



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

SUMMARY

District 6 Interviews

July 18, 2022

At the close of the COW Meeting

Hybrid Meeting

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

C. Daubert, D. Reed, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, W. Butler, J. Cepeda-Freytiz, M. Ventura

OTHERS PRESENT:

M. Gombar, L. Kelleher, E. Moran, M. Smith

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz called the meeting to order and explained that the purpose of this meeting is to interview applicants for the District 6 seat due to her recent appointment as Council President, after the untimely passing of former Council President Waltman. The following applicants will be interviewed in the order listed:

7:15 pm Chris Miller

7:30 pm Kelli Roberts – virtually

7:45 pm Joseph Nunez

At the start of each interview Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz explained to each applicant how the interviews will be conducted, how the presentations will be scored and that an appointment must occur at the July 25th meeting to stay in compliance with the Charter's 30 day timeline.

I. Interviews

- **Chris Miller**

Mr. Miller stated that he moved into the Centre Park neighborhood approximately 41 years ago. He stated that in the past he served on the HARB and he has been very involved with the Centre Park Historic District and with the Reading Rotary Club.

In response to a question from Ms. Ventura, Mr. Miller stated that the District 6 opening comes at an interesting point in time, as the City has been removed from the Act 47 program and the City's population is steadily growing, rather than declining. He expressed the belief that the

decisions made by City Council over the next few years will shape the future of the City moving forward.

In response to a question from Mr. Daubert, Mr. Miller stated that many outsiders look at and speak of Reading in its entirety, rather than considering the many different neighborhoods that collectively make Reading a diverse City. He stated that District 6 is also made up of a variety of different neighborhoods with varying needs. He suggested considering the needs of each distinct neighborhood to help strengthen the neighborhoods.

In response to a question from Ms. Reed, Mr. Miller stated that as a realtor and a landlord, he can help guide Council on improving the City's housing. He stated that his experience working with the Centre Park Artifacts Bank allows him to visit neighborhoods city-wide to collect artifacts that can be reused for remodeling projects. He noted that there are areas of the City with strong housing and areas with defunct housing, which require attention.

In response to a question from Mr. Butler, Mr. Miller stated that over the last 41 years, he has seen Reading go through a variety of changes. While many fled to the suburbs, he remained a Reading and Centre Park resident, due to the strong community spirit within Centre Park. He stated that many citizens grew frustrated with City government and its continued lack of manpower to provide critical services.

In response to a question from Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Mr. Miller explained that Reading Rotary Club is the 88th of Reading's original 100 civic organizations. Formed in 1918, the Club held its meetings in the Mineral Spring Hotel. When the Club recognized the upcoming City 275th anniversary, they decided to focus new efforts on the revitalization of Mineral Spring Park, as the restoration project at Essick Park has been completed. He stated that the Club will also be working to obtain additional grant funding for the Mineral Spring Park project along with partnerships with other regional organizations.

In response to a question from Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Mr. Miller stated that the City became distressed due to improper financial management and he stressed the need to continue to use the processes and policies that were developed and enabled the City to recover. He noted that the exit from Act 47 will end the capital funding provided by the Commuter Tax and the need to identify new funding to continue capital improvements to the City's infrastructure. He stressed the need for Council to continue to make financially responsible decisions to prevent reentry into Act 47. He noted his statement earlier about the need for Council to make wise decisions to ensure the City's future.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Mr. Miller noted the many features throughout District 6 such as the parks, varied architecture, the downtown, entertainment and cultural venues, etc. He noted his intent to make himself available to District 6 residents to understand their needs and to help them understand what government offers for them.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Mr. Miller stated that he often meets people who have a poor impression about Reading. He stated that these people look at Reading on the whole, rather than as a City of different neighborhoods that offer a variety of lifestyles and community. He stated that he often takes these people on guided tours and they walk away with a much different impression of Reading. He stated that tours like these encourage homeownership within the City.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Mr. Miller stated that in the first 60 days, he would like to meet with District 6 residents and work with Council members to understand the deeper facets of government and the issues at hand. He added that he regularly keeps up with City government related news.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz invited Mr. Miller to attend the block party this Saturday at Lauers Park Elementary School to celebrate the installation of the community initiated stop sign at Buttonwood and North 2nd Street. The block party runs from 10 am until 6 pm from Buttonwood to Walnut Street on North 2nd Street. Parking is available at the Goggleworks.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Mr. Miller stated that he would consider running for the District 6 Council seat in the next municipal election.

- **Kelli Roberts - virtually**

Ms. Roberts explained that she and her husband moved from the Berks County suburbs into Centre Park approximately 6 years ago. She stated that she and her husband felt disconnected living in the suburbs and wanted to reside somewhere that is community oriented. She stated that she has been involved in the Centre Park Historic District and she is interested in being involved in making a valuable difference to the City overall. She explained how her project management professional experience can help the City move forward.

In response to a question from Mr. Daubert, Ms. Roberts stated that the biggest struggle would be to find a balance between the needs of the very diverse neighborhoods within District 6. To find that balance she would bring neighbors together. She noted her desire to hold community events to bring residents together. She also noted her desire to listen to different perspectives and viewpoints.

In response to a question from Ms. Reed, Ms. Roberts stated that she would work to improve community revitalization through communication, work to increase the safety in schools and create an environment where businesses can open and thrive. She added that she would also work to continue beautification efforts.

In response to a question from Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Ms. Roberts stated that she is unaware about the conditions that drove Reading into Act 47; however, she noted her assumption that there was fiscal mismanagement. She stressed the need to continue to use the tools that the City learned while in Act 47 and to exercise sound financial management and

measured steps to prevent future financial problems. She stated that since moving into Reading, she has had a good experience dealing with various City employees.

In response to a question from Mr. Butler, Ms. Roberts stated that her favorite part of City living is community. She stated that she and her husband lived in the suburbs for 10 years and felt disconnected, as they have no children and no resulting school connections. She stated that when they moved into Centre Park feeling a part of the community took only a few days. She noted the warmth of that neighborhood.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Ms. Roberts stated that the District 6 strengths are its varied architecture and its wide variety of housing styles including affordable housing. She noted the need to find a way to provide balanced City services that support neighborhoods.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Ms. Roberts stated that in the first 60 days she would like to open the lines of communication, using a variety of approaches and venues, to collaborate with District 6 residents about community needs. She also noted the need for her to become more educated about how the government operates.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz invited Ms. Roberts to attend the block party this Saturday at Lauers Park Elementary School to celebrate the installation of the community initiated stop sign at Buttonwood and North 2nd Street. The block party runs from 10 am until 6 pm from Buttonwood to Walnut Street on North 2nd Street. Parking is available at the Goggleworks.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Ms. Roberts stated that she would consider running for the District 6 Council seat in the next municipal election.

- **Joseph Nunez**

Mr. Nunez stated that he ran for this seat in a prior election. He stated that he and his wife recently had a baby. He stated that he has been married for 10 years and now has three (3) daughters. He stated that he has been a realtor for 10 years.

In response to a question from Mr. Daubert, Mr. Nunez noted the need to improve the street lighting and curb appeal in District 6. He also noted the need for sidewalk improvements. He stated that the positives are the varied architecture and diversity, noting that he would like to see the City capitalize on its new forward trajectory.

In response to a question from Ms. Reed, Mr. Nunez noted that the City will always have a mix of rental and owner-occupied properties. He suggested developing legislation that creates housing allocations, subsidies and rental assistance.

In response to a question from Ms. Ventura, Mr. Nunez stated that the most pressing District 6 issue is street lighting to create a safer environment and the need to add street lighting in alleys.

In response to a question from Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Mr. Nunez stated that the City needs to continue to use the tools learned during Act 47 so the City remains on solid financial footing.

In response to a question from Mr. Butler, Mr. Nunez described his work with various community organization such as Barrio Alegria, Olivet, Hope Rescue Mission, etc.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Mr. Nunez stated that in the first 60 days his focus would be on becoming more educated about how the government operates. He stated that he would also encourage homeownership, and develop marketing for a home loan program.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz invited Mr. Nunex to attend the block party this Saturday at Lauers Park Elementary School to celebrate the installation of the community initiated stop sign at Buttonwood and North 2nd Street. The block party runs from 10 am until 6 pm from Buttonwood to Walnut Street on North 2nd Street. Parking is available at the Goggleworks.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Mr. Nunez stated that he would consider running for the District 6 Council seat in the next municipal election.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:20 pm.

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