

CITY COUNCIL
Sunbury PA 17801
October 22, 2018
6:15 pm

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

Kurt Karlovich, Mayor
Elizabeth Kremer, Director of Accounts and Finance
Richard L. Reichner, Director of Public Safety
Chris Reis, Director of Public Works
James R. Eister, Director of Parks, Recreation and Public Buildings

Other City officials in attendance:

Joel Wiest, City Solicitor
Kevin Troup, City Treasurer
Terry Specht, City Clerk

Visitors: 55

A moment of silent reflection was held after the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Karlovich presented a Proclamation (see attached) for National Bullying Prevention Month and moved to make it part of the minutes. Second – Reichner. Unanimous vote. The Proclamation was presented to 2 students from Northumberland County Youth Leadership.

Mayor Karlovich presented a Proclamation (see attached) for the Shikellamy After School Program and moved to make it part of the minutes. Second – Reis. Unanimous vote. Mr. Damian Rojas from the After School Program explained what they do. They work with the school district with the after school program that is funded by a grant from the federal government. They serve kids from 3rd grade to 8th grade and would like to increase that in the future. The program runs for 2 ½ hours a day Monday through Thursday and 270 students attend this year. The students get help with homework, in the STEAM fields and they get a healthy meal. The program also runs in the summer. They make available training for adults and are looking for volunteers to help with this program. They provide the program in the 4 elementary schools, the middle school and they provide classes for at-risk students in the high school with help to graduate.

PUBLIC COMMENT/AGENDA ITEMS

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

CHESTNUT ST. UPDATE

Councilman Eister said the final pouring for sidewalks was today. The curbing was finished last week. There are still 5 lights to be installed and some grass seed to be planted. On Wednesday, the first round of inspections will occur with Penn DOT.

2ND READING VACATE ALLEYS 145-49/BIMBO

Mr. Wiest explained 2 unnamed alleys are being vacated on land that is currently owned by Bimbo Bakery. As stated at a prior meeting, a vote to vacate the alleys was taken many years ago but the vacation follow-up in the court system never occurred. Both alleys are in the confines of the bakery and not in use by any public entity. Mayor Karlovich moved to pass the proposed ordinance (see attached) on a second reading. Second – Eister. Unanimous vote.

POLICE SOP REVISION

Mayor Karlovich moved to pass the SOP's as proposed to the Sunbury Police Officer's Association. Some of the SOP's were revised with the SPOA's request. Second – Reichner. Unanimous vote.

EMERGENCY POLICE OFFICER HIRE

Mayor Karlovich moved to hire Officer Joshua Dreisbach as a full-time officer under the emergency clause in the Civil Service Regulations at the Patrolman 1 pay scale. Officer Dreisbach has 6 years' experience as a police officer and is currently working for the city on a part-time basis. Under the Regulations, when the next Civil Service testing is conducted, Officer Dreisbach will be required to successfully pass all the sections to remain full-time. Second – Reis. Unanimous vote.

BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH CITY ADMINISTRATOR CANDIDATES

Mayor Karlovich stated numerous applications were received for this position. At this time there are 3 candidates being interviewed. Mayor Karlovich moved to begin employment negotiations with the 3 candidates. Second – Reis. Unanimous vote.

UNFUNDED DEBT LOAN

Mr. Troup explained the bids came in for the unfunded debt line of credit. At this time they will be voided. After looking at it further, it was decided a general obligation note would be requested instead of the unfunded debt loan. The amount will be for \$250,000 for a 2-3 year term. There will be a better interest rate on this type of loan and it doesn't have to be approved by the court system. The city will still receive bids for the 2019 Tax Anticipation Note. Mr. Wiest said it is much easier to obtain this type of note as opposed to the unfunded debt loan. This is a much better solution to the short-term problem. The bids for the general obligation note were received from Northumberland National Bank at 3.95% fixed with a bank fee of \$300 and Fulton Bank at 3.8% fixed and payment of the documents and solicitor. Councilman Eister moved to award the bid to the apparent low bidder with no fees, Fulton Bank. Second – Kremer. Unanimous vote.

APPROVAL TO PAY INVOICES

Councilwoman Kremer moved to pay the invoices reported on the voucher's payable report in the amount of \$135,622.77 from the General Fund and \$2,097.23 from Liquid Fuels. Second –Reis. Unanimous vote.

POLICE OFFICER RESIGNATION

Mayor Karlovich moved to accept the resignation of Kiefer Bathgate from the Sunbury Police Department effective October 12th. Second – Reichner. Unanimous vote.

AUDIENCE COMMENT

Robert Snyder: At the last meeting it seemed like the debt was more severe, has something changed since then? Mr. Troup explained instead of the \$500,000 unfunded debt loan for 10 years, it was decided to go for the \$250,000 general obligation note and the 2019 \$250,000 tax anticipation note, which is the same amount but with better interest rates.

Peggy Valenti: Is a life-long resident and feels the buildings downtown need to be filled but before that the downtown needs to be cleaned-up. The windows are filthy, the sidewalks aren't swept, the apartments up above have rags, towels and sheets hanging in the windows. No one would want to come to Sunbury because of the way the existing buildings look. It seems there is no pride with the building owners. Until it is cleaned up Ms. Valenti doesn't think anything will move forward.

Linde Lloyd: Every resource possible is used to sell yourself and your business if you are a small business owner. She feels if you really want to sell your property you will utilize all resources, including for sale/lease signs in the building. Ms. Lloyd also mentioned that she was under the impression the vacant property registration notices come from the property owner, not the code office personnel. When she moved, she was responsible for calling the 3rd party inspectors to get an occupancy permit. Shouldn't this work the same way? Councilman Reichner said the occupancy

permit is totally different and bringing in the 3rd party inspectors hasn't been discussed yet. They will charge a fee for any inspections they do. Ms. Lloyd said it makes sense not to have the code office do the inspections.

Ron Krieger: Is having a problem with a Keystone house near a property he owns. Parking is scarce in his neighborhood and the employees of Keystone have off-street parking but don't use it. The building is a single-property dwelling that has 24/7 paid employees staying with residents with intellectual disabilities. He feels this isn't a single-property dwelling but a lucrative business in a residential neighborhood. This issue was taken care of a few years ago with Mr. Shipman asking the manager to have the employees' park in the off-street parking. Mr. Krieger has spoken to the president of Keystone about the parking situation. The building itself is not handicap accessible. They swap the handicap placard in different vehicles and park in the handicap parking spot. He feels someone is going to get hurt in the neighborhood. Councilman Reis said he received a letter from the manager of the house and DPW took the handicap stall out last week. The issue is they are using street parking instead of their off-street parking and it is creating problems in the neighborhood. Mr. Wiest asked how many employees are there at any one time and Mr. Krieger answered 3-5. There are different numbers of residents there at any time. Councilman Reis said he will check the parking situation and discuss with the owner of the property as well.

Regina Russell: Is happy the council and mayor have come together to discuss the matter of keeping the city beautiful. If they truly want to make the city stay active, and on behalf of citizens who are afraid to appear before council, she asked council members to put aside political party, egos and personal differences to move the city forward. Ms. Russell feels the council members and community members do not understand what is trying to be done with the vacant property registration ordinance. The ordinances are selectively enforced. There is a misuse of authority and amendments that have been made to ordinances and there is no problem with not passing an ordinance at this meeting until it is perfect. Many buildings could be renovated and turned into apartments for veterans. There are programs which the government gives grants for veterans. Sunbury is a 3rd Class city as is Harrisburg who is a model for successfully having investors purchase vacant buildings, renovating and now housing veterans where they also have jobs within the building. Every other municipality around Sunbury is flourishing with new houses, buildings, stores and restaurants. Sunbury has the best view of the river and people should be knocking down the doors to bring business here. Ms. Russell said she was resistant to having to register a vacant property but now understands that in an emergency situation, the information on the sign is invaluable. It should be up to the property owner to put in a lease how they want their property to look when rented by a tenant. Ms. Russell said she has complained about several properties many times and nothing has been done about them. There are tenants living at 3rd & Court Sts. on the ground level and all the windows on the other levels are boarded up and she is not sure how anyone can live there. Ms. Russell closed with saying Sunbury needs a council with fresh eyes on the prize and Sunbury is the prize and asks council to revisit any ordinances other cities put into effect and is working for them.

Debra Betz: Doesn't understand why someone would not want to put a sign on a building for sale. Councilman Reis said to get the waiver they have to do some kind of advertising. If the owner's personal feeling is that they do not want a sign, he doesn't feel the city should make them put a sign up. Ms. Betz feels an empty building is invitation enough for someone to rob or vandalize it. Ms. Betz asked when the last time the code was updated and the procedures in the office as well. Councilman Reichner answered every time there is an update to a code the code book is updated. The International Property Maintenance Code is updated every 3 years and the city has adopted an ordinance to automatically update to the current IPMC. Councilman Reichner said it was explained to him that the code officers would hit the streets, look for vacant properties and do everything for the ordinance. He made the suggestion of getting the 3rd party inspectors involved but it never got any further than that. Mayor Karlovich stated he had a meeting with the code officers that Councilman Reichner did not attend, and the code officers suggested the 3rd party inspectors should get involved and he agreed with them and it has been discussed with this ordinance. Councilman Reichner explained in that case they do the inspections and they have the guidelines, the code office does not. Ms. Betz said it is obvious that Councilmen Eister and Reichner are against the ordinance but she would like to see them contribute some kind of compromise to it. Councilman Reichner said he never said he is against the ordinance. Councilman Eister said modernizing the computer system should be the first part of this. Councilman Eister said there is never money to purchase new computers. Mayor Karlovich explained the update in 2016 gave the city new servers with the old brains and now money has to be put in the 2019 budget for new brains because the old ones are

obsolete and will no longer be supported soon according to MePush, the city's IT company. Ms. Betz also asked if people from other places that have an ordinance as being discussed could come to a public meeting to address questions so it can move forward in Sunbury. Councilman Reichner said if there are 3 different sections in the code addressing a vacant property all the sections must say the same thing. At this time they do not. Some court cases have been lost because they are inconsistent. Mr. Wiest said many city ordinances were legal when written but a lot has changed. He was involved with a court case where he utilized the city's ordinances to win his case. He has already spoken to council about updating the ordinances. It will take a lawyer to review the entire book to be sure it is legal.

Mark Walberg: Everyone agrees that they want the city to move forward. Instead of spending so much time on the ordinance, have an investor, business and resident fair and have realtors and contractors available. Anyone that wants to sell a property in Sunbury could be there with information. Having it in July 2019 would give anyone interested enough time to fix their property up so investors can look at them. It could be advertised on the city's website. It would be a friendly, positive atmosphere. He feels if you are forced to do something you probably won't but if there are volunteers that would help clean places up it would be a fun project and a benefit to the city. This idea can be built upon.

Aimee Buehner: SRI has the Business and Economic Development committee and she is the chair. They did a sandwich stroll in May with a really great turn-out with great participation. There was a clean-up day the day before with much less participation. The new Biz Pitch competition was just launched with a new format called Business Assistant grant. Applications are being accepted for matches on physical improvements, etc. Signs do not necessarily sell commercial buildings. Investors look on line, realtors make connections trying to get investors to come to Sunbury. Everyone has to work together because people in city limits are their own worst enemies. She would love to help anyone that has ideas about how to make Sunbury look better and have pride.

Tammy Kingman: Has been in business 1 year next month in downtown. The people that live in Sunbury are amazing. She sees people picking trash up off the streets and throw it away. People that live here do have pride. No one has to wait for the ordinance to pass. If you see dirty windows, ask if you can clean them. Offer help because perhaps the person can't do it themselves. Ms. Kingman chose Sunbury to open her business. Others have told her to go to Lewisburg and she would do awesome with her business. She feels it is a ripple effect. If someone starts it will take off.

Linde Lloyd: There is a gentleman in town that will wash windows for \$5. He is out every day. There is also a window washing business in Sunbury that is inexpensive.

Dennis Shaffer: Has lived in Sunbury for 54 years and managed a multi-million dollar business and also several businesses in Sunbury. He feels the reputation of Sunbury has been soured for a long period of time. His family has volunteered on countless committees to try to better the community. Some investors could not sell their properties for the amount of money they put into them. He is concerned that as a business manager he has approached 2 members of the current council to offer free product, landscaping and labor. He never received a return call. He and his family have been attending council meetings and the next day the code office was at his property. He has heard from city employees there are issues. One of the complaints against him was there are pigeons on the roof. The council needs to work together and get over the dissention amongst the group. To move the city forward, council has to work together. The rest will fall in place when that happens. There cannot be selective enforcement of ordinances. He purchased a property that was the worst house on the street. They started investing in the property and bringing the property back. Now it is a nice property but he has other problems, like the gentleman that addressed council at another meeting about the crime in his neighborhood. It does not pay him to fix his property when the neighbor down the street is not made to do the same. Most of them are rental properties. He feels investors will not come in right now due to the way the city is being run and the way it is structured. The properties need to be fixed up for investors to look at purchasing/leasing them.

Laurie Johnson: Was disappointed because she thought the audience at the earlier meeting would be able to discuss this ordinance but it was only council members. The landlord meeting that was discussed has never been held. The ordinance has good things in it but there are some things that need to be worked out. Council needs to work together on it, which they don't seem to be doing.

Robert Snyder: Everyone wants Sunbury to succeed but no one ordinance is going to change things. The ordinance being discussed in his opinion is feel good legislation. There is no manpower to back it up. Different ideas are great. Council should not be able to tell someone what to do with their own property. If there is a fire or safety hazard there are already ordinances on the books to cover that. He has opened a 2nd business in the downtown area. There is no one thing that is going to fix the problem. It is not council's fault. Everyone has to work together but don't blame council and don't think one thing is going to change anything because it is not going to. He urged everyone to move forward.

John Shipman: "Governing is the art of the doable." In order to be doable there has to be some agreement. One person can't say this is the way it is and won't consider anything else. He encouraged all of council to look at the ordinance and come up with a solution. No one disagrees that vacant properties are a problem or that there are things that need to be done to correct the problem. He heard some good suggestions and urged council to consider them. They must communicate amongst themselves.

Bob Werline: The one thing being missed by everyone is that there is no tax base in Sunbury. The industry has closed or moved. There is no money to pay for manpower, police, code etc. Someone should be working on getting industry in. The residential taxes keep raising because there is no business to offset them. That should be a priority.

The next city council meeting will be held on November 12, 2018 at 6:15 pm.

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Specht, City Clerk