

CITY COUNCIL
Sunbury PA 17801
May 10, 2010
6:15 pm

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Council of the City of Sunbury was called to order with the Honorable David L. Persing, Mayor, presiding. There was a quorum with the following in attendance:

David L. Persing, Mayor
Todd E. Snyder, Director of Accounts and Finance
Joseph J. Bartello, III, Director of Public Safety
Kevin E. Troup, Director of Public Works
James R. Eister, Director of Parks/Recreation and Public Buildings

Other City officials in attendance:

Lisa Persing Martina City Controller
Michael Apfelbaum, City Solicitor
Stephen A. Mazzeo, Chief of Police
Michael Rhoads, Property Maintenance Officer
Joe Swope, Property Maintenance Officer
Stewart Graybill, City Administrator
Beth Kremer, City Treasurer
Dean Weirick, Fire Chief
John Bakowicz, City Engineer
Mike Bordner, Public Works Supervisor
Ken Kipple, 1st Asst Fire Chief
Russ Wertz, 3rd Asst. Fire Chief
Cheryl E. Delsite, Administrative Assistant

There were fourteen (19) visitors present.

MINUTE/REPORT APPROVAL

Councilman Eister made a motion to accept the minutes from February 2 and 22, 2010 and March 8 and 22, 2010 and the reports from City Administrator, Fire Dept., Police Dept., Controller, Treasurer, Engineer, Code Office Health Dept. (quarterly), Public Works, Parks and Public Buildings, Park and Recreation Board and Planning Commission. It was seconded by Council Kevin Troup. Motion passed.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mayor Persing read a proclamation concerning the National Police Week held May 9-15, 2010 (see attached).

CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Stewart Graybill informed the council his report was in their packet. Councilman Todd Snyder asked Mr. Graybill to expand on his idea to re-start the Redevelopment Authority. Mr. Graybill informed the council that there were open positions that would have to be reappointed and this group could become acquainted with what the Redevelopment Authority can do and then either find a project or have council give them a project to work on.

Mayor Persing would like to contact those on the authority to see if there is interest in serving but he feels without a project, they would lose interest. Mr. Graybill feels if they would learn the rules of a Redevelopment Authority and the method of financing the authority, they could come up with a worthwhile project.

Councilman Snyder asked if there was anything Mr. Graybill needs from the council. Mr. Graybill said not at this time. At this point he is working with the appropriate departments to get the rink area ready for the Eagles tournament as well as moving forward with the building renovations.

RIVER FRONT PROJECT

Councilman Eister informed council the project is about 10% completed. The intersection at Front and Market will become more congested at the Route 61 Corridor project will be starting on the 20th of this month which will include intersections being rebuilt, new traffic light and street light standards.

Phase 2 will begin with a pre-construction meeting later this month and construction will begin in June.

He noted there will be a lot of construction going on in the city with the Elm Street project consisting of new sidewalks, tree lines and curbing. The Municipal Authority has a project to separate the storm sewers in the hill section. The bridge by Zimmerman's on Market Street will be closed down for painting.

Mr. Snyder asked if any decision have to be made about adding the marina portion to the second phase since funding has been identified since it was excluded previously. Mr. Eister made a motion to restore the marina portion to the contract. Mr. Snyder seconded the motion. The motion carried.

CELOTEX/RAILROAD CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROPOSAL

Mr. Snyder informed the council that in two weeks he hopes to have SEDA COG present a proposal to assist with the redevelopment of the railroad corridor that includes the area between Celotex and Weis. Mr. Snyder feels this could be a good project for the Redevelopment Authority if they are reactivated.

Mayor Persing said this also deals with the gentleman who asked council to waive the bond for the Celotex property. In order to waive the bond, the ordinance has to be changed which takes three months according to the city's solicitor.

Councilman Bartello asked if this could be done in stages as he suggested. Mayor Persing didn't have a problem with that and asked Councilman Bartello to work with the gentleman on the issue.

PART TIME PAYABLES CLERK

Councilman Todd Snyder noted due to Cheryl Delsite's increased work load from the River Front Project, he would like to hire a temporary accounts payable clerk until the end of the year that would work four hours a day five days a week. The pay rate would be \$10 to \$12 per hour depending on experience.

Mayor Persing asked where the funding will be coming from for this position. Mr. Snyder responded it would be coming from the office equipment overages and the savings from making sure the payments are going out on a timely basis. Mr. Eister asked how many hours this person would work. Mr. Snyder said the hours may vary but the maximum hours would be 20 per week.

Mayor Persing explained the only reason this position is being considered is because of the complexity of the River Front Project and the need to keep the bills up to date.

Mr. Snyder made a motion to advertise and hire for this position between now and the second week in June. Councilman Bartello seconded the motion. Motion carried.

WAGE INCREASE APPROVALS

Councilman Snyder explained that standard practice is to bring all wage increases before the council. This one is for Harold Fazzini who will see an increase in hours as well. Mayor Persing questioned Mr. Eister to see if there was money in his budget for this. Mr. Eister said there was. Mr. Snyder made a motion to increase his hourly rate from \$8.24 to \$10 per hour. Mr. Eister seconded the motion and the motion carried.

RIVER FRONT BILL APPROVALS

Councilman Snyder made a motion requesting approval to pay the legal firm Mette Evans Woods that worked on the River Front Project's loans from Northumberland National Bank from the line of credit. The amount of the bill is \$12,734.84. Mr. Eister seconded the motion and the motion carried. Mayor Persing questioned if there are certain things that should be paid immediately rather than waiting until the next meeting. There was discussion about how this will be handled.

MAY EXPENDITURES

Mr. Snyder made a motion to approve the expenditures for May of \$140,547.37. The motion was seconded by Mr. Eister. The motion carried.

TAX EXONERATION

Mr. Snyder made a motion to accept the tax exoneration as presented. Mr. Eister seconded the motion and the motion carried.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Russ Wertz, Wolverton Street, remarked on The Daily Item article dated May 2, 2010 concerning the part time code officers of which he was one. The article stated that Councilman Joe Bartello discovered they were not doing their job and he fired them. Councilman Bartello countered that he was misquoted. Councilman Bartello remarked that the part timers were not doing inspections on their own. Mr. Wertz informed him they were not permitted to do inspections on their own which Councilman Bartello admitted. Mr. Wertz asked for retraction and an apology in the paper from Mr. Bartello to himself and the other part time officer. He also requested an apology for Property Maintenance Officer Mike Rhoads. Mr. Wertz stated it was Mike Rhoads who informed them of the lay offs and not Councilman Bartello.

Councilman Kevin Troup also questioned Councilman Bartello on his statement that city council would not hire an additional code officer because the code office was behind on their inspections by a thousand and the code office didn't want to catch up. Councilman Troup questioned Property Maintenance Officers Joe Swope and Mike Rhoads on how many inspections they were behind. PMO Rhoads responded the Code Office on June 16, 2009, they were 1,835 inspections behind but as of this date they are only 245 behind. This number includes 91 that have to be scheduled for 2007. There are 615 re inspections that are in processes. A reinspection is performed when the PMOs have to return to a property to ensure any findings have been corrected. Many of the re inspections are for exterior issues which may be affected by the weather. Interior re inspections are done on a timely basis. Mr. Swope said the Code Office will be caught up on their regular inspections by September. The re inspections may never be caught up because they must be given 90 days to correct the issues.

PMO Rhoads informed the council when he was hired by the previous administration, it was stressed the code office was behind on inspections. However upon further investigation by Mr. Rhoads and Mr. Swope, it was discovered there wasn't any new properties being inspected. Mr. Rhoads, Mr. Swope, Mr. Wertz and Mr. Fenstermacher went through every file in the office and created a complete list of every rental property in the city.

Bob Snyder noted the newspaper made it seem like it was a health and safety issue which it is not. He noted when it is a serious health and or safety issue, the Code Office has done the right thing and closed the property down. He added while peeling paint needs to be addressed it is not a life and death situation. He feels the newspaper article implied the Code Office is not doing their job which he stated is not correct.

Councilman Troup questioned Councilman Bartello about the qualifications of the person Mr. Bartello wanted to hire. Mr. Bartello informed Mr. Troup that he was a zoning and permit officer and had a background in construction that he was looking for. Mr. Troup stated the female that applied for the position was certified to do HUD inspection.

Mr. Troup also pointed out the article stated other city officials had family members working for the city like Mayor Persing. Mr. Troup informed Mr. Bartello that Lisa Persing is an elected official.

Mr. Troup thanked Mr. Bartello for clearing up his comments. Mr. Troup felt Mr. Bartello was trying to hammer the gentlemen that work in the Code Office who he feels do an excellent job. He had also heard that Mr. Bartello had made these comments to get back at the council for not hiring Mr. Bartello's relative. Mr. Bartello stated the paper was sent to him, he did not approach the paper about doing an article.

Councilman Eister stated a board member from the Sunbury Municipal Authority questioned him concerning this article. They were concerned there was some misconduct by these gentlemen who are also employed by the SMA. He is requesting a letter be sent to the SMA board to clear the matter up. Mayor Persing said Councilman Bartello knows what the issues are and he can decide how to correct them.

Ken Kipple, 8th and Line Street, stated he feels the paper is being treated unfairly. He believes the reporter does write accurate pieces and if Mr. Bartello stuck his foot in his mouth he should admit it. He noted that after the council voted not to hire the part time PMO, he still showed up for work for the next two days. Mr. Bartello countered that is not what happened. The gentleman did show up for work until Mr. Bartello heard from the City Solicitor.

Scott Johnson noted he had attended a previous council meeting concerning sidewalk permits. He stated at that meeting he was told what is fair for one person is fair for all. He noted over the past several weeks he has had to deal with sidewalk permit issues. He informed the council that he has had the Code Office at his place of business because they has been receiving complaints from the Treasurer's office about his tables on the sidewalk within 30 minutes of the tables being placed on the street.. He has also had the police show up because of these calls. He noted there are other businesses on Market Street that have not had sidewalk permits as well but they are not being reported.

Mr. Eister said this was discussed at the last council meeting and asked why it was being brought up again. Mr. Johnson said the Runner's Roost has not had a permit in a year but has had items for sale on the sidewalk. The flower shop at 318 Market St has not had a permit since 2008 but is not being reported. He noted the treasurer went to these businesses and asked them to get a permit, she did not send the Code Office down like she does to him.

City Treasurer Beth Kremer responded that Mr. Johnson knew last year that he needed a permit and she sent the Code Office over to tell him he needed a permit. Mr. Johnson did not respond to the request right away. She noted he does this monthly. She also observed that Mr. Johnson has been in her office complaining about parking tickets and parking permits since he has arrived in town. She also remarked she does tell the other businesses that they need permits but she is not to enforce it and that are why she sends the Code Office. She informed Mr. Johnson that no one is picking on him but he just pushes the buttons all the time.

Mr. Johnson countered there have been businesses that have not bought sidewalk permits in years and he may go a couple of days but they are not receiving visits from the Code Office.

City Administrator Stewart Graybill suggested sending all the businesses a courtesy letter informing them a sidewalk permit is needed if they are planning on selling anything from the sidewalk.

Ms. Kremer suggested changing the ordinance to make them pay one time for the whole season. Currently it is \$10 a month.

Mr. Eister would like to rescind the fee for putting the tables out. He said the city does make a whole lot of money on the permit and it is hassle. There was discussion on why the permit was put in place. Mike Apfelbaum reminded council the permit was put in place to ensure the tables would be placed in a safe location and not blocking the street.

Mayor Persing asked Councilman Snyder and Treasurer Kremer to gather the information on how much is actually made and the cost to enforce the ordinance.

Chief Steve Mazzeo, on behalf of the police department, thanked the council for the Police Week Proclamation.

Kerry Carter, Millersburg, will be holding an open meeting on June 5th at the library about starting a branch of the Guardian Angels.

Mayor Persing asked if his business is open yet. He is still working on getting some things straighten out. Until then, Mr. Carter is working from home.

If he can not get the Guarding Angels to come to Sunbury, he would like to start a non profit like the Guardian Angels.

Mayor Persing stated he doesn't support a group that would work in competition with the city's already successful Crime Watch Program. Mr. Carter told the mayor he would be meeting with him this week to explain his plan.

Pam Hollenbach, 12th Street, rents a home from a great landlord but she said there are properties on her street whose owners are not taking care of their properties. She noted she and the other neighbors have called the Code Office several times but nothing has been done. She thought that after three calls the property becomes a nuisance property and something would be done.

Mayor Persing referred her question to Mr. Bartello. Mr. Bartello said the Code Office does cite the property owners but District Magistrate Bolton throws the citation out.

PMO Rhoads agreed with the things Ms. Hollenbach said and that he did talk with the property owner about his property. However the person knows the system and knows how much has to be done to keep the Code Office out.

Mayor Persing asked the Code Office to give an update at the next meeting on what has been done to date and what they will be doing next. Mr. Eister suggested pulling the permit and condemning the house.

Ms. Hollenbach also questioned how many dogs may be in a house at one time. She was informed a household may have three dogs. But puppies are not considered dogs until they are 6 months old.

CITY YOUTH VOLUNTEER CORP

Mr. Snyder made a motion asking the council's permission to approach the school district and the YMCA about coordinating a Youth Volunteer Corp. The motion was seconded by Mr. Eister and the motion passed.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Mayor Persing announced the Army Corps of Engineers have issued a positive evaluation report on the Sunbury levee system which is valid until April 30, 2020. This report means the Sunbury Flood Risk Management Project has meet all of the requirements established by the Army Corps for determining that the levee system can reasonably be expected to protect the city against a flood event with at least a 1% annual change of exceedence, also referred to as FEMA base flood.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Delsite
Administrative Assistant