



# *CITY COUNCIL*

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## ***Public Works Committee***

***Tuesday, January 18, 2011***  
***Meeting Report***

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

**Others Attending:** S. Katzenmoyer, F. Denbowski, C. Jones, N. Walker, D. Gresh, C. Younger

The Public Works Committee meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm.

### **Protocol for Traffic Changes**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted her concern with traffic changes which are made before approved by Council. She stated that the City needs to follow consistent procedures. Mr. Jones stated that he did not realize that Council approval was needed. He stated that he will now include Council approval of all changes.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz described the situation with Klein Ave.

Mr. Sterner questioned if the change went to the Public Works Department first. Mr. Jones stated that it does for City streets. He stated that two stop signs on N. 13<sup>th</sup> St (at Elm and at Greenwich) were processed by PennDOT and were installed without City review. Mr. Jones stated that he has spoken with PennDOT about this issue and that they will now include City review and Council approval in their process.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested a flow chart with timelines for Council's information. Ms. Katzenmoyer requested that when ordinances are placed on the agenda for consideration that all supporting documentation also be submitted.

Mr. Jones noted the problems caused when requests are unfunded. He stated that he will bring changes to this committee prior to asking that they be placed on the Council regular meeting agenda.

### **Memo of Understanding – Reading Beautification Inc**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested clarification on MOUs which need Council approval and those which are informational only.

Mr. Denbowski described the relationship between the City Solid Waste office and RBI. He stated that lines have always been blurred and responsibilities shared. He stated that RBI has had space in City Hall in the past and is requesting an office. He stated that RBI is not a typical not-for-profit but is an extension of City government which supports City efforts.

Mr. McMahon arrived.

Mr. Gresh stated that RBI receives grants and donations. Mr. Denbowski stated that RBI is often used as a pass-through for City grant funding.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the City will be developing many partnerships in the future. She noted the need for consistency. She expressed her support of RBI but noted the need for template language in all MOUs.

Mr. Denbowski noted his hope that RBI would become self-sustaining and reduce dependency on City employees for their efforts. He stated that they will be conducting more clean-ups than the annual Great American Clean-Up and that the executive director could become a community liaison. Mr. Denbowski introduced Nigel Walker RBI Executive Director. Ms. Walker stated that the Great American Clean-Up will be held on April 30.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned how members of the RBI Board were appointed. Mr. Gresh stated that the Board is all volunteer.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the RBI Board members are not City appointed. Mr. Denbowski stated that the manager of the Solid Waste office is a member/liaison.

Mr. Younger stated that the City must develop policy on groups who may/may not be granted office space in City Hall. Mr. Denbowski stated that RBI has always had office space at either City Hall or 11<sup>th</sup> & Pike Rec Center. He stated that RBI has been an entity since the City recycling fund was created and that City staff has always been involved in their operations.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed her belief that past practice is not always good practice. She stated that the RBI Board is not City appointed and that there are City BACs and non-City boards.

Ms. Walker stated that she has been working for RBI for a short time. She stated that she has been focusing on the Great American Clean-Up as RBI has a large role in this event. She noted that Mr. Zolna has been extremely helpful and that RBI needs the City's support to move forward. She expressed her hope that RBI would grow and engage more neighborhood groups.

Mr. Denbowski explained that the City's solid waste fund is a major source of RBI income. He stated that RBI does this work so that City employees can focus on other issues. He stated that these are State mandated programs.

Mr. Sterner expressed his concern that other groups may also feel they deserve office space in City Hall. He suggested that this issue be reviewed by the Law Department before moving forward. Mr. Younger stated that he will review the issue by the end of this week.

Mr. McMahon stated that RBI works only for the City. He stated that it would be impossible for City employees to perform this work. He stated that he is impressed with the work done by RBI.

Mr. Sterner reiterated that the MOU needed legal review.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed her belief that the work done by RBI is invaluable but noted the need for legal review and consistent policy. She used the free parking item included in the MOU as an example as City employees have lost free parking but that the MOU gives the executive director free parking.

Mr. Younger questioned how much space would be used by RBI. Mr. Gresh stated that a small office with desk and phone is all that is necessary. He stated that a computer is not necessary and there will be no access to the City's computer system.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if Council needed to approve this MOU. Mr. Younger stated that this is a grey area.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the relationship between the City and RBI be better explained in the MOU.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned where RBIs cleaning equipment is stored. Mr. Gresh stated that it is stored in a garage at 11<sup>th</sup> & Elm Sts at a cost of \$50 per month. Mr. Denbowski stated that prior to the garage rental, the equipment was stored at City Hall.

Mr. Denbowski stated that RBI's incorporation papers use City Hall as its official address and that they have use of the City's mail system.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the next steps. She questioned if RBI could use the space until the MOU issues are resolved. Mr. Younger stated that he would review the issues by the end of this week.

Mr. Jones suggested that Mr. Geffken be consulted to be sure there are no plans for the space being considered for RBI. Mr. Denbowski stated that he has been consulted and there are no

immediate plans for this space.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that RBI use the same protocol for all clean-up events and thanked them for their work. Mr. Gresh thanked the Committee for their time and stated that he would be happy to answer any additional questions.

**Memo of Understanding - PermaCultivate**

Mr. Denbowski thanked PermaCultivate for running the Martin Luther King Jr Day event at the greenhouse with City youth. He introduced those present representing PermaCultivate – Eron Lloyd, Brian Twyman and Alexis Campbell.

Mr. Lloyd stated that he has been involved in the City for many years. He explained that PermaCultivate is a non-profit agency focused on urban greening and sustainability issues. He stated that this group was formerly called Renue and were involved with community gardens. He noted his hope that a partnership could be formed with the City to operate in City Park.

Ms. Campbell stated that her background is in organic gardening.

Mr. Twyman stated that he is an MSW. He has experience working with Renue and is currently the recycling coordinator for the City and Reading School District.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested a report on the greenhouse. Mr. Jones stated that a full time staff member was in the greenhouse for many years. He stated that the position was eliminated two years ago but that Mr. Zeiber is still very active with the greenhouse. He stated that all flowers and plants used in the City planters are grown in the greenhouse. Mr. Denbowski stated that the group Friends of the Greenhouse was active in the past with education programs.

Mr. Lloyd distributed additional information regarding the rose garden and greenhouse which highlighted portions of the City Park Master Plan in regards to these areas. He stated that Reading Roots is a plan for urban farming in City Park. He stated that there would also be programming for youth education. The proposal includes use of currently unused space in the greenhouse and to repurpose the rose garden with items which would be less maintenance intensive. He stated that there would be no maintenance by the City and that the garden would complement the bandshell. He stated that they currently hold \$2 million in liability coverage and are building a partnership with the school district for educational programs. He stated that they will be selling their produce at the Penn St Farmer's Market and hope to begin their plantings as soon as possible.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she has many questions about the uses.

Mr. Lloyd reviewed the MOU Operation Details section. He stated that all produce would be organically grown. The MOU also indicates that operations can expand beyond City Park to

other parkland. He stated that produce will be sold to continue funding for the operation. The group will be meeting with the Redevelopment Authority for use of 1.8 acres at 6<sup>th</sup> & Canal Sts as their main farm location. He noted that these venues could become locations for eco-tourists.

Mr. Sterner stated that the greenhouse is City owned. He noted that an agreement is necessary. He questioned if Friends of the Greenhouse had/have an agreement. Mr. Denbowski stated that he is not aware of an agreement. He stated that their main focus was fundraising for greenhouse operations. Mr. Jones reminded the Committee that a full time employee was stationed there until two years ago.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the greenhouse is also used by Berks Urban Greening. She noted the difficulty of growing roses in this climate and questioned better options. Mr. Lloyd stated that there are many options which would bloom from early spring until well into the fall which would be beautiful and require much less maintenance.

Mr. Sterner questioned if there was funding to allow the group to begin now. Mr. Lloyd stated that the group has begun receiving donations. He stated that selling produce at the markets and to local restaurants would also generate revenue. He stated that there are also conversations for a composting service which would provide additional revenue. He stated that the group is looking to be long-term and financially independent.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the condition of the greenhouse.

Mr. McMahon questioned the disposition of the plants currently inside the greenhouse. Mr. Lloyd suggested selling the plants. Mr. Jones stated that the plants are City owned and suggested that Mr. Zeiber participate in these discussions.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that a café be opened inside the greenhouse with a tropical theme.

Mr. McMahon stated that he is in support of the project. He noted the value of education for the school district and the possible eco-tourism opportunities. He stated that there is tremendous potential for success.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this is a very focused plan. She questioned if Council approval was needed. Mr. Younger stated his opinion that Council approval would be needed as this would be a lease agreement.

Mr. Denbowski suggested operating under the MOU for a one year time period while the lease agreement is formalized. He stated that this would give both sides an opportunity to learn from the experience to be sure the lease agreement is accurate. Mr. Lloyd stated that PermaCultivate has no stipulations at this time. He stated that any improvements made to the greenhouse would

respect its history and would be closely monitored by Mr. Zeiber. He stated that these items would be removable if necessary.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that City officials change and that the formal agreement would benefit the organization. Mr. Lloyd expressed his preference for City consensus on the project. He stated that the project will be a good model and a strong partnership.

Mr. Denbowski stated that PermaCultivate will be appearing before the Redevelopment Authority tomorrow. He questioned if Council support could be stated at that time. Mr. Sterner stated that the Committee cannot commit to support at this time.

Mr. Younger questioned if Mr. Zeiber was consulted on this MOU. Mr. Lloyd stated that there have been brief discussion but no in-depth information has been shared. Mr. Jones stated that this MOU needs further review.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the overall plan and MOU must protect the City and its investment. Mr. Lloyd stated that PermaCultivate is willing to make payments to the City once it is financially able.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that this topic be discussed at the February work session so that all of Council can review the plan and ask questions.

Mr. Jones stated that the farming plan for Canal St may need review by zoning. Mr. Younger and Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that agriculture may not meet the commercial or manufacturing definitions in the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Jones suggested that the Zoning Administrator become involved in the process.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed her excitement to have an active greenhouse.

Mr. McMahon stated that this project is at no cost to the City.

### **Inventory of Lease Agreements (PW 11)**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for a consistent template. Mr. Younger stated that agreements are not one size fits all. Mr. Jones stated that there can be some standard language but each agreement should be adapted to the specific facility and need.

Mr. Younger stated that East Ends AA has stopped making their lease payments. He questioned if he should pursue this with them. Those in attendance stated that collection should be pursued.

Mr. Jones voiced his concern with this building becoming vacant as it will be a target for vandalism in its secluded location. He stated that the City has many leases in addition to those listed for parks and playgrounds.

Mr. Sterner stated that all agreements should be reviewed. Mr. Jones stated that he will work with his staff to compile a list.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he has been working with other groups on new agreements for City facilities. He stated that he will continue to bring them to this Committee for review.

The Public Works Committee adjourned at 7 pm.

Respectfully submitted by  
*Shelly Katzenmoyer*, Deputy City Clerk