

CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Sunbury, PA
September 24, 2012
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
James R. Eister, Director of Parks, Recreation and Public Buildings

Other City officials in attendance:

Elizabeth Kremer, City Treasurer
Stephen A. Mazzeo, Chief of Police
Michael Rhoads, Property Maintenance Officer and Fire Chief
Joseph Swope, Code Administration Supervisor
Michael Bordner, Public Works Supervisor
Terry Specht, City Clerk

There were twenty-eight (28) members of the public present.

202 WASHINGTON AVE.

Councilman Eister announced that the equipment has been moved in and demolition should begin on Tuesday and should be completed by Thursday.

RE-BUDGET CDBG FUNDS

Ms. Jamie Shrawder announced there is \$1,556.98 left in the Welcome Sign project and she is suggesting it be re-budgeted to the Riverfront Project since invoices are still payable from that project. Mayor Persing moved to make the budget revision as described above. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote. Motion carried.

Ms. Shrawder explained that the county formed a blight task force under the guidance of Mr. Ed Christiano. The blight task force has decided that the main focus should be strategies for remediation, prevention and elimination of blight. The municipalities have been encouraged to enact the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), improve communications with the district magistrate's offices, which Sunbury has already started and enacting ticketing for code violations. Act 90 has several provisions that allow the municipality to go after the landlord if there are violations on one property but liens can be placed on all their properties, including personal property. The CDBG entitlement municipalities have been asked to set aside a portion of their CDBG funds so the county can apply for matching funds to be used to match the state grant. That would at least double the amount of funding that can be used for blight. The municipality would get all their entitlement funds as well as more funding if the county is successful in receiving the grants. The Redevelopment Authority (RDA) would like to commit \$20,000 to the effort. A commitment letter must be signed to approve the \$20,000 commitment. Also, Sunbury must implement Act 90 and designate a blight area. The City's designated area will be Market St. south and the county task force committee members were ok with that. Councilman Bartello asked what the definition the county has for blight and Ms. Shrawder answered it is from the Urban Revitalization Act. There are 8 items on the list that qualify for a blighted property to include declared a public nuisance, dangerous to children, unfit for human habitation, fire hazard or dangerous to the safety of people or property, utilities have been disconnected, accumulation of trash or debris and a haven for rodents, tax delinquent for a period of 2 or more years, vacant and has not been rehabilitated within 1 year of a code citation. Councilman Bartello asked if the RDA has \$20,000 to commit. Ms. Shrawder said yes, each year they receive 30% of the CDBG allotment. Councilman Eister asked if they will be leveraging dollar for dollar and Ms. Shrawder answered it could be more, depending on the amount of grants the county receives. Councilman Eister asked how many blight properties are on the south of Market St. and Ms. Shrawder answered about 9. Councilman Eister said they should be sure they are leveraging enough funding to take care of all 9 properties. The RDA was afraid to leverage more than \$20,000 because there

are properties in other parts of the City that are blight as well. Councilman Eister asked Mr. Christiano if the amount pledged could be increased and Mr. Christiano said yes, increasing the amount would leverage more funding. He also said the state is big on impact and that is the reason there has to be a designated area for blight remediation. Councilman Bartello asked if the City would lose money if the grants do not come through and Mr. Christiano answered no, there is no money actually exchanging hands – it is just a pledge to leverage grants with a local share. Coal Township committed 2 years of their CDBG funds. Councilman Eister asked if the funding could be used for rehab and the answer is yes, anything that takes care of blight and it is eligible under CDBG activity, it will be eligible for the same type of activity. The municipality will invoice the county for the increased funding. Mayor Persing said the RDA does not like to designate an area because at times the blight properties are on a lot that is too small to build on. Occasionally the larger lots, or two lots in a row, is where a new structure could be built which would help to increase the tax base. Ms. Shrawder said the RDA will be meeting on the 2nd Thursday in October if anyone would like to attend their next meeting. If council would like to commit more they should have a discussion with the Chairman of the RDA, Truman Purdy. Councilman Bartello said 313 Packer St. could be crossed off the blight property list because it is not zoned residential it is zoned industrial. Ms. Shrawder said it still needs to come down. Councilman Bartello said there are a lot of properties that are not on the list, including the building at 2nd and Spruce St. Mayor Persing said the list is not the entire list in Sunbury, it is just the portion that CDBG funding will be used. The list was very long however, when the City was completing the blight referral forms, most of the properties had been purchased and are in the process of being rehabilitated. Mayor Persing moved to accept the Agreement as presented, stating that \$20,000 is a minimum amount the City will pledge. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

Ms. Shrawder announced that council has received the 2013 draft CDBG schedule. Councilman Eister moved to accept the schedule as presented. Second - Persing. Unanimous vote.

Ms. Shrawder said the conditions of funds letter has been received which means the 2012 CDBG application is being processed. Two of the projects are being further reviewed by HUD to include the façade program and the economic development activity. The fire hose can soon be purchased and council has to discuss where the sidewalk program should be developed. The land acquisition project will have to be re-budgeted because the land has already been purchased. Ms. Shrawder asked council to think about large projects to use 2013 CDBG funding so general fund and liquid fuels money can be used for other projects.

HOME GRANT

Mr. Tim Brickley presented the Resolution for the City to apply for a \$500,000 grant to do owner-occupied housing rehab. To date, the City has received 2 grants. All the work for Phase II of the grant must be completed by May 26, 2013 and they are on target to complete the projects on time. The grant must show a target area and Mr. Brickley is recommending using the Phase III funding in Wards 2, 4, 6 and 9 and elderly. 2012's target areas were 3, 5, 9 and elderly (HUD's definition is anyone over 62 years old). They will send forms to the target areas with information about the Program. Councilman Bartello asked if the target areas are a requirement and Mr. Brickley answered yes that is a state mandate. Councilman Bartello said he knows at times the target areas are not followed. Mr. Brickley said at one time 75% of the grant was not spent in the target area but that percentage has been reduced to 35%. If there aren't enough applicants in the target area the program is administered on a first come/first served basis. Councilman Bartello said that is not how the program worked in prior years. Mr. Brickley said it is done first come/first served whenever possible. There are requirements for the program, applicants must be current on property taxes and water/sewer bills. The funding source for this project has been cut by 48% so it will be very competitive but since the City had successful grants in the past it is likely funding will be received again. He is going to send the City's application by October 5th. Councilman Snyder said he understands it is not as simple as getting your name on a list, there are qualifications that must be met. In the end, the participant must produce the information needed showing they are current on taxes and utilities. The application moves forward when the qualifications are met, on a first come/first served basis. The application process must move fast because there are so many applications received. If applicants do not respond in a timely manner, they will not be funded. Mr. Brickley's department helps as much as they can with needed information but there are some things they cannot get. Councilman Snyder also asked if the information could be entered on the City's website and Mr. Brickley said he could send information to be posted. Mayor Persing moved to pass Resolution #12-2012 for FFY 2012 Home Program Funds (see attached). Second- Eister. Unanimous vote.

Mr. Brickley also said council must make a decision if they are going to subordinate their position on mortgages. The program states that the loan is forgiven after 5 years but ownership and occupancy must

be maintained for the entire 5 years. A promissory note outlines that criteria. If the home is sold or vacated, a portion of the money must be paid back (20% each year is forgiven). The City has taken the option if people must sell, they may or may not forgive the loan, depending on circumstances. All estate issues are taken care of first. The mortgage is always first. If during that 5 year period, a homeowner wants to get a home equity loan, the City subordinates their position, or the bank changes who is in front of the HOME grant lien. Most communities subordinate. On a case by case basis, criteria must be established so it is equitable to everyone asking for subordination.

SPECIAL EVENT APPLICATION TO PA DOT

Councilman Eister moved to prepare and send the Special Events permit to PA DOT for the Fire Police Halloween Parade to be held on October 18th. Second- Persing. Unanimous vote.

Councilman Eister moved to prepare and send the Special Events permit to PA DOT for the road closure for the New Year's Eve event sponsored by SRI. Second - Persing. Unanimous vote.

COUNCIL PARTICIPATION BY TELEPHONE

Mayor Persing explained that Northumberland County passed a similar Resolution and the Shikellamy School District also allows participation by telephone if necessary. Councilman Bartello said he is not in favor of this and he thinks council members should be in front of the audience when voting. Mayor Persing said the topic is on the agenda for discussion. Councilman Snyder said the downside of not doing this is that good people that have busy schedules would not be able to participate. Councilman Bartello said if you can't participate you shouldn't have the job. Councilman Snyder said there are many times he stretches it to get to the meeting and it would be nice to know he could phone in on occasion. He is in favor of the Resolution. Mayor Persing said there must be a quorum in attendance in order for anyone to participate by phone. Councilman Eister moved to pass Resolution #13 as presented (see attached). Second – Snyder. Yes – Persing, Snyder, Eister. No – Bartello. Motion carried.

HARB APPROVAL

Councilman Bartello moved to approve the recommendation by HARB to allow porch improvements to be done at 341 Chestnut St. Second – Persing. Unanimous vote.

APPROVAL TO PAY INVOICES

Councilman Snyder moved to pay the invoices reported on the voucher's payable report in the amount of \$345,582.16 from the general fund and \$1,662.66 from Liquid Fuels as funds are available. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote. Councilman Snyder explained the non-uniform pension plan payment is included in that amount.

AUDIENCE COMMENT

Ms. Carmen Campbell announced that the North'd County Historical Society is sponsoring a "Roaring 20s Gala" on Saturday October 6th at the Park View.

Ms. Diane Whipple said some kids were attacked near the area of 4th St & Walnut St. after the football game on Friday night and asked if a camera could be put there for added security or increased police presence.

Mr. Gene Swanger said he is having problems in his neighborhood with someone building a fire in a chimnea at night. It burns low to the ground so the smoke and sparks go everywhere. The code office said it is legal to burn in a chimnea for recreational purposes but it can't cause a nuisance to the neighbors. The screens and doors must be closed. The code officers will check this situation out.

Mr. Ruell Whipple said he does not agree with council members being able to vote by telephone. He also said last Monday during the heavy rain he had 13' of water in front of his home. That should not be. Councilman Eister again explained that the Municipal Authority is doing a study of that area to find out where the water run off problems are originating from. At this time they know they are going to run a new line down the center of Edison Ave. They are working on the problem but the engineering portion of the project is not yet complete.

Ms. Julie Brosious said there was so much water running from that rain that she had water ¾ of the way up her yard and plastic ties were washed into her yard from Sara Lee/Butter Krust at the Moran property. Mr. Joe Swope said Moran is working on adding rip rap to that area to help stem the flow of water from the bank. If that doesn't work they will try something else. That improvement should occur in the next 2 weeks. Ms. Jamie Shrawder said storm water improvements are a CDBG eligible project.

Ms. Shrawder said Mr. Dan Brehm from the American Legion asked her for the contact information for the company that repaired the clock in front of their building. She said that is good news because they are watching it and will maintain it.

Mr. Scott Johnson announced there would be a joint promotion in Sunbury to celebrate Halloween on November 3rd. There will be hayrides sponsored by Sunbury Motors to take people between the restaurants and bars in an anti-drinking and driving campaign "Why drink and drive when you can drink and hay ride."

Councilman Bartello asked when discussion would be held regarding the proposed police contract. Mayor Persing said it will be on the agenda on October 8th.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The final Music in Cameron Park will be Tuesday September 25th at 7:00 pm.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Specht
City Clerk