



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

Kristen E. Haroian, Ward 2
John P. Donegan, Ward 3
Richard D. Campopiano, Ward 4
Christopher G. Paplauskas, Ward 5
Daniel Wall, Ward 6

MINUTES

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2024, at 7:00 P.M.

The regular monthly meeting of the Cranston City Council was held on **Monday, September 23, 2024 at 7:00 PM. in the Cranston City Council Chambers, Cranston City Hall, 869 Park Ave., Cranston, RI 02910.**

YouTube Live Stream

This meeting was live streamed on YouTube. Click the link to view the meeting. You will only be able to observe the proceedings. You will not be able to participate.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtE9vwA1B1PQHuftrNPcZjg>.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 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 Kristen E. Haroian, Councilman John P. Donegan, Councilman Richard D. Campopiano, Councilman Christopher G. Paplauskas, Councilman Daniel Wall, Council Vice-President Lammis J. Vargas, and Council President Jessica M. Marino. Also present: David DiMaio, Budget Analyst; Stephen Angell, Legal Counsel; John Verdecchia, Asst. Solicitor; Christopher Millea, Solicitor; Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff; Tracy Nelson, City Clerk; and Ronald Ronzio, Stenographer.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the body.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES *(votes may be taken)*

MOTION made by Councilman Paplauskas, SECOND by Councilwoman Renzulli to consider all minutes as a block.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

Approval of the minutes of the August 26, 2024 Regular Council Meeting
(vote may be taken) [\[click to view\]](#)

Approval of the **sealed*** minutes of the August 26, 2024 Executive Session
(vote may be taken) ***the sealed minutes were distributed by the Council President prior to the start of the meeting.**

Approval of the minutes of the September 9, 2024 Special Council Meeting
(vote may be taken) [\[click to view\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilman Wall, SECOND by Councilwoman Renzulli to approve all three sets of minutes as written.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

V. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND COMMENDATIONS

CITATIONS honoring *CLCF CWLL Girls Softball* - State and Regional Champions
(no votes) (cont'd from August 26, 2024)

The citations were presented by the Council President and Council Vice-President.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND PUBLIC COMMENT (Votes may be taken)

Public hearings under this section are limited to DOCKETED subject matters only

Heidi Lavigne of 22 Westhill Dr., **Martha Dimeo** of 69 Laconia Rd., and **Judy Dauphinee** of 95 Curtis St. all spoke in opposition of the gun range noise. They would like to know the Mayor's Plan.

Susan Blake, 173 Grand Ave., spoke in support of the Resolution forming a Subcommittee on Homeless Encampments and in support of the Resolution for an Independent Investigation into the lawsuit against the Mayor and city employees. She recommended an independent investigation of Budlong Pool as well. She supports the speakers' requests for relief from the gun range.

Silvia Louro, 18 Buttonwoods Dr., and **Melissa Lauro**, 85 Cypress Dr. expressed concern with the ambiguity of the term "unnecessarily" in Ordinance 08-24-06. There are no criteria. Who would determine the necessity?

Atty. Ryan Stys cautioned the City Council against discussing the Resolution for an Independent Investigation in open session. He is representing the defendants. He believes the pending litigation should only be discussed in executive session.

Karen Rosenberg, 46 Bow St., stands in solidarity with the residents of Meshanticut seeking relief from the noise. Relative to the civil complaint, a lot of people are focused on the concern of a person in their official capacity flagrantly violating the law by driving an unregistered vehicle around the city. The Mayor has not been adequately able to explain. His inability to recall the price is not credible. It's concerning that Mr. Broccoli may have been given special treatment or had some sort of agreement. It appears city employees were used to pressure and intimidate. She is concerned with the City's financial exposure. She feels the City Council has the right and obligation to request an independent investigation into the abuse of power.

Drake Patten, 684 Natick Ave., spoke (via Zoom) in support of the Resolution forming a Subcommittee on Homeless Encampments, in support of the neighbors of the gun range, and in support of the Resolution requesting an Independent Investigation. While she appreciates and respect's Atty. Stys' opinion, there is a question of the Mayor's ethics regarding use of taxpayer money and vindictive use of resources.

VII. RESOLUTIONS

None

VIII. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

A. Report from the Chair, Councilman Wall, on the *CLAIMS COMMITTEE* meeting of September 9, 2024: Claims paid report from May 21, 2024 to September 19, 2024
(no vote) [\[click to view\]](#) **No further action taken**

B. Report from the Chair, Councilman Ferri, on the *SAFETY SERVICES & LICENSES COMMITTEE* meeting held September 9, 2024: Nothing to report.
(no vote)

*C. Report from the Chair, Councilman Donegan, on the **FINANCE COMMITTEE** meeting held September 9, 2024:*

RESOLUTION Authorizing Real Estate Tax Abatements as requested by the Tax Assessor and recommended for approval by the Finance Committee September 9, 2024 (vote may be taken) [\[click to view\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to approve the resolution.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

RESOLUTION Authorizing Motor Vehicle Tax Abatements as requested by the Tax Assessor and recommended for approval by the Finance Committee September 9, 2024 (vote may be taken) [\[click to view\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to approve the resolution.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

08-24-04 ORDINANCE Ratifying School Committee's Collective Bargaining Agreement with the National Association of Government Employees, Local RI-153, Custodial Unit; Pursuant to Charter Sec. 11.02.1; recommended for approval by the Finance Committee September 9, 2024 (vote may be taken) [\[Ordinance\]](#) [\[Contract\]](#) [\[School Committee Resolution\]](#) [\[Fiscal Note\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to approve Ordinance 08-24-04 as recommended by the Finance Committee.

Councilwoman Renzulli noted that only the first year is funded. The money will need to be found for the remaining two years.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

08-24-05 ORDINANCE Ratifying School Committee's Collective Bargaining Agreement with Rhode Island Laborers District Council 1322, Tradespeople/Mechanic Unit; Pursuant to Charter Sec. 11.02.1; recommended for approval by the Finance Committee September 9, 2024 (vote may be taken) [\[Ordinance\]](#) [\[Contract\]](#) [\[School Committee Resolution\]](#) [\[Fiscal Note\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to approve Ordinance 08-24-05 as recommended by the Finance Committee.

Councilman Donegan, in reference to Councilwoman Renzulli's comment, noted the combined amount over the course of the two years is less than 1/3 of a percent of the city's overall budget. He trusts the Finance Committee will fund all three years.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

*D. Report from the Chair, Council Vice-President Vargas, on the **PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE** meeting held September 12, 2024: Nothing to report (no vote)*

*E. Report from the Chair, Council Vice-President Vargas, on the **ORDINANCE COMMITTEE** meeting held September 12, 2024:*

05-24-03 ORDINANCE In Amendment of Chapter 5.40 of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled 'Hawkers and Peddlers – Generally' Section 5.40.140 'Soliciting at Houses'; Sponsored by Council President Marino, Councilman Wall and Councilman Ferri; Co-Sponsored by Council Vice-President Vargas, Councilwoman Haroian, Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilman Campopiano, and Councilman Paplauskas; Recommended for approval as amended by the Ordinance Committee September 12, 2024

(vote may be taken) [\[click to view\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to approve Ordinance 05-24-03.

Solicitor Millea expressed concern with language in the ordinance. Colonel Winquist has indicated the Attorney General's office will not allow the Cranston Police Dept. to run the criminal background for this purpose. It should be incumbent upon the individual to pay the fee and obtain a background check from the AG's office that would include multiple states; otherwise, only RI information will be on the BCI. While he understands the importance of the ordinance, he requests Council table the ordinance to address that portion so that we don't find ourselves in legal jeopardy.

Council President Marino thanked Solicitor Millea but would have appreciated this information being brought forward sooner. Residents are facing this issue every day. She would like to expedite passage. This language is similar to other towns. She asked the Solicitor for recommended language. She suggested continuing to the 9/30/2024 Special Council Meeting.

Motion and Second WITHDRAWN by Councilmen Ferri and Wall.

MOTION made by Council Vice-President, SECOND by Councilman Ferri to continue this item to the next meeting. The roll was not called.

Council President Marino called for a motion to take the agenda out of order so that the solicitors could discuss language.

MOTION made by Councilman Wall, SECOND by Councilman Ferri to take the agenda out of order.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

Council President Marino would like a motion to move to executive session in consideration of Atty. Hemond who has a family emergency.

XVII. EXECUTIVE SESSION (vote may be taken to move to executive session)

MOTION made by Councilman Wall, SECOND by Councilman Donegan to move to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(a)(2) pertaining to prospective and actual litigation matters as listed below:

Casale vs. City of Cranston (vote may be taken)*

VOTE (by Roll Call): Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

Councilwoman Haroian did not join the executive session.

XVIII. RETURN OPEN SESSION (vote may be taken)

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to return to open session at 8:42 P.M.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to seal the minutes of executive session.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

**** At this time discussion returned to Ordinance 05-24-03 In Amendment of Chapter 5.40 of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled 'Hawkers and Peddlers – Generally' Section 5.40.140 'Soliciting at Houses'.**

Asst. Solicitor Verdecchia, after speaking with Solicitor Millea, suggested the following changes to address the issue: 1) after line 56 add the language “provide an up-to-date BCI and NCIC background check at the applicant’s expense”; 2) after “moral turpitude” on line 71 add the language “as defined in R.I. Gen. Laws and case law”.

MOTION made by Council President Marino, SECOND by Councilman Ferri to amend Ordinance 5-24-03 to incorporate the language recommended by Asst. Solicitor Verdecchia.

Councilman Paplauskas asked a procedural question. Can the ordinance be passed as amended or is this a substantive change which requires referral back to committee and re-advertising.

Asst. Solicitor Verdecchia explained the amendment is simply to clear up the methodology for the background check. It does not need to be re-advertised.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

MOTION made by Councilman Paplauskas, SECOND by Councilman Wall to approve Ordinance 05-24-03 as amended.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

08-24-06 ORDINANCE In Amendment of Title 17, “Zoning”, of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, to add Chapter 17.124 Entitled “Fences and Walls”; Sponsored by Mayor Hopkins, Council President Marino, Councilwoman Renzulli, and Councilman Wall; Recommended for approval as amended by the Ordinance Committee September 12, 2024 (*vote may be taken*) [\[click to view\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilman Wall, SECOND by Councilwoman Haroian to approve Ordinance 08-24-06.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked how the body felt about changing to a permit process rather than using the term “unnecessarily” in order to satisfy concerns.

Asst. Solicitor Verdecchia noted the language mirrors the spirit of state law. It’s a policy decision if you want people to have to come in or give the inspectors discretion.

Councilman Ferri wants to be sure a property owner can be made to take down a 12ft fence if it is put up illegally.

Asst. Solicitor Verdecchia answered yes; theoretically for anything over 4 inches. The difference is at what point you want the inspectors to get involved.

Councilwoman Renzulli is trying to encourage people to ask for permission rather than beg for forgiveness or have to take down the fence after they’ve spent money on it or forcing neighbors to complain.

Councilman Wall feels just because someone can do it doesn’t mean they should be allowed to. The maximum is 6ft. unless there is a valid reason.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked how this would pertain to anyone currently with a fence higher than 6ft. Would they be grandfathered in? Would this only apply going forward?

Asst. Solicitor Verdecchia explained the law pertaining to enactment states it would be prospective in application unless there is a retroactive date specified in the statute. The state law was on the books prior to the ordinances. The state created the private right of action.

Councilman Paplauskas is torn. He would prefer to strengthen the loophole by taking the word “unnecessarily” out in favor of specific purposes.

Councilman Campopiano agreed with Councilman Paplauskas. He suggested residential be capped at 6ft.

Councilman Wall shares Councilmen Paplauskas' and Campopiano's apprehension with the word "unnecessarily"; however, he is inclined to vote in favor of the ordinance as drafted in order to get something on the books.

Council President Marino is inclined to approve the ordinance as written. Common sense dictates. She reminded everyone, as she did in committee, that "unnecessarily exceeds 6ft" was not pulled from thin air. It is replicated in state law. She called for the vote.

VOTE: Ayes – 7 (Ferri, Haroian, Donegan, Campopiano, Wall, Vargas, Marino)
Nays – 2 (Renzulli, Paplauskas)

MOTION CARRIES.

RESOLUTION creating a Sub-Committee on Homeless Encampments; Sponsored by Council President Marino and recommended for approval by the Ordinance Committee September 12, 2024 (*Vote may be taken*) [\[click to view\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilwoman Haroian to approve the Resolution.

Councilwoman Renzulli is in favor. The unhoused couple she visited are now in temporary housing.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR UNDOCKETED ITEMS (*no votes*)

Public comment may be permitted under this section, subject to time limitations, for UNDOCKETED items only.

Jay Taraksian, 17 Asia St., expressed concern about a rat infestation caused by overflowing garbage next door. Rats are constantly feeding on it. It took the city two months to put out traps. Housing has come out. It is unsanitary. It smells. He offered to show photos. He came here for help. It is getting worse. The home is located at the corner of Cranston St. and Asia St., opposite the senior center.

Nick Lima, Director of Elections, announced upcoming deadlines and election preparations. He supports the alternate appointment to the Canvassing Authority. The position has been vacant back to August, 2022.

X. ELECTION/APPOINTMENT OF CITY OFFICIALS

APPOINTMENT of Justin Erickson as Republican Alternate to the Cranston Canvassing Authority, as nominated by Mayor Kenneth J. Hopkins, in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-8-1, for the unexpired term ending March 5, 2029
(*vote may be taken*) [\[click to view\]](#)

MOTION made by Councilwoman Renzulli, SECOND by Councilman Paplauskas to appoint Justin Erickson as Republican Alternate to the Cranston Canvassing Authority.

VOTE: Ayes – 9 (unanimous)

XI. REPORT OF CITY OFFICERS *None*

XII. EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Legal Expense Analysis (*no vote*) [\[click to view\]](#)

*From Planning Director Pezzullo, status report on the Comprehensive Plan
(no status report received) (no vote)*

Council President Marino received an email from Director Pezzullo this afternoon. The City Council will hold a workshop with the Planning Dept. on 9/24/2024 at 6:00 p.m., the Ordinance Committee will hold a public hearing at a special meeting on 9/26/2024 at 5:30 p.m., and then the Comp Plan will go before the full Council for a vote at a special Council meeting on 9/30/2024 at 5:30 p.m.

XIII. COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS (no votes)

Update from the Administration on the police training and gun range facility location as mentioned by the Mayor in recent interviews/debates

Director Moretti spoke. Soon after receiving complaints, the Administration met with a group of residents. Two or three years ago a proposal to enclose the gun range was rejected by the Planning Commission. It never went to Council. In the meantime, the Mayor has pursued the opportunity to find a piece of land to move the range. Nothing is concrete. The Administration is doing due diligence. There are different parties involved. He cannot divulge specifics. It is in the best interest of the city and citizens. They make no promises. It may not come to fruition. Preliminary costs are in the \$4 - \$6 million range. It is not inexpensive. Council will be kept abreast if more concrete information becomes available. The Mayor has asked the Colonel and Police Dept. to use suppressors. That muffles about 50% of the sound. They are doing what they can to mitigate. An enclosed facility is not soundproof. You would still hear gunshots. They are learning of new technology which may be considered through the capital process. That would go through Planning and Council. There's a long way to go.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked about funding through the federal delegation.

Director Moretti replied that we need a plan first.

Councilman Paplauskas would like to see something brought to the Planning Commission in the next budget proposal. Not only for the residents, but also so the police department can train regardless of the weather.

Councilwoman Haroian asked if other cities and towns have facilities. She also asked the amount of revenue generated.

Director Moretti believes Providence and Warwick have facilities, but he is not certain. The revenue is little. The facility is rarely used by others.

Members of the audience disagreed.

Councilman Campopiano would also like to see a plan in the next budget season. He is in favor of an enclosure.

Councilman Ferri noted this was first brought up two or more years ago. It was asked that something be done within a reasonable amount of time. Two years have gone by and it's still just a thought. We have not responded to the needs of the residents for relief.

Councilman Donegan has served on the Finance Committee his entire time on Council and has acted as chair the last two years. He estimates the city has received \$37,000 in revenue between October, 2020 and December, 2023. The revenue is not readily identifiable in the budget. He also would like to see the situation resolved through the capital budget process.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked if the city has looked at grants.

Director Moretti pointed out the City Council has a grant writer. Colonel Winkvist always has an ear out. He is not aware of anything. He reiterated that a proposal would need to go before the Planning Commission through the budget process.

Councilwoman Renzulli believes she found an application that appears to be for COVID relief money on google.

Director Moretti would have to check with Colonel Winkvist. It doesn't ring a bell.

Councilwoman Renzulli stated that in the past the facility has been rented to other parties including the FBI. The Colonel indicated that has been drastically reduced. She would like to find out if it is now just the Cranston Police Dept. and the municipal training academy. If not, which other agencies are using the facility.

Council President Marino agrees with Councilwoman Renzulli's statement that outside use has been reduced within the last year. Everyone involved has expressed openness and a desire to enclose the facility to mitigate sound and public safety. There was a proposal through the capital budget process. The Planning Commission didn't see the benefit of using city funds.

XIV. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS (no votes)

From Councilwoman Haroian:

- *Budlong Pool Update*

Director Moretti reported a lot is being done behind the scenes. The Administration continues to review and respond to requests for information for the submittal review process. Concurrently, they are trying to finalize the HUD grant; going through the processes to obtain funding.

Councilwoman Haroian asked for a timeframe for when the pool will be drained.

Director Moretti will get an estimated timeframe. The water is being treated regularly.

XV. COUNCIL BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER *None*

XVI. INTRODUCTION OF NEW BUSINESS

MOTION made by Councilman Wall, SECOND by Councilwoman Haroian to take all new business items as a block.

VOTE: Ayes – 6 (Ferri, Haroian, Donegan, Wall, Vargas, Marino)
Nays – 2 (Renzulli & Campopiano)
(Councilman Paplauskas was not present for the vote)

MOTION CARRIES.

The following New Business items are listed for reference and for a vote to be referred to the appropriate Council sub-committee for a public hearing:

09-24-02 ORDINANCE In Amendment of Title 10, Chapter 32, Section 030 of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled 'Multi-Way Stop Intersections – Enumerated' (adding 4-way stop at Packard St. and Flint Ave.); Sponsored by Councilman Donegan; to be referred to Ordinance Committee October 17, 2024 (vote may be taken) [\[click to view\]](#)

RESOLUTION Calling for an Independent Investigation relative to Complaint PC 2024-4766, David Broccoli, et al v. Kenneth Hopkins, The City of Cranston, Anthony Moretti, Paul McCauley, David Rodio and Christopher Millea, et al.; Sponsored by Council President Jessica Marino; to be referred to Finance Committee October 7, 2024 (vote may be taken) [\[click to view\]](#)

CLAIMS to be referred to the Claims Committee meeting of October 7, 2024 as follows:
(vote may be taken)

<i>TYPE OF CLAIM</i>	<i>CLAIMANT</i>	<i>DATE OF ALLEGED INCIDENT</i>
Property Damage	Joe’s Place Perfume	June/July 2024
Property Damage	Kelly & Diego Tecun	May 23, 2024
Property Damage	Kevin Flood	July 17, 2024

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to refer all new business items to their respective committees.

VOTE: Ayes – 6 (Ferri, Haroian, Donegan, Wall, Vargas, Marino)
Nayes – 2 (Renzulli & Campopiano)
(Councilman Paplauskas was not present for the vote)

MOTION CARRIES.

XIX. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – NO ACTION NEEDED
None

XX. ADJOURNMENT *(vote may be taken)*

MOTION made by Councilman Ferri, SECOND by Councilman Wall to adjourn at 9:35 P.M. All Ayes

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy A. Nelson, CMC
City Clerk