

CITY COUNCIL

June 11, 2020

The City Council of the City of Wilkes-Barre met in Regular Session on June 11, 2020, at 4:25 p.m. (immediately following the Work Session), at the Police Station, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania for the purpose of general business. (The meeting was conducted and streamed on YouTube for public viewing due to COVID-19.)

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  
Jay Delaney, Fire Chief  
Tim Henry, City Attorney  
Frank Hershberger, IT Director  
Charles McCormick, City Administrator  
Cathy Payne, Assistant City Clerk  
Lisa Sanfilippo, Administrative Assistant  
Jim Ryan, City Clerk

The City Clerk announced that Council will now take questions and comments on agenda items from the public by phone. There being no calls the meeting continued with general business.

Mr. Barrett read the following email comment:

*Sam Troy, Wilkes-Barre*

*Will an RFP have to be submitted to fund the new equipment for the firehouse?*

Attorney Henry said that an RFP is not necessary because it is being purchased under COSTARS.

**RESOLUTIONS**

The following Resolutions appeared on the Consent Agenda (Resolutions):

**RESOLUTION NO. R0042-20**

A Resolution of the City Council, of the City of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania declaring its intent to follow the schedules and procedures for the disposition of records as set forth in the Municipal Records Manual approved December 16, 2008 (as amended March 28, 2019).

Whereas, a Local Government Records Committee was created by Act 428 of 1968 and empowered thereby to make rules and regulations for records disposition; and

Whereas, the Municipal Records Manual was approved by said committee on December 16, 2008; and

Whereas, the City of Wilkes-Barre desires to dispose of records according to statutory requirements;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the City Council of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, that it intends to follow the schedules and procedures for disposition of records as set forth in the Municipal Records Manual approved on December 16, 2008 (as amended March 28, 2019).

Office/Department: Office of Community Development

<u>Box Number, Record title, date</u>	<u>Cubic Feet</u>
Box 920 – 1994 Contracts	1.26
No Box Number – 1997 OCD Chronological Files	1.26
No Box Number – 1998 OCD Chronological Fed/State Bldg/Housing	1.26
Total 3 Boxes	3.78

**RESOLUTION NO. R0043-20**

A Resolution of the City Council, of the City of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania declaring its intent to follow the schedules and procedures for the disposition of records as set forth in the Municipal Records Manual approved December 16, 2008 (as amended March 28, 2019).

Whereas, a Local Government Records Committee was created by Act 428 of 1968 and empowered thereby to make rules and regulations for records disposition; and

Whereas, the Municipal Records Manual was approved by said committee on December 16, 2008; and

whereas, the City of Wilkes-Barre desires to dispose of records according to statutory requirements;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the City Council of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, that it intends to follow the schedules and procedures for disposition of records as set forth in the Municipal Records Manual approved on December 16, 2008 (as amended March 28, 2019).

Office/Department: Office of Community Development

<u>Box Number, Record title, date</u>	<u>Cubic Feet</u>
See Attached List	
Total 100 Boxes	100.26

**RESOLUTION NO. R0044-20**

Whereas, the City of Wilkes-Barre is desirous to purchase an Emergency Vehicle Exhaust Extraction System for Hollenback Fire Station from Air Cleaning systems through the PA COSTARS contract #008-047 for the Bureau of Fire.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by the City Council of the City of Wilkes-Barre, that the proper city officials are hereby authorized to enter into an agreement with Air Cleaning Systems, Inc. PO Box 358 Exton, PA 19341, for the purchase of an Emergency Vehicle Exhaust Extraction System in the amount of \$43,900.00.

Payment will come from the Fire Department Capitol Improvement Budget.

**MINUTES**

Of the Regular Session of City Council of May 14, 2020.

Mr. Belusko moved to adopt the Consent Agenda (Resolutions).

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

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

Nays none.

### PRESENTATIONS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Belusko thanked the Fire and Police Chiefs, the Mayor and Administrator for all their work regarding fireworks in the city.

Mr. Barrett said Chief Delaney was instrumental in rearranging the Ordinance, which makes it basically illegal to use these Class A fireworks just about anywhere in the city.

### PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Sam Troy, Wilkes-Barre, PA, phoned in relative to the way City Council meetings are being held (during the pandemic), to support a Citizens Advisory Committee, and the planting of a tree on Public Square in honor of all the medical care workers/essential workers who put their life on the line to fight the effects of COVID-19.

Mr. Barrett said this will be the last meeting that Council will be holding in the Police Department conference room. He said he will be meeting with the Administration to discuss the safety procedures that need to be put in place before a Council meeting is held in City Hall.

Mayor Brown said he will be forming a seven member Citizens Advisory Boards made up of citizens of Wilkes-Barre. He will be selecting people from different diverse groups within the city. The members will be working in a proactive manner with the Police Department.

Mayor Brown told Mr. Troy that he forwarded his email from last week, regarding how Council meetings are being held, to Mr. Barrett.

Mayor Brown informed Council that the tree Mr. Troy is referring to, is being paid for by the City of Wilkes-Barre along with the Downtown City Partnership. The Mayor said he has approved \$300 for the purchase and planting of the tree.

Renee Bantone, Wilkes-Barre, PA phoned in relative to supporting the Citizens Review Board and to thank Council member McBride for her comments on the victims of police brutality and Black Lives Matter.

John Suchoski, Wilkes-Barre, PA phoned in relative to letting the public attend City Council meetings (outdoors), supporting the Citizens Review Board (investigatory power), Division Street Bridge and police sitting in parked police cars.

Emily Cavalaro, Wilkes-Barre, PA phoned in relative to supporting the Police Review Board and the police department's handling of her brother's murder.

Mr. Barrett suggested that she come in and speak with someone in the Police Department to get answers to her questions.

Jason Carr, Saylorsburg, PA phoned in relative to supporting a Police Review Board, the police pension system and comments made by Councilmember Belusko regarding police not pulling people over from New York and New Jersey because they are afraid to.

Mr. Belusko said he does not recall having a conversation with Mr. Carr regarding the police being afraid to arrest people and denied making those comments.

Mr. Barrett told Mr. Carr that the Auditor General is looking at Pension System Reform across the Commonwealth.

Eileen Dorsey, Scranton, PA phoned in relative to supporting immediate enactment of the Citizens Review Board for Police.

Tony Thomas, Wilkes-Barre, PA phoned in relative to supporting the Citizens Review Board, to thank Chief Delaney and Chief Coffay for their work on the Fireworks Ordinance, fireworks in North End (after 11 p.m.), to thank everyone involved with planting a tree on Public Square to commemorate essential workers and the Shade Tree Commission (doing greenspaces).

Mr. Marconi said that he has not received any complaints regarding fireworks.

Josh Hughes, Wilkes-Barre, PA phoned in relative to the various proposals for a Civilian Review Board.

Mrs. McBride thanked Mr. Hughes for taking the time to call in and for the research he has done.

Mr. Brooks asked Mr. Hughes to email his research to City Council.

Mr. Barrett read the following email that was received today (no name/just an email address):

*Why are there no black police officers, firefighters and minority members on this administration? This is a huge problem. FIX IT.*

Mr. Barrett said that when the city advertises for positions, they go to great efforts to make sure we are reaching out to everyone.

Mayor Brown said the city currently has 3 positions open in the police department and will be holding testing for those positions. It is open to everyone. There is written testing and a physical that is necessary to go through as part of the process. The Mayor said the city will continue to be fair and whoever wants to apply will go through the same process.

*Lois Brimm, Wilkes-Barre, PA phone in relative to a Citizens Advisory Board, different ways to take public comment at Council meetings and police reform.*

Mr. Barrett said Council hopes to be meeting back in City Hall by the next meeting.

*Mr. Barrett read the following letter into the record from Retired Captain of Detectives, Robert Mitchell:*

*Recently I learned that some members of Wilkes-Barre City Council are considering creating a Police Review Board. I don't see any need for any such board. The officers have been performing well. They are well trained in police procedures. Every year the officers must be recertified. They must go through In-Service Training in subjects such as the Use of Force, Crimes Code, Vehicle Code, First Aid, and CPR> They must qualify with their firearms, and classes on training to understand different cultures. Sensitivity training is also given. Test are given and the officers must pass the test to be recertified to be a police officer. I would be in favor of additional training in different subjects if necessary.*

*I am a retired police officer and went through the same training. I served the City of Wilkes-Barre for almost 34 years. I served as a Patrolman, Detective, and Captain of Detectives. I was also a member of the Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission for almost 16 years. I was Chairman of the In-Service Training Committee. The Commission sets up the training program, which the officers must follow. This includes Basic Training, In Service Training, and other types of training from time to time. The commission certified the officers, certifies the training schools, and certifies the instructors.*

*There are other agencies who can have oversight over the Wilkes-Barre Police Department if an officer is accused of a crime or other wrongdoing, such as the District Attorney's Office, and the Attorney General's Office. It should start however, with the Wilkes-Barre Police Department Internal Investigations can be made.*

*I see no relationship between what has been going on in Minnesota and here in Wilkes-Barre. Not one officer has kneeled on a suspect's neck and killed him. A Police Review Board would cause great harm to the moral of the Wilkes-Barre Police Department. If something is not broken, don't try to fix it.*

*Mark Shaffer, Wilkes-Barre, PA phoned in relative to the Citizens Advisory Board.*

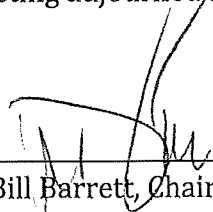
*Angel Mathis, Wilkes-Barre, PA phoned in relative to the Police Department and a Review Board*

Mr. Barrett said that he is extremely proud of the work the Wilkes-Barre Police Department does day in and day out. He said it is unfortunate the actions of a few have tarnished this profession across the country. No one in law enforcement is condoning what occurred. It was totally wrong, and it needs to be addressed. Mr. Barrett added that the police department responds to hundreds of thousands of incidents a year, where they make contact with individuals. Ninety-nine percent of those contacts go without any issues. He said defunding and dismantling the police department is the opposite of what needs to be done. We need to stand behind our department and make sure they are operating correctly, they are well trained, well equipped and well disciplined.

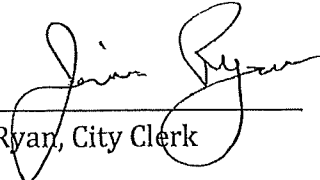
Mr. Barrett commended the Mayor, Police Administration and Police Union for meeting on the issue and coming to an agreement that we are going to start with a Citizens Advisory Group and go forward.

Mr. Brooks said that it is important for people to know that if you couldn't get through on the phone that Council members are available 24 hours a day. Council's phone numbers are in the city calendar and on the website, along with email addresses.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Barrett, Chairperson

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Ryan, City Clerk