



CITY COUNCIL

Standards of Living Committee

Tuesday, January 20, 2015
Council Office
5:30 pm

The Standards of Living Committee's responsibilities and topics include but are not limited to Housing Planning strategies, Building, Trades and Property Maintenance Inspection and Enforcement, Public Safety, Public Works, Police, Fire, Neighborhood Parks, Neighborhood Revitalization, Community Development, Customer Service, Graffiti Abatement, Community Group Organization and Support

Committee Members: Mr. Sterner, Mr. Daubert (Co Chairs) and Mr. Marmarou

Although Council committee meetings are open to the public, public comment is not permitted at Council Committee 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 Committee Chair.

All electronic recording devices must be at the entry door in all meeting rooms and offices, as per Bill No. 27-2012

- I. Update of Trades Codes & New Language re PVC vs Copper Piping - L. Agudo**
- II. Update Comprehensive Plan - E. Lloyd/ C. Peiffer**
- III. STAR Assessment - E. Lloyd/B. Kelly**
- IV. Donation Box Regulations - C. Peiffer**
- V. Updates**
 - 1. Wyomissing Park Street Lighting - in progress**
 - 2. UGI Meter Relocation**

- 3. SALDO Ordinance and Official Map** – currently in Law Department
- 4. Agreements with Playground Associations & Other Organizations**

February - Update Complete Streets

- **Update Dam Assessment**

May - Zoning Changes needed to implement Comprehensive Plan

June - Parking Issues



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Monday, December 15, 2014
Meeting Report

Committee Members Attending: D. Sterner, C. Daubert (Co-Chair), S. Marmarou

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, C. Snyder, D. Ruyak

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm.

I. UGI Meter Relocation

Ms. Snyder stated that Mr. Coleman has done a review of the new PUC regulations which were finalized in September 2014. She stated that the new regulations amend where meters can be placed but notes that they should be outside in general. She stated that the new regulations require 30 day notice to property owners and residents if that information is known. She stated that ultimately UGI decides where the meter is placed.

Ms. Snyder stated that the new regulations also expand the definition of historic districts to include federal, state, and local districts and federally recognized buildings. She stated that the regulations allow the right to petition for the meter to remain indoor at historic locations.

Mr. Daubert questioned how meters would be placed back indoors at historic locations after they have already been moved outdoors. He stated that it should be at UGI's expense.

Mr. Marmarou retold his personal experience with the relocation of his gas meter.

Ms. Snyder stated that she is unsure how to place a meter back indoors. She stated that she will ask Mr. Coleman to follow up on that issue with the PUC. She stated that the regulations, along with the dispute process, are available on the City's website.

Mr. Marmarou stated that he has tried to reach the attorney from the PUC many times without success.

Mr. Sterner stated that when the State passes new regulations they expect the City to incur the costs and used the example of having to replace ramps at intersections that have already been replaced. He stated that UGI should incur these same costs with correcting meter relocations. Ms. Snyder agreed. She stated that Mr. Coleman will follow up.

Ms. Snyder stated that she has met with UGI several times and they are now providing information in English and Spanish and are providing notice via door hangers to ensure that residents are informed of their project.

Mr. Denbowski arrived at this time.

Mr. Sterner questioned if there was another means to communicate with residents. Mr. Denbowski suggested flyers to affected neighborhoods as the project moves around the City.

Mr. Johnson arrived at this time.

Mr. Sterner suggested that the information be placed in UGI bills. Ms. Snyder agreed.

Mr. Daubert stated that he is troubled that UGI will still be able to do what it wants.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the inclement weather will cause delays.

Ms. Snyder stated that she will suggest a bill insert and that she will request Mr. Coleman follow up with the PUC about correcting meter relocations at historic properties and in historic districts.

II. 2015 Topics and Timeline

Ms. Snyder suggested the following topics:

- Update on the Comprehensive Plan – January
- STAR Community Assessment baseline rating – January
- Donation box regulations – January
- Update on Complete Streets – February
- Dam assessment – February
- Zoning changes needed to implement the Comprehensive Plan – May/June
- Parking issues (perhaps at COW instead of in Committee) – June

Mr. Marmarou stated that he has had a lot of negative feedback about the zoning change for downtown parking. Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that the Parking Authority is withdrawing this amendment.

Mr. Sterner noted the need to address the Parking Authority's wish to institute demand-based parking rates.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the majority of College Heights residents do not agree with the proposed parking changes in this neighborhood.

Mr. Sterner suggested that the Committee also look at initiatives and priorities in the Comprehensive Plan.

III. Snow Emergency Plan and Snow Removal

Mr. Marmarou questioned if leaf removal is complete. Mr. Ruyak stated that officially leaf removal has ended but that they work on areas with heavy tree cover as they are able between snow removal and other projects.

Mr. Lloyd arrived at this time.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the leaves are very bad on Oak Lane. Mr. Ruyak stated that he is familiar with the area.

Mr. Marmarou stated that in the past the City would allow those who needed firewood to cut areas back and keep the wood. Mr. Ruyak stated that it has been policy for many years for residents to take wood from trees that have already fallen but not to cut anything down.

Mr. Sterner questioned a deforestation program for additional revenue. Mr. Ruyak stated that he has looked at deforestation but not for revenue but rather for forest health. He stated that the mountain slopes are a major issue as this is rough terrain. He

stated that it would be difficult to get the equipment and timber in and out of locations. He stated that an assessment would need to be performed and then a return on investment assessed based on wood type and amount. He expressed the belief that it would not be much revenue after the cost of the assessments and the timbering was paid. He stated that the mountain fire trails are maintained.

Mr. Johnson stated that there are other lands owned by the City that are not on the mountain which can be addressed.

Mr. Ruyak distributed the Weather Emergency Operations Plan. He stated that the Plan remains the same but that it has been updated.

Mr. Sterner questioned if any processes have changed. Mr. Ruyak stated that they have not.

Mr. Ruyak explained that from January through March streets and parks staff begin working two 12 hour shifts to reduce overtime. He stated that during large snow events staff from sewer and the WWTP also assist. He stated that he has access to 49 employees in his division of public works and that two shifts of 18 (optimal for snow removal) takes most of the staff.

Mr. Ruyak stated that the updated Plan better defines when an emergency should be called for snow events. He stated that it is based on the amount of snow expected during a 24 hour period. He stated that the Mayor declares an emergency.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the use of outside contractors to assist. Mr. Daubert stated that a laborer with a shovel costs \$112 per hour. Mr. Ruyak stated that Reading monitored Allentown last winter when they contracted for snow removal. He stated that they spent many millions of dollars. He stated that Reading calls contractors on rare occasions because of the cost.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if other departments have equipment and assist with snow removal. Mr. Johnson stated that RAWA assists and then bills the City. He stated that DID does much work in the downtown area. Mr. Ruyak added that the Parking Authority clears their lots and some bridge sidewalks in the downtown area. He stated that Solid Waste clears the library lots and the Rec Commission does their own areas. He stated that the fire stations are cleared by fire personnel. He stated that all this cooperation allows public works to focus on clearing the streets.

Mr. Sterner commended Mr. Johnson and Mr. Ruyak for the fine work done during weather events.

Mr. Johnson stated that last winter was very challenging and was compounded by the poor quality of the road salt. He stated that with the cost of labor and supplies, the City cannot do curb to curb removal. He asked the Committee to consider how plowing up to the curb on some streets would completely block sidewalks and go onto porches and stoops.

Ms. Katzenmoyer questioned if the plan was public information. Mr. Johnson stated that it is.

Ms. Katzenmoyer questioned how the City will communicate with residents about snow emergencies if there is no power to homes. Mr. Johnson stated that he will do some further review on this issue. Mr. Ruyak stated that the public will be notified at least four hours before the emergency takes effect. He stated that police and fire also assist by going door to door.

Mr. Johnson questioned if the snow emergency routes were clarified. Mr. Ruyak stated that they are.

IV. Update Wyomissing Park Street Lighting

Mr. Johnson stated that good progress has been made. He stated that drilling is being done now to accommodate the new cabling system. He stated that the contractor will continue working until the ground freezes. He stated that the parts have been ordered and there has been steady progress.

V. 8th & Oley Sts

Mr. Marmarou questioned how long the street will remain closed. Mr. Johnson stated that he will request an update.

VI. Revision of Naming Policy

Mr. Sterner questioned if all were okay with the revisions.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that the revision clarifies the process for different types of facilities and is no longer one size fits all.

The Committee agreed to move the revision forward.

VII. Update of Trades Codes and New Language re PVC versus Copper Piping

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that it is her understanding that Mr. Lachat is working on updating all the Codes to remain UCC compliant. She stated that she will request an update.

Mr. Sterner requested an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Daubert noted the need to move this issue forward as copper theft continues.

VIII. SALDO and Official Map

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that these items are left undone since the last update of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Lloyd suggested that they be worked on after the completion of the Comprehensive Plan. He stated that he will follow up with URDC and Law.

Mr. Lloyd invited all to attend the next Comprehensive Plan meeting on Thursday at 5 pm in the 3rd floor conference room.

IX. Complete Streets

Mr. Lloyd stated that the Berks County Community Foundation has provided a \$10,000 grant for a one day workshop between the City and its partners. He expressed hope that a Plan would be before Council in March.

X. Agreements with Playground Associations

Mr. Sterner stated that there is no update at this time. He requested that it remain on the agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 6:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelly Katzenmoyer
Deputy City Clerk