

CITY COUNCIL
Sunbury PA 17801
January 28, 2008
6:15 pm

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Council of the City of Sunbury was called to order with the Honorable Jesse C. Woodring, Mayor, presiding. The meeting was held at city hall. There was a quorum with the following in attendance:

Jesse C. Woodring, Mayor
John K. Shipman, Director of Accounts and Finance
Kevin E. Troup, Director of Public Works
James R. Eister, Director of Parks/Recreation and Public Buildings

Other City officials in attendance:

Terry Specht, City Clerk

There were twenty (20) visitors present.

2008 CDBG PROJECT REVIEW/FINALIZATION

Mr. Bill Seigel and Ms. Glenda Ruch reviewed the recommendations made by SEDA-COG in regard to the 2008 CDBG Projects:

Sunbury Fire Dept.	\$ 20,265.	Recommended
Sunbury Fire Police	\$ 3,000.	Recommended
Sunbury Municipal Authority	\$100,000.	Not Recommended
Riverfront Project	\$135,000.	Recommended
Parking Lot Lighting	\$ 50,000.	Not Recommended
Parking Facilities	\$ 10,000.	Not Recommended
Stroh Alley Update	\$ 25,000.	Recommended at \$20,000.
Demo of Blighted Properties	\$51,750.	Recommended at \$20,000.
DLP Recreation Complex	\$112,410.	Recommended at \$85,823.
Neighborhood Mini-Parks	\$ 13,090.	Not Recommended
Real Estate Improvement Incentive Plan	\$ 25,750.	Not Recommended
Community Center	\$ 38,530.	Not Recommended
Street Improvements	\$104,410.	Not Recommended

The final projects and amounts assigned to them will be chosen at the next meeting on February 11, 2008. The actual amount to be received has been updated to \$346,438. of which, \$62,350. is earmarked for administration purposes (\$49,700. to SEDA-COG and \$12,650. to City).

SEDA-COG 2008 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

Mayor Woodring moved to enter into an Agreement with SEDA-COG to perform updates, maintenance, etc. to the City's website for 2008 in the amount of \$1,500. Councilman Shipman seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

LERTA

Mayor Woodring explained that he has discussed LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Law) with the Chamber of Commerce - it is a program that allows taxes to be exempt from certain buildings which would include improvements made to the structure (taxes would be prorated over a period of years). Mayor Woodring wanted to bring LERTA up to council to think about for a while and he will bring the subject to another meeting for discussion. This project could only be used if the school district and county agrees to it also.

SUBDIVISION/INSTALL SEPARATE WATER SERVICES

A letter was sent to Mayor and Council members from the Municipal Authority in regard to water and wastewater lateral lines as it relates to the subdivision of properties. They feel it is better for each property owner to have their own dedicated water and wastewater lines. To date, the City does not require separate lines when a subdivision is requested. The Municipal Authority has been mandated by DEP to install water meters on all properties by 2013. There are approximately 100 double homes with one water service line serving two separate property owners. It would decrease the cost of the metering project if property owners who wish to subdivide their properties were required to install separate water services. Mr. Stan Seiple stated that the lines could be sub-metered at the base of the house with a "t." Ms. Nancy Wallace said she had a problem with sewer lines and the Municipal Authority told her they could not separate her line without digging her yard and garage area out. Mr. Penn Seiple said if the line is sized properly to carry the waste it should not be a problem. Mayor Woodring will ask a representative from the Municipal Authority to attend a council meeting to discuss this topic further.

AUDIENCE COMMENT

Several members in the audience attended the meeting to discuss the \$100. Professional License Fee. Some of the comments are:

Ms. Anita Kiger asked what the intentions of council are? Were certain professionals singled out? Mayor Woodring answered that the professional license fee was for any professional licensed by the state. Ms. Kiger feels there are more than 2500 professionally licensed people at the hospital. Several of the calls Mayor Woodring received stated that most hair dressers work part-time and the Mayor felt that was a legitimate complaint. Mayor Woodring explained that professionals don't pay a mercantile tax like the merchants located in the City pay. Ms. Kiger said she already pays \$52.00 to work in the City. Restaurants and contractors already pay \$100. to the City. Council felt it was fair to ask licensed professionals to pay \$100. also.

Mr. Penn Seiple asked what the state annual license fee was for hair dressers? The answer was it ranges from \$35.00 every other year from the state. The fee to run a shop is \$72.00.

Mr. Tony Varano said they charge barbers \$62.00 every other year and \$72.00 every other year for the shop.

Ms. Peggy Lagerman explained that the cost for the state license fee depends on whether you have an operators, managers or a teacher's license with the state.

Ms. Donna Gotlob told council that she is licensed however her shop is in Shamokin – would she still have to pay the license fee? The answer is no, because she is not doing business in Sunbury.

Ms. Carolyn Marks asked what constitutes a professional – the answer is, for the purposes of this tax, anyone that is licensed by the state. Mayor Woodring explained that the problem is that the City has an austere budget, the City is trying to find new revenue sources which consist of taxes, fees and fines. Mayor Woodring said he doesn't think anyone in the room wants their services cut, which would include police services, street cleaning, street lights, etc.

Mr. Stan Seiple said he found a list of state licensed professionals in The Patriot News and gave a copy to Mayor Woodring.

Ms. Lisa Seiple said she runs her families' rental business and doesn't think it's fair that she doesn't pay a license fee and others do.

Ms. Peggy Lagerman stated that it is hard to support a family, balance a personal and business budget and provide food, heat, etc.

Councilman Shipman explained that this idea was explained as an additional source of income for the City and it would include doctors, attorneys, accountants, etc. – or anyone normally considered a “professional.” Then someone mentioned if you pass an ordinance that is not across the board and have no definition for professional, someone would surely file suit against the City. He feels the fee may be reduced but not eliminated because as it turns out, using the list of state licensed professionals, there may be many more than the 250 council first considered. Councilman Shipman mentioned that costs at the City, as well as for everyone at home, keep going up. Councilman Troup said he thinks council should revisit this issue before bills are mailed. Mr. Penn Seiple said why not tax the hair salons on a percentage basis. Councilman Shipman said the 3rd Class City Code does not allow that. Mayor Woodring said council will discuss the issue further. Ms. Lagerman said she does see positive changes in the City and she feels good about being a property owner in Sunbury.

Ms. Tammy Ross told council she feels the Sunbury police department is understaffed. She recently had some incidents at her husband's place of business and they had difficulty having someone from the police department come to that business and investigate a vandalism. Mayor Woodring asked how she knows the police dept. is understaffed. Ms. Ross answered that it was evident when no one showed up to investigate the vandalism – plus, the police chief is leaving. Mayor Woodring explained that there is only a certain amount of money in the City's budget to work with. For each police officer, for wages, health insurance and pension, that officer costs approximately \$100,000. per year. It actually goes beyond that because the police can retire after 20 years while they are still young, which increases their pension benefits. The cost per officer continues for a long time. 45% of all the revenue received by the City goes to the police department budget. Ms. Ross said that council discussed many items at the meeting including new poles for traffic lights and wondered why some of the money from the previous discussion could not be used to hire new officers. Councilman Shipman explained that the money discussed earlier has specific uses and that is for infrastructure improvement. It cannot be co-mingled with general fund money.

Mr. George Welker is a member of Crime Watch and he said a lot of the problems they see involves children. The children need something to occupy their time. He does not think adults give children enough attention. Councilman Shipman explained that the City spends more than \$100,000. on recreation each year and this council is dedicated to helping young people. Mr. Welker said he has discussed establishing a community center in a central location for young children with local clergy. He asked if there would be a problem if they acquired a building and put a community center in. Councilman Shipman said council would be happy to discuss this project with them.

Ms. Brenda Attinger asked whether grant money was used for the renovations to Runnerless Knits and the answer was no, the money was a state loan received through the PA Industrial Development Authority (PEDA). Ms. Attinger said she heard they were closing the Runnerless Knit plant in Sunbury. No one on council has heard that.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Specht
City Clerk