



CITY COUNCIL

Public Safety Committee

Monday, June 6, 2011
Council Office
5 p.m.

Committee Members Attending: D. Sterner, Chair, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, J. Waltman

Others Attending: T. Butler, V. Spencer, L. Kelleher, W. Heim, C. Younger, K. Kulp, C. Geffken, R. Natale, D. Robinson

Mr. Sterner, Chair, called the Public Safety Committee to order at approximately 6pm.

Amend Special Events Permit Ordinance

Ms. Butler distributed copies of the amended Special Events Permits Ordinance and explained that the Administration recently discovered that the ordinance enacted in 2007 and then amended in 2010 was never implemented. She explained that an internal group has reviewed the ordinance and is suggesting some refinement. She stated that there are no substantive changes to the ordinance. The group is only proposing some refinement. She stated that they would like to introduce the ordinance at the June 13th Regular Meeting of Council.

Ms. Butler stated that an application to match the terms of the ordinance has been prepared. Completed applications will be reviewed by the Traffic Enforcement Division of the Police Department along with Public Works and Property Maintenance.

Certificate of Transfer Ordinance

Ms. Kelleher distributed copies of the Certificate of Transfer Ordinance. She explained that she along with Ms. Katzenmoyer and Mr. Natale have been meeting with Mr. Weiss weekly to find a way to address the stock of illegal housing currently in the City and believe that the process contained in this ordinance will solve the majority of that problem.

Ms. Kelleher explained that weekly the Council office prepares an illegal rental memorandum that is distributed to a majority of people internally. Illegal properties are identified through the real estate listing printed in the Sunday Reading Eagle and others are referred through information from other sources.

Ms. Kelleher stated that under this ordinance, any property that is sold or transferred goes through a pre-settlement inspection by the Property Maintenance Division. The inspection will identify health and safety issues not normally captured during a private home inspection used to determine the appraisal amount for the property.

Once the property complies with the health and safety regulations contained in the ordinance and the certifications for trash and water are issued, an electronic Certificate of Transfer will be issued and sent electronically to the Recorder of Deeds, with a hard copy going to the seller or the seller's agent. The hard copy of the certificate will be attached to the deed issued to the Recorder of Deeds for recordation. If a deed is delivered to the Recorder of Deeds without the certificate attached, he will bring the property to the City's attention. She explained that this will cover all properties that transfer; commercial and residential, owner occupied and rental.

Ms. Kelleher noted that the terms of the pre-settlement review were based on ordinances from other municipalities, both in and outside Berks County. She stated that after many weeks of work Mr. Weiss is visiting with various organizations that will be affected by this ordinance, such as The Banker's Association, The Bar Association, and settlement companies to get their input. She stated that currently everyone has been supportive. She stated that the ordinance was reviewed by The Reading-Berks Association of Realtors and the Recorder of Deeds and his solicitor who all support the adoption of the Certificate of Transfer. She stated that the last group for Mr. Weiss to meet with is the Real Estate Investors Association. That meeting is planned for June.

The Public Safety Committee recommended that the ordinance be reviewed by the full body of Council at either June or July Work Session.

Citizen Service Center Implementation Report

Mr. Geffken stated that more SOP's have been created which will improve the service provided to customers. He stated that he is expanding the ability of employees outside the CSC to answer calls coming into the Customer Service Center. He stated that this will require an upgrade to the City's Cisco phone system. He expressed the belief that service in the CSC is improving. He stated that waiting time for phone calls is less than a minute and the dropped calls have been decreased.

Quality of Life Ticketing Implementation Report

A report prepared by Mr. Kersley was distributed showing tickets issued in May and year-to-date. 1,874 tickets were issued in May and 4,399 were issued year-to-date. Mr. Natale explained that more inspectors have been trained to use the ticketing program. He stated that inspectors are now trained to knock on applicable doors prior to issuing a ticket.

Mr. Geffken expressed the belief that the majority of citizens like the Quality of Life application because it can quickly change the conditions in neighborhoods. He also noted the ability of those

who receive Quality of Life tickets to appeal them to the Codes Manager.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that the Quality of Life ticketing program has made an improvement in District 2. She noted the need to clean up inconsistencies in Quality of Life ticketing ordinance, such as trash set out and snow removal.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Mr. Waltman, and Ms. Reed noted the need for the inspectors to apply the program fairly for violations, such as improper trash setout as some residents may not be as educated on the required practice. Mr. Spencer noted the need for the City also to comply with Quality of Life applications such as snow removal and high grass.

Mr. Marmarou noted the problems with trash set out at student homes in District 4.

Mr. Geffken stated that grass trimming in City parks and playgrounds will be handled properly after the Summer Youth Employment Program begins. He stated that he has also asked the Public Works Director to find volunteers or community groups to assist the City.

Ms. Reed agreed with the use of volunteer groups for grass mowing and trimming and suggested that the Mayor also include that application when he speaks with non-profit organizations about SILOTs.

Mr. Acosta noted that three (3) organizations that currently use the City's ball fields offered to help with mowing and trimming, but were told they were not permitted to undertake that activity.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that the grass mowing and trimming at City-owned properties be placed on the Public Works agenda.

Search for CD Deputy Director

Mr. Geffken is currently reassessing the need to fill this position.

MOU: I-Lead

Mr. Denbowski introduced Angel Figueroa, Executive Director of I-Lead. Mr. Denbowski provided some background noting that the originally requested MOU for the 11th & Pike field house has been withdrawn. He stated that Mr. Figueroa would like to speak with Council about other partnership opportunities.

Mr. Figueroa stated that the I-Lead group originally wanted to run the I-Lead Empowerment Camp program from the 11th & Pike field house for approximately thirty (30) days. The camp program is a pre-cursor for youth, ages 16-18, entrance to the I-Lead Charter School. He encouraged City Council to visit the I-Lead website to learn more about the program. He explained that the Camp Program is currently is on hold until an acceptable facility is located.

There was next a discussion about recreation programs available this summer such as the tennis

program, which is located at Baer Park and Hampden Park, and the Summer Camp program hosted at 3rd and Spruce field house.

The Committee noted the need for more summer programs to operate from the City's various field houses, City-wide.

Other Topics

Chief Kulp requested permission to do a mass Oath of Office to firefighters receiving promotions at an upcoming Council meeting. City Council agreed. Ms. Kelleher asked that Chief Kulp have those being promoted come to the Council office one (1) hour prior to the start of the Council meeting to sign the Oath book.

Mr. Geffken stated that the Act 537 plan contract recommendation will be brought to City Council next Wednesday. He explained the background behind the need for the Act 537 plan.

Sewer Fund Investigation

Ms. Kelleher stated that two (2) parties have not responded to the letter issued by City Council. She stated that City Council must determine how this matter will conclude and how the information will be released to the public.

Ms. Kelleher stated that at the June 2nd Act 47 Implementation meeting the group learned that the position responsible for the transfer activity is the Accounting Manager and that party is one of those who have not responded to the letter issued by Council. She stated that the Act 47 meeting, those attending also learned that there have been approximately 3,000 additional transfers on the City books that will need to be written off. Those transfers occurred over the last five (5) years and are valued above \$500K. This information was included in the meeting report distributed to Council members.

The Public Safety Committee adjourned at approximately 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk