

CITY COUNCIL
Sunbury PA 17801
October 24, 2016
6:15 pm

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

David L. Persing, Mayor
Elizabeth R. Kremer, Director of Accounts and 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
Brianna Apfelbaum Kula, City Solicitor
Michael Rhoads, Zoning Officer
Terry Specht, City Clerk

There were twenty-three (23) visitors present.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT/AGENDA ITEMS

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

RESOLUTION/RATIFY AUCTION

Ms. Apfelbaum Kula stated an auction was held on October 22nd for the property located at 714-716 N. 7th St. Councilman Henry moved to pass the Resolution ratifying the auction (see attached). Second – Kremer. Unanimous vote.

APPROVAL OF FNB LOAN FOR FIRE DEPT. COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT

After review by the solicitor, Councilman Henry moved to award the bid for fire department communication equipment tax exempt loan to the apparent low bidder, First National Bank in the amount of \$117,790 at a fixed rate of 2.5% (see attached Resolution). Second – Kremer. Unanimous vote.

RESOLUTION/STREET LIGHT SERVICES AGREEMENT

Ms. Apfelbaum Kula presented a Resolution to execute the Street Light Services Agreement to convert street lights into a more energy efficient system (see attached). Councilman Henry asked if this is the program where if the lights are 10 years or newer the city would have to pay for the conversion. Councilman Eister answered yes it is a prorated amount dependent on when the lights were installed. Most of the city lights are older than 10 years. Councilman Henry said he was concerned because he asked if there would be any cost to the city and was told no by Councilman Reichner. Discussion was held regarding the conversion and costs, including why some lights are charged at 10 kWh and some 35 kWh. The lights for the conversion are only PPL poles, not ornamental ones like Front St and Market St. Councilman Reichner moved to pass the Resolution as stated. Second – Eister. Yes – Persing, Kremer, Reichner, Eister. No – Henry. Motion carried. Mr. David Whipple stated there are wooden poles on Front St. as well.

APPROVAL TO PAY INVOICES

Councilwoman Kremer moved to pay the invoices reported on the voucher's payable report in the amount of \$101,217.97 from the General Fund and \$2,678.09 from the Liquid Fuels fund. Second – Henry. Unanimous vote.

1ST READING 2017 BUDGET

Councilwoman Kremer explained that she and the treasurer's office have been working on the 2017 Budget with individual council members. The budget at this time is short \$99,745. This would equal a 1.75 mil tax increase. Councilwoman Kremer moved to pass on a first reading the 2017 Budget with a tax increase of 1.75 mils. The budget will be discussed further to try to eliminate the tax increase. Councilman Henry said the largest department in expenses is the police department. Mayor Persing said he wants to work further on the police budget to see if it can be reduced to eliminate a tax increase. At this time there are 2 new police officer hires in the budget. Second – Henry. Unanimous vote.

AUDIENCE COMMENT

Ms. Deb Betz: Invited the city and police department to decorate a theme tree in the Hill Neighborhood council house. Mayor Persing said the city would be happy to decorate a tree. The open house and tree lighting is scheduled for November 28th. She also asked Councilman Eister when his department will be at Wolverton St. for the weeds again and he answered he thought they were there today.

Ms. Janet Bingaman: Complaining about her neighbors on N. 4th St. She has been harassed, her property damaged and they are afraid to be outside when the neighbors are outside. She does not feel anything is being done to help her. Can this property be named a nuisance property? Ms. Apfelbaum Kula said she should seek legal counsel. Because it is occupied the Redevelopment Authority cannot get involved and the nuisance ordinance does not pertain. They would check to see if there is anything they can do to cite the property owner. She cannot park her vehicles at her house because she is afraid they will damage them like they did her fence. Mayor Persing explained that fines have been sent by the code office and the police department knows about the problems. She said their fire pit is next to a propane tank and there are children running around it. Ms. Bingaman was told the place is rent to own. Mr. Joe Bartello thought "rent to own" was not legal in Sunbury. Mayor Persing agreed with that and will have someone look into it. Mr. Bartello said there is no exception for family renters. Councilman Reichner said there is a rental permit for the property. Councilwoman Kremer said she has had complaints about fire pits burning uncontrollably, with no screens and close to neighbor's fences. She does not feel in-town residents should be able to have open fires. Ms. Bingaman is afraid she will lose custody of her daughter because it is not a safe environment for her.

Victoria Rosancrans: "Save the Northumberland County Prison" group. A deadline is coming up in January and she asked Councilman Reichner if the issues at the old jail site are not resolved in January, what are the next steps for the city? The county turned down applying for a grant for an appraisal and feasibility study. Councilman Reichner said at this point, there has been no contact with the county regarding this property since June. The group does not want this historic landmark torn down. Ms. Rosancrans asked if whoever gets ownership of the old prison site will get an extension since obviously work will not be complete by January. Councilman Reichner said if the city does not hear anything from the county, they will proceed as if the county is not interested in doing anything with the property. A one-year extension will be given if progress is being made at the site. The city will require a bond if the property is sold to protect the city to be sure something is done with the property in a limited time period. Ms. Rosancrans said there are 2 proposals for purchase at this time but it has not been put out to bid to the public. Ms. Rosancrans asked why the insurance escrow was not given to the city by the former administration. Councilman Reichner explained they wanted to tear the remainder of the structure down and were going to do it right away. That was in good faith that was going to be done but it never was. Councilman Henry does not think an extension should be given to the county. Because the escrow money was never given to the city, there is nothing to protect the city for this damaged structure. Ms. Rosancrans also thanked Cheryl and Terry for allowing them entrance into the building for their meetings. Mayor Persing said if anyone has a viable plan for the property the city will work with them. The Save the Prison group has now formed into the Northumberland County Preservation Society and will advocate for all historical buildings in Northumberland County. Councilman Eister said the escrow check was never received and the city did not know the county had been given the insurance check. No one made any deals and everything that was done was in good faith thinking the commissioners would not do what they have done to the city. Mr. Joe Bartello asked where in the ordinance is the fire insurance escrow information. It is a state law the city adopted years ago.

Mr. Kurt Karlovich: How long has the city contracted with PPL for street lights? If the city is renting 600 lights from PPL, there are companies that you can buy LED street lights and save energy costs. The city would have to provide their own posts. Light posts are about \$8,000/each. Councilman Reichner said then the city would also have to maintain them. Mr. Karlovich said they would be paid in 10 years.

Mr. Jim Snyder: What is happening with the cameras? He had a truck involved in an accident and wanted to see if it was within camera reach. Mayor Persing said some cameras are not working, some that were checked had bad batteries. There should be an announcement soon about someone going to get the cameras up and running. The police officers were never intended to have access to all the cameras in Sunbury.

Ms. Deb Betz: Is concerned about the property at Arch St & 2nd St. There has been suspicious drug activity at that property. The appeal to the zoning hearing board decision is scheduled for November 14th immediately after the city council meeting. That is the appeal for parking for that property. Ms. Betz said she is concerned another historical building will be turned into a multi-unit building.

Ms. Laurie Johnson: Ms. Beck has a back-up plan for that building in case she does not get the variance for parking for the apartments. And Ms. Johnson will let Ms. Beck know about the alleged drug activity at that property.

Mr. Brad Hare: This weekend there is a play at the Community Theater League in Williamsport. It is the Adams Family.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pink in the Rink hockey game between Bucknell U. and Susquehanna U. at 4 pm on October 30th to benefit the PA Breast Cancer Coalition

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Specht, City Clerk