



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
August 11, 2014
5:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

D. Sterner, S. Marmarou, D. Reed, J. Waltman, F. Acosta, C. Daubert

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, D. Cituk, R. Johnson, C. Younger, C. Snyder, D. Hoag, V. Spencer, F. Denbowski, D. Sawitzki

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:07 pm by Mr. Acosta.

I. City-owned Dam Report

Mr. Johnson and Ms. Hoag introduced Mr. Sawitzki from URS. They stated that each dam has its own issues.

Mr. Sawitzki reviewed the results of the study. He explained that there are three types of hazard ratings – high, significant, and low.

Mr. Bembenick and Mr. Zale arrived at this time.

Mr. Sawitzki stated that the City owns five dams – Ontelaunee, Egelman's upper, Egelman's lower, Bernhart, and Bushong Mill. He stated that the average age of these dams is 115 years and that they must be treated as part of the civil infrastructure of the City. He explained that Ontelaunee is a medium sized dam and the others are small sized.

Mr. Sawitzki stated that to address the repairs to the dams the approximate cost would be as follows:

- High priority - \$815,000
- Medium priority - \$140,000
- Low priority - \$48,000
- Public Safety concerns - \$358,000
- Operations and Maintenance issues - \$27,000

For a total of \$1.4 million.

Mr. Sawitzki stated that to remove the dams the approximate cost would be as follows:

- Egelman's upper and lower - \$160,000 - \$310,000
- Bernhart - \$305,000 – \$725,000
- Bushong Mill - \$245,000 - \$425,000

Ms. Hoag stated that Public Works will be using the results of the study to plan and budget for these expenses. She stated that the final plan will need to be approved by PA DEP and that the City will be moving forward slowly and carefully.

Mr. Johnson stated that questions should be submitted to Ms. Kelleher so that they can be addressed at a future session.

Ms. Hoag and Mr. Sawitzki left the meeting at this time.

II. Recreation Commission Park and Recreation Plan

Ms. Klahr, Mr. Washington and Ms. Toole joined the meeting at this time.

Ms. Klahr stated that the Rec Commission is beginning work on a 10 year park and open space plan. She stated that DCNR has waived the matching funds expectation for the grant.

Ms. Toole stated that she has begun her work and spent the day observing the playground program. She stated that it has been 14 years since the City did its last park and open space plan.

Ms. Toole stated that the Reading Rec Commission is a statewide model and that it is her hope that the plan will capitalize on the great things already in place. She stated that she would like to interview the elected officials as part of the process. She suggested that improving the good things and addressing the challenges be included in the plan. She also noted the need for citizen involvement and field studies. She stated that the plan will include priorities and costs for budgeting purposes. She stated that the plan should be in place in 2015 and should address recreation in terms of public health, community building, and attraction and retention of businesses and residents.

Mr. Waltman commended the Rec Commission for their work. He noted the need for additional public pools and to enhance residents' connection to the City's natural resources. He expressed the belief that residents don't know about the many recreational assets of the City. Ms. Toole agreed and stated that residents must reconnect to nature.

Mr. Daubert commended the Rec Commission but noted the need to reach more people. He also suggested that programs be expanded and that adult programming be added.

Ms. Reed stated that the City has excellent passive recreational areas. She suggested that the trails and parks complement the playground programs. She noted the difficulty Public Works has maintaining the parks and playgrounds.

Ms. Klahr stated that she is working on a youth maintenance grant which will place teens in the Public Works Department to perform maintenance on parks and playgrounds. She stated that this will help make the connection with youth, give them hands-on work experience, and assist the City with maintenance.

Ms. Toole stated that landscape professionals and planners will also be on the team creating the plan and that maintenance will be reviewed during the process.

Mr. Sterner expressed his thanks to Ms. Klahr and the Rec Commission for the work they have done so far.

Ms. Snyder suggested that vegetation other than grass be explored where able to reduce the mowing and maintenance of grassy areas. She stated that there are also many other groups who use City facilities and suggested that the Rec Commission reach out to partner with them. She also suggested that recreation be included in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

III. Egelman's Baseball Field

Ms. Klahr stated that the field is being used and that the Rec Commission is maintaining it. She stated that the concession stand has been cleaned and painted and that Mr. Gaston has removed all his equipment. She stated that she has been in contact with another group who wished to have exclusive use of the field but she stated that she does not want to lose access to this field. She stated that Mr. Gaston is not part of the Rec Commission staff.

Mr. Acosta questioned if the field is bringing a profit. Ms. Klahr stated that it is unclear as access to the field was granted late in the season and that the concession stand has not been open. She stated that there will be a better idea after next season.

Mr. Waltman described tournaments held at Baer Park in the past. He stated that many teams participated in regional weekend-long tournaments. Ms. Klahr stated that this has been discussed but that there is currently no access to the restrooms in the field house at Baer Park. She stated that the field is beautiful after its renovation and the addition of field lighting.

Mr. Acosta explained that the boxing club has not granted the Rec Commission access to the field house.

Mr. Spencer questioned the use of the field at Angelica. Ms. Klahr stated that the agreement states that only two games per day can be played on the fields, the window to schedule games is small, and the rental fee is very high. She stated that the field is available but rarely used.

Mr. Acosta stated that Alvernia invested a lot to bring the fields to NCAA standards.

Mr. Sterner stated that girl's softball tournaments used to be held at Hillside. Ms. Klahr stated that the Rec Commission has just begun a girl's softball program that has the support of the District and that it will most likely expand next season. She stated that she will keep this in mind.

Mr. Washington stated that holding tournaments as fundraisers has been discussed. He noted his hope that three to five be held next season. He noted the need to use fields with lights.

Mr. Washington suggested that the City consider requesting gifts in lieu of taxes from Alvernia and Albright for recreation. He stated that Albright does not charge the Rec Commission to use its baseball field but noted his hope that they would also grant access to the gym for basketball.

Ms. Klahr described the Rec Commission's back to school event and stated that that she received a donation of \$5,000 from a resident for programs.

Mr. Sterner expressed the belief that positive brings positive.

Mr. Acosta thanked Ms. Klahr and the Rec Commission for their work. He stated that the City's \$488,000 contribution is used well. He noted that there is a strong board and many positives in the programs.

Ms. Klahr, Ms. Toole, and Mr. Washington left the meeting at this time.

IV. Executive Session

Council entered executive session at 6:11 pm to discuss personnel and litigation matters. Council exited executive session at 6:36 pm.

V. Agenda Review

Council reviewed this evening's agenda including the following:

Mr. McMahan arrived at this time.

- Award of Contract to renovate the baler facility

Mr. Johnson stated that the City received a grant to purchase a cardboard baler and the facility is at the wood shed on Hill Road.

- Resolution designating Our City Reading as the redevelopment partner for the Penn Street Properties

Mr. Acosta expressed the belief that there is support for the partnership if the conditions are met. He noted the need to move the issue forward. He noted that a letter was received from Mr. Boscov withdrawing from the project.

Mr. Daubert noted the need to repair this relationship. Ms. Snyder agreed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz joined the meeting via speaker phone.

Mr. Acosta questioned if the timeline was included in the resolution. Ms. Snyder stated that it is.

Ms. Reed questioned when the letter from Mr. Boscov was received. Ms. Kelleher stated that she received it on August 6 at 5 pm.

Ms. Reed questioned if Mr. Boscov was aware of the requested changes. Ms. Snyder stated that she did discuss the changes with Mr. Boscov. She expressed the belief that the only way the relationship would be salvaged for this project is if Council approves the resolution. She stated that he may still refuse to work on the project.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with Ms. Snyder.

Ms. Snyder stated that the items added to the resolution are:

- That any and all housing included in the project will be market rate
- That other developers be included in the project
- That the final plan must include a marketing plan, a timeline, and a reversion clause if conditions are not met

Mr. Acosta noted the need for this project to be part of the vision for downtown. He questioned how this would be done. Ms. Snyder stated that it would be reviewed when the final plan is submitted for Council's approval.

Mr. Spencer stated that there is a five year Main Street plan in place and encouraged Council to review it. He stated that his vision includes the upper floors of buildings to be occupied, restaurants, shopping, entertainment and people out walking.

Mr. Waltman stated that he will not support this resolution without knowing the vision for the downtown. He stated that money is easy to spend and that currently the 400 block of Penn St is essentially vacant. He expressed the belief that the Our City Reading plan was vague and that agreement recommendations are not the same as mandates.

Mr. Sterner noted the need for Council to move this forward and continue addressing the concerns. He stated that Council will have the opportunity to review the final plan.

Mr. Waltman expressed the belief that the City should not be against the wall on this project. He noted the need for others to have access to 108 and BEDI funds. Ms. Snyder stated that they are assigned to a particular developer.

Mr. Waltman expressed the belief that the downtown is collapsing.

Mr. Spencer stated that it took Lancaster ten years to see improvement.

Mr. Acosta expressed the belief that the \$50,000 grant awarded to Main Street will be used to fill the deficit of DID caused by the loss of the assessment at 4th & Penn.

VI. Charter Complaint

Mr. Acosta stated that he has received notice that the latest complaint does not have merit and the investigation is concluded.

Mr. Acosta questioned how to proceed with the regular meeting with Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz on speaker phone. Ms. Kelleher and Mr. Younger stated that Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz must be present for roll call and for public comment. They suggesting changing the meeting order.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:57 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC, City Clerk*