



***COMMITTEE of the WHOLE***  
***CITY COUNCIL***

**MINUTES**  
**February 23, 2015**  
**5:00 P.M.**

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

S. Marmarou, D. Reed, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, F. Acosta

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, D. Cituk, M. Vind, C. Younger, C. Snyder, C. Peiffer, G. Smith, V. Spencer, F. Denbowski, M. Malinowski

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:17 pm by Mr. Acosta.

**I. 2015 General Obligation Bonds**

Mr. Vind distributed a repayment schedule. He stated that this bond transaction will refund several current bonds and that it is part of the amended recovery plan. He stated that the 2003 Redevelopment Authority bond, the 2006 debt service and the 2008 debt service will all be refinanced which will net the City a savings of \$1.3 million in 2015 and just over \$2 million for the life of the bond.

Mr. Marmarou stated that a similar refinancing was just done. Mr. Vind agreed but stated that this is a different series of bonds. He stated that both bond refinancing transactions were part of the amended recovery plan and the budget.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that all initiatives in the amended recovery plan be tracked for progress made. Ms. Snyder stated that Mr. Kersley is currently creating a database to track this information. She stated that he will also be creating a timeline for initiatives to be accomplished over the next five years. She stated that he expects the database to be complete in March and that Council will begin receiving quarterly reports.

Mr. Vind left the meeting at this time.

## **II. Comprehensive Plan Update**

Mr. Peiffer distributed a handout to Council summarizing the Steering Committee meetings held to date. He stated that the Steering Committee meets the second Tuesday of each month and invited Councilors to attend and participate.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she attended two meetings. She gave her compliments to the Steering Committee and stated that they are following a great process.

Mr. Peiffer suggested that if Councilors cannot attend, they participate by interview either over the phone or at a more convenient time.

Ms. Snyder encouraged all to participate.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the facilitator did a great job during his interview.

Mr. Peiffer stated that the facilitator provides the questions in advance to allow preparation time and for deeper discussion. He stated that the Steering Committee is currently using a bilingual survey through Survey Monkey.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that these are the same questions asked during the process to complete the 2000 Comprehensive Plan. She questioned if a comparison would be made between the answers to the questions for 2000 and for 2015. Mr. Peiffer stated that they would be compared. He stated that the 2000 Plan was very comprehensive and that parts of that Plan would be kept.

Mr. Acosta stated that he has shared the link to the survey through his Facebook page and has seen positive comments and feedback.

Mr. Peiffer stated that the Steering Committee is working to identify neighborhoods through this process. He stated that the Plan will be developed around neighborhoods. He stated that each neighborhood should have its own commercial core area to ensure that needed services are available. He stated that this will cause the need to amend the Zoning Ordinance and SALDO.

Mr. Acosta questioned how long it would take to implement the Plan. He stated that neighborhoods change and that regulations must keep up with the change. He noted his hope that this will have a positive effect on residents. Mr. Peiffer stated that the City must complete the Plan by June 2015. He stated that after completion there will be public meetings and adoption by Council. Ms. Snyder stated that work on the Zoning Ordinance and SALDO would begin after the Plan is adopted by Council.

Mr. Acosta agreed with the need for neighborhood hubs. He stated that they will be positive in neighborhoods. He stated that he has attended several meetings with the Mayor to discuss the need for these hubs.

Ms. Reed requested an update on the hub concept.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that officials meeting for discussion is not the same as the official planning process.

Mr. Marmarou described how neighborhoods were important to nationalities in the past, specifically the Greek neighborhood. He stated that in the past businesses supported their neighborhoods by providing what residents needed.

Mr. Acosta stated that churches are also very important.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for this Plan to make Reading the best it possibly can be. She stated that she did not provide an update to Council on the Steering Committee meetings she attended because she felt it best they attend personally. She stated that she served on the Comp Plan Committee for the 2000 Plan and stated that focus group meetings were held in several areas of the City instead of relying on a survey. She noted the need for follow through with the Plan initiatives.

Ms. Reed stated that there was no follow through on the 2000 Plan. Mr. Peiffer stated that he has reviewed the 2000 Plan initiatives. He stated that he has a summary available and will provide it to Council. He stated that the 2015 Plan will include action strategies.

Mr. Marmarou stated that businesses should not be placed where the City doesn't want them.

Mr. Acosta agreed. He stated that Council members and other City officials will change over time. He noted the need to stay consistent with the Plan. He stated that he has no doubt that the 2015 Plan will be a great one but reminded all for the need to change zoning regulations to accommodate the hubs. He noted his concern about the amount of time it will take to make the hubs successful.

Mr. Peiffer stated that the Steering Committee will be reviewing the Zoning Ordinance and SALDO after the Plan is adopted. He stated that this will help to identify the needed changes. He stated that he is also working on a map of non-conforming properties.

Ms. Katzenmoyer and Ms. Kelleher explained the difference between non-conforming properties and use variances.

Mr. Acosta noted the need for community meetings to reflect and represent the neighborhoods in which they are being held. He stated that this will increase the impact of the meetings and the results of the Plan.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that it is good to take ethnicity into consideration but that socio-economic factors should also be considered. She stated that those without cars or the means to transportation have needs that must be met closer to home. She stated that the City has clusters of empty factory buildings which can be used to rebuild neighborhoods. She noted the need for one on one outreach to occur as well.

Mr. Peiffer stated that the PA Municipalities Planning Code requires public meetings. He noted his hope that they be facilitated through active community groups. Mr. Acosta agreed and noted that neighborhood stakeholders should also be invited to attend.

Ms. Reed noted the need to consider strong residential neighborhoods as well. She stated that the 2000 Plan noted the need to keep the strong neighborhoods strong and that this was not done. She expressed the belief that the strong neighborhoods are beginning to fail.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the pride that can follow when residents identify with their neighborhood. She suggested that each neighborhood have its own name.

Mr. Acosta stated that ethnicities relocate to areas where people speak their language. He stated that naming of neighborhoods is important.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she will only support the 2015 Plan if there is a deep level of community involvement.

Mr. Peiffer left the meeting at this time.

### **III. Liability Insurance Update**

Mr. Malinowski distributed a handout describing the City's liability insurance. He stated that EHD has been the City's provider since 2005. He stated that the City has done very well with its premium. He stated that an appraisal of property has been done and that he is comfortable with the current program.

Mr. Malinowski stated that the City is self insured for worker's comp. He stated that there are 3 – 4 active heart and lung cases at this time. He explained that the City's coverage is underwritten by Traveler's Insurance and that he works well with the City's legal office.

Ms. Snyder questioned why the Marion fire station was the only one specifically named in the policy. Mr. Malinowski stated that he has a list of all properties and Traveler's determines which are listed specifically.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that many properties are leased to non-profits including the Recreation Commission. She questioned how improvements made to facilities would affect the policy. Mr. Malinowski stated that it would depend on the lease agreement. He stated that he receives frequent updates from the City's Risk and Safety officer and that a formal appraisal is done every 10 years.

Mr. Malinowski stated that the policy is updated each August in preparation for the following year's budget discussions. He stated that satisfaction reports are also compiled annually for cost/deductible benefits.

Mr. Malinowski and Mr. Smith left the meeting at this time.

#### **IV. Review of Council Rules of Procedure**

Mr. Acosta stated that the Council rules are attached to the agenda for everyone's information. He stated that he will be following the rules moving forward and that they were not followed at the last meeting. He stated that members should not speak unless recognized by the chair. He reviewed the rules of debate.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if there was a time limit on presentations. Mr. Acosta stated that there is not. He expressed the belief that more boards, authorities and commissions should make presentations to Council. He stated that Ms. Kelleher recommends a time limit based on the length of the agenda.

Mr. Acosta stated that he has been lenient with the rules in the past but that he will be following them closely from now on.

Ms. Reed suggested an update to the rules regarding the use of technology (cell phones, tablets, etc) during meetings. She stated that Council may also wish to consider a rule about entering and leaving meetings as it makes it difficult to conduct business without everyone's full participation. Mr. Acosta agreed.

Ms. Reed noted the need for individuals to be committed to their position. Mr. Acosta agreed.

Mr. Acosta expressed the belief that the behavior at the last meeting was disrespectful. He stated that moving forward the President will call for a motion to adjourn at the conclusion of business.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested also applying the rules of debate in Committee meetings. She noted her agreement in addressing the use of technology.

Mr. Acosta stated that he does not follow the rules of debate in Committee meetings to allow for deeper discussions. He stated that in the past this discussion occurred in the public

meeting but he prefers to have it during the Committee sessions. He stated that he is willing to amend the rules.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that when there is a procedural question the meeting should pause for consultation with the Solicitor.

Ms. Snyder stated that she is unsure when to elaborate on items before Council for a vote. Mr. Acosta requested that she signal him when there is information to be shared. He stated that the rule is not intended to limit comment when it is needed. He stated that he also invites the Mayor to comment. He stated that he was frustrated that he was not allowed to comment last week after others made several comments.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she has attended many other public meetings. She stated that in the past, members of other boards became physical with each other. She suggested that the boards, authorities and commissions be scheduled to provide updates to Council. Mr. Acosta agreed with scheduling the boards, authorities, and commissions, especially those with key roles in City business.

Mr. Acosta questioned where the other three members of Council were this evening. Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Sterner is attending a family event, Mr. Daubert has car problems, and Mr. Waltman is not well.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned protocol if there are not enough members to reach a quorum. Ms. Kelleher stated that the meeting would be called to order, a new date announced, and then adjourned.

## **V. Agenda Review**

Council reviewed this evening's agenda including the following:

- Resolution – requesting the PHMC allow permanent records to be digitized rather than microfiched or microfilmed for storage

Ms. Kelleher explained that although PA State law regarding the retention of permanent records has been amended for State offices, the PHMC does not allow counties and municipalities to store permanent records electronically. It still requires permanent records to be stored on microfiche or microfilm.

Mr. Acosta stated that in the future, items on the Council agenda will not be noted as "Council Staff." He stated that especially for controversial issues, even if staff assists, a Councilor's name must be associated with the legislation. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed.

Mr. Acosta stated that important issues should be discussed with Council before legislation is introduced. He stated that last minute additions are frowned upon and will only be added with his permission. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed.

Ms. Kelleher stated that she has been working on the document management issue with Senator Schwank's staff. She stated that Wilkes-Barre and Reading are the only two municipalities working on document management and expressed the belief that others are not because of the microfiche/microfilm requirement. She stated that other 3<sup>rd</sup> class city's clerks are willing to present this resolution to their Council's for submission to the PHMC.

- Ordinance – authorizing a transfer of \$10,000 for the baler project

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that Ordinance 9-2014 and Ordinance A under introduction are duplicative. Ms. Snyder agreed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that Ordinance D under introduction is credited to Stevens & Lee. Ms. Kelleher explained that this method was started many years ago to indicate who drafted the legislation. Mr. Acosta stated that moving forward it will be used to indicate the Department, Committee, or Councilor.

- Appointment Resolutions

Mr. Acosta stated that these are great people.

The meeting adjourned at 6:51 pm.

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