



# ***COMMITTEE of the WHOLE***

## ***CITY COUNCIL***

**MINUTES**  
**February 26, 2007**  
**5:00 P.M.**  
**Council Office**

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

V. Spencer, J. Waltman, S. Fuhs, S. Marmarou, M. Baez, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, D. Sterner

### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

C. Kanezo, C. Younger, L. Churchill, L. Kelleher, J. Khokhar, C. Sopka

Vaughn Spencer, President of Council, called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 5:00p.m.

### **I. Introduction of New Zoning Administrator**

Mr. Churchill introduced Cynthia Sopka and highlighted her recent work experience. Mr. Churchill commented the City is lucky to have a candidate with extensive experience in planning. Ms. Sopka thanked Mr. Churchill for the introduction. She explained her recent work as an Environmental Specialist and Planner in Morristown New Jersey has prepared her for the position of Zoning Administrator. Mr. Spencer and Mr. Sterner inquired if Ms. Sopka planned to relocate to Reading. Ms. Sopka stated she was looking in Reading and the surrounding area, though she declined to make any specific commitments.

Mr. Waltman asked what specific strengths Ms. Sopka would bring to the table, considering her very diverse background. Ms. Sopka stated she has the necessary academic training to meet the technical demands of the job and her previous training and career as a social worker has prepared her for the interaction with citizens. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz commented on the many benefits of having an administrator with experience in social service fields. Mr. Churchill expressed confidence in Ms. Sopkas abilities to deal with difficult situations.

Mr. Marmarou asked if Ms. Sopka was familiar with student housing issues. Ms. Sopka replied that her careers in academia and studies at Lehigh University have prepared her with dealing with students. Mr. Marmarou explained he meant dealing with disruptive students living off campus. Ms. Sopka felt student issues are a problem common in university towns; she stated a better understanding of the current situation is necessary before offering input. Mr. Marmarou described the disruption occurring around Albright and urged Ms. Sopka to be aggressive in her dealings with landlords who willfully disrupt the community.

Council welcomed Ms. Sopka to the City of Reading and wished her well in all endeavors. Ms. Sopka thanked Council for their kind wishes and promised to work to the best of her ability.

## **II. Mayor and Auditor Compensation**

Mr. Spencer explained how former Councilman Schorn was instrumental in the creation of a mechanism for raising the salaries of the Mayor and Auditor. Due to the wording of the existing ordinance the salaries of both the Mayor and Auditor will return to their original levels at the beginning of 2008. Mr. Spencer stated Council must decide how to proceed. Mr. Spencer presented three options: 1. do nothing and allow the salaries to revert to forty and fifty-five thousand for the Auditor and Mayor respectively; 2. pass a new ordinance adopting the current salaries paid to both positions, without an increase; 3. increase both salaries.

Mr. Waltman pointed out that he opposed the last salary increase and would oppose any proposed increase this time. Mr. Waltman explained his objections were not due to poor performance on the part of the Mayor or Auditor, indeed both individuals have done a good job. His objections are based on the philosophy that elected officials should not seek their office in the hopes of gaining compensation. Mr. Waltman chiefly objected to creating a salary structure that provided automatic increases over the course of a term. Mr. Sterner agreed with some of the thoughts expressed by Mr. Waltman; though he believed increasing salary is a fair thing to do. Mr. Sterner agreed with increasing salary once during a term and only after an official took office.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted salary increases for elected officials are problematic as the increases are made without consideration to performance. Ms. Kelleher observed the only time an elected official is subject to a performance evaluation is during his or her reelection. Mr. Spencer asked the Finance Committee to evaluate the issue and make a recommendation to Council on how to proceed. Mr. Spencer also remarked on how Council consistently takes care of other officials without considering the needs of Council. Mr. Spencer pointed out that Council has not received any increase since the change in government, yet the costs of the duties of Council have increased. And while it may be politically unpopular, Council is entitled to a salary increase or some other form of compensation in addition to what is currently received.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed that Council should consider a modest cost of living adjustment to their salary. Council agreed to discuss the issue of compensation after the Finance Committee has had an opportunity to review material prepared by the Auditor and Council Staff.

### **III. Executive Session-Airport Authority**

Council entered into an executive session at 5:45p.m. and exited at 6:45p.m.

### **IV. Fire Diversity Board**

Mr. Waltman proposed a resolution, which would create a comprehensive City of Reading Diversity Board. The board would make recommendations on how to increase the diversity of every city department and agency. Mr. Sterner asked if such a board would be a duplication of effort, as Police and Fire Diversity boards have already been established. Mr. Churchill stated discussions with the Police Diversity board during the Horne Settlement, showed how the board was focused on Latino issues and unwilling to embrace larger issues of diversity. The Administration was fearful that the Fire Diversity board would focus on African American issues, as the suit which established the board was initiated by the NAACP. Mr. Churchill commended the idea of creating a comprehensive diversity board, which once established would be able to advocate for all protected classes.

Mr. Waltman noted he had argued for the creation of a comprehensive diversity board after the police diversity board was established. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated Council would need to be involved in defining the function of the new board. Mr. Waltman agreed, explaining that is why he is presenting a generic resolution. Council can later, through ordinance, define the powers and responsibilities of the board.

Council adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Linda A. Kelleher, City Clerk