



# ***COMMITTEE of the WHOLE***

## ***CITY COUNCIL***

**MINUTES**  
**April 11, 2016**  
**5:00 P.M.**

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, T. Coleman, D. Cituk, B. Murray, A. Palacios, C. Younger, P. Vasquez, L. McCauley, D. Driesbach, T. Butler, N. Rivera

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:01 pm by Mr. Waltman.

### **I. Animal Rescue League**

Ms. McCauley, Executive Director, distributed and reviewed her report. She stated that the ARL will be focusing on educating residents. She stated that she is also working on holding a free clinic event at the Double Tree. She described a situation in which 30+ cats were removed from a vacant City property before it was secured. She stated that the ARL works closely with local cat rescue groups and that trap, neuter, release programs are very helpful.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the areas of the City where there are the highest cat populations. Ms. Driesbach stated that there is a map available showing where there are high cat populations. She stated that they can only be reported by zip code and that 19602 is the highest.

Ms. Castner arrived at this time.

Mr. Daubert questioned if the Code Red/Code Blue is beneficial. Ms. McCauley stated that it is. She stated that she called a Code Blue the night before the January snowstorm. She stated that several visits were made during the storm and many follow ups were made after the storm. She stated that it was very helpful and it will be used again in the future. She added that Code Red will be considered over the summer.

Ms. McCauley thanked the City for its support. She stated that the ARL works well with City staff and requested that she be contacted with any concerns in the future.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that her Council District is most of the 19602 zip code. She questioned if Ms. McCauley would attend a neighborhood meeting to educate residents about controlling the cat population. Ms. McCauley and Ms. Driesbach stated that they would attend. Ms. Driesbach stated that in 2015 1,368 female cats were trapped, neutered and released. She stated that one cat can have three litters of five kittens per season. (*Note: mathematically, approximately 20,000 kittens have been avoided.*)

Mr. Slifko questioned if there was any way the City could assist in reducing the cat population. Ms. Driesbach stated that she would be willing to meet with City officials to discuss this further. She stated that some municipalities provide funds to assist residents with trap, neuter, release or discounted spaying programs. She stated that there can be a focus in a specific problem area and that residents must provide proof of residency to receive the discounted cost. She stated that animals that are trapped, neutered, and released have their ears tipped to show that they have already been through the process.

Mr. Slifko suggested that Council look at this possibility. Ms. Driesbach stated that it is helpful to residents if the costs are shared. Ms. McCauley agreed and stated that in addition, she will continue with her educational efforts.

Ms. McCauley and Ms. Driesbach left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Slifko suggested that this topic be discussed further by the Standards of Living Committee. Mr. Daubert agreed and stated that this is a quality of life issue.

## **II. Executive Session**

Mr. Waltman announced the need for an executive session for Council to discuss pending litigation.

Council entered executive session at 5:15 pm and exited at 5:58 pm.

## **III. Baer Park and Mineral Spring Hotel Update**

Mr. Daley arrived at this time.

Mr. Coleman stated that the Baer Park fieldhouse will be vacated the second week of May after the boxing program concludes its tournament. He stated that the program's current equipment is City property.

Mr. Slifko questioned if the boxing program is cooperating. Mr. Coleman stated that they are.

Ms. Reed questioned what would happen to the equipment after the current program closes. Mr. Coleman stated that other boxing programs have approached the Mayor about using the equipment. He stated that a final determination has not been made on this issue.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if any equipment has been removed. Mr. Coleman stated that it has not as the program continues to operate.

Mr. Coleman stated that East Ends has been sent a final invoice giving them 30 days to pay in full or to vacate. He stated that they have not yet responded and that they must vacate by the end of April if they do not.

Mr. Marmarou cautioned that if East Ends vacates that another use must begin right away. Mr. Coleman stated that Public Works and Police will secure the building.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if City artifacts remain in the building. Ms. Reed and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that they have all been removed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz recommended that the building be inspected thoroughly before anyone else begins using it.

Mr. Slifko questioned the legal eviction timeline. Mr. Coleman expressed the belief that this will be contentious but that the City will try to be as expeditious as possible and stick to the timeline in the lease agreement. Mr. Younger explained that residential eviction differs from commercial eviction.

Mr. Encarnacion arrived at this time.

#### **IV. Angelica Park and DCNR Update**

Mr. Coleman stated that an appraiser has been identified. He stated that the appraisal will cost approximately \$450 and that he hopes to have it scheduled by mid-May.

Mr. Waltman questioned if this would assist with the land swap process. Mr. Coleman stated that it would. He stated that DCNR must review and agree to the land swap before it can proceed.

#### **V. Habitat for Humanity**

Mr. Daley distributed a draft proposal for properties at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Elm. He stated that these are blighted properties and vacant lots. He explained that the Habitat properties at 4<sup>th</sup> & Elm have just been completed and are selling for \$70,000 each. He stated that Habitat hopes to impact another block in the neighborhood. He stated that two new homes could be built at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Elm.

Mr. Daley stated that the City demolished the properties and there is now a \$30,000 lien. He stated that Habitat is requesting that the City remove the lien so that the project can move forward.

Mr. Waltman questioned if Habitat has made a cash offer to the current owners. Mr. Daley stated that they have.

Mr. Waltman stated that the \$30,000 lien is currently the owner's liability. He stated that if the City removes the lien, the owners receive cash and the City is not reimbursed for its expenses. He stated that he does not support this situation. Mr. Daley stated that the properties have been appraised at \$10,000. He stated that these are prime locations for Habitat projects.

Mr. Waltman stated that this is a difficult situation. He expressed the belief that Habitat should pay the City at least partially for its expenses and the owners should not be paid. Mr. Twyman agreed.

Mr. Twyman questioned the history of these properties and why they were demolished by the City. Ms. Reed stated that they were the site of a fire, were not rehabilitated and were certified as blighted properties. Mr. Daley stated that it is the location of an old speakeasy called "Mac's".

Mr. Slifko stated that placing new homes on the property will increase the tax revenue. He stated that Council should consider this. Mr. Daley stated that in addition to the increased tax revenue, Habitat would also be paying license and permit fees.

Ms. Kelleher suggested that the City foreclose on the properties to take possession and then remove the lien. She stated that Habitat can then pay the City directly. Mr. Coleman stated that he would research this possibility.

Mr. Twyman questioned if this would set a future precedent. Mr. Waltman expressed the belief that it would. He stated that this has not been done in the past. He stated that many properties are demolished due to fires and that the City sometimes receives escrow funds from the insurance companies.

Ms. Kelleher stated that these properties were certified blighted in 2011.

Mr. Cituk stated that he will research any possible fire escrow funds for these properties.

Mr. Daley expressed the belief that new homes would be a great way to impact the neighborhood. He stated that all local contractors would be used. He stated that he understands the City's position.

Ms. Reed expressed the belief that this would be a great way to assist the neighborhood.

Mr. Daley stated that Habitat acquired the 4<sup>th</sup> & Elm St properties through eminent domain. He stated that he would never go through that process again.

Mr. Scott suggested that staff determine whether general fund or CDBG funds were used for the demolition. He stated that this would make a difference in determining how to handle the situation. He expressed the belief that this sets a dangerous precedent. Mr. Waltman agreed.

Mr. Scott cautioned that if the City forgives the lien for Habitat, it must do it for all who request it. He expressed the belief that he would be more willing to forgive the lien if CDBG funds were used.

Ms. Reed questioned if the owners would sign the properties over to Habitat without payment. Mr. Daley stated that he does not know if they would be willing to do so.

Mr. Scott stated that this property is being handled by an estate but that the family is still in the area.

Mr. Daley stated that Habitat cannot absorb the cost of the lien or pass the costs onto the new Habitat family.

Ms. Kelleher stated that State law allows the municipality to attach a blighted lien to the owner and not to the property. She suggested that this may be another solution. Mr. Coleman stated that he will also research this possibility.

Mr. Daley noted his hope that the project could begin in mid-summer.

Mr. Younger noted the need for continued negotiations. He stated that a \$30,000 investment is sensible but that there is a problem if the owner receives a benefit. He reminded all that the City would also lose the lien funds if the properties move into the tax sale process.

Mr. Scott suggested that Habitat get an agreement in writing stating that the owners would deed the properties to Habitat before any action is taken. He stated that this would prevent a bidding war for the properties.

Mr. Waltman stated that the agreement must be clear that the owners do not get a cash payout. He stated that he would support removing the lien when Habitat has possession of the properties.

Mr. Twyman suggested that next time Mr. Daley presents to Council that he be prepared with possible solutions. He noted his support of Habitat and stated that they are a great organization.

Mr. Waltman requested an update on the proposed Habitat project at 4<sup>th</sup> & Elm. Mr. Daley stated that Habitat was unable to submit the tax credit application before the deadline. He stated that he will review the project again in the future.

Mr. Waltman suggested that the City also look at moving the old City garage property forward for redevelopment.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the process used for this property be used to set precedent for future requests. Ms. Reed agreed and stated that it should be used for all and not only non-profit organizations.

Mr. Daley left the meeting at this time.

## **VI. Agenda Review**

Council reviewed this evening's agenda including:

- Ordinance restricting parking along N 5<sup>th</sup> St at Woodward, Douglass and Oley Sts
- Mr. Slifko stated that a total of 16 parking spaces will be lost.

Mr. Waltman questioned when the spaces would be removed. Mr. Slifko stated that the spaces would be removed by the end of this summer. He stated that the timeline for the traffic study at Douglass and Oley is unknown at this time.

Mr. Waltman questioned if this project was discussed at RATS. Mr. Slifko stated that it has been discussed. He stated that the next project will be a similar coordination and evaluation of Spring St in 2017.

Mr. Waltman stated that the traffic study is needed soon. He stated that if additional traffic signals are added, the benefit of this project will be lost. Mr. Twyman agreed. Ms. Reed stated that Public Works coordinates well with PennDOT.

Ms. Reed noted concern with delaying the vote on the ordinance. Mr. Waltman stated that this is a \$2 million project for PennDOT. He requested that Public Works expedite the traffic study. Mr. Scott stated that he will follow up with Mr. Johnson.

## **VII. Other Matters**

- Committee of the Whole meetings relocated

Mr. Twyman suggested that Committee of the Whole meetings be relocated. He stated that this room gets very full. Mr. Waltman stated that this will be considered. Ms. Kelleher stated that if the meetings are relocated, she loses access to her computer files and to the copy machine.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this has been discussed in the past. She stated that new technology should make relocating easier.

Ms. Reed stated that if meetings are relocated to the Penn Room that the room must be set up differently.

- Upcoming Events

Mr. Waltman reviewed the upcoming event schedule to ensure that a member of Council would be in attendance at each event.

- Towing Contract

Mr. Waltman requested an update. Mr. Scott stated that the City would be moving to a round robin type contract with multiple towing contractors.

Mr. Coleman stated that the City is also working with the current contractor to extend the contract to the end of 2016 to give the City additional time to work out the new details.

Mr. Twyman questioned when the current contract expires. He questioned if the current contract could be month-to-month until the new contract is approved. Mr. Coleman stated that the current contract expires at the end of April. He stated that each contract has unique terms and that he would check to see if month-to-month is possible.

Mr. Scott stated that he has also learned that a salvage license is necessary to remove the cars that are not claimed. He stated that there are only two licensed salvers in the City. He stated that he has learned much through this process but that towing should be a bigger revenue stream for the City.

- Street Sweeping and towing

Mr. Scott suggested that cars that are not removed for street cleaning should be towed instead of ticketed.

Mr. Waltman requested further review of this issue. He stated that not all cars parked on sweeping routes have been abandoned. Mr. Scott stated that exceptions should not be made. He stated that if cars are not towed, that the cost of the ticket be increased. Mr. Younger reminded all that there is also a current exception for one ticket per year due to street sweeping.

Mr. Slifko suggested that cars on sweeping routes be towed after a set number of tickets has been issued.

Mr. Scott suggested that the regulations contain a clause that only cars with expired inspections and registrations be towed as they are already considered abandoned.

- Street Sweeping and cleanliness

Mr. Waltman expressed the belief that the City is teaching residents to litter because the City will continue to clean up after them.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed and stated that City cleanliness is a large issue. She suggested that there be scheduled discussion of this issue overall. She suggested that it be discussed with the Mayor at a future Strategic Planning Committee meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 pm.

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