



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
May 11, 2015
5:30 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, C. Younger, C. Snyder, D. Cituk

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:08 pm by Mr. Waltman.

I. Parking Authority Payments

Ms. Snyder stated that the City has received correspondence that the Parking Authority will honor its financial agreement with the City. She stated that further discussions will occur after the Authority's May meeting.

II. Bushong Dam Removal

Ms. Snyder stated that there is currently no one registered to speak on this issue. She stated that the Reading Eagle ran an editorial supporting the removal of the dam. She reminded Council that the City had all its dams assessed in 2014 and there are many safety issues at this site. She stated that the mill race is deteriorating quickly.

Ms. Reed explained her rationale for changing position on the removal of the dam. She stated that the site is dramatically more dangerous than it was five years ago when this issue was last discussed. She stated that the site is a large liability for the City in its current condition.

Ms. Snyder stated that a neighborhood meeting was recently held. She stated that the meeting started out as contentious but that at the end the neighbors understood that the City is trying to make the park more usable and functional. She stated that she explained that this can only occur if the City receives funding from the State and that the PA DEP does not support dams. She explained that the resolution before Council signals the State that the City will be removing the dam and will assist when State grant funding is requested.

Mr. Sterner questioned if the main reason for installing the dam. Ms Reed stated that the dam and mill race were constructed in 1892 to power a paper mill. She stated that the dam still looks beautiful from a distance but that it is a hindrance to the park area.

Ms. Reed explained that the County may be interested in obtaining this park from the City in the future after the liabilities have been removed. She stated that it is logical to make this an extension of Stonecliff. She explained that many residents fear that the area will look like Angelica after the dam is removed. She expressed the belief that this would not occur as the creek is different in this area. She noted that the past will be honored in the new park design.

Mr. Marmarou stated that five years ago Ms. Reed was adamant to keep the dam. He questioned who owned the land. Ms. Snyder stated that the City owns the property. She stated that the City retains ownership through this process. She stated that future ownership will be discussed in the future.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the City gave away the airport and Antietam. He stated that the City should not continue to give away its assets. Ms. Reed agreed with Mr. Marmarou but stated that she would easily give this park to the County.

Mr. Marmarou reiterated that he does not want to see the City continue to give assets away. Ms. Snyder stated that there is no ownership change proposed at this time. Ms. Reed stated that this will be a 3-4 year project. She noted the natural beauty of the area but stated that the City cannot maintain all its parks. She expressed the belief that all City parks should be given to the County except for City Park and other select interior parks.

There was a discussion about Antietam and Angelica parks.

Mr. Waltman stated that he would support the removal of the dam if there is also a plan to design the new park. He stated that area residents should be able to leave their legacy on the new park and that the new park should preserve the natural beauty and history of the area.

Ms. Reed stated that designs for this park were included in the River Place master plan and that she is working to obtain them.

III. Other Matters

Mr. Marmarou stated that he received four complaint calls about the condition of Oak Lane approaching Skyline Drive. He stated that residents don't know where the City line is. Ms. Kelleher stated that the portion of Oak Lane that is in poor condition is not in the City. She stated that she has spoken with Lower Alsace and there are plans to address this issue.

Ms. Snyder stated that she will speak with Mr. Johnson about this issue and ask him to contact Alsace and Lower Alsace townships.

IV. Agenda Review

Council reviewed this evening's agenda including the following:

- Award of Contract for the local limits project

Ms. Snyder stated that the City has limits on element levels that are processed at the WWTP. She stated that this will allow baseline testing for the levels.

- Resolution authorizing three provisional sidewalk vendor licenses for 2015

Mr. Marmarou questioned if this was for a trial basis only. Ms. Snyder stated that it is a trial basis while the rest of the regulations are updated.

- Resolution authorizing an agreement with Norfolk Southern Railroad for the WWTP project

Ms. Snyder explained that this agreement is necessary as water lines need to be located under the railroad tracks at the 6th & Canal pump station.

Mr. Marmarou described a railroad site near the former Expo Center where the same trash has been there for three years. He stated that the site is in Muhlenberg Township.

Mr. Waltman expressed the belief that the entire railroad bed through the City is in disgraceful condition.

- Ordinance suspending Code of Ethics section 12 Campaign Finance

Mr. Daubert expressed concern with how this section of the Code of Ethics is written but suggested that it not be addressed at this time.

Ms. Reed stated that she supports Ms. Kelleher's suggestion that the research begin now but that no action be taken until 2016. She stated that Council has two choices – to table the legislation long term or to vote it down and reintroduce it as a Code of Ethics amendment when it is ready. Council agreed to vote it down.

- Ordinance transferring funds from the Contingency Fund to the Board of Ethics

This ordinance will also be voted down.

- Ordinance transferring funds within the Shade Tree fund

Mr. Sterner questioned if this transfer would leave enough funding for the Shade Tree Commission to continue operations through the end of 2015. Ms. Snyder stated that it does.

- Ordinance adding Dog Code Blue and Code Red

Mr. Daubert stated that he sponsored this legislation. He stated that it will allow the City's animal control agency to impound dogs that are outdoors during severe weather.

Mr. Marmarou stated that Albright students have again released a large amount of cats into the neighborhood as they move home for the summer.

Mr. Daubert thanked Ms. Kelleher for her work on these regulations.

- Resolutions making appointments and reappointments

Mr. Marmarou stated that these are great people.

V. Executive Session

Mr. Waltman announced that Council would be entering executive session to deliberate on the recent HARB appeal. Council entered executive session at 5:44 pm and exited at 6:06 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 6:06 pm.

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