



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
June 13, 2016
5:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, B. Twyman, D. Reed, J. Slifko, C. Daubert

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, B. Murray, D. Cituk, A. Palacios, G. Steckman, F. Lachat, C. Castner, W. Scott, J. Encarnacion

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm by Ms. Reed.

I. Citizens' Initiative Committee

No report.

II. Mineral Spring Hotel/East Ends

Mr. Lachat stated that the eviction complaint has been submitted to the courthouse. Mr. Scott stated that the complaint will be served within 20 days and then East Ends will have time to submit objections.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to care for this historic property and any possible historic artifacts inside the building. Mr. Twyman agreed but stated that it may already be too late to save artifacts.

Ms. Reed expressed the belief that the additions to the building were not done well but that the original structure remains.

III. East Reading Pool

Mr. Scott inquired if the pool was sold at last week's tax sale. Ms. Castner stated that it was pulled from the sale.

IV. Other Matters

- Municipal ID Program

Mr. Scott stated that the leaders of Make the Road PA are taking a very aggressive approach. He stated that the Administration is currently researching the possibility of establishing this program. He stated that what it boils down to is that the person is swearing that the information given is true and correct and that he/she is the person presenting themselves. He expressed the belief that many forms of proof of residency listed in the draft ordinance should not be accepted.

Ms. Vasquez arrived at this time.

Mr. Scott stated that there is the potential for many non-Reading residents to present themselves for ID's with false information. He stated that Make the Road PA has stated that this program will increase City revenue through fees and Per Capita Tax. He stated that he is uncomfortable with the program as presented and that he feels like he would be selling liberty to those who have circumvented the process to enter the United States legally.

Mr. Waltman arrived at this time.

Mr. Scott stated that the ID should be renewed annually. He expressed the belief that this program does not preserve liberty and he feels that the City will be held liable and could be put into compromising positions. He expressed the belief that these people need help but that this program will be difficult to manage.

Mr. Younger arrived and Mr. Lachat left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Scott stated that he is very uncomfortable with this program. He suggested that if the legislation is passed in Philadelphia that people will go there to get their ID. He expressed the belief that just because other cities have municipal ID programs it does not make it right. He stated that the program will assist seniors but that this is a small group and that this program has many loopholes. He questioned if the City would be liable if a crime is committed and the suspect has a Reading ID.

Mr. Scott stated that Make the Road PA feels the City is holding the program back. He stated that the City must be cautious before moving forward.

Mr. Slifko suggested that the proposed program be vetted by the Law Office. He noted the need for independent legal analysis and thanked the Administration for sharing their position on the program.

Mr. Scott stated that Council should take action based on what's best for Reading and not as politicians.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she has spoken with former Mayor McMahan about the program to assist seniors. She stated that it will be much easier for seniors to get a non-

driver's ID from PennDOT. She suggested that the Office of Aging assist with transportation as needed.

Ms. Reed stated that she agrees that the program would benefit seniors but also noted her concern about the City's liability. She stated that administering the program would also be time intensive and that the current Clerk's office staff will need additional assistance. She noted the need for additional information and that this will increase the staff workload.

Mr. Waltman noted the difference between "should we" and "can we." He agreed that this program could be a great liability for the City. He stated that this program should not be passed by Council without support from the Administration. He stated that this program is early in the City legislative process and that vetting by the Law Office is critical. He stated that the City is addressing other large priorities that will take precedence over this program. Mr. Scott agreed.

Mr. Waltman stated that the City's priorities should be clean and safe and getting out of Act 47. He stated that discussions on this program will continue as time allows.

V. RAWA Dissolution

Mr. Waltman stated that Council has passed a resolution beginning the dissolution process. He stated that the ordinance has been vetted by Law and three changes have been made – resignations are requested, sale of the system is eliminated, and the date has been extended to December 2016.

Mr. Daubert stated that he is unclear of the next steps. Mr. Waltman stated that he has worked for the last three weeks to get the ordinance ready for final passage. He stated that the next step is working with the Administration to determine all the options. He stated that all Councilors will have input on the options and he suggested a separate workshop on this topic.

Mr. Daubert noted his discomfort enacting an ordinance to dissolve RAWA without knowing the plan to move forward.

Mr. Twyman stated that he is also very uncomfortable. He stated that he has much to learn and discuss before he is ready to enact the ordinance.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that Council enter executive session to have a deeper discussion.

Council entered executive session to discuss potential litigation at 5:29 pm and exited at 6:11 pm.

VI. Angelica Park and the DCNR

No report.

VII. Agenda Review

Mr. Waltman stated that the flow of the meeting will be adjusted to allow him to vote on the RAWA dissolution before leaving the meeting to travel to Philadelphia.

Council reviewed this evening's agenda including:

- Resolution authorizing the use of \$1.1 million of unprogrammed CDBG funds to purchase a ladder truck

Mr. Palacios distributed copies of the agenda memo and resolution. He stated that the City expects to exceed its cap in a short time and this is an excellent way to quickly spend down the funds.

Mr. Scott stated that this purchase was included in the capital budget and there will be a fund swap.

Mr. Steckman stated that purchasing the truck in this manner will also save the cost of financing a three year purchase and also allows for a discount on the purchase for paying up front.

- Mayor's Report

Mr. Scott stated that he will use his time to address the Municipal ID program.

Mr. Twyman suggested that a meeting specific to public comment on this issue be scheduled in advance.

Mr. Waltman questioned who would develop the next steps for this program.

Mr. Younger stated that the ordinance is drafted incorrectly and contains many errors.

Mr. Twyman suggested that calls be made to the cities who have instituted the program to discuss the pros and cons. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that she has already begun this research and has left a message for the Los Angeles City Clerk's office.

Mr. Slifko suggested a memo from the Law Office before the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

Mr. Daubert stated that he has also done some preliminary research.

- Ordinance setting the salary of the Police Chief

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the Chief has been sworn in. Mr. Scott stated that he has not. He stated that he will be working with Ms. Kelleher to set a date. He stated that he must also determine if he can be sworn in before he is Act 120 certified.

- Ordinance amending the Position Ordinance and Budget to add a Deputy Police Chief and setting the salary at the same rate as captain

Mr. Scott noted the need for the Chief to choose the deputy. He stated that this will allow a better chain of command during the absence of the Chief and that this position will not be a member of the FOP. He noted the need to recognize Captain Parr for his service to the City.

VIII. RAWA Vacancy

Council decided that it would interview Bill Murray to fill this vacancy.

Bill Murray (appointment – Water Authority)

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned why Mr. Murray was interested in serving in this position. Mr. Murray stated that he shares the Mayor's vision for more user-friendly service and an entity that is not separate from the City. He stated that the water system is the City's largest asset and it is out of the City's control. He stated that he wishes to give back to the people and change RAWA's image.

Mr. Slifko questioned what qualifications and experience Mr. Murray has to serve in this capacity. Mr. Murray stated that he has over 15 years of experience with the Western Berks Water Authority. He stated that he was part of a great transformation there when they created a new way of doing business. He noted the need for a shared vision. He stated that he was Vice President of ARB when the City used that firm for its collections. He stated that this program was not set up to help the user. He stated that he was a former member of the Wyomissing School Board and Wyomissing Borough Council. He stated that he has also recently been appointed to the Berks County Water Sewer Association and he helped to develop the Association with the County Commissioners. He stated that the Association brings together all the water and sewer providers in the County to share information and provide trainings.

Mr. Murray stated that he has been working with residents on RAWA issues since the Administrative transition. He stated that the current system is designed to hurt the user. He stated that there is no compassion at RAWA and that he has already begun to attend board meetings. He expressed the belief that some members have good intentions but that they are not receiving good guidance. He stated that several contracts need to be reviewed regardless of how the City moves forward. He noted the need for the City and RAWA to work together. He stated that he has been studying RAWA for the past two years.

Mr. Waltman stated that give and take will be necessary as the City moves forward. He noted the need to have the best model so that the City does not need to be in this position again. Mr. Murray expressed the belief that this is very achievable. He stated that it is time to turn the ship. He suggested that the service agreement should be rewritten and that the solicitor should be contracted on an annual basis only. He stated that he encouraged the Board chair not to file any legal complaints.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that Mr. Murray's appointment resolution be added to this evening's agenda. Council agreed.

Mr. Murray stated that he is willing to discuss RAWA at any time.

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 pm.

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