



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
September 12, 2016
5:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, D. Cituk, C. Castner, W. Scott, G. Steckman, B. Murray, A. Palacios, P. Vasquez, R. Johnson, C. Younger, J. Encarnacion, R. Miller (NHS), G. Mann (PFM)

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:02 pm by Mr. Waltman. He announced the need for an executive session on litigation with Council's outside legal counsel. The executive session began at 5:03 pm and concluded at 5:40 pm.

Council President Waltman announced the need for a second executive session with the Mayor and Managing Director on litigation at 5:40 pm. Attorney Merolla left the meeting at this time and Mr. Scott, Mr. Steckman and Mr. Younger arrived. The executive session concluded at approximately 5:59 pm

I. Council Calendar

Ms. Kelleher distributed the Council schedule for the week. She stated that the schedule will be distributed each Monday in hard copy. The schedule will include events that are funneled through the Council office or other events Council can refer through the office. She expressed hope that this approach will help Council handle their event and meeting schedule.

II. NHS Programs

Mr. Miller, Executive Director of NHS, stated that NHS is working to improve their marketing of programs that can benefit homeowners and help with the maintenance of properties. He noted the Operation Renovation program that has been in existence to provide volunteer labor to rehabilitate properties for veterans and their widows. He stated that since the program's inception 425 volunteers have rehabilitated 73 homes for veterans and their widows.

Mr. Miller stated that NHS offers home ownership programs and loans out \$600-800K annually along with home improvement loans. He stated that there are three (3) local agencies that offer funding through the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) – NHS, Greater Berks Development Fund and Community First. He stated that CDFI provides \$800K on a county-wide basis to homeowners that fall below the 60-80% median income levels with a 2-3% interest rate (fixed rate), \$2500 minimum and up to \$15K max with a term of up to 15 years. He stated that appraisals are not required and while the applicants' credit record is checked, credit scores are not used to qualify for the loan.

Mr. Miller stated that NHS is offering a one-time program for the Ricktown area that will provide \$150K for home improvements. He noted that since 2000 owner occupancy has fallen from approximately 60% to close to 43% and in Ricktown owner occupancy slides further to 39%. This program will offer a maximum loan of up to \$15K with up to \$3500 deferred for those earning below 50% of the median income.

Ms. Kelleher stated that Council can help NHS promote their programs by including Mr. Miller in their In Your District programs and allowing NHS to fill in on evenings when a councilor cannot do the In Your District program.

III. 2017 Budget

Mr. Mann stated that there are three (3) budget deadlines imposed under Act 47. The first requires the Act 47 Coordinator to review the proposed budget 75 days before the last day of the calendar year; however, as the Charter requires the presentation of the budget on October 1st, this will not be a problem.

Mr. Steckman questioned if Council wished to introduce the budget on Friday, September 30th at 5 pm or have the budget documents distributed and introduce the budget on Monday, October 3rd. Mr. Waltman replied that a Special Meeting can be held on Monday the 3rd as long as the budget is distributed on Friday.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to define the budget meeting schedule. Last year the Council met with the administration on Mondays and Wednesdays and avoided Saturday sessions. She asked Council to submit their budget review meeting preferences over the next two (2) weeks so a schedule can be developed.

Mr. Mann stated that Act also allows the Coordinator to check the budget to make sure it is in compliance with the Recovery Plan and allows the Coordinator to make amendments that will rectify any compliance issues. The last requirement pertains to the submission of the adopted budget to the DCED. He noted that none of the deadlines in the Act will be a problem due to the Charter imposed deadlines.

Mr. Mann stated that this budget is occurring during an off year as the City is between pension actuarial cycles. He stated that it will not be an easy budget cycle but one where some hard

decisions will need to occur, similar to prior years. He noted that this is the last year of the required budget contribution to the Rec Commission.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed; however, she stated that the Rec Commission would prefer a continued contribution from both the School District and the City, as is done in almost every other municipality with a commission. Mr. Mann noted that the Act 47 Plan allows for a contribution; although an amount is not defined.

Mr. Mann noted that as per prior years the Solicitor will need to petition the Court of Common Pleas to continue the Commuter Tax. He noted that in 2017 the Recovery Plan requires a larger portion of the Commuter Tax to be placed in the Capital Program area. He stated that .1% of the EIT (total resident rate 3.6%) and Commuter (total commuter rate .3%) collected is allocated to the Capital Program area and that percentage increases to .2% in 2017.

Ms. Kelleher consulted the calendar and suggested having a resolution authorizing the Solicitor to petition the Court on the October 24th agenda so the hearing can be scheduled by mid November.

Mr. Mann noted that the upcoming budgets will need to include factors from the Collective Bargaining Agreements from Police, Fire, AFSCME 1st Level and Rank and File groups.

Mr. Mann stated that next year PFM, as the Act 47 Recovery Coordinator, must file a report on the City's financial condition with the DCED by June; however, he stated that the 2016 external audit will not be completed by the time that report is due.

IV. Agenda Review

Mr. Waltman noted that the agenda is fairly light.

Consent Agenda Legislation

A. Resolution – promoting Officer Joseph Cadawallder to Sergeant

B. Resolution – promoting Officer Brett Sneeringer to Sergeant

C. Resolution – authorizing the Mayor to sign and submit a Pennsylvania Department of Education Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Grant application to request \$75,000 in funding \$75,000 for the HVAC rehabilitation of the Reading Public Library Northeast Branch. Total project cost \$166,000.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW ORDINANCES

A. Ordinance - restricting parking by establishing a No Parking zone on the east side of Reed Street at the intersection of Buttonwood Street and Reed Street for a distance of approximately 28 feet. The purpose of the restriction is to establish a safe and sufficient turning space for vehicles turning from Buttonwood Street onto that section of Reed Street.

Ms. Marmarou expressed the belief that the property owners own the property where the cars are parked on the east side of Reed Street.

Ms. Kelleher expressed the belief that the ownership ends at the curb line on the west side of the street. Mr. Johnson noted that the east side is the side owned by Norfolk Southern.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the garage owner has an agreement with Norfolk Southern.

Mr. Scott stated that the agreement, if it ever existed, is no longer in place. He stated that the area is difficult for a car to maneuver through and it needs to be cleaned up. He expressed the belief that one garage cannot rule the entire block.

Mr. Johnson will obtain additional information on the ownership of the east side of Reed Street.

B. Ordinance – authorizing the transfer of cash reserves in the General Fund totaling \$85,000.00 from Fund Balance to Public Works

C. Ordinance – authorizing the transfer of cash reserves in the Sewer Fund in the amount of \$61,717.50 from Fund Balance (54-07-00-2980-000) to Engineering Costs (54-07-45-4816-000) and to Administrative costs (54-07-45-4823-000) and amends the 2016 Sewer Fund operating budget to allocate funds to Engineering to be performed on 6th and Canal Pump Station for Phase I.

Ms. Kelleher distributed an additional ordinance for introduction that was mistakenly omitted from the agenda that authorizes making a transfer from the Reserve to the Charter Board to cover their expenses through the end of the calendar year.

11. RESOLUTIONS

A. Resolution – authorizing the City Solicitor to execute the reimbursement agreement in the RAS with No. R16050006 for the Rockland Street Project initiated by the Wyomissing Foundation

Mr. Waltman expressed concern about approving this resolution and project as the surrounding community has not had any input about the design of the project.

Mr. Marmarou read a statement asking Council to table the resolution until October 24th so a public hearing can be held and so the Planning Commission can review the project at their September 27th meeting. He noted that approximately 100 people attended the CHCC meeting last night and they all spoke in opposition of the project. He stated that none of the businesses in the area were informed about the changes to Rockland Street, although those changes will impact their businesses.

Mr. Steckman agreed that the residents at the CHCC meeting were opposed to the project and were angry that they were not consulted until after the project was designed. He agreed that the traffic

study that was completed by the consultant should have included the North 11th Street area. He stated that that study will occur. However, he stated that the City will need PennDOT to approve the delay, due to the funding timeline. He stated that during the discussion the community's frustration with Albright was evident

Mr. Waltman expressed that the community's anger is justified as they were excluded. Mr. Marmarou agreed.

Mr. Steckman agreed that the community should have been consulted but he cannot say why they were not. He noted that overall the community has frustrations with Albright leadership and he suggested putting together a Town and Gown type of group to encourage improved communication between the community, the college and the City. Mr. Marmarou stated that a group currently meets with representation from the community, college and the City. Mr. Steckman stated that City and college leadership should be present and meetings should occur more than quarterly until the relationship improves.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:55 pm.

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