

CITY COUNCIL
Sunbury PA 17801
June 13, 2016
6:15 pm

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

David L. Persing, Mayor
Elizabeth R. Kremer, Director of Accounts & Finance
Richard L. Reichner, Director of Public Safety
Dale L. Henry, Director of Public Works
James R. Eister, Director of Parks, Recreation and Public Buildings

Other City officials in attendance:

Brianna Apfelbaum Kula, City Solicitor
John Bakowicz, City Engineer
Ken Long, Asst. Public Works Supervisor
Michael Rhoads, Zoning Officer
Russ Wertz, Fire Chief
Terry Specht, City Clerk

There were thirty (30) visitors present.

A moment of silent reflection was held prior to the beginning of the meeting

MINUTES AND REPORTS

The Minutes of 4/11/16, 4/25/16, 5/9/16 and 5/23/16 and available departmental reports of the Police Dept., Treasurer's Office, Controller, Health Dept. (quarterly), Fire Dept., City Engineer, Code Office, Park and Recreation Department, Park and Recreation Board, Public Works Dept., Planning Commission, Redevelopment Authority and Police Pension Board (quarterly) are in the City Clerk's office for review. Motion to accept was made by Councilwoman Henry. Second – Kremer. Unanimous vote. Minutes will be posted at cityofsunbury.com.

PUBLIC COMMENT/AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Persing asked for public comment regarding agenda items and there were none.

The city council meeting was in recess and the CDBG Public Hearing began.

CDBG PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Bill Siegel explained this is the 1st public hearing for the CDBG program for 2016. This is a program that originates at the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It is a federal program and the city is an annual entitlement community. The allocation for 2016 is \$272,958. A portion is set aside to administer the program and there will be approximately \$225,000 to allocate to projects. The application is due September 23rd and final public hearing will be held August 1st. Projects will be identified through this meeting and then they will work to develop the projects as submitted. Council will announce their decision on projects to fund on August 1st. There are eligibility thresholds that need to be met which are: Eligible Activities (economic development, community development, public services, environmental infrastructure, street projects, bridges, water sewer); National Objectives and Funding Requirements.

Every activity must meet one of three federal criteria: 1. Benefit low-to-moderate income residents. 2. Eliminate a slum or blighting influence on the community. 3. Respond to urgent need issues.

Ms. Regina Russell, Community Activist, asked if the recipient information is public and Mr. Siegel said yes it is and the awards will be made at a public meeting, it will be posted in the newspaper and also through the city or SEDA-COG. She did a Right-to-Know and was denied the information but she does not know why. Mr. Siegel said he would give her his card and they can discuss it further.

An unidentified gentleman said a building could not be built but funding for economic development could be requested.

The regulatory requirements for the CDBG program are the Fair Housing Notice which is published annually to alert the public to their commitment to fair housing and to make the public aware of where complaints can be filed. The city does an annual outreach and this year they are working on zoning ordinances that have an impact on fair housing. The Antidisplacement Plan has been adopted which states the city will not use the CDBG funds to purchase property and displace individuals in the city. Many years ago the funding was used to buy-out lower income neighborhoods and that forced people to move to other communities. The Section 504 Outreach is an annual review and analysis required by the federal government that identifies accessibility needs in the programs or the facilities owned by the city. There were no concerns presented. Section 3 Preference provides enhanced opportunities to participate in the federally-funded projects. There were no further questions or discussion on any of these items.

Mr. Siegel asked for public comment on projects that have been funded with CDBG funds in the past which include the Chestnut St. project, clearance and demolition work in coordination with the Redevelopment Authority, Cameron Park and Stroh Alley improvements and participation in the River Front Project. Mr. Joe Bartello asked how the Chestnut St. project falls under the 3 categories. Mr. Siegel said Chestnut St. serves as a main corridor through the city and therefore benefits all residents of the city, and the city has a 60.8% low to moderate income and the project meets the criteria. Mr. Bartello asked what it actually does to benefit low to moderate income people and Mr. Siegel answered it provides accessibility to the city and for businesses as an improvement of an existing street. Ms. Russell asked about the bad sidewalks in the city that she feels is a safety hazard. Mr. Siegel said if the sidewalks downtown were in question, CDBG funds could be used because that would benefit the entire city. As far as sidewalks at private homes, traditionally the sidewalk is the responsibility of individual homeowners and the code department can enforce maintenance of sidewalks. In order to fund a sidewalk program you have to have a requirement that any sidewalk that doesn't meet the code is replaced and homeowners that meet the low to moderate income guidelines could apply for funding assistance. Mr. Siegel will write that up as a potential project. Ms. Russell's house is near a school and has previously discussed a grant to fix them. Ms. Carmen Campbell said Chestnut St. sidewalks are not very good either. Getting back to CDBG projects, Mr. Siegel said the projects proposed for 2016 funding that are eligible include additional funds for Phase 2 Chestnut St., assistance to Redevelopment Authority for clearance and demolition, emergency radio equipment and a new hose washer for the fire department. A project that is ineligible is repair and upgrade to parking meters because it is viewed as maintenance. Mr. Siegel asked if anyone had any other projects to propose. Ms. Julie Brosicous asked if the fire department requests were from an individual company or the fire department as a whole and the answer is it is a fire department request. She also asked who determines whether a house is demoed or not. The answer is the code department and the Redevelopment Authority, not a third party. Ms. Kula said lately the properties have not needed to be demolished and have been sold at auction and brought to code. If it does have to be demolished, a full environmental review is done before any grant funding is used.

Mr. Siegel continued with asking if there are any historical or environmental impacts with projects currently under consideration. There were no comments.

The public hearing concluded and the city council meeting commenced again.

SRI UPDATE

Mr. Robert Roush reported the council for the Albright building will be starting a campaign for fundraising pertaining to private funds. The cost for the Albright project is between \$3 and \$6 million. Wake the Lake was held and they used the dock to launch water rides which were very popular. SRI participated in the Loving and Caring Street Fair and also held sidewalk sales and city-wide yard sales. Movies on the River is a new event that will take place on the 4th Tuesday of the month at riverfront. There are 600 followers on Facebook for that activity. The River Festival planning continues.

HIRE 2 PART-TIME SEASONAL EMPLOYEES/DPW

Councilman Henry moved to hire 2 part-time seasonal employees for 35 hours a week each at \$8.50/hour. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

APPROVAL TO PAY INVOICES

Councilwoman Kremer moved to pay the invoices reported on the voucher's payable report in the amount of \$47,846.26 from the General Fund and \$1,950.27 from Liquid Fuels. Second - Henry. Unanimous vote.

TAX EXONERATION

Councilwoman Kremer moved to accept the tax exoneration as requested by Statewide Tax Collection. Second – Reichner. Unanimous vote.

AUDIENCE COMMENT

Ms. Becky Enders: Who owns the parcel of land going out Wolverton St. on the right between the walkway and the railroad track? The weeds are extremely high. Councilman Eister said they will take care of that this week. She also asked if a tree hanging over a sidewalk is legal. Councilman Reichner said if she gives him the address he will check on it. She said it is on Market St. between 11th and 12th St on private property.

Ms. Regina Russell, Community Activist: Who is responsible for the community garden? There is a group from the school that plants it. Ms. Kula said it is freshly mowed and it looks like someone is working on it. The property at Church & 3rd St. have weeds all around it. Councilman Henry said that is the city's property. Ms. Russell also said someone stopped her and said she walked to the playground on S. 2nd St. and the weeds were high, 2 swings were broken and the sliding board had a missing panel. Councilman Henry said the weeds were taken care of last week. Councilman Eister said the new equipment is coming and should be here soon. Ms. Russell said there is an abandoned property at S. Awl and Church St. Councilman Reichner said the owner does have a permit to work there. The code office has been there and there is progress being made. He will have the code office check the weeds. Ms. Russell said a few years ago she asked for an ordinance addressing abandoned or vacant properties after a certain amount of time. The city would then give a higher tax to the owners. Mayor Persing said the Redevelopment Authority has a list of properties that they address every meeting. As long as a property is maintained it cannot be taken. Ms. Kula said abandoned residential properties are harder to take care of because the owners are long gone and are not paying taxes, etc. or maintaining the properties. Until the RDA can put it through the process it is up to the city to take care of the weeds and grass. Councilwoman Kremer said you cannot selectively raise taxes on certain parcels. Ms. Russell said they have done it in DC, Baltimore and in Virginia. Councilwoman Kremer said in the 3rd Class City they are limited as to what they can do about taxes. Ms. Russell said they are limited because they accept being limited. Mr. Siegel said the city has extensively researched the regulations that exist in PA and are implementing most of the opportunities available to them. He is familiar with some of the tools Ms. Russell mentioned in other states and they are not tools available to the city of Sunbury. Ms. Russell also said in reviewing city ordinances, she is not able to find where vehicles are permitted to block designated public sidewalks and the 5' ruling that is quoted by council. Councilman Reichner said he gave her a copy of that ordinance 1 ½ years ago. She said she did not receive it and he said he would get her another copy. He reminded her that the code office and the police were both there and what the tenant is doing at the property is not illegal. Ms. Russell said she has withheld information about the person council wants to make chief of police, his name is Officer Bennick. When she started complaining about Councilman Eister's property and tenant at 406 Walnut St. that keeps violating codes that no one was enforcing beginning in 2012. Officer Bennick came to her door and warned her that she was not to step on private property and that she would be arrested. To this day the officer was not dispatched to that property, there is no record. She is also in possession of a letter filed as a complaint to the city about Officer Bennick making a traffic stop in 2015 with a young Caucasian female driving with 2 Afro-American men. He made them get out of the vehicle and crawl on their bellies toward him because he said they looked like suspects the officers were looking for. She has that in writing. She would not like to see Officer Bennick become chief of police. Councilman Henry asked her how she received the information from the 911 Center that Officer Bennick was not dispatched. She said that is her business.

Mr. Dino Pangolius: Asked a question about SRI and Kristen McLaughlin in regard to his property at 370 Market St. Councilman Reichner explained to Mr. Roush that the property being discussed was in negotiations to become the Community College. Mr. Pangolius would like to get with SRI to discuss the property and possible uses.

Ms. Julie Broschius: What is happening at 4th & Line Sts? Councilman Reichner said he is not sure what is going in but someone did get a permit to tear the tanning bed building down.

Mr. Gordon Lamb: Is there any truth that Councilman Eister wants to start charging to use the ball parks for tournaments. Councilman Eister said he is looking at the numbers now.

DISCUSSION

Councilwoman Kremer explained that Mr. Troup is going to move \$30,000 of the debt tax from the general fund to the debt service account to be used to pay debt for the tax anticipation note.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Music in the Park – June 14 at 6:30 pm Billy D & Rosie

A memorial will be held in Cameron Park at 5:30 on June 14th honoring the victims of the Orlando shooting sponsored by the Interdenominational Council.

On August 21st there will be a reenactment of the Bloody Springs Massacre

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Specht
City Clerk