

CITY COUNCIL
Sunbury PA 17801
July 14, 2014
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
John K. Shipman, 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:

Kevin E. Troup, City Treasurer
John Bakowicz, City Engineer
Brianna Apflebaum Kula, City Solicitor
Michael Rhoads, Zoning Officer
Michael Bordner, Workforce Supervisor
Terry Specht, City Clerk

There were thirty-four (34) visitors present.

MINUTES AND REPORTS

The minutes of 5/12/14, 6/9/14 and 6/23/14 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 Councilman Eister. Second – Henry. Unanimous vote. Minutes will be posted at cityofsunbury.com.

PUBLIC COMMENT/AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Persing asked for comments on agenda items and there were none. Mayor Persing thanked the committee that planned the Ft. Augusta grand opening on July 5th. Also, the following for the wonderful Sunbury Celebration that was planned for July 10-13. The Park & Recreation Board – Darwin Klock, President, Jodi Scholvin, Celebration Chair-woman, members Ron Pratt and the playground supervisor crew, Jim Eister, Director of Parks & Recreation, Linda Hare, Jenna Eister Whitaker, Ric Reichner, Eric Long, Mindy Hoffman, Mike Bordner and DPW crew, Mark Getz and Tammy Forbes and Park & Recreation Crew and Cheryl Delsite. A lot of work goes into the planning. Councilman Eister added the Eagles Club also were a lot of help.

SRI UPDATE

Ms. Meghan Beck said the IDA should be getting back to them in regard to the marketing grant they applied for. The Promotions Committee is still working on the discount cards. The Hill Neighborhood just finished their final Rain Barrel workshop that fulfills the WREN grant requirements. The Membership Committee is distributing welcome bags to members. There are quite a few members this year. River Festival planning is going well for the 25th anniversary of the festival. The Renaissance Festival will be held on August 30th from 12 noon – 6 pm. 1000 Wine & Brew Festival tickets are on sale at Brewer's Outlet and it will be held September 20th from 2-6 pm. The New Year's Eve festivities are being planned. The deed for the Albright Center has been transferred to SRI from Faith United Method Church.

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Mayor Persing explained that 131 Church St. will be demolished, it was not sold at the auction. Ms. Brianna Apfelbaum Kula explained a Resolution should be passed by council acting as the Board of

Health to declare them a public nuisance: 149 Church St, 314 S. 3rd St, 218 N. Front St, 128-130 N. 11th St, 912-914 Court St. and 416-418 Chestnut St. Councilman Reichner moved to pass the Resolution declaring the named properties a public nuisance so the situation can be remedied. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

CODE FEES/COMMERCIAL

Councilman Reichner stated the City now charges a per unit fee for mechanical, plumbing and electrical work on commercial properties. He is proposing changing that to a per job fee by the cost of the construction. NEIC, the City's commercial inspector, brought this to his attention and provided information from other municipalities that have updated their code fees. He asked council members to review the change and he will bring it up at the next council meeting. Councilman Eister asked to have the old values and the new values together so they can be compared. Councilman Shipman explained the old way is archaic and this new fee schedule will make it easier for contractors to figure out.

HARB APPROVAL

Mr. Mike Rhoads explained the owner of 724 Market St. would like to reconstruct his side porch. The porch can be seen from Market St. HARB approved the work to be done. Councilman Reichner moved to allow the property owner at 724 Market St. to reconstruct his side porch to HARB's guidelines. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

APPROVAL TO PAY INVOICES

Councilman Shipman moved to pay the invoices reported on the voucher's payable report in the amount of \$70,864.42 from the General Fund and \$7,902.78 from the Liquid Fuels Fund. Second – Unanimous vote.

TAX EXONERATION

Councilman Shipman moved to pass the tax exoneration as requested by Statewide Tax Recovery. Second – Reichner. Unanimous vote.

AUDIENCE COMMENT

Mr. Bob Werline: A resident of Wolverton St. approached him and said their sidewalks and curbs are cracking on the far-east side of the sidewalk. The property is 4 doors down from Haas Ave. toward Market St.

Mr. David Whipple: There are 53 street lights out in the Market St. and Front St. area. He made a list that was given to Councilmen Shipman and Eister. One block does not have any lights lit. Mr. Bob Werline asked if solar lights were ever considered. Councilman Eister said the City is looking at LED lights at this time. Mr. Bob Werline asked if there was any response from Phillips after they presented a street lighting plan to council. Councilman Eister said they never followed up on that and did not fulfill their commitment. Mr. Werline said he spoke to the mayor of Woodbridge NJ and he told him they have solar lighting with no problems.

Ms. Stephanie Sterner: There are potholes and 3 street lights out in the 1100 block of Court St. Driving is difficult during the day and even worse at night.

Mr. Terrance Bossert: On June 6, 2013 2 police officers assaulted him on Market St. and he asked how to get compensation for that and make sure the officers were disciplined. Mayor Persing suggested he get a lawyer and he does not believe that happened. He hasn't seen any reports. Mr. Bossert said charges were filed against him but the judge threw them out. Mayor Persing said he will check reports for that date. Mr. Bossert said he is also concerned about the police shooting someone and he is concerned for his safety. Mayor Persing asked why he waited a year to approach him about this and Mr. Bossert said he had to deal with the charges. They were dropped in December 2013 but it was actually earlier than that – October. He said the former chief said he had a plan in place to deal with this so he was counting on him.

Ms. Regina Russell: Commented that at a meeting there was a discussion about the home owner on 4th St. that has discs on the house for her tenants. Mayor Persing said there was nothing the city could do about that. Mayor Persing said Mayor Woodring tried to pass an ordinance regarding satellite dishes but it never went through. Ms. Russell said when service is being ordered they can request that the disc be put on the roof. Otherwise the technician will put it on the lowest or easiest location they can.

Mr. Drake Saxton: Has 3 topics. 1. Had the surveillance cameras been placed properly at every entrance to the City the incident would have been caught on camera. If the cameras are functional and can be accessed by the City. He said the police department does not receive support. There is a known gang presence and drug problem. The current administration refused to add officers, in particular a detective, to investigate and bring gang problems under control. The police department uses worn-out patrol cars and recently the police chief was replaced with an interim chief who was involved with the shooting incident and now there is an interim interim chief. The current administration should have had a new chief ready to be appointed before demoting the old one. The criminal element in the area knows the department is in a state of disarray so they know this is a place to commit crime. He hopes that playing politics with the position of chief of police will stop and a decision of a permanent chief will be made. 2. Celotex site is a huge question in area residents minds. There was supposed to be a meeting set up with Mr. Reichner and Mr. Saxton and it never happened. Activity at the site continues but the City is not answering questions or discussing lack of code enforcement at the site. Minuteman Environmental has been charged with illegal dumping at other locations and has been on the Celotex site operating without code enforcement. He does not know what has been dumped there. Mr. Saxton went on to discuss the former Celotex site. 3. Mr. Saxton attended a meeting last month and a person that attended that is a Northumberland County employee's behavior was unacceptable. Mr. Gordon Lamb was crudely and verbally assaulted by that individual without an objection from city council. Councilman Shipman asked Mr. Saxton when Minuteman was on the site. Mr. Saxton answered he would have to look the exact dates up. Councilman Shipman said it would be fair to say the site had been abandoned by the end of last December. Mr. Saxton answered yes. Councilman Shipman suggested Mr. Saxton talk to his friend, the former code enforcement supervisor, because he has all the answers needed. Mr. Saxton said if you are referring to Mr. Bartello he does not have the answers because when he tried to take action and get to the bottom of it he was removed from his position and Mr. Troup took over. He said there are numerous letters from Mr. Bartello asking the site be closed until an investigation could be conducted. In hindsight since Minuteman was indicted for illegal activities you cannot be sure what has happened on the site. Celotex probably had underground seepage pits to handle storm water run-off and he has no idea what has been done with the seepage pits or if they were used for illegal disposal. He is not saying that was done but a possibility. That is why he is asking council to take definitive action to see what has been done. Mr. Troup said he took over personnel, not the department. Councilman Eister asked Mr. Saxton about accusing him of making a statement several meetings ago in regard to the WPA wall. The copy he gave Councilman Eister does not show that he said the WPA wall was inspected. After general discussion between Councilman Eister and Mr. Saxton, Mr. Saxton apologized to Councilman Eister.

Ms. Penny Nolls said she was at the meeting due to comments made at the June 23rd council meeting in regard to her property. She said Ms. Regina Russell has a fire safety issue in that a parked car is blocking one of her exits. Ms. Nolls thanked Ms. Russell for her concern for her family. According to the 2012 International Residential Code, 1 emergency or egress/entrance needs to be provided for each dwelling unit. Ms. Nolls said she has 7 exits on the 1st floor, 1 on the 2nd floor, a 2nd and 3rd floor emergency ladders for evacuation purposes. She conducts fire drills on a regular basis and has 2 foster agencies routinely inspect the home. Ms. Regina Russell, Community Activist, said she is happy to meet Ms. Nolls. She spoke to an agency last week and they did say she had a good fire plan. They didn't say she could block a door but they did give a reason why the door could be blocked. She used the fire safety issue at council meetings because code was not addressing the parking issue. If a car is 1/2 or 2/3 past their house and blocking 1/2 of the public sidewalk, there is a difference between the incline being referenced as the 5' space. Ms. Russell also thanked Councilman Reichner and Ms. Nolls for 1 of the 2 issues she kept bringing up. Ms. Russell said the mayor asked her if she had ever been in the house or does she know if the door opens and closes. Ms. Russell said the blueprints say it is an egress.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Persing reminded residents that the police department will be ticketing and towing unregistered vehicles, including trailers to continue to improve the condition of neighborhoods in the City of Sunbury. Councilman Reichner said if anyone knows of abandoned/unlicensed vehicles they should call the code office and they will look into it. They did give the police department a list of over 50 vehicles.

Councilman Shipman showed the audience a pickle ball and paddle. He announced a demonstration will be held at the ice skating rink on July 26th at 8 am. Ms. Jan Dockey's brother will be in the area and he will put on a clinic for anyone that wants to learn pickle ball. The public is welcome to attend this free event.

Councilman Shipman also announced that SPARC will be sponsoring another stump grinding event. If anyone has a stump in the tree line between the sidewalk and curb, they can call city hall or SRI to register to have them removed and clean fill put it. A \$10 donation is being asked but if someone cannot afford that it is ok.

Music in the Park Tuesdays at 6:00 pm:

July 15 Timothy's Burden
July 22 Counterfeit Dreams
July 29 Past Country

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Specht
City Clerk