
City of Reading City Council

Regular Meeting Monday, January 14, 2008

A regular meeting of City Council was held on the above date for the transaction of general business.

Vaughn D. Spencer, President of Council, called the meeting to order.

The invocation was given by Rev. Calvin Kurtz, Reading-Berks Conference of Churches.

All present pledged to the flag.

ATTENDANCE

Council President Spencer
Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, District 2
Councilor Sterner, District 3
Councilor Baez, District 5
Councilor Waltman, District 6

Mayor T. McMahon
Managing Director L. Churchill
City Solicitor C. Younger
City Auditor D. Cituk
City Clerk L. Kelleher

PROCLAMATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

The Patriotic Order Sons of America, represented by Robert Rivers of Philadelphia, presented the City with an American Flag to be placed at the Pagoda. Mr. Rivers explained that the flag is given in honor of the Pagoda's 100th birthday. He noted that the City and Patriotic Order Sons of America share the same Charter date of 1748.

City Council issued a commendation to Hank Magliocchetti recognizing his 30 years of service to the City of Reading.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council President Spencer announced that four citizens were registered to speak on agenda topics and one on non-agenda topics. He inquired if Council wished to suspend the public speaking rules to allow all citizens to speak at this point. As no one objected, the public speaking rules were suspended. Council President Spencer reminded those registered to speak of the need to limit their comments to five minutes for agenda topics and three minutes for non-agenda topics.

Michael Reese, representing AFSCME local 2763, stated that he served on the negotiating team and asked Council to support the ratification of the contract. He thanked the City Administration for their effort to work toward a fair contract. He stated that the contract received an overwhelming ratification vote by AFSCME 2763 members. He expressed the belief that the components of the contract reflect the Administration's willingness to compromise with the rank and file and create a win-win situation.

Ron Lyons, President of AFSCME local 2763, expressed his belief in the terms of the contract and the process used to negotiate the contract. He thanked Managing Director Leon Churchill and the others involved in the negotiating process. He also thanked the waste water treatment plant and public works employees for their work to correct the broken sewer main over the past weekend.

Ivy Goldstan, of Goldstan Trading, stated that this has been a family run metal recycling business for well over 30 years. She expressed concern and noted several questions on the Scrap Metal Ordinance being introduced this evening.

Tom Yoder, of Laurel Street Recyclers, expressed the belief that the Scrap Metal Ordinance will push the metal trade to outside dealers. He noted the national epidemic of theft of precious metals. He expressed the belief that local dealers are already making corrective steps. He described some of the steps taken by recycling dealers.

Leon McDevitt Jr., of Shillington, expressed the belief that the renovation of the Pagoda is too costly for the cash strapped City. He expressed the belief that the cost of the consultant to study this heirloom is wasted money. He noted the money wasted on many useless studies and suggested that this money be used to address illegal dumping instead.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council President Spencer asked Council to consider the minutes from the December 10, 2007 and December 17, 2007 meetings and the agenda for this meeting. He announced that one additional ordinance will be introduced this evening to allow the refunding of a general obligation bond.

Councilor Waltman moved, seconded by Councilor Baez, to adopt the agenda as amended and approve the minutes from the December 10, 2007 and December 17, 2007 Council meetings.

Councilor Waltman inquired if the ratification vote on the AFSCME contract could occur at this point in the meeting as several City employees were waiting to learn the outcome. All agreed to take the ratification vote at this point.

Resolution 3-2008 – ratifying the Labor Agreement with AFSCME Local 2763 (Managing Director)

Councilor Baez moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to adopt Resolution 3-2008.

Managing Director Churchill highlighted the changes and some terms of the contract which will reflect an annual cost of approximately \$130,000. He stated that this contract was negotiated using interest based bargaining which allows compromise and results.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz thanked all who worked on negotiating the terms and standards of this contract.

Councilor Sterner noted his appreciation of the work done every day by AFSCME employees. He thanked all who worked towards negotiating a fair contract. He noted the continued dedication of AFSCME employees.

Councilor Baez thanked AFSCME and the Administration for working together and agreeing on a fair contract. She also congratulated and thanked Representative Larry Murin who's planning to retire at the end of the 2008 calendar year.

Councilor Waltman thanked all who worked to negotiate this contract. He noted that City employees are the most important part of the City family.

Council President Spencer commended Managing Director Churchill for understanding the City's workers and for bringing interest based bargaining to the negotiating table.

Resolution 3-2008 was adopted by the following vote:

**Yea: Baez, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Sterner, Waltman, Spencer
President – 5.**

Nay: None – 0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution- authorizing an amendment to the City's agreement with Mike Gehris, 1501 Luzerne St., Reading, PA that will increase his hourly compensation to \$12.00 per hour for providing contracted printing services. **(Purchasing)**

Resolution- authorizing the disposal of purchasing records in accordance with the provisions of the City of Reading Document Retention and Disposition schedule. **(Purchasing)**

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Mayor McMahon highlighted the report distributed to Council at the meeting covering the following:

- The City's reduced crime rate
- Update on Rental Housing Permit applications
- Upcoming District 11 Crime Watch Spaghetti Dinner on March 1

Councilor Sterner thanked the Reading Police Department for their critical work which has knocked back the City's crime rate. He also noted the dedication of the Junior ROTC and Captain Jiminez.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the success and commitment of all those involved in planning the 2008 Inauguration. She also expressed thanks to all those involved in the New Year's Eve celebration that occurred in downtown Reading.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed belief in the Housing Permit process. She noted that this new process will help the City move ahead. She asked the Administration to assist those who are having difficulty with the process.

Councilor Waltman stated that he recently attending a Real Estate Investors Association (REIA) meeting and attempted to re-frame the amendment to the City's Housing Permit process for the group. He noted

that the Ordinance is in the best interest of landlords, City residents, and the City.

Councilor Sterner agreed noting one of the goals of the Ordinance is to uncover problem landlords and to build a database of all City properties.

AUDITOR'S REPORT

City Auditor Dave Cituk highlighted the report distributed to Council at the meeting covering the following:

- Update on the City's recycling grant
- Update on the collection of Real Estate Transfer taxes
- Update on the composition of the three Pension Boards

Councilor Sterner expressed the belief that the City will come close to meeting the budgetary goal set for the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

Mayor McMahon questioned the decrease in the amount of the recycling grant. He stated that the City had a better rating performance 5-7 years ago. City Auditor Cituk explained that the Administration is currently working to increase business and industry participation in the recycling program.

ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

Bill No. 1-2008 - vacating a portion of Wyomissing Avenue between Brookline Streets and Lancaster Avenue. *(Solicitor) Introduced at the 12/17/07 meeting of Council; pursuant to 53 PS 37916 was required to lay over for 28 days.*

Councilor Sterner moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to enact Bill 1-2008.

Bill 1-2008 was enacted by the following vote:

**Yea: Baez, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Sterner, Waltman, Spencer
President - 5.**

Nay: None - 0.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW ORDINANCES

Council President Spencer read the following Ordinances into the record:

Ordinance- authorizing an increase to the Police Pension for those officers retiring before 2000. **(Marmarou, Police Pension Board)**

Ordinance- amending the 2008 City of Reading Full-Time Position Ordinance, by eliminating the position of Sergeant and creating the position of Lieutenant in Police Administration. **(Chief Heim)**

Ordinance- amending the Codified Ordinances of the City of Reading by adding to Chapter 10, Health and Safety, a Health and Safety Inspection Ordinance, which will require the inspection of all properties within the City of Reading after any sale or transfer of property. **(Codes/Solicitor) Replacing Bill No. 85-2007, which was withdrawn at the Administrations request**

Ordinance- authorization for dedication of St. Bernadine Street as a public roadway through Angelica Park to Route 10 **(Solicitor)**

Ordinance- amending the City of Reading Codified Ordinances, Chapter 13 - Licenses, Permits and Business Regulations, by adding a new Section 15 entitled Scrap Metal Dealers **(Council Staff/Deputy Chief Talbot)**

Ordinance- amending Chapter 10 Health and Safety, Section 407 Parking Trucks, Trailers and Mobile Homes, by prohibiting the Parking of Trucks, Trailers and Mobile Homes in all areas designated as preservation zones in the City of Reading **(Council Staff/Police Department)**

Ordinance- amending the City of Reading Codified Ordinances Chapter 1 - Administration and Government, Section H Department Organization, Exhibit A - Purchasing Procedures, by adding a new Section 8.0 entitled Protection of Integrity in Government **(Fuhs)**

Ordinance - refunding of a General Obligation Bond in the amount of \$5,900,000

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 4-2008 - directing the Berks County Tax Claim Bureau not to collect delinquent real estate taxes **(Solicitor)**

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz moved, seconded by Councilor Baez, to adopt Resolution 4-2008.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz explained that the City has been more successful in collecting delinquent taxes since they contracted with Portnoff.

Resolution 4-2008 was adopted by the following vote:

**Yea: Baez, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Sterner, Waltman, Spencer
President – 5.**

Nay: None – 0.

Resolution 5-2008 - appointing Marcia Schmehl to the Disruptive Conduct Review Board (**Administrative Oversight Committee**)

Resolution 6-2008 - appointing Russell Manbeck to the Disruptive Conduct Review Board (**Administrative Oversight Committee**)

Resolution 7-2008 - appointing John Hefferon to the Disruptive Conduct Review Board (**Council Staff/Managing Director**)

The Administrative Oversight Committee moved to adopted Resolution 5-2008, 6-2008, and 7-2008.

Councilor Sterner explained that the Disruptive Conduct Review Board will hear appeals to the Landlord/Tenant Ordinance. This Board will greatly assist the City in enforcing quality of life ordinances.

Councilor Baez noted the qualifications of the appointees stressing the need for this Board to assist the City with problems associated with quality of life.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the importance of the Ordinance as it directly attacks quality of life issues.

Resolutions 5-2008, 6-2008, and 7-2008 were adopted by the following vote:

**Yea: Baez, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Sterner, Waltman, Spencer
President – 5.**

Nay: None – 0.

COUNCIL COMMENT

Councilor Baez thanked the City Clerk, Public Works Department, and all those who assisted to correct the issues identified in the 100 block of W. Windsor Street.

Councilor Sterner thanked all attending this evening's meeting. He also noted the success of the Hillside light program despite inclement weather. He also thanked the Public Works Department employees for working through the weekend to correct the sewer break.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz thanked the Southeast People's Voice for their work at Amanda's Garden and painting the basement at St. John's Church. She noted the strengths of this particular community group.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz asked all to remember the total cost to rehabilitate the Pagoda will be spread out over many years. She stated that this rehabilitation will be funded through a combination of public and private partnerships.

Councilor Waltman and Councilor Sterner suggested a closer examination of the Scrap Metal Ordinance.

Councilor Waltman expressed his belief in the long term viability of the Pagoda and the need to rehabilitate the Pagoda as it sits overlooking the City and the County.

Councilor Waltman expressed Council's sympathy and condolences to Councilor Fuhs.

Councilor Baez moved, seconded by Councilor Sterner, to adjourn the regular meeting of Council.

Linda Kelleher
City Clerk