

CITY COUNCIL
Sunbury PA 17801
June 8, 2009
7:00 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. There was a quorum with the following in attendance:

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

Other City officials in attendance:

Elizabeth Kremer, City Treasurer
John Bakowicz, City Engineer
Stephen Mazzeo, Chief of Police
Michael Rhoads, Property Maintenance Officer
Michael Bordner, Public Works Supervisor
Michael Apfelbaum, City Solicitor
Brianna Apfelbaum, Apfelbaum Law Offices

There were forty-three (43) visitors present.

An executive session was held prior to this meeting to discuss personnel and legal issues

MINUTES AND REPORTS

Minutes of 3/23/09 and 4/13/09 and Reports of the Police Dept., Treasurer's Office, Fire Dept., City Engineer, Code Office, Park & Recreation, Public Works Dept, and Planning Commission were accepted on a motion by Mayor Woodring. Eister – second. Unanimous vote.

INTRODUCTION OF INTERNS

Mayor Woodring introduced Mr. Bob Lagerman: Mr. Lagerman from the Hill Neighborhood Council proudly introduced Mr. Kevin Selig from Buffalo NY who attends the University of Buffalo and Mr. Jack Cebe from Greenville NC who attends Clemson University and is studying landscape architecture. They are on loan to the City through a program with Keeping PA Beautiful which is affiliated with the PDC and DCED. They will be creating some landscape demonstration projects in the Hill Neighborhood to educate and show improvements that can be made to yards. They are looking for volunteers! Mayor Woodring introduced Mr. Alex Meng from East Buffalo Township who will be interning in the mayor's office. Alex attends Susquehanna University and is majoring in economics. Alex will be, among other things, working on the City's website.

CDBG-R/APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION AND AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN DOCUMENTS

Ms. Jamie Shrawder announced that the City is eligible for an additional \$93,960 in stimulus money from the CDBG-R program. Councilman Shipman asked if the money could be used to hire another policeman or for the general budget. Ms. Shrawder said this is a grant for specific purposes and cannot be used for general governmental activities. Councilman Eister moved to pass the Resolution (see attached) and authorize the Mayor to sign all documents. Second – Troup. Unanimous vote.

CDBG PROJECT UPDATES

Ms. Jamie Shrawder will be attending the July SPARC meeting to discuss the fund usage for the "Welcome to Sunbury" sign. The environmental review will be started as soon as possible and when that is complete the project can be started.

Ms. Shrawder has been in touch with Ms. Beverly Hutzel at DCED regarding the close-out of some of the CDBG projects. Ms. Hutzel will get back to Ms. Shrawder as soon as she can. They are busy with the additional stimulus applications.

Mr. Apfelbaum sent a letter to the Ethics Commission regarding Stroh Alley and the Edison Plaza Projects and the use of CDBG funds for these projects because 3 members of city council are part owners of the building adjacent to the project. An answer is expected in about 2 weeks. Ms. Shrawder asked for a copy for their file.

Mr. Apfelbaum stated that his office is working with SEDA-COG regarding one of the blight properties – a deed should be turned over to the City in the near future so the structure can be demolished. The Environmental Review for this project is underway.

Ms. Shrawder also explained that there is approximately \$10,000 in 2005 money for the Edison Plaza which will expire in 1 year. Ms. Shrawder asked if council wanted to move forward with the Edison Plaza parking machine and lighting improvements without doing the camera portion of the project so the money is expended before it expires. Everyone wants to wait until an answer is received from the Ethics Commission before making any decisions about Edison Plaza or Stroh Alley projects.

FISHER SUB-DIVISION

Mr. Mike Rhoads explained that the owners are applying for a sub-division at 426-428 Walnut St. They have been approved by the Zoning Hearing Board, the Planning Commission and Mr. Bakowicz, City Engineer. There is an easement for the sewer lines in the rear. The property owners have been informed that the water lines must be separated by December 31, 2009. Councilman Walberg moved to approve the Sub-division at 426-428 Walnut St. Second - Eister. Unanimous vote.

RENTAL INSPECTION NOTIFICATION

Councilman Walberg stated that the code officers will be sending letters to property owners scheduling rental inspections in an effort to get caught up on inspections. After all the inspections are complete, all rental properties will be on a schedule for inspections every three years. They are doing this by wards so if a landlord receives a lot of letters at different times, that is the reason.

HARB APPROVAL

Councilman Walberg moved to approve HARB's request to allow a garage to be built at 21 N. Second St. Second – Troup. Unanimous vote.

PROPOSED FIBER OPTIC PROJECT

The code officers and public works supervisor attended a meeting to discuss a project to run 2" underground conduit for a fiber optic project going from Ohio to New Jersey. Councilman Troup would like to discuss this project with the Municipal Authority before a decision is made.

STREET CLEANER LEASE

Councilman Troup moved to enter into a lease agreement with Bradco Supply to lease a street cleaner to be paid from Liquid Fuel funds. The lease will be for 5 years with a \$1.00 buy-out. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

NEW HIRES

Councilman Troup moved to hire 2 students to work with the public works crew for the summer. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

Councilman Eister moved to hire lifeguards, PHEAA playground counselors and 1 office staff, concession stand and 2 maintenance workers for the summer. Second – Woodring. Unanimous vote.

Mayor Woodring moved to hire an intern for the City Clerk's office for the summer. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

JUNE EXPENDITURES

Councilman Shipman moved to approve the expenditures for June in the amount of \$54,487.84. Second – Walberg. Unanimous vote.

TAX EXONERATION

Councilman Shipman moved to exonerate the 4 people listed from paying their taxes per the request of Statewide Tax Recovery. Second – Walberg. Unanimous vote.

AUDIENCE COMMENT

Mayor Woodring announced that anyone making public comment would be limited to 3 minutes, if time allows, another round of comments would be allowed.

Mr. John Deppen/Northumberland – on behalf of American Legion Post 201 a petition was presented to city council members to keep the war memorials and the World War I canon be kept in their current locations.

Ms. Virginia Mendler – presented council members with a petition to rescind the addition to Ordinance 956 Professional License Fee that states all professionals with a license from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania pay \$100 professional license fee due to it being inequitable as it includes all professionals, some of whom make a lot more money than nurses. Ms. Mendler asked what “an office in Sunbury” means. Councilman Shipman answered it means if you work in Sunbury. Ms. Mendler stated that the Sunbury Community Hospital received an invoice to bill all employees however; she was told some of the nursing homes or at other businesses did not receive a bill to pay. That situation will be looked into. Councilman Shipman explained that he is thinking about proposing a step rate plan i.e. from \$5,000 to \$12,000 – pay \$50, anyone making over \$12,000 would pay \$100. An exemption is being looked at for under \$5,000. No decisions have been made at this time.

Ms. Virginia Houtz/Sunbury – taxes are already being paid on their profession to pay another tax. She feels it is another fee on top of taxes they already pay. Ms. Houtz does not feel the billing was done properly and fairly. Councilman Shipman said if there were oversights on the billing, it would be corrected. He also mentioned that the occupation taxes paid by profession are paid to the municipality where the employee lives, not to the City of Sunbury. Ms. Houtz feels a lot of professionals will leave Sunbury because of this tax. Ms. Kremer explained that some of the employers did not submit a list to the treasurer’s office when asked. Ms. Houtz stated that a lot of other people hold licenses that are not listed in the ordinance.

Ms. Barbara Hoffman/Sunbury – as a nurse she pays the same occupational tax as a doctor or lawyer. She thinks the 50% payment as discussed earlier should have a lower cut-off. Ms. Hoffman asked if those that haven’t paid should wait to pay. It was due June 12th and the letters were received on May 9th. Councilman Shipman moved to place a 90 day moratorium for council to come up with an equitable way to enforce this tax. Ms. Kremer stated that nurses do not pay the same percentile of occupation taxes as doctors and lawyers. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

Mr. William Stamm Jr./New Berlin – asked council members if they pay an extra \$100 to do their jobs. Councilman Eister said when he was in business, he paid more than that.

Mr. Garry Leister/Sunbury – has no objection to moving the flagpole. Of the 5 issues discussed with Mr. Jones and Mayor Woodring, Mr. Leister wanted to know if there would be a walkway between the Cameron Monument and the area where the monuments would be relocated. The photo in The Daily Item does not show a sidewalk. Mayor Woodring assured Mr. Leister there is a walkway in the new plans. Mr. Leister feels there is not enough room to move the memorials and the canon and have a sidewalk. Mayor Woodring explained that professional engineers designed the plans and they know whether all the elements will fit in the proposed area. Mayor Woodring also stated that council is trying to enhance the location to create a highly visible area for all the monuments. He feels this subject has been made a case of the Veterans vs. the City and he does not think that’s fair. Being a veteran, he has as much respect for the monuments as everyone else has. The park is not a veteran’s park, it is a community park. There are many people that want this project to move ahead. Nothing that is being done in the park dishonors veterans. There is no real reason why the monuments and canon can’t be moved.

Mr. Fred Campbell/Sunbury – is a veteran (20 years in the US Navy) and reiterated that they are simply moving the memorials and canon and that is not disgracing veterans in any way.

Mr. Robert Miller/Sunbury – (a veteran) agrees with Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Chuck Skipper/Sunbury – asked when the memorial or canon was placed, was there anything stating it could never be moved. He doesn’t understand why moving these items is such a big deal. They are not being removed from the park. He has lived here 6 years and has never lived anywhere where people don’t want change but there are always complaints that nothing is done. Mr. Leister answered that he has minutes from 1925 that mention putting the monuments at the west end of the park.

Mr. John Long/Sunbury – told mayor and council members that they are doing a good job. He wishes they had the support of the citizens. He also feels that every time something good is planned for Sunbury a group steps forward to try to stop it. He thinks the plan for the park looks great and can’t wait for it to start. Councilman Walberg stated that the park was designed by William Maclay who marched during the Revolutionary War during the 1st decisive battle in Trenton with Gen. Washington. The park has a lot of military history.

Mr. Van Shipe/Shamokin Dam – lived in Sunbury for 55 years. The American Legion veterans organize Memorial Day and Veteran’s Day programs. The park has sentimental value to them. He said

council does not care about the veterans. Mayor Woodring told him that is untrue, this council does care about them as well as all the citizens and business in Sunbury.

Mr. Vince Wolheiter/Sunbury – said no one knew about the monument being moved. The WWI monument is very old and he is extremely worried about it being moved and damaged.

Mr. Rick Enterline/Sunbury – was part of the canon restoration committee. He asked if it is standard procedure to only have one plan drawn up for a project like the park and is there an alternate plan that could be utilized that does not move the monuments and canon. Mayor Woodring said bids were let for the project and there was a selection process. This project has been going on for almost 2 years. There were news articles and public meetings. In those meetings and the drawings that came from them, the canon was removed.

Mr. Bill Seigel stated that the Cameron Park renovation project has been discussed for over 2 years. There were 5 public meetings and a number of efforts by the PSU students to get the local citizenry to meetings. Very few people attended any of the meetings. The CDBG money earmarked for this project came from 3 years funds. Each year required at least 2 public meetings before funds could be assigned to the project. It is not council's fault that people chose not to participate, it was their own choice. It is council's responsibility to assess the input of the community, pro and con, and this council has worked diligently to engage the community in the effort to rewrite the culture of the City of Sunbury. It is ironic that the audience being critical of the culture and financial situation is what it is, and they attack the council members for their efforts to lift the community.

Mr. James Smith/Sunbury – doesn't think anyone would move a business into Sunbury because the park looks nice. He also commented on the professional license fee discussed earlier, and feels the taxes will bring business in more than a beautiful park. Mayor Woodring asked what Mr. Smith was doing to help new business. Mr. Smith said he was doing nothing and doesn't know what he could do.

Mr. David Whipple/Sunbury – applauded council for doing their job as others have also done for the City for 237 years. Mr. Whipple stated that if things don't continue to move forward it will never grow. It is time for all citizens to pull together to make Sunbury a better place.

Mr. Dale Henry/Sunbury – asked what owners of storage rental sheds pay in taxes each year. The answer is \$100 per year plus property tax. He thinks it is not fair for an owner of a storage rental business to pay \$100 when someone like the bowling alley has to pay \$100 each for all games, pool tables, etc. Councilman Walberg explained that no matter who you tax, someone will not like it, unless it is an across the board tax like sales tax. No one likes to pay taxes but that is what is used to keep municipal government going. City of Sunbury is at bare bones with employees and other than discontinuing services, cuts are impossible to make.

The being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Specht
City Clerk