

CITY COUNCIL
Sunbury PA 17801
January 26, 2015
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 Troup, City Treasurer
Brad Hare, Chief of Police
Brianna Apfelbaum Kula, City Solicitor
Michael Rhoads, Zoning Officer
Terry Specht, City Clerk

There were nineteen (19) visitors present.

PUBLIC COMMENT/AGENDA ITEMS

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

COMMEND FIRE DEPARTMENT AND POLICE DEPARTMENT/PRISON FIRE

Mayor Persing explained the effort that was shown by the Sunbury police and fire departments on the day of the prison fire was overwhelming and gratefully appreciated. All entities that came to Sunbury to help in this situation worked together and no one was injured. Chief Hare said there were over 200 inmates that were not the city's responsibility but the county's and his job was to make sure the citizens were safe and protected. He called Chiefs VanKirk and Kreiner from Point Township and North'd police departments for aid and they called their personnel. Most city police officers came out. There were officers and troopers from Stonington PSP who helped coordinate escorting prisoners out of the prison and he called troopers from Milton and Montoursville for aid. Most Snyder county departments came, Buffalo Valley Regional Police came, Mifflinburg, Middleburg, Mt. Carmel and Mt. Carmel Township. The county sheriff's office personnel were there as well as Union County sheriff's office who came with their K-9. Constables from the City of Harrisburg arrived as well as local constables who helped evacuate prisoners. Pastor Troup from Faith Lutheran Church opened their doors to allow the prisoners a safe, warm place to wait until the busses arrived. Rep. Lynda Culver made arrangements with Coal Township State Prison to have the prisoners sent there. Everything went smoothly. Someone asked him if there are protocols or plans of operation for a situation like this and he answered even though you have plans on paper, whatever happens happens. The new warden did a fantastic job of keeping chaos at bay. Chief Hare thanked everyone that helped on behalf of the Sunbury police department and he hoped he did not forget to mention anyone. Three officers from the Sunbury police department that were instrumental in helping were Corporal Travis Bremigen who acted as the chief's liaison, Officer Gary Heckman who had knowledge of the prison system and Officer Mike Hawkins who worked during the last prison fire. Each was given a commendation of merit for their help.

SUNOCO

Mr. Rhoads said the SUNOCO project has been reviewed by the city engineer. The county planning and conversation reviewed it and no one had issues with the project. Sunbury city council and Sunbury Municipal Authority reviewed and accepted their plan as well as the city Planning Commission who approved it with the stipulation that all discrepancies on the engineer's report were corrected. All deficiencies were corrected with the exception of the Highway Occupancy Permit which is now under review by PennDOT. Councilman Reichner moved to accept the plan with the

condition that the Highway Occupancy Permit be accepted by PennDOT for final approval. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

ARC/LOCAL ACCESS ROADS GRANT

Ms. Betsy Lockwood of SEDA-COG explained the Local Access Roads grant through the Appalachian Regional Commission. Ms. Lockwood said the city is applying for \$580,000. The scope of work is reconstruction of Chestnut St. from 3rd St. to 10th St. She said these funds are economic development funds and the impact must be shown are jobs retained, jobs created or expansion. The draft application is complete and does not require a match. DCED who helps to allocate funding for the ARC likes to see leveraged funds. In addition to the ARC funding, the non ARC funding is considered leveraged funds. She received a letter of support from the City for the application which states the city agrees to own and maintain the road. She still needs support letters that indicate the need for the road project from businesses that provide family sustaining wages such as Weis Markets, Sun Re Cheese, etc. She did receive one letter from a business on Chestnut St. The application can be changed as support letters come in. Councilman Shipman said there is a major project going on at the Albright Center located at Chestnut St & 5th St. and he can provide a support letter for that because that is an economic development project. Ms. Lockwood said economic related projects are a must to be considered for ARC funding. The deadline for the application was January 31st however there are a number of other approvals needed including from SEDA-COG directors and the SEDA-COG Metropolitan Planning Organization. DCED is aware the application will arrive on or before February 16th.

Ms. Jamie Shrawder reiterated that application is for Phase 2 of the Chestnut St. Project. The Phase 1 notice to proceed was signed by the mayor and sent to the general contractor. Ms. Shrawder said she has copies of the Professional Administrative Services Agreement for the 2014 Competitive CDBG Grant Application for Phase 1. It is the same as the CDBG Administrative Services Agreement but this is state competitive funding. The Agreement was sent to council members prior to the meeting for their review. Councilman Eister moved to approve the Agreement with SEDA-COG in the amount of \$75,000 of which can be paid from the CDBG grant funds. Second – Henry. Unanimous vote.

Ms. Shrawder announced that the Keystone funds from the county will be used for demolition of 2 additional properties, 116 S. 10th St and 314 S. 3rd St. The owner of 116 S. 10th St. have 30 days to clean their personal belongings out before demolition can begin. Councilman Reichner moved to solicit bids for the demolition of the 2 named properties following the 30 day period allotted to the property owners. Second – Shipman. Unanimous vote.

Ms. Shrawder said the OPG basketball court project and the tennis courts will be bid in March and awarded in April for spring work to begin on the projects. Mr. Bakowicz is currently working on the designs for these projects. Councilman Shipman asked if there is any plan to add pickleball courts to either of these areas. Ms. Shrawder said no they are just improvements to the projects as they area. It could be changed but revisions would have to be made to the funding source. Pickleball courts could just be painted in the different areas.

SCULLIN OIL COMPANY/STORM WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN WAIVER

Mr. Rhoads explained an application was received for a minor sub-division plan for Scullin Oil at their fueling station. They want to sub-divide the fueling station from their construction site. A storm water waiver has been submitted because there is no construction or improvements being made, just the minor sub-division. Storm water run-off will not be affected. Councilman Reichner moved to allow the storm water management waiver for this project. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

APPROVAL TO PAY INVOICES

Councilman Shipman moved to pay the invoices on the vouchers payable report totaling \$162,193.79 from the general fund and \$2,996.65 from the liquid fuels fund. Second – Henry. Unanimous vote.

AUDIENCE COMMENT

Ms. Carol Mazzeo: Is Chestnut St/Route 61 the city's responsibility to maintain or the states since it is a truck route. Councilman Eister explained the city maintains it and can therefore apply for grants.

Ms. Jan Dockey: Why can't the money from the sale of properties be used to keep police officers. Mayor Persing explained it is generated to be used for the blight program. The goal is to sell properties and reimburse the Redevelopment Authority to purchase more blight properties. That way no city funds are used. The original agreement was that all funds go back into the Redevelopment Authority. Councilman Shipman explained the RDA is a separate authority like the Sunbury Municipal Authority and the Sunbury Housing Authority and they operate independently from the city. The city appoints the board members but they run their own business. Ms. Dockey said she is concerned about losing patrol officers. Councilman Eister explained that certain funding can only be used exclusively for what the purpose of it is. Councilman Shipman said under state law the RDA has authority the city does not. Ms. Apfelbaum Kula said it is a tool to give the property a 2nd lease. It helps to get the property back on the tax rolls and clean up blight in the neighborhoods.

Ms. Julie Broschious: What constitutes the difference between selling a home or demolishing it? Mayor Persing answered there are properties the RDA board members thought would have to be torn down and people bid on them and submitted a plan for renovation and use. Now the only ones torn down are the properties that no one wants to bid on because they are so bad. If it can't be sold in a reasonable amount of time they will be torn down. Ms. Apfelbaum Kula said there are far fewer properties in Sunbury showing on the county judicial sale lists because of the active blight removal program. Developers are coming in now to rehabilitate properties and there won't be a lot of demolition taking place any more. Ms. Broschious asked what the idea of posting homes for water shut-off is, letting people know there is no one living there. Those homes seem to be vandalized. Councilman Shipman said the Sunbury Municipal Authority posts properties if the water is turned off. The same for all public utilities. Ms. Apfelbaum Kula said the 1st step of eminent domain is the city council acting as the Board of Health. There have to be postings showing the property as a public nuisance. The posting states there is a certain amount of time for the property owner to bring it to code compliance. If the property owner doesn't do anything, documents are filed with the court to take the property. Councilman Shipman said some of them have been abandoned for years, the wood is rotting out, they are full of garbage and the conditions are unbelievable. The neighbors are upset because the property has deteriorated. To tear a house down it costs approximately \$20,000. Ms. Broschious said the home at 116 S. 4th St seems to be deteriorating more since the postings. Ms. Apfelbaum Kula said that particular property is in the court system now. The judge has walked through that property and oral argument comes up in early February. This property is owned by a bank and they objected to the taking. When the attorney for the bank showed up to go through it with the judge, the judge pointed out the bad things in the house. Chief Hare also said if the home is not posted they cannot arrest anyone for trespassing if someone is in them. Councilman Reichner said they physically go through the properties with a 3rd party to get an estimate of what it will cost to bring it to code and look at the potential value of the property. If it costs more to fix it than what it can be sold for, it is targeted for demolition. The money the properties are sold for goes back to the RDA to acquire more blight properties.

Ms. Regina Russell, Community Leader: As a member of the public and taxpayer she asked if everyone on council signed their oath of office and is it a sworn statement. Mayor Persing said everyone is sworn in when they are newly elected and sign their oath of office. She asked that they are available so the public can look at them. Is there an ethics code they are required, as elected officials, to follow and do each of the council members know what it is? Mayor Persing said there is an ethics code for the state of PA. In regard to the monthly bills, for interested parties of the public to review them, she recommends council brings the bills in to demonstrate the council's transparency and competency of the oath as elected officials. Councilman Shipman showed her the bills and said he brings them to every meeting. If there are ever any questions he would be happy to answer them. Ms. Russell asked if any reimbursements were made for expenses like mileage, meals, membership, or lodging made to council members in the last 3 months. Councilman Shipman said several council members attended the PA League of Municipalities conference in Philadelphia this past summer and they had travel expense. Regular mileage is not paid if a councilman is using their personal vehicles for city business they pay for it. There are no expense accounts. Ms. Russell asked if council members are allowed to use city vehicles for personal use or have a city vehicle haul personal things or make deliveries for them. Councilman Shipman said they do not use city vehicles for personal use. Everyone has their own vehicle. It is not a routine practice and he is not aware that it has been

done. Ms. Russell asked if council ever extended an invitation to high school students to attend council meetings. Mayor Persing answered he has met with high school students but they have never been formerly invited to every council meeting. Ms. Russell asked if anyone minded that she extended herself to do that. Mayor Persing reminded her the council meetings are public meetings and everyone is encouraged to attend. Ms. Russell announced the Atlantic and College Board for 2015 is offering a writing contest to high school students and they are looking to recognize the best writers with cash prizes and a chance to get published. The website is www.collegeboard.org/writing-prize. The theme is important documents from US history. Mayor Persing asked if she took it to a school board meeting and she answered no she just received it today. She wanted to ask the mayor's permission before she reached out.

Ms. Victoria Rosancrans: Started the "Save the Prison" group after the fire. The group is concerned with the prison and what is happening with it. Although it is a county thing, there is an outpour of community that would like to see the property used in some way. The group would like the prison to stay in Sunbury. If it is not safe to put another prison in that area the group would like to see the area preserved in some way. Mayor Persing has offered his help in any way the county may need. There are a lot of questions that can't be answered yet. She has only spoken on behalf of herself on what she would like to see there. People are asking her how city council feels about preserving the area. Mayor Persing said he did start by trying to reach out to say if there is anything he could do to help them they are more than willing to do that hopefully so the prison can stay in the city. From there it went places he never intended it to go. The decisions will be made at the county level. Ms. Rosancrans said people that grew up in Sunbury but moved away are also contacting her so there is a lot of pride in the city. Her group will continue to be a voice and they will hold the county accountable in regard to decisions being made about that property. Their next meeting is February 16th.

Ms. Carol Mazzeo: Speaking on behalf of the Caketown Crime Watch, they are also in support of keeping the prison in Sunbury. Councilman Reichner explained the code office could not let anyone do anything to the old prison building after the fire until all clearances were met.

Ms. Meghan Beck: On behalf of SRI, historic preservation is part of their mission statement and they want to see the edifice of the prison maintained even if the use is changed. It is part of the downtown character which helps to revitalize the downtown.

Mr. Steve Mazzeo: Complimented Councilman Henry and the public works crew for keeping the streets cleaned of snow in Sunbury.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Owner occupied home owners in need of code compliance improvements to owner occupied properties in Wards 2, 4, 6 and 9 may contact Mr. Tim Brickley at 570-524-4491 to see if they qualify for HOME grant for home repairs

The brush pile is closed until March 28th

A meeting for landlords has been scheduled for February 17th at 6 pm in council chambers. Councilman Reichner explained it's been a year since the landlord/tenant ordinance has been in place and he wants to meet with landlords to see what their concerns are and give them some tools to help them make better decisions for tenants. Ms. Julie Broschious asked if the funding for owner occupied housing rehab has been in the paper. Councilman Reichner answered he thinks it has been and this has been an ongoing project for many years.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Specht
City Clerk