



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE
CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
August 24, 2015
5:30 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

S. Marmarou, D. Sterner, J. Waltman, D. Reed, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, C. Younger, D. Cituk, R. Johnson, C. Snyder, H. Tangredi, B. Nicarry, D. Kersley, C. Peiffer

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Mr. Waltman.

I. Towing Contract and RFP

Mr. Kersley stated that the current contract with Vince's Towing expires in April 2016. He stated that the City will be amending the fee schedule for a rate increase in towing fees due to inflation. The current fees have been in effect since 2003.

Mr. Spencer arrived at this time.

Mr. Kersley stated that he is working with the Police Department on the RFP specifications. He stated that the next contract will clarify performance and service expectation standards. He stated that the RFP will be issued in October 2015.

Mr. Kersley stated that he is also working with the Parking Authority to have them utilize the City's towing company for a unified experience and operational consistency.

Mr. Marmarou expressed the belief that it is the responsibility of the towing company to inform owners where their car is being taken. Mr. Kersley agreed but stated that this does not always occur. He stated that all towed vehicles should be registered with the Police so they can assist owners after their vehicle has been towed.

Mr. Marmarou suggested regulating the number of towing companies allowed to operate in the City. He suggested that the towing companies be researched to ensure they all have a

business license to operate in Reading. Mr. Kersley stated that the Law office would need to determine if the number of towing companies can be regulated.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the business licenses should still be reviewed. He stated that he has also seen yard sales at the same properties week after week.

Mr. Kersley stated that the research on towing has shown that they are regulated by the State, especially towing salvage companies.

Mr. Marmarou recommended that there be one impound location so that it is easier for owners to locate their vehicles.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this always becomes a hot button issue. She recommended being thorough throughout the process.

Mr. Waltman questioned when the rate increases would be presented to Council. Mr. Kersley stated that it should be ready in the next several weeks.

Mr. Kersley left the meeting at this time.

II. Executive Session

Mr. Waltman announced the need for an executive session on potential litigation.

Council entered executive session at 5:40 pm and exited at 6:09 pm.

Mr. Nicarry left the meeting at this time.

III. Zoning Backlog

Mr. Peiffer reminded Council of the process to be followed when processing properties in the zoning backlog.

Mr. Waltman questioned if any properties have been processed which need Council hearings. Mr. Peiffer stated that there have not.

Mr. Peiffer reviewed the handouts showing the properties that received denial letters and the properties approved to date.

Mr. Waltman questioned follow up on the properties that have been denied. Mr. Peiffer stated that if there is no response after the letter is sent, the properties are turned over to Property Maintenance. He stated that there is one inspector dedicated to illegal rentals. If the inspector determines that the incorrect number of units exists at the property, a notice of violation is issued. He stated that all the properties which are denied must then apply to go through the appeal process or deconvert their properties.

Mr. Waltman questioned if there was a fine associated with renting units that are not permitted. Mr. Peiffer stated that there is a \$1,000 fine.

Mr. Waltman stated that the goal of this process was not to be punitive to rental property owners. He noted the need for the City to ensure that all its residents live in safe housing. Mr. Peiffer agreed.

Mr. Marmarou noted the problems with off campus housing in the Albright area. Ms. Kelleher explained that those properties are not multi-unit and would not be part of this process.

Mr. Waltman questioned how the number of units is enforced. Mr. Peiffer stated that Zoning and Property Maintenance do inspections and look for signs of the number of people residing in a unit. He stated that it is very difficult to verify people who are related and how many people are living in a unit at any given time.

Ms. Kelleher again stated that the off campus properties are not part of the backlog. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the conversation get back on topic.

Mr. Peiffer reviewed the spreadsheet showing the properties processed on a monthly basis. He stated that there are 29 properties remaining in the backlog and that they should be completed by the end of September.

Mr. Waltman questioned if zoning is now correct in the City's database and that the number of units permitted by Zoning is the same number of units permitted by Property Maintenance. Mr. Peiffer stated that they now match and if they do not Property Maintenance refers the owners to the Zoning office.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested holding a public meeting when the backlog is cleared to explain that this process occurs to ensure the health and safety of all Reading residents and to ensure that City services are adequate for its residents.

Mr. Waltman agreed and stated that City housing is much safer when it is inspected and up to current codes.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the hard work of the Zoning and Property Maintenance offices and noted that they need Council support.

Mr. Marmarou requested an updated report from Mr. Peiffer on the rental properties in the Albright area. Mr. Peiffer stated that he will supply an updated report.

Mr. Peiffer left the meeting at this time.

IV. Agenda Review

Mr. Sterner questioned why the lease agreement for Hillside Playground was not listed on this evening's agenda. Ms. Snyder stated that it is not complete at this time. Mr. Johnson explained that he reviewed the draft agreement and made comments and had questions. Mr. Coleman is completing the agreement.

Ms. Snyder stated that it should appear on the September 14 agenda for introduction.

Council reviewed this evening's agenda including:

- Award of Contract for Bituminous Materials

Mr. Johnson stated that this is an annual contract to obtain cold patch and hot paving materials for street repairs by Public Works. He stated that this is the lowest responsible bid.

- Award of Contract for Phase II of the 11th & Pike Playground improvements

Mr. Johnson stated that this phase of the project includes installation of a water feature that is ADA compliant, resurfacing the tennis court into an all sports court and replacing the basketball courts with porous paving. He explained that the use of porous paving will assist the City's MS4 requirements and will decrease run off from the courts. He stated that it will also get the kids back on the courts quicker after rains occur. He explained that the porous surface will need to be vacuumed two times per year and stated that the sewer fund is financing the porous paving portion of the project.

Mr. Waltman questioned if all six baskets would remain. Mr. Johnson stated that they would.

- Conditional use 841 N 8th St

Mr. Waltman questioned the conditions placed on the approval. Ms. Kelleher stated that the deeds to the property need to be merged, one unit needs to be owner occupied, the parking area needs improvements and the dumpster must be screened.

- Ordinance amending the fee schedule for certified police reports

Ms. Snyder explained that this fee is set by State law and must be reduced.

- Ordinance amending the fee schedule for street cuts

Mr. Johnson stated that a correction needs to be made to reduce the steel plate fees. He stated that the rate indicated on the draft is not justifiable and that the reduced rate is more appropriate for Berks County. He stated that the fees will be \$300; \$90 for winter placement and \$150; \$45 for summer placement.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the problems plowing around steel plates in City streets during winter months. Mr. Johnson agreed that it is very difficult to plow around steel plates. He stated that the ordinance also includes some technical differences in the types of plates used during different seasons.

- Ordinance regulating gas meters in historic districts

Mr. Waltman stated that this adds clarity.

- Ordinance amending the police pension regulations

Ms. Snyder stated that the Police Pension Board has a new solicitor and the pension regulations do not comply with the collective bargaining agreement. She stated that this makes no drastic changes and is an update.

Mr. Cituk agreed and stated that if Council members have questions he would welcome the discussion. He noted the need to ensure that City regulations are consistent. He stated that the regulations had a very thorough review and that there are no new benefits.

V. District 6 Applications

Ms. Kelleher stated that six applications were received. Two are disqualified due to not living at their current address since May 2010. One applicant lives in District 5.

Mr. Waltman questioned the May 2010 date. Mr. Younger explained that the Charter requires applicants to live in the District at least one year before the date of the primary held for the seat which is vacant.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if all interviews would occur during the same meeting. Ms. Kelleher stated that they would.

Ms. Kelleher stated that the deadline to make the appointment is September 10. She suggested that the interviews be held on Monday, August 31 and a special meeting on Tuesday, September 8.

Mr. Waltman agreed. He suggested that the interviews begin at 5:30 pm. He requested a rating sheet to compare the candidates and guide the decision.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the different standards used to document residency used by the City and the County Elections Office.

Mr. Waltman stated that some people would serve the City well but have not had the length of residency required. Ms. Reed stated that they would be eligible in the future.

VI. Other Matters

Mr. Marmarou stated that he spoke with a constituent who believes the \$150 fee for the post settlement inspection is unfair.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the City tried doing the inspection before settlement and it did not work out well. She stated that there is good rationale to doing it after settlement.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the constituent feels that the seller should have to repair the items before settlement.

The meeting adjourned at 6:44 pm.

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