

CITY OF WILKES-BARRE
PENNSYLVANIA



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

CITY COUNCIL

APRIL 30, 2020

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

FILE OF COUNCIL NO. 4 OF 2020- AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WILKES-BARRE, COUNTY OF LUZERNE, AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING THE 2020 ACTION PLAN ENCOMPASSING THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM, COVID-19 CDBG GRANT AND HOME PROGRAM BUDGETS FOR PROGRAM YEAR FORTY-SIX AND APPROPRIATING SPECIFIC SUMS ESTIMATED TO BE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES." (SECOND AND FINAL READING)

CITY COUNCIL

April 30, 2020

The City Council of the City of Wilkes-Barre met in Special Session on April 30, 2020 at 4:00 p.m., in the Wilkes-Barre Police Station, City Hall, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania for the purpose of Council's consideration of the Second Reading of the Office of Community Development Action Plan/Budget (streamed on YouTube for public viewing).

The meeting was organized with Chairperson Bill Barrett in the Chair.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was given.

Roll Call:

Belusko	- present
Marconi	- present
Gilbert McBride	- present
Brooks, Vice Chairperson	- present
Barrett, Chairperson	- present

Also Present:

George Brown, Mayor
Charles McCormick, City Administrator
Maureen Collins, Assistant City Attorney
Butch Frati, Director of Operations/Deputy City Administrator
Tim Henry, City Attorney
Frank Hershberger, IT Director
Cathy Payne, Assistant City Clerk
Lisa Sanfilippo, Administrative Assistant
Jim Ryan, City Clerk
Tyler Ryan, Assistant to the Mayor
Joyce Zaykowski, Director of OCD

City Clerk Jim Ryan announced that the Special Session is for the purpose of Council's consideration of the Second Reading of the Office of Community and Economic Development Action Plan/Budget. He said the meeting was duly advertised for this purpose and this purpose only. The advertisement also stated that only comments relative to the Community Development Action Plan/Budget can be accepted by the public. He said there were some comments submitted, but they were not relevant to the topic; those comments will be forwarded to City Council for consideration at the next general Council meeting.

The Chairman read the following comments (submitted by email) on pending legislation:

Jason Carr, Saylorsburg, PA

Why was there no money allocated for rental assistance for the common citizens in the COVID-19 grant money, but bars that serve food were allocated funding?

Mayor Brown replied that rental assistance is not an eligible activity for these funds.

Mr. Brooks asked if these are guidelines from the Federal Government.

Mayor Brown responded that the guidelines do come from the Federal Government.

Sam Troy, Wilkes-Barre, PA

I would like to know whether any of the \$588,000 for infrastructure improvement designated in the CDBG money can be used for tree planting?

Mayor Brown said the money cannot be used for tree planting.

What are some examples of public services that the \$159,000 (CDBG money) can be used for?

Mayor Brown replied that the services range from men and women's shelters, Meals on Wheels, counseling, etc. Some eligible expenses as determined by the regular Community Block Grant Development money that will keep them operating during this pandemic and help them to prepare and prevent and respond to COVID-19.

What are some ways that the \$518,000 of COVID-19 money for special economic development assistance can be used for? Does anyone know whether businesses that are in the KOZ classification can get some of this money? When will the specifics of the breakdown of this COVID-19 budget be prepared? Right now it seems to be a very vague proposition. I don't feel that the KOZ businesses should have as much access to that money as the non-KOZ businesses. Also, are Kings and Wilkes College going to have access to any of this money?

Mayor Brown said the city anticipates a loan program specifically designated to for-profit businesses, focusing on small businesses to create low/moderate income jobs. Non-profits such as Wilkes and Kings do not qualify for this program.

Also, are residents and taxpayers who have lost their jobs or who are undergoing economic hardship eligible for any money in either area?

Mayor Brown replied that residents and taxpayers are not eligible. He said for clarification purposes, the Emergency Relief Loan Program that we put together for the restaurants, is not associated with the CDBG grant. The funds for that are allocated from an old account the city had; it has nothing to do with the CDBG grant that is being voted on tonight.

ORDINANCE

FILE OF COUNCIL NO. 4 OF 2020 – AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED “AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WILKES-BARRE, COUNTY OF LUZERNE, AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING THE 2020 ACTION PLAN ENCOMPASSING THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM, COVID-19 CDBG GRANT AND HOME PROGRAM BUDGETS FOR PROGRAM YEAR FORTY-SIX AND APPROPRIATING SPECIFIC SUMS ESTIMATED TO BE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.” (SECOND AND FINAL READING)

Mr. Brook moved to adopt the Ordinance.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Marconi and adopted by the following yea and nay vote:

Yeas Belusko, Marconi, Gilbert, Brooks and Barrett (Chairperson) – 5 – being all of the members elected to City Council.

Nays none.

PRESENTATIONS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Belusko asked Mr. Frati if he has seen an increase in garbage and tipping fees.

Mr. Frati responded that they have seen an uptick in late March and all of April. It is a significant number, around 19 – 20% higher now, than this time last year. He said he should have numbers in a week to ten days.

Mr. Marconi asked the Mayor for an update on City Hall’s roof.

Mayor Brown said they met with Panzitta Construction today and were told because of the inclement weather the work on the roof will be extended. He told Council that they still have to put the membrane up, but they couldn’t do it because of the weather.

Mrs. McBride thanked Mrs. Zaykowski and the Administration for all their work on the CDBG/COVID-19 budget, as well as, taking my concerns into consideration and assuring that non-profits will be able to receive the help that they need, by making this a fluid budget over the summer months.

Mrs. McBride said she thinks it would behoove the city, during this time of social distancing, to prioritize credit card payments for city taxes, to increase convenience and social distancing and to keep both our residents and employees safe. She said she also believes that it might increase collection rates just because of the convenience factor of it all. She asked the Administration if it is something they can look into.

Mayor Brown said it is something that the Administration was looking into, but then the pandemic hit, followed by the roof blowing off City Hall. The Mayor said the Administration is looking at, but couldn't guarantee when it would take place.

Mr. Brooks thanked Mr. Frati and the DPW employees that helped with cleaning up the residential clean up on Spruce Street.

Mr. Barrett said he appreciates what the Mayor and the city employees are doing during this difficult time, but most importantly the communication. He thanked the Mayor for keeping Council informed on the state of the city.

Mr. Barrett thanked the IT Staff for coordinating today's meeting.

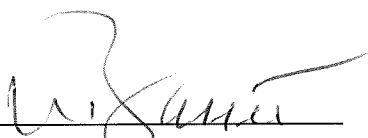
Mr. Barrett informed Council that they will be going back on the May schedule. The tentative plan is to combine the next meeting on May 14 at 4:00 p.m.

Mayor Brown asked if Council plans on continuing to have the meeting on YouTube.

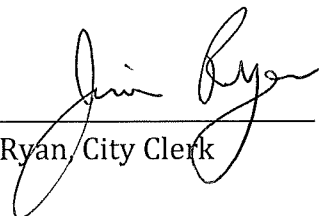
Mr. Barrett said for right now they plan on conducting meetings on YouTube, unless something changes with social distancing and they can be done from City Hall.

Mayor Brown suggested that Council think that way because he can't see City Hall being ready by that time.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.



Bill Barrett, Chairperson

ATTEST: 

Jim Ryan, City Clerk