

## FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Standing Committee on Finance met on *Tuesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 at 7:00 PM* in the *Council Chambers, Brockton City Hall, 45 School Street*, with Councilor Lally presiding, Councilor Thompson and Councilor Minichiello absent, to consider the following:

1. Appointment of Michelle Yaffe of 273 Belmont Avenue, Apt. 2, Brockton, MA 02301, as Parking Clerk for the City of Brockton.

Invited: Michelle Yaffe

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Farwell to report FAVORABLE, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Asack. Motion carried by a hand vote.

2. Appointment of Mary James of 996 Court Street Brockton, MA 02302 to the Council on Aging for a three (3) year term, ending February 2025.

Invited: Mary James

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Asack to report FAVORABLE, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Farwell. Motion carried by a hand vote.

3. Appointment of Attorney Shannon Resnick of 131 Samoset Avenue, Hull, Ma. to the position of legislative counsel to the City Council for a two-year term ending in February of 2024.

Invited: Shannon Resnick

\*City Clerk Tim Cruise begins by telling the Council that there shall be a Legislative Counsel by the second Monday in February despite not having one the last few years per the ordinance.

\*Attorney Resnick states that she has been the Legislative Counsel for the City of Brockton since 2017.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Farwell to report FAVORABLE, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Nicastro. Motion carried by a hand vote.

4. Ordered: That the City Council authorizes the acceptance and expenditure of the total grant funds in the amount of \$51,480.

From: Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)- Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)

To: Brockton Emergency Management Agency- Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Fund  
(These grant funds will be used to purchase a 2022 Polaris Ranger UTV for Fire Department, flashlights and radio equipment. This grant does not require a match.)

Invited: Stephan Hooke, Director of Emergency Management  
Troy Clarkson, Chief Financial Officer

\*Director of Emergency Management, Stephan Hooke, states that this is an annual recurring grant. Due to the increase in the population of the city, the grant funds have increased as well. He goes on to say that they will be using some the funds for radio equipment, while the majority of the funds will be used to purchase an all-terrain vehicle for the Fire Department. He states that there is no match for this grant.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Asack to report FAVORABLE, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Rodrigues. Motion carried by a hand vote.

5. Ordered: That the City Council authorizes the acceptance and expenditure of the total grant funds in the amount of \$50,000.

From: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Fire Services- FY2022 Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant

To: Brockton Fire Department- FY2022 Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Fund  
(These grant funds will be used to purchase a thermal imaging camera. This grant does not require a match.)

Invited: Brian Nardelli, Fire Chief or Designee  
Troy Clarkson, Chief Financial Officer

\*Chief Nardelli states that this is not a grant that the department has put in for in the past. He goes on to say that Brockton is one of the only fire departments to receive this number of grant funds. He states that these funds will be used to purchase replacement thermal imaging cameras. These need to be replaced due to the changes in technology over the years. The last cameras were purchased in 2013 and are getting to the end of their life expectancy. He ends by saying that these cameras are used for more emergencies than just fires, and that there is no match for this grant.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Asack to report FAVORABLE, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor D'Agostino. Motion carried by a hand vote.

6. Ordered: That the City Council authorizes the acceptance and expenditure of the total grant funds in the amount of \$275,000.

From: Executive Office of Public Safety and Security – FY2022 Municipal Services Staffing Grant

To: Brockton Police Department- FY2022 Municipal Services Staffing Grant Fund (These grant funds will be used to pay overtime wages for patrol shift minimum staffing; shift overruns, detective investigations; restraining order service, training, community police activities, etc. This grant does not require a match.)

Invited: Steve Williamson, Interim Chief of Police

Michelle St. James, Grant Coordinator, BPD

Troy Clarkson, Chief Financial Officer

\*Ms. St. James states that this is a grant that they have received for many years and that Brockton is one of the few cities in Massachusetts that receives it.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Asack to report FAVORABLE, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor Farwell. Motion carried by a hand vote.

7. Resolve: To have Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy Cruz present before the Brockton City Council an update on crime statistics in Brockton and what his office has been doing to address crime in the city as well as the programs offered through the DA's office such as the Safe Streets Meetings and programs for our youth.

Invited: Timothy Cruz, Plymouth County District Attorney

\*District Attorney Cruz states that the DA's office is dealing with prevention of underage drug and alcohol use as well as mental health issues amongst many other things. He goes on to say that being ahead of and smart regarding public safety issues is key. He says that it is important to work together as a community to work toward prevention.

\*DA Cruz states that as DA he provides resources, prosecutes crime and attempts to build community partnerships in attempts to make the district safer. He goes on to say that his office takes care to be present in the community.

\*DA Cruz provided the Council with charts and numbers regarding crime in the City of Brockton which he continues to refer to. Since 2015, crime numbers have gone down. Since 2010, the number of incarcerated individuals in the Plymouth County Department of Corrections is down 65%.

\*Safe Streets is a program that allows the community's leaders and law enforcement officers to come together and decipher ways to make our community safer and welcoming. There are community based juvenile justice meetings that

are brought together to talk about young men and women and how the community can help them with various issues that they may be facing in their lives. DA Cruz states that the programs that have been put together are in place to break the cycles that young men and women are dealing with. These cycles are breaking because of everything together, not just one thing.

\*DA Cruz tells the Council about 'Handle With Care' which is a program that works with schools to talk about kids who have had some sort of traumatic experience, specifically encounters with the police, just to be sure that the school is aware of what is happening in the child's life outside of school. The DA's office is trying to use this program to make the schools in the district trauma sensitive.

\*After talking about kids who witness violence and how 'Handle With Care' helps them, DA Cruz moves on to talk about children who witness Opioid abuse within their homes. Dealing with these issues and preventing the children from falling into the cycles that their families, or people that they know have fallen into, is important. Taking the information that the DA's office has learned about children who witness violence, they are able to apply this to children who witness Opioid abuse. The Plymouth County Drug Abuse Task Force has been developed in Plymouth County in regards to this as well.

\*DA Cruz moves on to talk about re-entry programs within the district that are helping those who may have been incarcerated reenter the community and get the help to find work, and reenter life as an individual no longer incarcerated.

\*DA Cruz mentions the Plymouth County Anti Human Trafficking Task Force and how they have received a 1.5 million dollar grant to partner with Health Imperatives in the City of Brockton to ensure that people are trained well and efficiently in what to look for.

\*He goes on to say that those children who are hurt and who come from broken homes can often go from victim to perpetrator and fall into the violent cycle that they were once a victim of. His office works to prevent this. He believes that it is important that kids get the help they need to stop the cycle. Many times, crimes in which a child is being hurt or abused do not have any criminal prosecutions coming from them because the children are too young to testify or it may be harmful for them to do so. The office has also been dealing with commercial sexual exploitation of children. They are going out and training people with what they may need to look for regarding these problems. Numbers are spiking regarding this issue due to people, meaning police and educators, now being more trained in what to look for; they put themselves in a position to help the children.

\*The DA's office partnered with BAMSI to have sexual assault investigative nurses help children who may have been abused and need help the most.

\*Cruz moves on to talk about the numerous diversion programs in the city. The office is making sure that children are treated fairly and keeping their futures in mind regarding CORIs and juvenile records. Brockton District Court has been selected as one of the two pilot programs this year to implement a new screening mechanism for a drug diversion program. The office is hoping to identify candidates for diversion including those who may be suffering from substance abuse and keep them out of the system while getting them the help that they need.

\*Cruz tells the Council that any grant that the community has received has gone directly to the community, and there has been no administrative fees taken out of them.

\*DA Cruz notes that one doesn't have to sacrifice accountability to achieve justice.

\*Everything talked about by Plymouth County District Attorney Cruz is also outlined on [PlymouthDA.com](http://PlymouthDA.com).

\*Councilor Farwell asks DA Cruz to comment on the gun issue in the community, especially in the hands of young people. He asks if DA Cruz and the other DAs are able to find the source of these guns and how they are falling into the hands of young people and people in Brockton. He asks how to trace the origin of guns. DA Cruz responds by saying that since being given the Project Safe Neighborhood grant funds they have been attempting to crack down on these issues. They are following the casings of bullets and evidence at the scene to track where the guns have come from. He goes on to say that they are trying to crack down on it as best as they can and that they are trying to get the crime guns off the streets. They attempt to prosecute individuals who have firearms and work with individuals at the federal level to make this issue go away. He hopes that they are able to expedite gun cases although COVID has slowed some of these cases down.

\*Councilor Rodrigues states that Brockton suffers from a perception of crime and social media and other media outlets do not help that. He goes on to say that the community doesn't do a very good deal of publicizing the good within our community. He asks DA Cruz how the statistics he has provided compare to other communities of the same size in terms of reduction. DA Cruz states that he doesn't have exact research to support his answer but while looking at crime spikes in the country and the decrease in violent crimes in our community, he can say that both the downward trend with crimes and the downward trend with people whom are in custody shows him that there is something being done right in this community. He recognizes that we may not be perfect, but we are much better than we were. He states that while looking at these numbers and seeing the downward trends, these trends don't just happen. He goes on to say that these happen because the different groups and partners within the community are

working together to get in front of the issues. He reiterates the fact that the charts provided go back 7-8 years and some even 10+ years, which proves that this is not just a spike, but it is a trend that has continued.

\*Councilor Rodrigues goes on to ask if the rates of solving homicides in the city are high. District Attorney Cruz answers that these rates are between 80 and 85%. He states that he is confident in the justice system.

\*Councilor Rodrigues follows up to ask if the community has been helpful and responsive in terms of coming forward and assisting the DA's office with investigations about criminal activities. DA Cruz states that there are always people who want to come forward and help while there are others who simply don't, whether because they are scared or because they just don't want to help. He states that it is important to make people feel comfortable and safe.

\*Councilor Rodrigues notes that with the legalization of marijuana, people felt like there would be a spike in drug crimes. He asks DA Cruz if this is true for our city. Cruz states that he believes that it has brought an increase in drugged driving crimes. He believed that the city wasn't ready for marijuana to be legalized in terms of law enforcement. Besides the initial observations, it is hard to prove these cases.

\*Councilor D'Agostino asks about re-entry programs and how things are set up to ensure that those who exit a prison of sorts don't end up back where they were to which DA Cruz answers that the re-entry program at the House of Correction has been really helpful in ensuring that. The programs that are there help people coming out get jobs and reunite with their families, essentially to get back on their feet. He states that every case is different but understands the responsibility that his office has to be sure that they are at their best and to be their best for people who are at their worst.

\*Councilor D'Agostino refers to the statistic charts DA Cruz provided to the councilors and asked how many, if any, of the offenders are repeat offenders. DA Cruz states that he doesn't have that number per say and asks to clarify if he's asking in the Department of Correction or in general. Councilor D'Agostino says in general. DA Cruz states that he looks at the numbers as they are now, but states that he could certainly look at the numbers to find out and attempt to crack down on repeat offenders.

\*Councilor D'Agostino circles back to the Opioid crisis and refers to the part of DA Cruz's presentation where he talked about the potential new drug coming from DC. He asks DA Cruz to elaborate a bit more on what is to be expected from this and how the community can prepare for it. DA Cruz states that every jurisdiction is doing things differently, but specifically in Plymouth County, there is a MOU amongst all police departments that if a nonfatal overdose were to happen to someone in a surrounding community, the person would be met with a

plain clothed police officer and a recovery coach that has a packet of information to help. He states that by bringing this information to people's houses, it has been very helpful. When looking at the fatal opiate overdoses, in 2020, during the peak of COVID, these spiked tremendously. DA Cruz believes that this is because these officers could not go to homes.

\*Councilor D'Agostino asks if the reason that these drugs keep ending up on our streets is a federal issue, or something that we, as a community, can do more to prevent. DA Cruz states that providing resources and holding those who are selling these drugs accountable are big steps in moving to get these drugs off the streets. He goes on to say that in working with the other DAs, they're working as hard as they can to get the drug traffickers off the streets, which is in turn eliminating the number of drugs being sold and consumed. Regarding the drugs themselves, Cruz goes on to say that they're being tweaked all the time and it is hard to stay ahead of them.

\*Councilor D'Agostino goes on to ask about Safe Streets, and what exactly it is. DA Cruz answers that it is a version of the original Project Safe Neighborhood which was a federal grant that was received in 2008/2009. It brought local, state and federal people together on a monthly basis to talk about different cases happening around the counties. He goes on to say that when that federal program, and it's funding ended, and when there was an increase in crimes again in the City of Brockton, he and the Police Chiefs decided to do it again, just without the grant. They started Safe Streets meetings on their own. Safe Streets meetings have stopped due to the pandemic, but once they are back up and running DA Cruz believes that it would be important to have meetings all over the city because people from the community are more apt to show up if it is somewhere closer to their home. He goes on to say that it's beneficial when people feel as though they have someone that they can talk to. Eventually, the Project Safe Neighborhood grant came back to the county as one of the few communities to get these funds and additional resources. He states that if he had to summarize PSN and Safe Streets into one word, it would be communication.

\*Councilor Tavares asks how the various programs are advertised. DA Cruz answers that there are press releases, and they post things to their website and their Facebook page. He recognizes the fact that it isn't as well promoted as he would like it to be, but he hopes to become better at promoting these programs.

\* Through the Chair, Councilor Asack tells Councilor Tavares that the DAs office will usually email the councilors with information about Safe Streets meetings and other information that they should know.

\*Each councilor thanks Plymouth County District Attorney Cruz for coming before them and for all the work that he and his office does for the community.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Asack to report FAVORABLE, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilor D'Agostino. Motion carried by a hand vote.

Meeting Adjourned Approximately 8:30pm