



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
May 11, 2009
5:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, C. Younger, R. Hottenstein, C. Hemnitz, C. Kanezo, M. Mayes

Mr. Spencer, President of Council, called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. He noted that Mr. Waltman would not be attending this evening's meetings.

I. CDBG-R Review

Mr. Mayes distributed a draft project list for the stimulus funding package. He stated that he received the regulations governing the funding package recently and is unsure if all these projects will fit into the guidelines. He stated that the focus needs to be on infrastructure and energy efficiency and that projects need to be ready to begin within 120 days. He stated that substantial tracking of these projects is needed.

Mr. Mayes indicated that the street lighting and pedestrian lighting will definitely fit the regulations as will the Properties of Merit program. He stated that he will try to incorporate the Blighted Property Review Committee funding. He stated that the Reading Beautification project may not be ready in time and that the artifacts bank project may not fit the regulations.

Mr. Mayes stated that he will be following up on these questionable projects with the City's HUD representative to determine their eligibility. He stated that his fall-back position will be to use any unprogrammed funds for street paving projects.

Mr. Sterner stated that stimulus funding is to be utilized to create jobs. He stated his belief that these projects will keep employment level but will not create positions.

Mr. Mayes reminded Council that this document is a draft but that it will be finalized by Friday.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz indicated that the brief turn around time on the projects does not allow for training of new employees. She stated her belief that these projects were for those who are already qualified for these types of jobs.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the Reading Beautification project. Mr. Mayes stated that he has met with Wayne Cockrell. He stated his belief that this organization is unfocused and that this funding will allow RBI to assist the Blighted Property Review Committee and the CD Department in creating a problem property database. He stated that the cost would be approximately \$40,000.

Mr. Hottenstein clarified that this list was created through the application process before the regulations were received. He stated that substitutions may occur but that the advertisement must be placed this Friday.

Mr. Spencer questioned if this was the best the City could do with the funding. Mr. Mayes stated his belief that there may be better projects. He stated that he will keep Council informed through email.

Mr. Spencer stated that the site of the water bottling business would be a good location for economic development and improvements to enhance the neighborhood.

Mr. Spencer questioned the Neighborhood Housing Service Community Center. Mr. Mayes indicated that the funding would be to rehabilitate the building at Schuylkill Ave and Buttonwood St into a community center/computer lab. He stated that he is looking for Council feedback on these projects and suggestions for other possible projects.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that there are sections of the City where sidewalks are in dire need of repair and the owners cannot afford to make the corrections. Mr. Mayes noted his willingness to study these needs.

Mr. Mayes noted that he will be making a further presentation of the finalized project listing at the May 18 Work Session.

Mr. Fuhs voiced his support of the lighting, Properties of Merit, and Blighted Property Review Committee funding. He stated he would like to see the other funding be used for sidewalk and infrastructure improvements.

II. WWTP Updates

This update will be received at the May 18 Public Works Committee meeting as a Committee of the Whole discussion. It will be discussed at Committee of the Whole meetings on the fourth Monday beginning in June.

III. Executive Session

Council entered executive session at 5:34 pm to discuss litigation. Council exited executive session at 6:25 pm.

IV. Bernhart's Park

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz informed Council that she toured the park with Dr. Eve Kimball from the City Board of Health and the PA Department of Health. She stated that she disagrees with the report released by the PA Dept of Health.

Ms. Kelleher indicated that all who have reviewed the report to date have found the report laughable. She also informed Council that she has discovered that the Secretary of the PA Dept of Health was not informed of the situation at Bernhart's. He will be receiving a brief on the situation and a meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

Ms. Katzenmoyer distributed the Bernhart's Park Resolution recently passed by the City Board of Health.

Mr. Fuhs questioned if the draining of the lake and inspection of the dam would fall within the scope of the Army Corps of Engineers. Ms. Katzenmoyer replied that Dr. Wong and Dr. Kimball from the Board of Health both believe that it would.

Mr. Spencer stated his belief that in order to get the park back to its original condition, the City would need to begin the litigation process.

Mr. Marmarou stated that litigation was always discussed but always delayed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the report suggests installing a fence around the wooded area that is contaminated. Mr. Jones noted that Public Works would not be willing to install or maintain the fence since the City did not cause the damage to the park.

Mr. Hottenstein indicated that the Administration would review the resolution and determine the best course of action.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if litigation begins how long the proceedings would last. Mr. Younger stated that he would not respond as that would be a topic for executive session.

Mr. Hottenstein questioned if Council wanted the park remediated. All of Council replied affirmatively.

Mr. Jones indicated that some areas can be bulldozed removing contaminated soil and adding new top soil. He noted the difficulty in removing the contaminated soil from the sloped wooded area.

Mr. Fuhs stated his belief that the fence should be installed in that area. He stated that Exide should be responsible for installing and maintaining the fence.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this area is abutting a new housing development and will be a prime site for children to play. She stated that the area needs to be remediated and not fenced off.

V. Agenda Review

Council reviewed the agenda for this evening's meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:43 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC
City Clerk