



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

SUMMARY
March 7, 2022
5:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

D. Reed, J. Cepeda-Freytiz, J. Waltman, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, M. Ventura, W. Butler, B. Tyson

OTHERS PRESENT:

M. Gombar, L. Kelleher, S. Smith, E. Moran, F. Denbowski, C. Crespo, M. Oppenheimer, M. Rodriguez, H. Guldin, R. Tornielli, T. Gombar, J. Schwank, J. Didow, N. Matz, T. Profit

An executive session was held between 5:04 and 5:10 pm for the members of Council, Mr. M. Gombar and Ms. Kelleher to discuss personnel and potential litigation.

The COW meeting was called to order at 5:15 pm by Mr. Waltman. He announced that Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz will be disconnecting from the meeting early. Ms. Reed announced that she will be disconnecting early as well due to a schedule conflict.

Mr. Waltman reminded the group that anyone wishing to make a comment or ask a question should post a note in the Chat.

I. Statewide Local Share Assessment Grant

Mr. Moran introduced the topic, noting that he asked that this topic be added to tonight's agenda mid-morning today.

Senator Schwank stated that this grant is funded by gambling in PA. Due to the casino located in Caernarvon Twp., Berks County is eligible for a local share of the available grant funding.

Mr. Litvinov and Chief Stoudt connected with the meeting.

Senator Schwank stated that the grant applications for projects costing \$25,000 to \$1M are due on March 15th. A resolution supporting the application is required; however, if the resolution is

not adopted by the 15th adding a reference to when it will be approved is satisfactory. She added that there is also a 2nd grant application opportunity in May.

Mr. Abodalo, Mr. Murray and Mr. Oppenheimer connected with the meeting.

Mr. T. Gombar explained that the applications are submitted to the DCED where the technical format of the application is reviewed. If all is acceptable, the application is forwarded to the Commonwealth Financing Authority where the substance of the application is reviewed. Senator Schwank stated that input/support from the State legislature is considered strongly.

Mr. Moran stated that the administration intends to make application by March 15th and asked Council to consider fast action.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired about the project and grant amount the administration is considering. Ms. Reed questioned if the grant is limited to certain types of projects.

Mr. T. Gombar stated that the March grant is for bricks and mortar projects or equipment. The May parameters and deadlines have not yet been released by the Authority board. Senator Schwank added that the grant cannot be used to hire new staff members. She noted that a sample resolution is included in the grant packet and the resolution should provide information on the project.

Ms. Tyson thanked Senator Schwank and Mr. T. Gombar for the presentation. She requested a copy of the grant packet and suggested that Council table the resolution on the 14th so it can be considered at a later date.

Mr. Waltman requested information on the project and funding by this Wednesday/Thursday so Council can consider it well before the 14th. He thanked the Senator and Mr. T. Gombar for the presentation and invited the Senator to update Council on State business.

Senator Schwank stated that the House and Senate are in the midst of budget hearings. She stated that today was the last day to file protests against the new State district maps. The matter will be referred to the State Supreme Court quickly.

Senator Schwank, Mr. T. Gombar, Mr. Abodalo and Ms. Didow disconnected from the meeting.

II. Parking Authority (RPA)

Mr. Waltman reminded the group that anyone wishing to make a comment or ask a question should post a note in the Chat. He stated that the following issues will be covered this evening and he gave a recap of the meeting about garage rates that took place last Friday:

- **Garage Rates**
- **Review Parking Fines**
- **Review Ordinances Introduced**
 - **Bill 18-2022**– amending City Code Chapter 576 Vehicles & Traffic Section 420 Parking Against the Traffic Flow by exempting vehicles parked in violation of this section due to winter weather conditions ***Introduced at the February 28 regular meeting***
 - **Bill 19-2022** – amending City Code Chapter 576 Vehicles & Traffic Section 503 Sundays and Holidays Exempted by retitling the Section as Hours of Enforcement and Saturdays, Sundays and holidays excepted, adding Saturday to excepted enforcement and limiting the hours of parking zone enforcement to Monday through Friday from 8 am to 6 pm ***Introduced at the February 28 regular meeting***

A. Garage Rates

Mr. Profit explained that at the meeting last Friday with Mr. Waltman, the mayor and the Convention Center Authority, the need to modify event rates and create a separate rate for community events was identified. The following was agreed to:

GARAGE AND SURFACE LOT PARKING

Santander Arena Event Rates 2021-2022

Garage/Lot Name	Garage/Lot Location	Major Events	Reading Royals	Community Event ****
Doubletree Convention Center Garage (VIP parking)	700 Court St	\$25	\$12	\$10
State Lot (VIP Parking)	7th & Penn Sts	\$25	\$12	\$10
South Penn Garage	635 Franklin St	\$15	\$10	\$5
Reed & Court Garage	666 Court St	\$15	\$5	\$5
6th & Cherry Surface Lot	31 S 5th St	\$10	\$5	\$5
Poplar & Walnut Garage	130 Poplar St	***\$10	*\$4	**\$5
4th & Cherry Garage	29 S 4th St	\$6	\$2	\$5
Chiarelli Garage	25 N 3rd St	\$6	\$2	\$5

Santander Performing Arts Center Event Rates 2021-2022

Garage/Lot Name	Garage/Lot Location	Major Events	Community Event ****
Poplar & Walnut Garage	130 Poplar St	\$15	*\$5
Reed & Court Garage	666 Court St	**\$15	\$5

Mr. Profit stated that the RPA’s goal is to standardize event parking rates, noting that the parking that is located within direct vicinity of the DoubleTree parking garage and State Lot is

considered VIP parking with a higher rate. He noted the RPA's work to alleviate parking stress within the neighborhoods.

Mr. Waltman noted the rate adjustments for Royal games and a \$25 rate for larger events (shows, concerts, etc.) at only parking facilities in close proximity to the arena. He stated that the problem appears to be resolved and that recalibrations can occur moving forward.

Mr. Profit noted the need for the RPA to speed the exit process at the garages after events. He said that the new gates, currently undergoing beta testing, will help. He expressed the belief that having different rates based on the proximity to the arena helps to avoid overcrowding at the garages in close proximity to the arena.

Ms. Reed disconnected from the meeting at this time.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted her understanding of the tiered garage rates and she questioned how the public is educated.

Mr. Profit stated that the majority of traffic for arena events enters from the Penn Street Bridge and approaches using Franklin Street. Those garages are used first. Mr. Matz stated that there are sandwich boards in front of each garage/lot advertising the rate. That information is also provided to the arena and on the RPA website.

B. Ordinances

Mr. Profit stated that he is concerned that eliminating Saturday enforcement in the downtown will cause the return of parking problems for the downtown businesses. Saturday enforcement creates parking turnover and reduces the amount of residents taking spaced that should be used by those patronizing downtown businesses. He added that the elimination of enforcement on Saturdays will also bring back the double parking problem. Eliminating Saturday enforcement will not impact RPA finances. He suggested surveying downtown business owners prior to the enactment of this ordinance.

Mr. Waltman suggested considering allowing enforcement on Saturdays between 9 am and 4 pm.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the impact on street meter rates at the SPAC. Mr. Profit stated that Saturday enforcement creates overtime expenses and staff issues which will be eliminated without Saturday enforcement.

Mr. Moran stressed the need to create a vibrant downtown through parking turnover.

Ms. Tyson thanked the RPA for making the rate and enforcement adjustments. She stressed the need for increased transparency through an easy to navigate website which is kept up to date.

Regarding the Ordinance adding exceptions to parking against the flow of traffic, Mr. Profit stated that he finds the current language arbitrary and he suggested allowing an exception

only when a snow emergency is put into place. Mr. Matz agreed noting the visual limitations created when a vehicle is parked against the flow of traffic.

This issue will be revisited.

Mr. Profit and Mr. Matz disconnected from the meeting.

III. Council Staff Oversight Policy

Mr. Gombar stated that the Committee met two weeks ago and will be proposing a review program similar to that used by the administration. A presentation will be prepared in 2-3 weeks.

IV. City's Performance Evaluation Policy & Salary Study Update

Mr. Denbowski introduced Ms. Guldin, the Interim HR Director and he gave a PowerPoint presentation. He stated that Performance Evaluation requirements are found in the Personnel Code, Chapter 70 of the City Code, as follows:

§ 70-308. Performance evaluation.

All employees shall have an annual written performance evaluation conducted by the immediate supervisor and the department director. Said evaluation shall be reviewed with the Human Resources Department prior to discussing the evaluation with the employee. The following procedure shall be used for performance evaluations:

- A. Evaluations shall be completed on forms provided by the Human Resources Department.
- B. Evaluations shall be performed by the employee's immediate supervisor.
- C. Evaluations shall be based on an employee's job description.
- D. Evaluation criteria shall be based on:
 - (1) Performance effectiveness.
 - (2) Goals of the Department.
- E. The employee shall prepare a written self-assessment of his/her performance.
- F. The Supervisor and employee shall agree on others to be consulted for evaluation.
- G. The Supervisor and employee shall meet during working hours to conduct evaluation.
- H. The employee shall sign the evaluation verifying that he/she has reviewed the evaluation and had an opportunity to respond.
- I. The evaluation shall be signed by the department director and the Human Resources Director or his/her designee.

Mr. Denbowski explained that the administration's Performance Review Plan (PRP) is designed to encourage communication between management and staff and enhance the performance and growth of all employees, staff and management. He noted that performance evaluations have not consistently occurred since 2014 and the administration has defined the following implementation schedule:

August

- Supervisor set a date for the self-evaluation.
- The employee receives a self-evaluation packet.

September

- Create an appointment with supervisor in September to review completed self-evaluation

October/November

- Supervisor will conduct performance evaluation with employee

November/December

- Management will meet with HR staff to go over evaluations before being placed in personal file.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the Personnel Code also covers Salary increases as follows, noting that increases beyond 3% are merit increases based on good performance or taking on additional duties:

G. Salary increases.

(1) Annual employee salary increases which are not governed by union labor contracts or mandated by other state statutes shall be limited to 3% without City Council approval. The amount of the annual salary increase shall be determined by a recommendation made by the employee's direct supervisor and/or department director in conjunction with consultation from the Human Resources Department. If the Human Resources Department and the employee's department director believe that an employee is entitled to an annual salary increase in excess of 3%, they shall obtain approval from both the Mayor and Managing Director followed by a scheduled executive session with City Council to discuss the reasons for providing a salary increase in excess of 3% of the employee's annual salary. If City Council agrees to increase an employee's salary after meeting with the department director and/or a representative of the Human Resources Department, City Council shall pass a resolution authorizing an annual salary increase in excess of 3% for the named employee. **[Amended 6-22-2015 by Ord. No. 34-2015]**

(2) Annual salary increases for City of Reading department directors are not covered by this section and are governed by § [705](#) of the City of Reading Home Rule Charter and Ord. No. 22-2002, passed on June 24, 2002 (see Ch. A613 of the City Code).

(3) The provisions of Subsection G(1) of this section shall apply to all employee salary increases effective January 1, 2003, and thereafter. Any salary increases granted in 2003 in excess of 3% are hereby reduced to 3% and any monies paid to an employee (as salary) in excess of 3% of their year 2002 salary shall be returned to the City of Reading from the proceeds of said employee's pay for the pay period immediately following the effective date of this provision. ¹⁹

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz disconnected from the meeting and Mr. Kelly connected with the meeting.

Mr. Denbowski described the Code's Promotion and Hiring requirements, stressing the need to hire or promote the best available applicant for the position in compliance with our Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Programs.

Mr. Denbowski stated that discussions about the need for revised job descriptions and a salary study have started with AFSCME 2763 (rank and file) and AFSCME 3799 (1st level supervisors). He stated that all four (4) collective bargaining agreements expire next year and

the administration hopes that all four (4) units will contribute to the cost of a salary study, with the funding moving forward in the proposed budget.

Ms. Rodriguez stated that the Employee Handbook has language regarding the need to provide up to \$5,000 in relocation expenses for Department Directors. She suggested eliminating that language, as residency is no longer required.

Mr. Denbowski stated that that language adjustment will be reconsidered as the handbook is revised. He stated that he is unsure if the handbook requires Council ratification.

V. Public Safety Reports

A. Fire

Chief Stoudt highlighted the report attached to the agenda and distributed electronically. He explained the roles of the five (5) divisions in the Fire Department: Administration, Prevention (Fire Marshal – inspection, enforcement and investigation), Suppression, EMS and Training.

Chief Stoudt stated that the department submitted a SAFER Grant application for 12 new firefighters at the end of January. A decision is expected during the upcoming summer.

Ms. Rodriguez disconnected from the meeting.

In response to a question, Chief Stoudt stated that the smoke detector program is for owner-occupied properties and information is provided on the website. He stated that appointments are made through the Prevention Division and the installation is handled by Suppression personnel.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the growing number of fire damaged properties that are left unrepaired. She requested that this topic be added to the COW topic list. Chief Stoudt stated that there are many uninsured properties and those that take the Fire Escrow money and walk away.

Chief Stoudt suggested having the Fire Marshal attend a COW to describe the work of this multi-faceted office – from Fire Code, inspections, investigating fires to emergency management. He noted that the Fire Marshal could assist Council in understanding the need for their basic FEMA training.

B. Police

Chief Torielli stated that the written test for new recruits occurred on February 26th – 60 of the 95 attending passed this comprehension test and will move on to the physical agility phase. He also stated that the Sergeant and Lieutenant lists expire this summer and tests for both positions will occur on May 21st. Oral interviews conducted by the Civil Service Board follow. After both tests, the Board ranks the applicants and new promotional lists are created.

Chief Tornielli stated that the Police Substation at the CollegeTowne building has been completed. The Youth Academy started at the end of January and there are approximately 20 participating on a weekly basis. He thanked Olivet for their assistance with the Academy.

The Community Response Coordinator, LT Lillis, has been very active in the community attending meetings, job fairs and events. He thanked Mr. Crespo for his help with social media management for the department.

Chief Tornielli stated that LT. Demko, in Internal Affairs, conducted research on how this complaints about police officers are handled in other communities, as the Department questioned if a civilian would feel uncomfortable filing a complaint about an officer to an officer. They found that to correct that using a form that can be submitted was a better vehicle and that has been implemented. He then explained how the complaints are managed and tracked with follow-up with the affected officer.

VI. Administrative Reports

A. Finance Monthly Reports – Executive Summary re Delayed until April 4th

B. HR Monthly Reports

Mr. Denbowski requested that this report be deferred until April.

VI. Other

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested taking action to support the Ukraine by raising a flag, or some other action. Ms. Tyson agreed.

Mr. Waltman stated that Council will return to a hybrid meeting style on March 14th with both the COW and Regular Meeting in Council Chambers and Council members having the option to participate in-person or virtually. He stated that business will be conducted in that manner for 2-3 months. Council will then decide how they wish to proceed in the future. He stated that he purchased ice cream from the Great American Creamery for all who attend in-person on the 14th

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC, City Clerk*