



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
July 23, 2007
5:00 P.M.
Council Office

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C. Kanezo, C. Younger, L. Churchill, L. Kelleher, T. Getz, A. Mukerji, W. Heim, T. McMahan, J. Khokhar

I. Community Development Projects

Adam Mukerji presented the Redevelopment Assistance Summary. In his summary, Mr. Mukerji explained that the Goggleworks and the IMAX movie theatre were receiving support through project specific grants. Mr. Mukerji also explained City would be applying for approximately \$1,000,000.00 in additional Section 108 monies to pass along to Hydrojet Inc. and Sunfresh Foods. Both companies are receiving Section 108 monies. Our city Reading is providing support by passing along received Section 108 loans. Mr. Mukerji also stated that the city applied for and received a \$3,000,000 competitive grant. This grant will be applied to the IMAX Theater and Goggle Works Apartments projects.

Mr. Spencer questioned how the City would be protected, in the event either company defaulted on the loans. Mr. Mukerji stated the City has collateral on the equipment as well as the cash flow, which Mukerji stressed as the most important aspect. Mr. Fuhs asked if both companies were viable enterprises. Mr. Mukerji explained that Sunfresh Foods will be creating a number of walk to work jobs, which are in keeping with the Administrations economic development policies; Hydrojet is an established company that is expanding. The expansion necessitates space in excess of existing facilities.

Mr. Mukerji said that the Reading Area Water Authority tap fees are keeping business out of the city. Mrs. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the need for RAWA and the

City to work together instead of reacting to each others actions. Mr. Mukerji emphasized the need to bring quality jobs back to Reading and that RAWA's tap fees could challenge efforts to bring such jobs back. Mr. Mukerji encouraged Council to examine the fees assessed by RAWA. Mr. Spencer asked Ms. Kelleher to investigate the tapping fees assessed by other municipalities across the state.

II. Housing Permit Ordinance

Mr. Spencer asked if Ms. Kelleher would be able to clarify several points contained in the ordinance. Ms. Kelleher explained that the process for the rental housing permit needs to be introduced; however, the ordinance proper could be adopted. Mr. Churchill expressed the need for the Zoning Hearing Board to meet more frequently, as there will be numerous people who do not meet the current criteria. Mr. Fuhs asked if the Administration was prepared to estimate how many people would fall outside the proposed process. Mr. Churchill indicated the number was likely in the thousands.

Mr. Churchill outlined a tentative application period between August 15th and October 15th for the zoning application. Mr. Fuhs showed concern about the board being able to hear all of those cases in a short amount of time. Mr. Churchill assured him that the Zoning Board would have to hear all of the cases. Mrs. Goodman-Hinnershitz stressed the importance of good communication between City Council and the Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. Waltman questioned the length of the process. Mr. Churchill informed him that those people seeking a housing permit must first go through the process of getting a zoning permit. Mr. Churchill showed how the second process can only be completed after the housing permit process was satisfied. Mayor McMahon proposed the idea of a simple yes/no chart regarding the rental occupancy permits. The chart would clearly explain the steps individuals would have to take depending upon their current situation.

Mr. Fuhs stated that there should be safeguards for people who already have existing housing permits. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed concern about the city having enough time to go through a long and detailed process. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz observed that staff shortages are already an acute problem. Mr. Churchill commented that Council, as part of the budget process, is already considering adding additional staff to the zoning office. Mr. Marmarou questioned if proposed staff increases would be enough. Mr. Churchill thought that an additional zoning officer, combined with additional zoning enforcement personnel in Codes, should be adequate.

Mr. Spencer objected to the use of date of birth information on applications as sensitive material. Mr. Younger described the provisions of a proposed Senate bill that would permit using date of birth. Mr. Fuhs claimed that date of birth is necessary to show that those who are entering into a contract are of legal age. Mr. Younger indicated that date of birth is not currently viewed as an infringement on privacy. Mr. Waltman said that it would be very difficult for the City to keep tenant lists as they are changing daily. Mr. Marmarou said that it is very important to have these lists as only three unrelated individuals are allowed to reside in a rental at the same time.

At this time Mr. Churchill expressed the ability of moving up the date for the housing permit 5 months. Mrs. Goodman-Hinnershitz believes that community input on this matter is very important.

III. Executive Session

City Council went into executive session at 6:10p.m. to discuss personnel matters.

IV. Agenda Review

City Council came out of executive session at 6:45 p.m..

Mr. Waltman explained how Karel Minor of the Humane Society believes that the City should ease up on the aggressive dog ordinance. However, Mr. Waltman urged Council to consider strengthening the existing ordinance. Councilor Waltman explained how the city's housing density, combined with large numbers of young children, creates a hostile environment for pitbulls. Mr. Fuhs claimed that by strengthening the current ordinance the City runs the risk of penalizing good pit bulls and good owners. Mr. Marmarou explained how he believes the total number of bites should be counted even if they occurred in a home. Mr. Waltman expressed belief that containment is an issue. Mr. Waltman also stated that the current action by the City is not working, and that change needs to happen.

Mr. Sterner said that the City needs to go after the owner's of bad dogs, and look into regulations on the owners. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with Mr. Waltman that the City is not a good environment for this breed of dog. Mr. Marmarou suggested raising the current \$500 aggressive dog licensing fee to \$1,000.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m..

Respectfully Submitted

By: _____
Linda A. Kelleher, City Clerk