

In Re:

SUMMARY TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

The City Council of the City of Wilkes-Barre met in Executive Work Session, Tuesday, March 6, 2018 at 6:17 p.m. (immediately following the Public Hearing), in City Council Chambers, City Hall, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

PRESENT:

Tony Brooks, Chairperson
Mike Belusko, Vice Chairperson
Bill Barrett, Council member
Beth Gilbert, Council member
Mike Merritt, Council member

ALSO PRESENT:

Butch Frati, Director of Operations
Tim Henry, City Attorney/Deputy Administrator
Cathy Payne, Assistant City Clerk
Jim Ryan, City Clerk
Darren Snyder, City Controller
Ted Wampole, City Administrator

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was given.

City Clerk Jim Ryan presented the following Resolution:

1. Approving the transfer of a Liquor License from Hanover Township to La Villa Restaurant and Catering, LLC, 369 South Main Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA.

City Administrator Ted Wampole appeared before Council relative to the following:

1. Resolution authorizing the proper city officials to enter into an agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (“PennDot”) and Alfred Benesch and Company of Hazleton, to begin the design of the North Washington Street Bridge Replacement Project.
2. Resolution authorizing the proper city officials to enter into an agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Alfred Benesch and Company of Hazleton to conduct Bridge Inspections of all City owned bridges from 2018 through 2022.

Ms. Gilbert asked if there is a cost associated with the inspections.

Mr. Frati explained that the Federal Government pays 80% of the fee. Depending on where the bridge is located, the City will pay anywhere from 5% to 15% and the State pays the rest. This is a mandated program through the Federal Highway Administration and they have to be inspected every two years and our cycle is due. The city’s share will come from Liquid Fuel money.

3. Resolution authorizing the proper city officials to grant Elite Championship Tournament Baseball (ECTB) Field Use Permits for available city athletic fields for the purpose of conducting the youth travel baseball tournaments between May 1, 2018 and November 1, 2018.

Mr. Wampole said they will hold weekend tournaments in the city. The economic impact should be very impressive. They will be bringing in anywhere from 15 to 40 teams on any given weekend and will staying in our hotels and eating at our restaurants.

Mr. Belusko asked if it will disrupt any of the local sports.

Mr. Wampole replied that the city will be working around that. The city has plenty of fields, but if worse comes to worse we will call in Kings College and Wilkes University to use their fields.

Ms. Gilbert asked if they will have to pay for the permits to use the fields.

Mr. Wampole replied that they will pay for all permits.

4. An Ordinance amending Article IV of Chapter 20 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Wilkes-Barre entitled "Parks and Recreation." (First Reading – On Title) (Hollenback Golf Course)

Mr. Wampole said that the Administration looked at the fees of other nine hole golf courses of similar size to Hollenback and realized that our rates were not in line with them.

Council Presentations

Mr. Barrett mentioned that back in the 90's the city did a lot of paving work, under Mayor McGroarty's Administration, on Scott Street. He asked if it was under a different program back then and if PennDot is going to hold us responsible for doing some of the paving work up there.

Mr. Frati responded that Scott Street was part of the buyback program that occurred in the 90's. The City is responsible for the maintenance of the any type of infrastructure on Scott Street, even though it is a state highway; however the city is not responsible for paving. We are trying to tell PennDot that there is no pave left to maintain and to ask them to move it up a cycle and see if we can get that funded in 2019.

Mr. Barrett said he has been encouraging residents to talk to their State Representatives regarding Scott Street.

Mr. Frati added that the City receives a small stipend from the state for maintaining the state roads in the city.

Ms. Gilbert said that she has received several complaints about downtown businesses (around Public Square) shoveling snow onto the street after a storm. She asked if there is an Ordinance prohibiting it.

Attorney Henry said that he believes there is an Ordinance.

Ms. Gilbert asked the Administration to keep an eye on it in the future.

Ms. Gilbert said she is receiving complaints about the condition of Northampton Street. She asked if there is a time line as to when that will be repaired or is it PennDot's responsibility.

Mr. Frati said it is to some degree PennDot's responsibility, but the city is going to have to make some temporary repairs once the asphalt plants are open, so we can get a

good product. The city is currently researching why the water is continually backing up in the catch basins.

Ms. Gilbert asked if the water issue is originating at the top of the hill by where Sherman and East Northampton intersect.

Mr. Frati replied that it may actually be starting at Grant Street because the system is connected at that point with water running down hill toward Wilkes-Barre Boulevard. He said the city is checking each basin to see how they are filling up so quickly.

Mr. Merritt asked Mr. Wampole if the city has published evacuation routes out of the city.

Mr. Wampole said he will check with Chief Jay Delaney.

Mr. Ryan informed Mr. Merritt that there is a master plan that Chief Delaney updates every year.

Mr. Belusko reported the following three vacant properties:

1. 427-429 South River Street – the property has been boarded up for years. He said he asked Kurt Sauer about putting it on the list to be demolished, but he said he believed someone bought it. He asked Mr. Wampole to check into it.
2. The rear of 427 – 429 South River Street on Race Street – the windows and doors are open. The property needs to be boarded up.
3. 114 Westminster Street – it is boarded up, but the backyard is full of mattresses, tires, garbage bags, etc. The fence is falling down. He asked if the Administration would send Code Enforcement to look at it.

Mr. Snyder asked if the Administration has any plans for large capital improvements to the Hollenback Golf Course to justify the rate increases. He is concerned that by raising the prices the city will lose business and profits.

Attorney Henry remarked that there are no profits.

Mr. Wampole said it will be Council's call to raise the prices or not. If the prices are not raised the city will continue to lose money.

Mr. Wampole mentioned that the Administration is looking to maybe put a driving range there and possibly a miniature golf course too.

Mr. Wampole pointed out that the current golf rates are low. If we do nothing the course will continue to lose money and then there is less of a chance of making an investment in it.

Mr. Snyder asked if the Administration has looked at raising membership fees.

Mr. Wampole said it is part of the suggested rate increases. He said he will send Mr. Snyder the changes tomorrow.

Mr. Snyder asked what other courses the city looked at when comparing rates.

Mr. Wampole said Twin Oaks and Lehman Golf Course.

Mr. Snyder pointed out that they are in economically higher areas.

Mr. Snyder said he fears the revenues going down if the rates go up.

Mr. Wampole said we either have to cut the cost or increase the revenue.

Mr. Snyder added or do capital improvements.

Mr. Wampole said that the Administration is looking at capital improvements such as the driving range and the miniature golf course, through LSA grants.

Ms. Gilbert asked if the city is going about this process backwards. She asked if it would be more beneficial to apply for the grants, make the capital improvements and then raise the fees.

Mr. Wampole said the city has to get someone to design the capital improvements, and by the time we do that and apply for a grant we will be looking at 2019. If the grants don't come we will be a year behind.

Mr. Frati said since he has been with the city overseeing the parks and grounds, we have made capital improvements to Hollenback Golf Course. He pointed out that the sand traps have been fixed, the areas with no grass were addressed, the trees were trimmed, the tee boxes are incredible and the greens are in great shape. He said now may be the time to raise the rates and then we can look at applying for grant money.

Ms. Gilbert asked when the last time the fees were increased.

Attorney Henry replied in 2010.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.