

CITY COUNCIL

FEBRUARY 8, 2018

The City Council of the City of Wilkes-Barre met in Regular Session on February 8, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers, City Hall, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania for the purpose of general business.

The meeting was organized with Vice-Chairperson Mike Belusko in the Chair.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was given.

Roll Call:

Barrett	- present
Gilbert	- present
Merritt	- present
Belusko, Vice Chairperson	- present
Brooks, Chairperson	- excused

Also Present:

Darren Snyder, City Controller
Ted Wampole, Administrator
Bill Harris, Director of Planning/Zoning
Tim Henry, City Attorney/Deputy Administrator
Cathy Payne, Assistant City Clerk
Jim Ryan, City Clerk
Lisa Sanfilippo, Administrative Assistant
Joyce Zaykowski, Capital Projects Program Manager

City Clerk Jim Ryan read a statement relative to Council's Rules and Procedures.

The City Clerk asked if there was anyone wishing to address Council on pending legislation. There being no one the meeting continued with general business.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. R0013-18 to and including the Minutes appeared on the Consent Agenda (Resolutions).

RESOLUTION NO. R0013-18

Authorizing the proper city officials to enter an agreement in the amount of \$9,876 with the Pennsylvania Department of Health to provide a tuberculosis program.

MINUTES

Of the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority of December 19, 2017.

Of the Regular Session of City Council of January 25, 2018.

Ms. Gilbert moved to adopt the Consent Agenda (Resolutions).

The motion was seconded by Mr. Merritt and adopted by the following yeas and nays vote:

Yeas Barrett, Gilbert, Merritt and Belusko (Vice Chairperson) – 4 – being a majority of the members present.

Nays none.

Absent – Brooks (Chairperson) – 1.

City Controller Darren Snyder appeared before Council to read the following statement:

Earlier this week I learned that the City of Wilkes-Barre was to form a committee to review the RFP's to develop the Hotel Sterling site. When I learned that the individuals that were included in this committee were members of the Administration, Council, Diamond City Partnership and the Chamber, I noticed that the Controller's office, the third branch of City government was not included to review these proposals. So I approached the Administration and requested copies of these proposals be given to the Controller's office to review along with the Council, the Administration, Chamber and Diamond City Partnership, which was refused. I then, a second time, approached the Mayor to request that the proposals for city property, the peoples' property, be reviewed by the Office of the Audit and Control, again, it was refused. Now, as the duties of the Audit and Control is to examine, audit and verify all books, records, and accounts of the various Administrative and Legislative Units, departments, offices or officers under the control of the supervision of mayor or council and for this purpose have access to all such books, records and accounts at anytime. Also, the duties of the Controller is to examine and approve for payment all contracts all purchase orders, documents which the city incurs financial obligations, having ascertained approval that these monies are duly appropriated and review for and allotted to meet such obligations. Submit reports to Council and Mayor when records deem to be in violation of law or contrary to accepted accounting procedures. So my question is, why would the Controller's office not be first asked to be part of this committee to review these proposals and secondly when the Controller's office asked to review such documents, which the Code says, all such books and records and accounts shall be delivered at any time, was refused. Thank you.

Mr. Belusko: Anyone like to speak on that matter? Mr. Wampole? No. Thanks Darren.

Ms. Gilbert: Would it be possible to have the Controller on the Committee to review the proposals?

Mr. Wampole: We had talked to him about that and it is the Administration putting the committee together. The Controller really is the watchdog for everything that goes on, so it was our determination that we not include him at this point. It's just a personal preference.

Ms. Gilbert: It seems, in my opinion, it's just such a large financial matter I think that he should be. I understand your decision but ...

Mr. Wampole: We don't make the decision to sell, obviously that decision when we review the proposals, we will bring it to Council to make a recommendation and then Council could act on it or not act on it. Of course at that point they're public record and anybody can have a copy of them, but at this point we just received them and we want to take the time, from the Administrations perspective to review them. That is our prerogative.

Mr. Snyder: Where does that say that it is excluded from "records and accounts" at anytime?

Atty. Henry: I don't know if it is a book, record or an account at this point.

Mr. Snyder: It was a public request.

Atty. Henry: Proposals as of this date wouldn't be public record.

Ms. Gilbert: Once they are open they are public record, correct?

Atty. Henry: No, once one is selected.

Mr. Merritt: So my question is at what point would you bring Mr. Snyder in? I mean, he has a background in real estate. He certainly could possibly help. I think it would be a wise decision to bring him in.

Ms. Gilbert: I would feel more comfortable having him on the committee.

Mr. Belusko: Myself included.

Mr. Wampole: I'll take it to the Mayor.

Mr. Snyder: Thank you.

Mr. Ryan announced that before public discussion Mr. John Gleason, Executive Director of Keystone Mission asked to make a brief statement.

John Gleason, Keystone Mission, appeared before Council to go on record to deny any involvement and/or knowledge of, as was stated in the newspaper, with the sober house that has opened in the Parsons section of Wilkes-Barre.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

John Magda, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to Laurel Creek and the property at 31 Mineral Street (junk yard).

Mr. Barrett said he discussed Laurel Creek with Mr. Frati at great length. He said at the earliest opportunity the city will tour the whole creek and reevaluate what has been done.

Fredrick Voelker, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to a halfway house in Parsons (Austin Avenue).

Mr. Belusko said it is being looked into by Zoning Officer Bill Harris and City Attorney Tim Henry.

Ms. Gilbert said this is an on-going problem on all over the city. She said there is legislation out there that will help us put a stop to things like this.

Gregory Kopyak, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council to report flooding in his basement after construction was done in front of his house (36 Sheridan Street) by the Water Company and to have a crosswalk beeper installed at the light on Northampton and Sheridan Streets.

Richard Wharton, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to the halfway house in Parsons (Austin Avenue).

Mr. Barrett said this is a for-profit business, regardless if they have a tax-exempt status, in a residential area without any zoning. He asked Attorney Henry to look at what the City can do to address it.

Linda Joseph, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to personal attacks on her and others in the Citizens Voice newspaper under the comment section of the article regarding the parking study.

Mary Maloney, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to the halfway house in Parsons (Austin Avenue).

Mr. Barrett said there is some confusion as to who owns the property. He asked that someone from the city reach out to the church itself and find out what is going on with the property.

Ms. Maloney mentioned that she did speak with a member of the church that lives in the neighborhood and they said that the congregation had to vote unanimously to allow this.

John Suchoski, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to the Mayor's absence at Council meetings, excluding Controller Darren Snyder from the committee for the Sterling property and the halfway house in Parsons.

Mary Eileen Lindbuchler, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to the parking situation on Hazle Street (between Stanton and Parrish Streets).

Sue Gilbert, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to the parking study (against it / not necessary) and putting the Controller on the committee relative to the Sterling property.


Gordon Williams, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to tax reassessment and new millage.

Mr. Barrett mentioned that the city did a test of ten properties to see what the results would be. He said he doesn't think that ten properties really gave you the whole picture. He suggested the city reform the committee that they had last year to look at the tax reassessment and do a bigger sampling including more commercial properties.

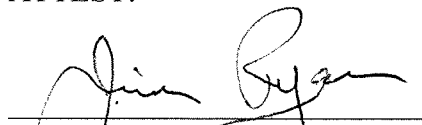
Mr. Wampole said the city will continue to look at the issue and pull some commercial properties also.

Bob Kadluboski, Wilkes-Barre, PA appeared before Council relative to Ms. Zaykowski's (Capital Projects Manager) residency, Mr. Wampole's experience to be Administrator, Mr. Snyder not being on the Sterling property committee, and the police department (suspensions and overtime).

There being no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.


Mike Belusko, Vice Chairperson

ATTEST:


Jim Ryan, City Clerk