



# *CITY COUNCIL*

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## ***Committee of the Whole***

**Monday, August 10, 2015**

**5:00 pm**

**Agenda**

*Although Council committee meetings are open to the public, public comment is not permitted at Council Committee of the Whole meetings. However, citizens are encouraged to attend and observe the meetings. Comment from citizens or professionals during the meeting may be solicited on agenda topics via invitation by the President of Council.*

*All electronic recording devices must be located behind the podium area in Council Chambers and located at the entry door in all other meeting rooms and offices, as per Bill No.27-2012.*

- I. Agenda Review**
- II. Appointment of Interim Council President**
- III. Other Matters**



***COMMITTEE of the WHOLE***  
***CITY COUNCIL***

**MINUTES**  
**July 27, 2015**  
**5:00 P.M.**

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

S. Marmarou, D. Sterner, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, J. Waltman, D. Reed, C. Daubert

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, C. Younger, D. Cituk, R. Johnson, J. London, M. Zielinski, C. Broad, Cathy Curran-Myers, V. Spencer, C. Snyder

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm by Mr. Waltman.

**I. DID Renewal**

Mr. Zielinski stated that the DID Authority Board approved the preliminary plan at its meeting this afternoon. He stated that the Plan requests a \$90,000 increase from the City and a 12% assessment increase. He explained that \$100,000 funds DID activities and \$50,000 funds Main Street activities. He stated that there are reservations with the assessment increase (which will equal approximately \$60,000) and he suggested that DID receive funding from other authorities for which DID works (Parking, Redevelopment). He stated that there has been positive momentum downtown and that DID services are expanding. He expressed the belief that the Plan will be approved by property owners.

Mr. Sterner questioned how the assessment increase would affect the average property owner. Mr. Broad stated that 12% is slightly more than 1 mil. He stated that there is no average as the increase is based on the property's assessed value and there is a wide range of assessed values within the DID area. Mr. Zielinski explained that the

reduction of assessable properties decreases DID funding (I-Lead building, the City's purchase of the 5<sup>th</sup> & Penn St properties, and the many properties owned by the Redevelopment Authority are examples). He stated that DID encourages PILOT/SILOT from non-profits.

Mr. Sterner questioned the contribution of the Parking Authority. Mr. Zielinski stated that they do not make a contribution. Mr. Spencer clarified that they provide DID with 15 free parking spaces.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the term of the renewal. Mr. Zielinski stated that it will be for five years. He expressed the belief that the ten year agreement was too long.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that DID does a great job with clean and safe downtown. She stated that you can tell the difference in cleanliness between the downtown and other neighborhoods.

Mr. Zielinski agreed and stated that DID also provides a presence downtown in a way the Police Department cannot. He stated that there is a vacant ambassador position due to funding reductions.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the \$90,000 increase would be feasible with the City's budget. Ms. Snyder stated that this discussion will need to occur during the budget process. She suggested that a portion of the transfer tax from the sale of the I-Lead property be used toward this increase.

Mr. Zielinski stated that this would be one-time only. Ms. Snyder agreed and stated that the City will be facing challenging budgets.

Ms. Reed expressed the belief that if the City does not make the extra contribution it is being hypocritical since it invested in the downtown by purchasing the Penn St properties. She stated that the City took these properties off the assessment roles for DID and stated that if the City must provide all the services that DID does at this time it will cost far more than \$90,000. She suggested that DID request complimentary services from non-profits to assist the downtown activities. Ms. London stated that the Neighborhood Improvement District regulations allow for in-kind contributions.

Mr. Broad stated that if the City cannot contribute the additional \$90,000 they will need to request an assessment increase of 20%. He stated that both campaigns for PILOTs (calculating cost based on services received and calculating cost based on footage) were unsuccessful.

Mr. Daubert expressed concern with one time funding and an unsustainable funding stream.

Mr. Spencer expressed the belief that DID is important but that funding will always be an issue. He stated that he has heard complaints from businesses about the assessment but that there will be no one to perform their services if DID is not renewed.

There was a discussion of litter, trash and high weeds at the Penn St properties and the effects of the reduction of Public Works employees City-wide.

Mr. Marmarou questioned when the PILOT programs were encouraged. Mr. Broad stated that they were in place when he became executive director in 2008. He stated that he has tried to improve the programs but that they are not successful.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if there were PILOT trends. Mr. Broad stated that those who do participate and those who don't participate are consistent. He stated that decreasing property values along with the reduced number of properties which are eligible for the assessment have caused the need for increases from the City and the assessment increase.

Mr. Daubert questioned if the property owners would vote no for the Plan if the City did not commit to the increased contribution. Mr. Broad stated that 40% (221 property owners) must object to the Plan. He expressed the belief that a negative campaign could occur. Mr. Zielinski stated that without the City's portion, the assessment would need to increase by 20% or services must be cut.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the many ways DID assists with downtown safety and maintenance. She noted the need for more property owners to increase their commitment and for the City to address those properties that are becoming eyesores. She expressed the belief that the great need for the Jehovah's Witness volunteer service projects speaks volumes.

Mr. Broad stated that DID has also received \$600,000 in grants.

Mr. Sterner encouraged DID to speak with the Parking and Redevelopment Authorities about financial contributions.

Mr. Waltman questioned the amount of DID's 2015 budget. Mr. Broad stated that he will provide this information.

Mr. Waltman questioned where the increased funds would be used. Mr. Broad stated that the increase will be used for staff, equipment, rental increases, etc.

Mr. Waltman stated that City property values continue to fall while taxes and fees continue to rise. He stated that many independent organizations are working within the City but that they are treating the symptoms and not the causes. He noted the need for the City to get the highest return on investment possible and for the public to see visible improvements. He noted the need for comprehensive and coordinated efforts.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the issue before Council now is the DID renewal. She stated that the other issues are strategic and must be discussed separately. She stated that there are also many people who live downtown and that they must also be considered when planning for the downtown.

Mr. Zielinski noted the need for DID to understand the City's contribution level to determine if other actions must be taken.

Ms. London explained that there are three items before Council – the ordinance renewing DID, the agreement between DID and the City which outlines responsibilities, and the Plan. She noted the need for a public hearing and stated that the current agreement expires on December 31, 2015.

Mr. Broad explained that all DID agreements expire on December 31 and that they must all be renegotiated before they expire. He requested updates on funding to assist with the renegotiation, the Plan and the public hearing process.

Mr. Cituk explained the Council budget timeline and process. He stated that the preliminary draft will be available on October 1.

Mr. Broad, Mr. Zielinski, and Ms. London left the meeting at this time.

## **II. Discharging Firearms**

Chief Heim joined the meeting at this time.

Chief Heim explained that he supports reinstating the discharge of firearms within City limits. He stated that firearms are discharged for many reasons including warnings, celebrations, etc. He stated that many times these individuals are caught and there is a hefty fine.

Mr. Daubert and Ms. Reed stated that there is misinformation about this regulation in the public. They stated that the public believes this will limit their right of self defense. Chief Heim stated that this is not the case.

Chief Heim stated that he does not support reinstating the regulation to report a lost or stolen gun. He stated that this provision was not often used in the past.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the number of people discharging illegal guns. Chief Heim stated that he does not track this statistic however most times legitimate owners misuse the firearm.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if it would be legal to target shoot at the quarry on Neversink. Chief Heim stated that it is if proper procedure is followed.

Chief Heim left the meeting at this time.

### **III. Clean Power Plan**

Ms. Curran-Myers distributed copies of the draft resolution. She stated that the resolution voices support of President Obama's Clean Power Plan and encourages coordination between US EPA and PA DEP. She stated that the Clean Power Plan encourages the use of alternative energy sources and lowers PA's emission levels and would benefit all by giving incentives for renewal energies. She stated that the EAC's alternative energy regulations will be received by Council in the near future.

Mr. Waltman questioned the cost comparison between standard and alternative energies. Ms. Myers stated that the cost is very similar but that energy use costs would be difficult to predict as they are based on many factors.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that this resolution will appear on Council's August 10 agenda.

### **IV. Public Works Grant Applications**

Kim Murphy Executive Director Berks County Conservancy and Bob Folwell Schuylkill River Greenway Association joined the meeting at this time.

- Schuylkill River Trail

Mr. Johnson stated that the grant for phase one of this project has been approved. He stated that this grant will allow the project to proceed.

Ms. Murphy explained that the gap on the Schuylkill River Trail from RACC to Stonecliff is rated within the top ten trail gaps in PA. She stated that much of this land

is owned by Norfolk Southern (formerly Conrail) and that the agreement is expired and no longer honored. She stated that this portion of the trail is still in use but is not a legal portion of the trail system. She stated that the engineering study has been completed and RACC supports the plan. She stated that this is a \$1 million project and that a grant application has been sent to DCNR. She stated that this grant will be matching funds for the DCNR grant.

Mr. Folwell distributed site plans for review.

Mr. Waltman questioned if the State could assist with Norfolk Southern. Ms. Murphy explained that Norfolk Southern would require a fence along the entire length of the railway which is cost prohibitive and would need constant maintenance. Mr. Folwell explained that this is a safety requirement to keep people off the tracks.

Mr. Marmarou stated that it is unfortunate that the agreement was lost. Ms. Murphy expressed the belief that the agreement was from the 1970's. Mr. Folwell explained that it was a licensing agreement which has since expired. He stated that negotiations would include fencing, increased security or police presence, crossing locations, etc.

Mr. Waltman questioned road changes that would be required. Mr. Folwell stated that a secure bike lane would be created. He stated that the median would be tree lined and that parking would be lost on N. Front St. He stated that the addition of the bike lane would reduce speed on River Road. Ms. Murphy stated that the recommendations are made by a traffic engineer. She stated that the rain swales would assist with the City's MS4 requirements.

Ms. Reed questioned where this section would reconnect with the rest of the trail. Mr. Folwell stated that it would reconnect just after the Buttonwood St Bridge.

Mr. Waltman suggested that the Shade Tree Commission may be able to assist with the number of trees that are planted.

Ms. Murphy stated that the City is missing out on many visitors without this section of the trail. She stated that over 400,000 people use the County trails annually and avoid this area. She noted the need to complete this section of the trail and take advantage of these visitors.

Ms. Reed stated that a pedestrian/bike bridge in the Bushong Dam area would be excellent. She suggested using a section of the Wiley's bridge that will be removed. She

stated that funding may be difficult but that this is an excellent solution. She noted the need to work with the County on this project.

- Skyline Drive Project

Scott Anderson consultant with GVC and Mike Golembeski from the Berks County Planning Commission joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Johnson stated that Lower Alsace Township is the lead applicant for this project. He stated that there have been additional conversations since Council's last review of the project.

Mr. Anderson stated that this is a multi-model grant from DCED. He explained that it would improve safety for all as it is already in use by pedestrians and bikers. He stated that the new plan would have two eleven foot wide driving lanes, two four foot wide pedestrian/bike lanes and two foot wide rumble strips in between lanes for additional safety. He explained that the rumble strips will be removable in some locations to accommodate the Hill Climb races. He stated that the total length of the project is approximately 2.5 miles of which 23% is within the City of Reading. He stated that Reading's portion of the cost is \$92,000.

Mr. Waltman questioned the existing width of the driving lanes. Mr. Anderson stated that this is not consistent throughout but that the recommended widths will accommodate all uses at the most narrow sections of the road.

Mr. Waltman noted the slopes and bends. Mr. Golembeski stated that this project will slow down traffic and the slopes and bends will be less problematic.

Mr. Johnson stated that the new plan accommodates the racers, traffic and bikers and is the most feasible plan.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that once the project is complete it will increase the bikers using this roadway. She noted the need for safety for all. Mr. Anderson stated that he has been working with the racing and biking organizations.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the signage. Mr. Anderson stated that signage will be added as part of the project. He stated that two crosswalks will also be added to the roadway at the tower and at List Road.

Mr. Waltman questioned if the roadway would be resurfaced. Mr. Anderson stated that the roadway will be resurfaced and the existing walls will not be damaged.

Mr. Johnson stated that Mr. Golembeski is also a daily bike commuter. Mr. Golembeski stated that the project concept is consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan. He stated that maintenance of the bike lanes will be key (leaves, cinders). He expressed the belief that if the bike lanes are not maintained bikes will be forced back into the traffic lanes. He suggested an inter-municipal agreement for maintenance.

Mr. Marmarou noted that many catch basins are clogged and overflow during rains. Mr. Anderson stated that some areas could be raised around the catch basins to assist.

Mr. Marmarou stated that in the past Albright College would travel Skyline Dr to collect downed wood for fraternity house fireplaces. He noted that the trailer spilled several times due to road conditions.

Mr. Anderson stated that guiderails will be added at several locations to protect the retaining walls.

### **Agenda Review**

Council reviewed this evening's agenda including:

- Award of Contract for construction management and project management at the WWTP

Ms. Morris joined the meeting at this time.

Ms. Morris explained that the selection committee did a tremendous job during a very intense process. She stated that they recommend Hazen & Sawyer.

Mr. Sterner questioned the delay requested by Mr. Miravich. Mr. Johnson stated that Mr. Miravich did a complete review of the documents and was able to negotiate a lower cost. Ms. Morris stated that the cost was reduced by 9.8%. Mr. Johnson stated that this cost is similar to the estimate from ten years ago but also includes the pump stations.

Mr. Spencer commended the selection committee.

Ms. Morris left the meeting at this time.

- Resolution amending the Action Plan to provide \$100,000 to the Homes at Riverside project

Ms. Snyder stated that the funding is an unused portion of 2014 funding to bridge the gap until the 2015 HUD funds are received. She stated that the Homes at Riverside project is moving forward and is in need of the funds. She stated that when the 2015 HUD allocation is received these funds will be replaced. She stated that it is a cash management issue.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if this was allowable. Ms. Snyder stated that it is but that it requires Council approval.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for the public to understand the different funding requirements.

- Amending the Duties of the Health Officer

Ms. Snyder stated that the amendment updates the job description of the Health Officer.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested a training session to better understand hoarding. Ms. Snyder agreed.

Mr. Spencer questioned what the training would involve. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that it would be warning signs, treatment options, etc.

- Amending Street Cuts

Mr. Waltman suggested that Council approve the amendment. He stated that this is a starting point and that additional amendments will be brought forward to address UGI meter relocations as work continues. He stated that meetings will continue next week.

- Appointments/Reappointments

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the candidate for the Water Authority be interviewed by all of Council. She suggested withdrawing this resolution.

Mr. Spencer stated that he has also not had the opportunity to interview the candidate.

Mr. Waltman suggested that the resolution be removed from the agenda during the agenda approval.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:49 pm.

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