo (alternate)
  - a. CM Cavanaugh requests that Assistant Director of Planning Tito Martinez's letter be read into record (*\*appended below*)
  - b. CM Hotchkiss motion for a holdover
    - i. Second: Middleton
    - ii. Vote: 3-4-0-0
    - iii. Nay: Cavanaugh, Dundon, Strawn, Mativetsky
  - c. Motion to accept appointments: Dundon
    - i. Second: Cavanaugh
    - ii. Vote: 6-1-0-0
    - iii. Nay: Hotchkiss



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3. Commission for the Conservation of the Environment: Luke Day, Thomas Costello, Richard Jannaccio, Ashley Seyfried, Darius Bang, Matthew Ryan, Julian Shepherd, Scott Lauffer, Eric Denk
  - a. Motion: Porter
  - b. Second: Middleton
  - c. Vote: All in favor

## **VI. PUBLIC HEARING**

1. Public Hearing regarding RL24-13 “An Ordinance authorizing various capital improvements in and for the City, stating the maximum cost thereof is \$11,937,500, appropriating said amount for such purpose and authorizing the issuance of bonds in the City in the principal amount not to exceed \$11,937,500 to finance said appropriation”

- John Solak, Binghamton Resident: Criticizes small proportion of grant funding versus overall dollar amount, asks Council how much debt they are comfortable with City taking on. Reminds Council that their names will be legally bound to SEC prospectus as statement of fact.
- Tarik Abdelazim, Binghamton Resident: States need for legislation to be passed requiring 5-year capital improvement plan for City, considering all public assets that need to be funded, enabling strategic decisions every year. Without one, neighborhoods may receive preferential treatment. Abdelazim regrets being unable to achieve this goal during his own time in City government; reminds Council of last administration’s waste of ARPA \$41mil funds (cites binghamtonslushfund.org) on budget items that were not related to helping pandemic recovery.
- John Patterson, Binghamton Resident: Asks for clarification around terms of bond.

## **VII. SET PUBLIC HEARINGS**

1. The City of Binghamton will hold a Public Hearing regarding RL24-42 “A Local Law amending Chapter 400 of the City Charter, Vehicles and Traffic, adding the prohibition of operation of off-road vehicles in the City of Binghamton”

This Public Hearing will take place at 6PM during the March 13, 2024 regular City Council Business Meeting in City Council Chambers, 38 Hawley Street, Binghamton NY. Residents wishing to participate in Public Hearings may do so electronically by emailing their comments prior to 1:00PM on the day of the meeting to [clerk@cityofbinghamton.gov](mailto:clerk@cityofbinghamton.gov) or in-person during the meeting.

## **VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Residents wishing to submit public comment may do so electronically by emailing their comments prior to 1:00PM on the day of the meeting to [clerk@cityofbinghamton.gov](mailto:clerk@cityofbinghamton.gov) or in-person during the meeting.

- Aviva Friedman, Binghamton resident: Attended hearings regarding right of appointment case within City Council, glad to see that City Council right to appoint was affirmed. Friedman points out that 6<sup>th</sup>



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District is completely different from prior to redistricting. Friedman lives in 6<sup>th</sup> district and was previously a Councilmember last year, seems arbitrary to choose one representative over the other. Looks forward to seeing who Council chooses to appoint.

- Tarik Abdelazim, Binghamton Resident: As a resident of 6<sup>th</sup> District, feels he hasn't had good representation. Passionate about public service, but emailed CM Strawn consistently and suggested good governance reform bills without response or consideration. Criticizes the misrepresentation of Solak's legislation proposal. Hopes that Council does not appoint Strawn to fill vacancy on Council. Abdelazim expresses support for new Youth Rec Center and commends Pat McGinnis, former Parks Director, for pursuing legislation.
- John Patterson, Binghamton Resident: Expresses support for ATV prohibition legislation, emphasizes danger of vehicles without lights, especially at night.
- Jim Clune, Binghamton Resident: Representing community groups (Citizen Action, Broome County Peace Action, Broome County Veterans for Peace, Binghamton University faculty/students) in support of ceasefire in Gaza. Believes all people have a responsibility to say something. 70 cities across US have passed similar resolutions calling for ceasefire, hostage release, and reestablishment of finances for UN relief. Went to Israel/Palest in 2010 with peace group, learned that Palestinians are like anyone else: strong, vibrant, but have lived under occupation for 75 years. Was clear to him who held power, recounts several background stories of time there. Says the only options available to Palestinians are living in apartheid, dying, or leaving as part of ethnic cleansing.
- Miriam Frankel, Binghamton Resident: Believes that trendy activism in mass digital spaces regarding Israeli-Palestinian conflict stands out as reminder of dangers of oversimplification. Geopolitical issues reduced slogans do not account for depth and complexity, while bandwagon effect is encouraged and strengthened by Hamas supporters promote surface level understanding of October 7<sup>th</sup>. Believes many individuals who claim title feminist and peace pursuer are incorrect, is concerned for justice and rights of all women and men. Prays for Palestinian safety and Jewish safety, hopes to shed light on the inequities Palestinians face during this conflict. However, believes the blame Pro-Palestinians place on Israel is on wrong shoulders, as Hamas guilty party. Frankel retells stories from October 7<sup>th</sup> as background for statements. Points out that Hamas violated agreements in the past; believes free speech is being misconstrued. Believes Hamas must be condemned and conversations surrounding ceasefire must include freeing hostages.
- Salka Valerio, Binghamton Resident: Community organizer in Binghamton, states that Israel-Palestine conflict has been going for many years. Last conflict was in 2008/2009 -- truce was over, when NATO wasn't involved, Israel went into Gaza and killed about 1300 Palestinians. People knew about it and protested in California, but no ceasefire then because Israel has an established military while Palestinians don't. Valerio understands support of Israel, but directs attention to Palestinian families who have lost hundreds of family members. Has a friend here whose whole family was wiped out. Emphasizes importance of standing up with Palestinian families in this community that are mourning losing generations of people. Believes we should speak about it and Binghamton's Palestinians neighbors should know that they're being supported.



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- Rebecca Rathmell, Binghamton Resident: Here to speak because she heard a member of Veterans for Peace intended to submit a ceasefire resolution. Grew up in DC-area, going to Holocaust Museum every year in Middle School, processing atrocity committed against Jewish people and those who dared to resist Nazi regime during World War II. Can't understand such hate, but also can't understand inaction of those who knew and did nothing. Believes strongly that being pro-Palestine and against anti-Semitism go hand in hand, all systems of oppression reinforce one another and none can be fought in isolation. Word "genocide" did not actually exist prior to 1944 -- coined by a Polish-Jewish lawyer specifically to describe Nazi policies of systemic murder 1939-1945. 80 years later, believes genocide is most fitting word to apply to the Israeli regime's occupation and obliteration of Gaza, mass killing of Palestinian civilians between October 7th 2023 to today. Armed violence has claimed lives of over 29,000 Palestinians (more than 12,500 children, over 1,400 Israelis, injuring more than 70,000). Rathmell is angered by Biden administration's commitment to sending billions of taxpayer dollars to support Netanyahu's military assault. Urges Council to use their platform to advocate for measures that will result in the least amount of death and violence in support of the ceasefire resolution submitted.
- Lauren Levy: States that there is a baby and toddler that are Hamas hostages; until they are returned, ceasefire cannot happen. Hamas has committed to repeat October 7th Massacre again, said repeatedly by multiple high-level people. Levy says Israel is going through a great length to reduce casualties for Gaza, sending ground troops instead of carpet bombing because they don't want non-combatants getting killed. States that Hamas death toll of 30,000 doesn't specify number of terrorists killed -- most of that number are terrorists. Points out Israel is still receiving rockets from Gaza. Has a family that lives in Israel, getting rockets every day from Gaza and Lebanon, Yemen, Syria. States that population in Gaza and West Bank has exploded, negating genocide. Concludes mentioning yesterday Hamas rejected a cease fire.
- Ed Nizalowski: Resident of Tioga County, participates with Veterans for Peace and Broome Peace Action, considers himself a historian. Studies history of social justice campaigns is in awe of people that have sacrificed for women's rights, abortion, abolition of slavery, animal rights, mental health issues, etc -- many gave up careers, lost lives. In women's rights fight, there were males who made sacrifices so that women could get right to vote. In abolition, many Caucasians made major sacrifices for the abolition of slavery, some gave up their lives. Nizalowski states one area he investigated was people that have tried to act on behalf of others that aren't part of their interest group. References Rachel Corey -- a young woman from the state of Washington who went to Palestine very concerned about the destruction of Palestinian homes, died trying to save a Palestinian home from an Israeli bulldozer. Her parents created a foundation in her memory to keep dialogue going between Jews and Arabs. Points out on Wikipedia, if you look up Arab-Israeli cooperation. there are efforts going on to continue cooperation and communication, reducing violence.
- Amari Pavati, Binghamton Resident: Here to speak about ceasefire resolution -- states that scale of bombing has been carpet-level, references The Guardian and other news sources, encourages people to check sources. Points out that International Court of Justice has said there's a probability of genocide, Amnesty International has also expressed a clear risk of genocide and famine --15% of all people in Northern Gaza and 5% in Rafa (safe zone continually being bombed) are at highest level of catastrophic hunger monitored by experts. Mentions protests for ceasefire in Binghamton over last couple months. Has family currently fighting in IDF, knows people who have family in Gaza and don't know have contact. Was recently participating in discussion with professors giving



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presentations comparing what is happening in Gaza to genocides across history. Says Council has obligation to amplify voices to call for ceasefire, release of hostages, and escalation of humanitarian aid.

- Saul Hakim, Binghamton resident: Student at Binghamton University, here to ask Council to oppose ceasefire resolution. Getting a bachelor's degree in political science and Judaic studies – Israel-Palestine conflict is focus of study. States that Hamas is genocidal organization -- in its charter has said they seek elimination of the Jewish state in its entirety. Says last name is Hakim; comes from Arab countries, family lived in Syria until expelled, had nowhere else to go but Israel. States he is a proud Zionist and proudly Pro Palestinian -- loss of life on both sides is abhorrent. States that this war would not be going on if not for Hamas; hostages being kept for 145 days is unacceptable – to create a shared future, Hamas needs to go. Agrees that there should be a permanent ceasefire, but cannot be implemented until Hamas is eliminated, as they indoctrinate children. Hakim is President of pro-Israel group on campus, says hundreds have protested with calls of “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”, considers this a call to exterminate Jewish people. Mentions that, last week, Judaic studies department and other sponsors brought in a Palestinian and Israeli to speak and was inspired that dialogue and a future are possible, but need to be built on a foundation of understanding that both have a right to exist. Urges Council to vote against resolution.
- Henry Rostkowski, Binghamton Resident: Has owned a vacant building within City for 43 years which was condemned, City forced out tenant living there. Had to declare bankruptcy while building developed further issues, so bank would not take it back. Stated that he had put a lot of work into property, hoping it would be a retirement project, but was constantly being given violations by Code. Doesn't believe he was allowed due process.
- John Solak, Binghamton Resident: Believes Emmanuel Priest and Christopher Dziedzic are political operatives -- worked for Libous, Akshar, Mihalko. States they are patronage people, not community members operating in good will, also on other boards like Landbank. Solak states he is against interlocking on various boards and commissions based political petition gathering, should at least make them fill out a form stating what other boards they're on. Criticizes process for fireworks in which applicant doesn't come before Council -- City Clerk does. Applicant files application with Clerk's office, then Clerk comes down to lobby for person requesting permit, so no questions can be asked. States every Friday night, people/pets can't sleep, sound amplified by valley, other issues: PTSD, environment, etc. just for baseball game -- suggests cutting Rumbleponies off financially like Boscov's. States Boscov's gets no government subsidies elsewhere, has no debt, and bring in a billion and a half dollars worth of income annually while City gives them \$10mil. References Dick Sporting Goods House of Sport receiving \$8mil of County ARPA money plus \$2mil more. Points out ARPA money is distributed in trivial ineffective amounts. Concludes saying Strawn should contribute to legal defense in 6<sup>th</sup> District case, as the candidate that has an objection to an election, points to other examples in past of similar payments.
- Anna Warfield, Binghamton Resident: Congratulates Council on win in 6<sup>th</sup> District Council right to appointment, has been watching on Youtube and thanks CM Cavanaugh for representation.



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## **IX. FIRST READING LEGISLATION**

### **Introductory Ordinance O24-06. Considered in Finance: Cavanaugh**

An Ordinance authorizing various capital improvements in and for the City, stating the maximum cost thereof is \$11,937,500, appropriating said amount for such purpose and authorizing the issuance of bonds in the City in the principal amount not to exceed \$11,937,500 to finance said appropriation

Motion to declare the property as "Type II" under SEQRA: Cavanaugh

Second: Dundon

All in Favor

Motion: Cavanaugh

Discussion: CM Hotchkiss states that more information will be expected to be provided in the future, particularly 5-year plans. CM Cavanaugh reiterates the necessity for more department planning and data to be provided. CM Mativetsky adds that mandatory reporting around debt may become necessary to increase transparency.

Second: Middleton

Vote: 6-1-0-0

Nay: Porter

### **Introductory Resolution R24-08. Considered in Finance: Cavanaugh**

A Resolution authorizing the Mayor to accept a grant for \$250,000 from CREST for a pumper fire truck

Motion: Cavanaugh

Second: Dundon

Discussion: CM Cavanaugh thanks Senator Webb for securing the accompanying grant money.

Vote: 7-0-0-0

### **Introductory Ordinance O24-09. Considered in Finance: Cavanaugh**

An Ordinance to amend the 2023 General Fund Budget to account for various over budget line items at year end

Motion: Cavanaugh

Second: Middleton

Vote: 6-1-0-0

### **Introductory Resolution R24-12. Considered in Municipal and Public Affairs: Middleton**

A Resolution authorizing the Rumble Ponies to conduct fireworks displays in 2024

Motion: Middleton

Second: Cavanaugh

Vote: 7-0-0-0

### **Introductory Resolution R24-13. Considered in Public Works/Parks: Middleton**

A Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a supplemental agreement with Fisher Associates for Ross Park Recreational Trail Design

Motion: Middleton

Second: Dundon

Vote: 7-0-0-0



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## **X. COMMUNICATIONS FROM COUNCIL**

CM Porter: Porter thanks public commenters for speaking up at meeting, especially considering his perspective as a person of color in America. Porter references the severity of devastation and starvation in Israel-Palestine. Porter also encourages constituents to attend 1<sup>st</sup> Ward Neighborhood Watch meeting at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

CM Middleton: Middleton shows appreciation for 2<sup>nd</sup> District constituents and fellow councilmembers. Middleton is still searching for location for Neighborhood Watch meeting. Middleton reads Audre Lord poem “Now” as a tribute to Black History Month.

CM Cavanaugh: Cavanaugh mentions Parade Day weekend is upcoming, wishes everyone a safe and happy time.

CM Dundon: Dundon mentions Eastside Neighborhood Watch meets 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of every month at 6PM at Hands of Hope (270 Robinson St.), hopes to see constituents there.

CM Strawn: Strawn shows appreciation to fellow members and Clerk’s office for welcome, has been paying attention while legal process played out. Strawn applauds Council for holding town hall on Weis closure, emphasizes importance.

CM Hotchkiss: Hotchkiss discusses attendance of Together for Ukraine Rally over weekend, emphasizes role of City Council in supporting individuals dealing with international conflict. Hotchkiss states that the loss of Rebecca Rathmell’s perspective on Council is unfortunate, but hopes to see Rathmell stay involved due to her intimate knowledge of housing issues. Hotchkiss concludes by spotlighting City of Binghamton phone application to report issues; has been very effective and recommends use to constituents.

CM Mativetsky: Mativetsky also commends City of Binghamton application, thanks IT for supplying Council with computer. Mativetsky thanks Acting DPW Commissioner Paludi for attending the Southside Neighborhood Watch meeting, encourages residents to attend. Mativetsky mentions actively flyer neighborhood to encourage feedback on ATV prohibition legislation proposal. Upcoming events: 3/1 and 3/15 First Friday Art Show & Free Admission Night from 4PM-7PM at Discovery Center, 3/2 2024 Binghamton Fire Post-Parade Day Party at Celebrations on Park (136 Park Ave) 3PM-7PM

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Motioned at 8:11PM: Dundon

Second: Middleton

All in Favor

David Whalen  
City of Binghamton

I'm writing to express my support for Mayor Kraham's initiative providing the Salvation Army with funding to support their move and infrastructure build out at a new location on Walnut St. While the Salvation Army certainly provides a vital need for some of our most underserved community members; it's location on Washington St in the heart of our downtown business district has long been out of place.

This potential funding and move would be the culmination of over 20 years of work and would certainly improve the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors of downtown Binghamton; as well as the clients of the Salvation Army, I hope.



Though I usually shop @ the Weis on Robinson St., I find it disconcerting that you are closing what looks like a necessary commodity in the area. The Weis on Conklin Ave. serves a large population , in both Binghamton & Conklin & areas in between. It is convenient for people who don't own cars, of which there are many in this area.

Sorry that I missed the meeting yesterday - Weis is closing due to the loss of money due to shoplifting - any business would do the same as if they do not make a profit, they go out of business - shoplifters should be arrested and held accountable for their action - people, rather shoplifters will just go to Weis on Robinson Street and then they will be closing also - maybe all the grocery stores and other businesses will also close their doors and there will be shopping on line only - one way to stop the shoplifting - and all the good, honest people get hurt and the shoplifters just go to other stores and do their thing - do not know the answer to this problem as it does get worse instead of better - wonder why the prices are so high - say something when you witness shoplifting !!!

We need a nearby supermarket! In inclement weather it would be really tough for seniors like me to drive miles for groceries. Please do whatever you can to prevent reducing our quality of life here on the east side.

Thank you,  
Paula Rizzo

Honourable City Council President,

We Apple Food & Grocery Inc., located just opposite Weis Market, Conklin Ave. We were unable to attend the meeting conducted by city council on 13th Feb 2024 and we apologise for that.

Definitely there must be a big impact for this neighbourhood regarding their day to day grocery shopping and convenient location and we are aware of the future traffic in our store for grocery shopping.

Moving forward and handling the situation as a united community, we are committed to excellence in our C-Store with certain heights with available resources.

This is our promise and commitment to our Community and The City of Binghamton, New York.

Thanking You,

Sincerely,

Manoharan Krishnaswamy,