City of Reading City Council
Regular Meeting
March 25, 2019

Council Vice President Twyman called the meeting to order. He asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Criminal Investigator CJ Mayer.

The invocation was given by Deacon Dino, Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church.

All present pledged to the flag.

The executive sessions held during the Committee of the Whole on March 18th and March 25th were on personnel and litigation.

ATTENDANCE
Councilor Sihelnik, District 1
Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, District 2
Councilor Twyman, District 3
Councilor Marmarou, District 4
Councilor Reed, District 5
Councilor Cepeda-Freytiz, District 6
Acting City Auditor P. Sleppy
Acting Solicitor E. Kraft
City Clerk L. Kelleher
Acting Managing Director O. Deming

PROCLAMATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS
City Council issued the following:
• Commendation recognizing Greek Independence Day
• Commendation recognizing Sofia Crespo, a Glenside pupil, who won first place in the Crime Alert poster contest.
• Commendation recognizing Alan Shuman for his restoration efforts at the Hopewell Mennonite Church building.
• Commendation recognizing retiring Reutlingen Mayor Barbara Bosch.
• Commendation recognizing Joyce Ortiz, Miss Teen Reading 2019

Nathan J. Hokenbrough, Project Manager from Larson Design Group, representing PennDOT, described the plan to make street improvements to Chestnut Street between 4th and 10th Streets. He noted that the milling and resurfacing will include improvements to the curbing and the
handicapped ramps in 2020. He stated that the drawing will remain in City Hall for two (2) weeks and those viewing the drawing should consider filling out a comment card about the proposed project.

Councilors Sihelnik and Cepeda-Freytiz questioned the availability of the project description that can be shared with constituents electronically and bilingually. They also noted the need for sound communication about the project with businesses, residents and the Reading School District on and in the vicinity of Chestnut Street well in advance.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Council Vice President Twyman stated that there are six (6) citizens are registered to address Council on non-agenda matters. No one objected to suspending the rule requiring non-agenda comment at the end of the meeting. Councilor Reed read the public speaking rules that were adopted by Council.

Andrew Molteni, of Pear Street, suggested that Council consider a friendlier approach to various laws that affect the public by including an appeals process that can be used prior to appealing to the Court of Common Pleas. He stated that a description of his issue about the tree he planted on the front sidewalk was distributed previously. He noted that the problem started when the neighbors began complaining about the tree. He stated that the Shade Tree ordinance regulates street trees and requires that appeals go to the Court of Common Pleas, which creates difficulties for the average resident.

Cristobal Arroyo, of Greenwich Street, expressed the belief that the customer fees related to water, sewer and municipal waste are high. He expressed the belief that 144 Walnut Street is a vacant property.

Council Vice President Twyman called for a point of order. He advised Mr. Arroyo that his comments were related to a specific sitting member of Council which is not permitted.

Mr. Arroyo stated that he owns a pizza shop and takes responsibility for cleaning up the litter in the neighborhood. He described seeing a U-Haul truck dumping material near the former MJ Earl property which was removed from the City greenhouse creating a problem.

Council Vice President Twyman called for a point of order. He advised Mr. Arroyo that his comments were related to a specific sitting member of Council which is not permitted.

Annarose Ingarra-Milch, of Alsace Rd., congratulated the winners of the 2019 Miss Teen Reading pageant and the Crime Alert poster contest. She thanked City Council for commending Alan Shuman for stepping up to assist in the rehabilitation of the Hopewell Mennonite Church and for his redevelopment efforts within Reading at a time when others
have walked away. She noted the success Mr. Shuman’s projects have had in providing start-up opportunities for small businesses and critical shopping and personal services within various residential areas. She stated that these successful redevelopment projects increase the tax base in Reading and raise the standards of living.

Anthony Sedoti, of Perkiomen Ave., stated that he resides in the South 19th and Perkiomen area adjacent to Pendora Park. He stated that this neighborhood does not have adequate parking and that the City for decades, going back to the Haggerty administration, allowed parking on a City owned vacant lot located on South 19th Street. He questioned why the Parking Authority recently installed a No Parking sign and began ticketing vehicles.

The acting managing director asked Mr. Sedoti to call his office to discuss this problem.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz thanked the acting managing director for agreeing to explore the change in regulations when residents in this neighborhood have relied on parking on this lot for decades. She thanked Mr. Sedoti for bringing this issue to the City’s attention.

Ann Marie Wolfe, of Franklin St., suggested exploring positive activities for disabled individuals.

John Hefferon, of Mohnton, distributed photographs of properties in the 300 block of South 6th Street and a map showing 349 and 351 South 6th Street. He stated that 351 South 6th Street is not a valid address. He described the property maintenance issues at these properties, including the satellite dishes located in the front facades of the properties that are located within the Prince Historic District. He described the issues with the inspection reports for these properties.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA & MINUTES
Council Vice President Twyman called Council's attention to the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the March 11th Regular Meeting of Council, along with the summations of discussion from the March 11 COW and the March 18 Finance COW and the consent agenda legislation. He stated that the Consent Agenda will be amended to move the Award of Contract to the Resolution heading.

Councilor Reed moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to approve the minutes from the March 11th Regular Meeting of Council, along with the summations of discussion listed and the agenda, as amended. The motion was approved unanimously.

Consent Agenda
B. Resolution 33-2019 – authorizing the disposal of contract documents from the City Clerk’s office in accordance with the PA Record Retention Policy as specified:
C. Resolution 34-2019 - authorizing submission of a PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program Grant application for $250,000 as part of the total project cost of $500,000.00 for the Third and Spruce Playground Rehabilitation Project

D. Resolution 35-2019 – authorizing the submission of a PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program Grant application to request $25,000.00 as part of the total project cost of $50,000.00 for the completion of a feasibility study for the Schlegel Park Pool

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT
The acting managing director explained that Resolutions 34 and 35-2019 approved under the Consent Agenda will allow the City to submit grant applications for improvements to the Schlegel Pook and 3rd & Spruce playground.

Councilor Marmarou stated that the mayor previously announced his intent to attend tonight’s meeting. He inquired why the mayor is not present.

The acting managing director stated that the mayor called his cell phone after the Committee of the Whole meeting and said that he decided not to attend the regular meeting.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz asked for the date of the last meeting the mayor attended. Council Reed replied that the last meeting the mayor attended was on December 17, 2018.

AUDITOR’S REPORT
Acting Auditor Sleppy explained that the 2018 external audit work has started.

REPORT FROM DEPT. DIRECTORS, BOARDS, AUTHORITIES, & COMMISSIONS
Amy Johnson, Historic Preservation Specialist, representing the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) explained that the City’s first historic district, Callowhill, was approved by City
Council in 1978, followed by Centre Park and Prince in 1982, Penn’s Commons in 2005 and The Heights in 2012. She noted that a federal historic district – Queen Ann was approved in 2004. She stated that the HARB Board reviewed 106 applications in 2018, of which 95 were approved and 11 were denied.

Erin Weller, HARB Chair, explained that in addition to reviewing applications for improvement projects, the HARB Board also considers creating various policies to assist applicants such as the financial hardship policy and the modification to the window replacement policy to allow the use of additional materials apart from wood. She added that the roof policy was modified due to the 2015 hail storm that destroyed many of the existing slate roofs in Reading’s historic districts.

Ms. Weller stated that the HARB Board currently has only four (4) active members. She stressed the need for additional members. She stated that the Board is willing to meet with community groups to explain how the board operates and the application process for projects. She stated that at times the Board would like assistance from one of the City’s attorneys.

Acting Solicitor Kraft stated that the City currently has only three (3) staff attorneys and that requests for legal counsel will be considered upon request.

Council Vice President Twyman thanked HARB for their work.

**ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pending Further Discussion</th>
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<td><strong>Bill No. 4-2019</strong> – amending the Ethics Code regarding attorneys retained to work with the Ethics Board <em>Introduced at the January 14 regular meeting; Tabled at the January 28 and February 19 regular meetings</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bill No. 5-2019</strong> – amending the Charter Ordinance regarding attorneys retained to work with the Charter Board <em>Introduced at the January 14th regular meeting; Tabled at the January 28 and February 19 regular meetings</em></td>
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**A. Bill 9-2019** – authorizing the sale of 46 North 3rd Street to the Berks County Community Foundation $5,000.00 - a $2,000.00 deposit was made on June 14, 2018, and the remaining $3,000.00 is due to be made at the time of settlement. The lot will be used as a parking area. The sale of the property was advertised on June 6 and 7, 2018 *Introduced at the March 11 regular meeting* 

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz moved, seconded by Councilor Reed, to enact Bill No. 9-2019.
Acting Solicitor Kraft explained that the City received only one (1) bid to purchase these lots, noting that the sales price was negotiated higher than the bid originally submitted. She stated that the adjoining property owner was contacted to see if they had any interest in acquiring title to the lots.

Bill No. 9-2019 was enacted by the following vote:

  Yeas:  Cepeda-Freytiz, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Reed, Sihelnik, Twyman,– 6
  Nays:  None – 0

INTRODUCTION OF NEW ORDINANCES
Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz read the following ordinance into the record:

A. Ordinance - authorizing the reconciliation payment to the City of Reading in the amount of $7,921,583.00 through available funds in the Refund Prior Period Revenue as per the Inter-municipal agreement of 2013 for the overpayments of treatment and transportation of wastewater

B. Ordinance - amending the 2019 budget by creating the Aggregated Pension Fund 93 to capture funds from the City’s Police, Fire, and Officers and Employees Pension Funds and designate them to the new aggregated pension board

RESOLUTIONS

A. Resolution 36-2019 – reappointing Kathy Schorn to the Board of Health

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Councilor Reed, to adopt Resolution No. 36-2019.

Councilors Marmarou and Twyman noted the wealth of experience Ms. Schorn brings to this board.

Resolution No. 36-2019 was adopted by the following vote:

  Yeas:  Cepeda-Freytiz, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Reed, Sihelnik, Twyman – 6
  Nays:  None – 0

B. Resolution 37-2019 – authorizing the administration to remit payment in the amount of $219,589 to Empire for the demolition of 932 and 932A Penn Street

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz moved, seconded by Councilor Sihelnik, to table

Resolution No. 37-2019 was tabled by the following vote:

Yeas: Cepeda-Freytiz, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Reed, Sihelnik, Twyman – 6
Nays: None – 0

C. Resolution 38-2019 – authorizing the payment of outstanding invoices in the amount of $7,222.23 to Leffler Energy for HVAC preventative repair and maintenance for the months of October to November 2018

Councilor Reed moved, seconded by Councilor Marmarou, to table Resolution No. 38-2019.

Resolution No. 38-2019 was tabled by the following vote:

Yeas: Cepeda-Freytiz, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Reed, Sihelnik, Twyman – 6
Nays: None – 0

D. Resolution 39-2019 – authorizing the extension of the 2014 contract with Advanced Disposal Services from January 1, 2019 to January 30, 2019 and agreeing to remit payment to Advanced Disposal Services in the total amount of $227,479.19 for the services provided from January 1 to January 30, 2019.

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Councilor Sihelnik, to table Resolution No. 39-2019.

Resolution No. 39-2019 was tabled by the following vote:

Yeas: Cepeda-Freytiz, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Reed, Sihelnik, Twyman – 6
Nays: None – 0

E. Resolution 40-2019 – authorizing the payment of outstanding invoices in the amount of $36,937.80 for legal services performed by Campbell Durrant Beatty Palombo & Miller, P.C. in labor and employment matters and authorizing the retention of Campbell Durrant until December 31, 2019 or until Council approves an engagement with labor counsel based on the upcoming RFQ/RFP.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz moved, seconded by Councilor Reed, to table Resolution No. 40-2019.

Resolution No. 40-2019 was tabled by the following vote:
Yeas: Cepeda-Freytiz, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Reed, Sihelnik, Twyman – 6
Nays: None – 0

From the Consent Agenda:
A. Award of Contract – for the Hill Road Storm Water Sewer Pipe Project to, National Water Main Cleaning Company, Kearny, NJ at a total submitted price of $44,250.00.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz moved, seconded by Councilor Reed, to approve the Award of Contract to National Water Main Cleaning Company.

The Award of Contract was approved by the following vote:

Yeas: Cepeda-Freytiz, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Reed, Sihelnik, Twyman – 6
Nays: None – 0

COUNCIL COMMENT
Councilor Sihelnik thanked Mr. Hefferon for bringing the issues about these deteriorated properties to the City’s attention. She noted that Berks Nature recently attained the Gold LEED certification. She described the anniversary events planned for the Kennedy House. She stated that the South of Penn competition had 70 volunteers who collected numerous bags of trash and were rewarded with a clean neighborhood. She spoke about the upcoming Great American Clean-up, another event that will produce clean neighborhoods.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz described her experience participating in the Rise Up Reading event over the past weekend. She asked people to provide input on the Pagoda and the activities at the Pagoda.

Councilor Cepeda-Freytiz thanked all those who spoke at tonight’s meeting. She stated that she is open to meeting with citizens, as are the other Councilors. She noted Council’s overall belief in unity within the community.

Councilor Reed noted the DoubleTree’s recent recognition by Commuter Services of PA for their multitude of walk-to-work jobs. She described the tangible need for a new bridge to connect the Wyomissing interchange with the Dana South area. She stated that the opportunity to achieve this task will occur with the project to expand the West Shore Bypass which is expected to begin in 2022. She encouraged all to recognize the need to add this bridge project and that the failure to act now will continue the usual status quo to overlook the City of Reading and its need to be connected to the major road systems.
Council Vice President Twyman thanked all who attended tonight’s meeting. He also thanked those from the Barber’s Institute for attending the COW meeting.

Council Vice President Twyman reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule.

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Goodman-Hinnershitz, to adjourn the regular meeting of Council.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk