

BOROUGH OF WILKINSBURG COUNCIL MEETING
Planning Session
March 7, 2012

CALL TO ORDER

President Cohn called the meeting to order at approximately 6:35 PM in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal Building, 605 Ross Ave., Wilkinsburg, PA.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Present were Mr. Lefebvre, Ms. Ervin, Ms. Evans, Ms. Trice, Ms. Moore (via telephone connection), Ms. Goodman, Ms. Ms. Macklin, President Cohn. Also present were Mayor John Thompson, Marla P. Marcinko, Borough Manager, and Mike Witherel, Esquire Borough Solicitor. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson was absent due to illness in her family. A quorum was established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Following the pledge of allegiance, a moment of silence was observed for victims of violent crime.

President Cohn read a statement aloud about a Police Department services proposal from the City of Pittsburgh.

Council understands that hearing about any large scale change to the Police Department makes people nervous. But we also know we don't have the resources to provide more police protection without raising taxes which is something we fight everyday not to do. It's our duty to do everything within our power to make Wilkinsburg as safe as it can be and to explore any options that may accomplish that. To that end, on the heels of doing just that with our fire merger, Council asked the City of Pittsburgh for a proposal for providing police services to see if it would indeed make the Borough a safer place. We have indeed received a proposal and now Council needs to review it and compare the proposed services and cost to what we currently have. If Council decides to continue to explore the proposal, prior to taking any concrete action, we will hold public hearings to share all the specifics of the proposal with the public and engage public sentiment. Until Council has had time to review the proposal, no public hearings will be held, no votes will be taken and you will continue to be protected by the Wilkinsburg Police. We can't share the full details of the proposal until full Council has reviewed it. When that happens, if Council feels it could result in a safer Wilkinsburg, we will have deep and public conversations about it. Let me be clear, no matter what untrue rumors you have heard, there is no imminent plan to take action on this. Council lives here too. I live a block

away from Hamnett Park-N-Ride where there had been a serious carjacking and where there has been multiple shootings. So we know what is at stake here. I am disappointed in the irresponsible fear mongering that has been going on and want to assure you nothing will happen without lots of prior notice. Once again, thank you for coming and expressing your concerns. We want to hear your concerns. This is not something that whatever happens...if the residents of Wilkesburg are truly against it. And in order to know that, we need to hear your concerns now and if we decide to move further on this, we need to hear your concerns after you have heard all of the details of the proposal. We may not even get that far. Please limit your comments to three minutes so we can fit everybody in.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Peter Maurin – 7416 Lighthouse Pt. – Thanked Wilkesburg management, Code Enforcement Department, Police Department and Council members for their prompt action taken on the illegal dumping at Lighthouse Point. The action did come to an end. He recommended pursuing weight limits and driveway permit for the roadway.

Alice Williams – 1413 Marlboro Ave. – Commented on the proposal from the City of Pittsburgh and that the police officers would not live in the Borough. She commented it is safer to have officers here rather than from another community which has its own issues.

Edward Jones – Commented that police response times will be slower if officers are responding from Pittsburgh. Mr. Jones commented about reported “secret meetings” and the need to eliminate abandoned properties.

President Cohn commented that there have been no “secret meetings”.

James Simmons – 1633 Laketon Rd. – Spoke in support of keeping Wilkesburg Police.

Rock Burnett – Spoke in support of the Wilkesburg Police Department as a first line of defense.

Michael Jones – 1312 Penn Ave. #4 – Commented about concerns regarding Wilkesburg autonomy.

Corrine Scott – 1409 Mill St. – Stated she collected signatures on petitions and that the police department knows the businesses, community and children.

Winifred Johnson – Clark St. – Spoke in support of the police department.

Jenna Lang – 465 Biddle Ave. – Commented that she has worked with the Wilkesburg Police Department on animal rescues and that the officers know the community.

Michele Wilson – 346 Miller Ave. – Commented that her husband has for the Borough for over seventeen (17) years and offered her support of the police department.

Wilbert Wright – 1315 Clark St. – Spoke in support of the Wilkesburg Police Department and commented that the City does not notify the Mayor or the Chief when house raids are conducted.

Art Hicks – 571 Princeton – Questioned who put forth this idea and why and how it was believed that it would work. He further commented on the budgetary challenges the Borough faces.

President Cohn commented on the process followed with the fire department merger and the resulting success of same and that it made sense to discuss additional partnership opportunities with the City.

Representative Dom Costa – 6808 Greenwood Ct. 15206 – Thanked Council for the opportunity to speak. He commented that both the City and Wilkesburg have good departments and the benefits which may be received from a smaller department. He would hope to see a merger and not a take-over in order for the officers to have an employment opportunity with the City.

David Wilson – EAPHS – Looks forward to a continued positive professional relationship with Wilkesburg Police Department. He provided the monthly report for February, 2012 which included a total of 282 dispatches, 210 transports and response times.

Lillie Hawkins – 1419 Sloan Ave. – Spoke in support of the police department and commented on response times and that they are good men.

Denise Edwards – 118 Peebles St. – Questioned Council regarding a report on KDKA which she stated she found troubling and disturbing. She questioned the validity of a comment by a Borough official that a police department merger as a safety issue and not a money issue. President Cohn responded that, without going into details, there are no financial savings to be realized. President Cohn provided some history regarding the exchange of data relating to the proposal.

Kate Luxemburg – 432 Rebecca Ave. – Questioned whether 2011 MSF delinquent accounts had been turned over to Portnoff Law Associates. She commented that it appeared with the expediency at which the accounts were turned over for collection, that there is an attempt to create revenue for Portnoff Law Associates instead of focusing on correcting the date.

Lonzo Boyce – 2057 McNary Blvd. – Commented on quality of the local officers and that they are seen out on the street.

Debra Indino – 927 North Ave. – Stated she is a former dispatcher for the department and expressed concerns regarding response times.

Edward Scheppa – Commented that the business community will feel disenfranchised without its own police force.

President Cohn commented of the respect held for the Borough's police officers and that the proposal is not being taken lightly.

Adam Lawrence – Commented on being an Edgewood Police Officer and a former police officer in Wilkesburg and concerns that service from the City is slow.

Mayor John Thompson commented that the Borough officers do a great job. Mayor Thompson commented that if he had been present at the first meeting, there would not have been another meeting.

Ms. Macklin commented on the meetings which were held with the City and that the proposal had not yet been provided to Council.

Public comment was closed and the meeting was recessed at approximately 7:32 PM. The meeting was reconvened at approximately 7:45 PM.

FINANCE

1. 2010 Audit – Action plan for response to observations.

David Egler commented that the 2011 audit report should be received in the next month or so. Mr. Egler reviewed the observations in the 2010 Audit Report from Maher Duessel. Due to organizational structure some issues will never be resolved. Ms. Goodman commented on the number of items noted by the auditors Ms. Goodman questioned the deficit fund balance in the Library Fund and Mr. Egler advised that this appeared to be a booking, possibly double entry, error which will need to be addressed by Council. Ms. Evans commented that issues relating to segregation of duties are difficult to overcome with a small staff and therefore a good policy is needed to be in place. Ms. Macklin commented that a peer review is currently being performed of all finance functions and asked if the auditors could make a presentation to Council.

Mayor John Thompson left at approximately 7:52 p.m.

Ms. Macklin expressed concern regarding a delay in cash receipts being deposited to the bank. She questioned why the Comprehensive Annual financial report (CAFR) was no longer being prepared. Mr. Egler explained that the work required to prepare the CAFR has increased significantly with the GASB 35 rules. He commented on the worth of the statistical information contained in the report and spoke with the auditors about providing a historical data section as part of the 2011 audit report.

President Cohn questioned the status of the Revolving Loan Fund and that Council needs to make a decision regarding the ultimate disposition of those funds. Ms. Macklin provided some history on the loans provided to the business community through that program. She stated her support of providing low-interest loans to businesses to make repairs to their buildings and commented on the ability to offer residents a similar assistance program. Ms. Evans, as Executive Director of the WCDC, has an intern in her office who is working with Mr. Egler to review documentation relating to the EDGE/revolving loan program. The WCDC is suggesting that matching monies be provided to business owners to rehabilitate storefronts in order to be in compliance with Code for a habitable structure. The program would be administered by the Borough. Ms.

Macklin questioned the program requirements and whether the owner would be required to be current on taxes. Ms. Evans responded yes and that the requirements would be similar to those of the façade grants. President Cohn asked Ms. Evans to put together the proposal for Council's review and action next week.

Ms. Macklin commented on compensated absences for management employees and the importance of all management employees documenting those absences by type on a time sheet. Mr. Egler advised that all management employees are in compliance with this expectation. Mr. Cohn expressed the critical importance of the auditor's letter and the need to take a careful look, as a matter of course, in dealing with as many of the issues as possible.

(The telephone connection Ms. Moore was noted to be lost at approximately 8:10 p.m. The Telephone connection to Ms. Moore was then reestablished.)

Ms. Macklin advised Council that Tony Russo will be leaving WPJWA at the end of the year.

2. Delinquent tax collection – contractual obligation and RFP time line.

Ms. Marcinko advised that the PLA contract renews automatically every two years and requires a 60 to 120 notice for termination. The contract next expires on June 30, 2013. Ms. Marcinko suggested a meeting with Portnoff Law Associates to address Council's concerns. President Cohn stated that would be a good idea. Ms. Macklin questioned whether they would pursue tax collection under Act 45. Ms. Marcinko advised that the question had been raised to them and that it was referred for legal review.

CAPITAL PLANNING

Ms. Evans distributed a summary of proposed capital projects and commented on the efforts to create a five-year plan. Funding sources are still being discussed. Ms. Macklin commented that the Princeton Park Pillars were not included on the spreadsheet. Ms. Evans advised that the Borough Engineer had been consulted and he did not see any reason for additional work on the pillars. Mr. Cohn requested that Council review the list prior to the next Capital Planning session.

GENERAL MATTERS

1. Discussion – Berkheimer Confidential Contact Agreement.

Ms. Marcinko explained the requirement for the agreement. Mr. Egler stated that confidentiality concerns arise with Business Privilege Tax and Earned income Tax as it relates to income. Ms. Macklin commented that she is not seeking income or gross receipts information, only the names of those paying. She questioned the proactivity of Berkheimer in ensuring those who are responsible to do so are paying BPT and EIT. Mr.

Egler commented that the reports may contain sensitive information and Berkheimer is concerned regarding liability for releasing confidential information, particularly since the enactment of Act 32.

2. Discussion – Joint UCC Appeals Board.

Ms. Marcinko commented that the COG is facilitating the forming of a Joint UCC Appeals Board for its member municipalities. There will be no cost to the Borough for the use of the Appeals Board. Charges are paid by the applicant. Participating municipalities may submit recommendations for appointments to the Appeals Board. The UCC contains legislative requirements for specific trades and design professionals to be represented on the board.

3. Discussion – Website revisions.

President Cohn has had limited discussions regarding this matter with Council members and did receive feedback from Ms. Macklin. He commented that he has updated all he can and that programming items are now needed. He suggested the site be modified so that all payments may be made on-line. Ms. Macklin questioned if parking tickets would be included. Dave Egler commented that problems may be encountered with that if the ticket had become a citation. President Cohn commented that the question remains as to whether to use the Nixle alert system. Ms. Macklin commented on the possibility of marketing properties for sale in Wilkesburg on the website. Ms. Evans commented that the County provided a presentation on the need for better marketing of the VPRP program and how it can be used. Ms. Macklin commented that the VPRP program is now working well in Wilkesburg. Ms. Luxemburg suggested putting tax delinquencies on line. President Cohn suggested a tree problem reporting form would be a good item to include. He further commented about his disappointment with the level of response from Council and staff for suggestions. Ms. Evans commented that the CACDC is interested in a presence on the Borough website. Ms. Macklin talked about putting together a packet for new residents.

4. Discussion – Filling vacancies on Boards and Commissions.

Ms. Macklin commented on the practice of reappointing those members who were interested in continuing to serve. President Cohn commented that this has been discussed by Council and the importance in providing an opportunity to any and all who are interested in serving on a Board or Commission and that those who are doing a good job should be reappointed. President Cohn proposed an attendance policy for Board and Commission members and read the policy aloud. Ms. Trice commented that the notice of vacancies was not advertised in the New Pittsburgh Courier and that it cost approximately \$300.00 to place the notice in the Tribune Review. Ms. Marcinko advised that it was her understanding that there was not charge for the notice to be published in the Tribune Review and that repeated attempts were made to place the notice in the Courier and Borough staff was advised that they do not offer such a service. Ms. Trice

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believes those currently serving should be allowed to continue. Ms. Trice requested copies of meeting minutes from all Boards and Committee be distributed to all Council members.

Ms. Moore announced Tony Russo will be retiring from WPJWA after thirty years of service.

Ms. Trice asked that the conference attendance policy be amended to include both Council and employees of the Borough.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, on motion by Ms. Trice, second by Ms. Goodman, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

Jason Cohn, President