



---

---

**Members**

James Tillotson  
Gary Labrie  
Jerry Roy  
Pniak-Costello  
Krampits

APPROVED 5-24-2022

**MINUTES**  
**April 25, 2022**

The following are the minutes of a public hearing held Monday, April 25, 2022 6:30 PM in the City Council Chambers, Fourth Floor, City Hall Annex, 274 Front Street, Chicopee, MA 01013.

**Members Present** Tillotson, Labrie, Roy, Pniak-Costello

**Not Present** Krampits

**Also Present** Dan Garvey (Associate City Solicitor) Councilor Laflamme, Councilor Balakier, Councilor Courchesne, Councilor Zygarowski, Councilor Dobosz, Councilor Lopez (zoom), Tim Wagner (School Committee)

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM

In compliance with the Open Meeting Law the Chairman asked if anyone in the audience was recording the meeting. Hearing none the meeting continued.

**ITEM #1**

Mayoral appointment of Edward Czepiel as a member of the Westover Metropolitan Development Corporation to serve in such office for the term of 3 years expiring on the first of February 2025.

**Public Input**

Mary Hanor, 145 Slate Road, asked what his vision and role on the WMDC Board of Directors and what does he see for his responsibilities to citizens of the City of Chicopee.

Edward Czepiel stated that sixteen years ago when he was appointed he was in a position to extend Community Development for the entire city. He stated he looks at everything that comes in front of the Board. He stated that he has lived in the city for seventy five years and looks at the city as a whole not one neighborhood.

Mary Hanor stated that are there any situations that could hinder your ability to meet your obligations to the WMDC Board of Directors and the City of Chicopee.

**Edward Czepiel** stated that there is none whatsoever.

Mary Hanor stated what are your ideas on how to open the lines of communication between, WMDC, the City Council, and citizens groups such as the Slate Conservation area alliance.

Edward Czepiel stated that he had no comment.

Mary Hanor stated that in the interest of transparency would you be willing to sponsor a request for the WMDC public meetings to be subject to the same rules and regulations that apply to open meetings that apply to the City Council including publishing meetings and agendas.

Edward Czepiel stated that is beyond his capability as a board member.

Mary Hanor stated there is great confusion of the roles played by the WMDC, the Western Mass Area Development Corporation and the Western Mass Economic Council. Can you tell us how these corporations work together to the betterment of Chicopee.

Edward Czepiel stated that he has no comment.

Mary Hanor stated that the Western Mass Economic Development Council about us page, they list the Western Metropolitan Airport as one of their affiliated partner organizations. Please clarify if the airport is only with the entity or with the larger Western Metropolitan Development Corporation as a whole.

Edward Czepiel stated that he has no comment.

Katie Kalbaugh, 14 Nawrocki Drive, stated that she had questions for the other two that were supposed to appear this evening.

**Councilor Tillotson** stated that they could not make this meeting.

**Councilor Balakier** stated that Edward Czepiel is experienced and he's been involved with WMDC for a number of years. He also has a distinguished career with being the Deputy Fire Chief, long time city employee, civic minded and we served at our church with him, he is involved with numerous organizations. He stated that he has experience with the City of Chicopee.

**Councilor Zygarowski** stated that Edward Czepiel used to be the Deputy Fire Chief and he is well qualified and very involved in the community. He stated he will serve the board with dignity and respect.

**Councilor Chourchesne** was curious what the role and responsibilities are with this position.

Edward Czepiel stated his role is to take and review anything that comes in front of the Board and to give my best qualified vote either to pass or defeat it.

**Councilor Dobosz** stated is there any goals that WMDC has as a Board that they would like to share with the City.

Edward Czepiel stated that he has no comment.

**Councilor Dobosz** stated that he hopes that the line of communication opens up. He stated that he expects some change from WMDC.

**Councilor Pniak-Costello** stated that she would like to thank Mr. Czepiel for his many years of service but there were several questions where there was no comment. She stated that she wants to make an informed and correct decision which would be in the best interest of her constituents and the city.

**Councilor Dobosz** stated that we have no line of communication and there's no transparency. He stated he hopes the line of communication will open up in the future because he thinks there is some dialog that could benefit WMDC and the residents in the City.

David Boisselle, 117 De Jordy Lane stated that there is a lot of tension here and Mr. Czepiel is under the gun and that is not what he or anyone else here is trying to do. We just want to know what is WMDC, what do they do and what are they going to do for us the citizens. We are here every month and we don't know anything. He stated that we just want answers and knowledge of what's going on, will this be a ten year project. He stated he hears the frustration from the other residents.

**Council Labrie** stated that the last fifty years Mr. Czepiel has been a Director or member of this committee. This committee was charged with turning the former military property at Westover Airforce Base to civilian use and it developed four industrial parks, and a civilian airport. There's fifty companies that have located in

the parks. He stated that Mr. Czepiel is not here to explain the whole organization as he's just a member, and may not want to speak about the whole organization unless they are all present. After over fifty years of service including his Deputy Fire Chief position, he sees no reason why Mr. Czepiel would not be reappointed. He stated he would like an open meeting with the WMDC as a whole.

**Councilor Lopez** stated she is grateful for anyone that wants to sit on these Boards and give their time, this is important work. She stated that she believes that the Human Resource Committee could be the right forum if the candidate could answer the questions. She stated if you went for any other job and couldn't answer four or five questions you would not get the job. She stated that just from the answers we received tonight she does not think it is appropriate to move forward with the candidate.

**Councilor Pniak-Costello** stated that the public took the time to be here tonight knowing full well that they were going to ask questions. Mr. Czepiel is a very fine person and he has volunteered many hours of his time, but I did expect answers.

Councilor Roy motion to approve – Councilor Labrie 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion – motion passed

Committee vote	In Favor	Unfavorable
	Roy	Pniak-Costello
	Labrie	
	Tillotson	

### ITEM #2

Mayoral appointment of Paul G. Lamontagne as a member of the Council on Aging to serve until the first of April 2025.

Paul G. Lamontagne would like to withdraw his appointment.

Councilor Roy motion to approve – Councilor Tillotson 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion – motion passed

Favorable to withdraw  
Committee vote 4 – 0 favorable

### ITEM #3

Mayoral appointment of Laura B. Lavoie as a member of the Council on Aging to serve until the first of April 2025.

Laura Lavoie stated that she has been working with elders, specifically dementia for over twenty five years. She worked in Longmeadow for twenty five years and is now back in Chicopee starting her own business.

**Councilor Pniak-Costello** stated that how do we go about advocating for seniors to remain in their homes when finally after a certain financial part they can't do this.

Laura Lavoie stated that it is very important for people to remain in their homes. Having Chicopee become age and dementia friendly because there would be more volunteers that could be trained to help.

**Councilor Pniak-Costello** stated that there is a lot of supervision that's needed for elders that do get early onset dementia and what she finds is that the Government doesn't support these families financially.

Laura Lavoie stated that she cannot find any adult day care centers in Chicopee. She stated that there has to be a change and it has to start within our communities.

**Councilor Pniak-Costello** stated as a Council on Aging board member would you be willing to be an advocate. The State House can look at how they allocate money, so they start changing their thinking so that Mass Health can be used for community care.

Laura Lavoie stated that her business is related to dementia, education and support.

Councilor Laflamme stated that Laura Lavoie and her whole family are volunteers and I know she will do a good job.

Councilor Roy motion to approve – Councilor Labrie 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion – motion passed

Committee vote      4 – 0 favorable

#### **ITEM #4**

Councilor Roy motion to approve the minutes of December 14, 2021 – Councilor Pniak-Costello 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion – motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.