

City of Reading
City Council
Work Session
Monday, October 15, 2007

Council Members Present

Vaughn Spencer, President
Maria Baez
Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz
Stratton Marmarou
Dennis Sterner
Jeff Waltman

Absent

Stephen Fuhs

Others Present

L. Churchill
C. Younger
L. Kelleher

Call to Order

President of Council Vaughn Spencer called the work session to order at 7:07 pm.

Managing Director's Report

Managing Director Leon Churchill reviewed the report distributed to Council at the meeting which covers the following:

- Halloween night, Wednesday, October 31 from 6 – 9 pm with curfew enforcement beginning at 10 pm
- Ghost hunting 101 at the Pagoda on Saturday, October 27
- Grant resources workshop on Wednesday, October 24 from 10 am to noon at the Reading Public Library
- City Hall roof repairs
- NHS meeting on foreclosure prevention

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested additional police patrol in District 2 on Halloween due to the recent upswing in gun violence.

Ms. Baez inquired about the availability of barricades to close streets in defined areas for trick-or-treaters. Mr. Churchill advised Ms. Baez to

contact the traffic enforcement office to learn of the availability and procedure.

Berks County Conservancy Update

Kim Murphy, Executive Director of the Berks County Conservancy, gave a power point presentation on Conservancy projects. She stated that the Conservancy's main goal is to protect and preserve land and water systems through partnerships with the City and County governments. She noted the concerns from residents about ecological resources. She stated that the County is divided into five planning regions. She explained that the Conservancy has worked to:

- Contribute \$250,000 to the Berks Urban Greenery (BUG) project
- Restore the quality of the water flowing in the Schuylkill River
- Partner with Reading Area Water Authority to maintain watershed areas at the Maiden creek site
- Restore stream banks

Ms. Murphy described various partnerships and initiatives at the greenway and recreation hubs. She noted the Schuylkill River's national and state heritage and the need for RiverPlace Design to go along with that heritage.

Ms. Murphy described the nine focus areas around Berks County, one of which is Angelica Park. She stated that the Conservancy is currently considering connecting Angelica Park with the Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center. Ms. Murphy highlighted several hub areas and her work with City staffers to find matching grant opportunities.

Mr. Marmarou inquired about the trail running along Route 10. Ms. Murphy replied that this trail is the Schuylkill River Heritage Trail leading to Philadelphia. She stated that it is widely used by citizens from Philadelphia and the Berks County area.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for various features on trails to be refurbished. She also suggested the Conservancy include improvements at Egelman's and Mineral Spring Park. Ms. Murphy described the project to sign all trailways.

Mr. Waltman commended the Conservancy for their work to improve the trail system. He noted the rich architectural style of the City's many churches. He suggested that the Conservancy assist in coordinating an organized church tour.

Mr. Marmarou noted the existence of a rare pipe organ at the old Greek church at 5th & Elm Sts.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the availability of trail security personnel. Ms. Murphy stated that currently the Conservancy works with the County to provide Park Ranger patrols at several trails.

CDBG Budget Review

Olivet's and NEAR Allocation

Mr. Churchill explained that 435 children are served at the two southeast Reading Olivet's sites. He stated that 101 children are served at three NEAR centers located at St. Matthew's, St. Mark's, and St. Thomas. He noted that when operating at capacity the NEAR program runs 14 centers. He explained that the two Olivet's centers are located at 10th & Penn Elementary and the Perkiomen Ave. Olivet's building.

Mr. Goodman-Hinnershitz explained that the NEAR centers are smaller sites and more neighborhood based.

Mr. Waltman noted that the NEAR centers have a much higher cost per participant.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the difference between the NEAR and Olivet's programs. She noted the importance of having church-based neighborhood activities.

OND-RBI Allocation

Mr. Churchill distributed a handout explaining the projects covered by RBI and the OND allocations. The RBI receives \$10,000 to pay for the Great American Clean Up director and supplies. This same money has also been used to pay for general neighborhood work. The \$30,000 requested in 2008 is to be used for part-time labor to remove graffiti in neighborhoods, labor to assist in litter removal projects (other than the Great American Clean Up), administrative costs, the Clean City Yes program and general administrative costs.

Mr. Spencer inquired about the amount budgeted in the recycling enterprise fund for education.

Mr. Waltman left the work session at this time.

Mr. Churchill stated that he would supply the information on graffiti removal at a later time along with the information requested on graffiti removal. He explained that currently graffiti removal is a three pronged effort involving public works, RBI, and codes staff.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for a formal graffiti plan.

Mr. Churchill explained how the informal program has been effective on a smaller scale. He explained that all complaints go to the operations division manager (Kyle Zieber) where they are assessed and assigned.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the County's graffiti program promised earlier in the year. Mr. Churchill explained that the County program worked on four or five initiatives over the summer months and are finished for the 2007 year.

Mr. Spencer inquired about the cost of graffiti clean up in 2006 and 2007.

2007 Projects

Mr. Churchill stated that the CDBG 2007 projects are highlighted in yellow on the sheet distributed at the meeting.

Council President Spencer reminded all of the upcoming meeting schedule.

The work session was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Linda A. Kelleher, City Clerk