

**WILKINSBURG BOROUGH**  
**Planning Session**  
**April 3, 2013**

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Cohn called the meeting to order at approximately 6:37 PM in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal building, 605 Ross Ave., Wilkesburg, PA.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Kate Luxemburg – 432 Rebecca Ave.** – Ms. Luxemburg commented that Portnoff Law Associates postponed a recent Sheriff's Sale. Ms. Luxemburg commented that County Controller Chelsea Wagner is hosting a page on her website called "Windfall Watch". The page cites that a vote of Council, explicitly for the purpose of collecting real estate tax revenue up to 105% of prior year collections, is required. She commented that most municipalities reduced their millage. President Cohn informed Ms. Luxemburg that an evaluation as to where final assessment figures and therefore, anticipated collections, cannot be made for several months. Ms. Marcinko commented that there are currently outstanding appeals, representing a potential reduction of approximately \$15,000,000 in assessed value, as of March 20, 2013.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

**CONNECT – Jay Rickabaugh – Source water reduction and green infrastructure opportunities.**

Mr. Rickabaugh was joined by Brenda Smith, Executive Director of Nine Mile Run Watershed Association. Mr. Rickabaugh explained that organizations are working together to understand their options relative to source water reduction and green infrastructure. ALCOSAN submitted a Wet Weather Plan to regulators in January, 2013. Ms. Smith explained there is approximately \$2.8 billion needed in infrastructure improvements throughout the ALCOSAN service area. The 83 municipalities' share of this, with required improvements under their individual Administrative Consent Orders and Consent Decrees, is approximately \$500 million. This will

also have a significant impact on municipal budgets. Ms. Smith and Mr. Rickabaugh commented that there are alternatives to allow for greater flexibility and that, during the planning process for the preparation of the feasibility studies which are due in July, 2013, other options have become available. ALCOSAN has an 18 month extension for the submission of its plan. Given that this submission will come after the submissions of the municipalities', there is a greater opportunity for the municipalities to drive the direction of the Wet Weather Plan. There are opportunities for Integrated Water Management which will provide the ability to reopen the plans and perhaps include sustainable infrastructure. The most important next step is to obtain an update from the borough engineer on the status of the Borough's feasibility study. The Borough should explore options such as street tree plantings, strategic locations for bio swales, etc. There are resources available to help address barriers to these types of green alternatives, such as those posed by zoning.

ALCOSAN's recommendations will not solve the water quality problems. Ms. Smith explained that it is best to know the current status of the plan now as opposed to June or July when action needs to be taken. Ms. Smith thanked Council for the opportunity to speak.

Ms. Moore inquired about the flexi pave project. Ms. Smith explained that this was a demonstration project installed by NMRWA. Ms. Smith referenced it as a good example of zoning requirements as barriers to alternative sidewalk materials. Discussion ensued relative to the material and useful life of the flexi-pave material. President Cohn commented that the Borough is in the process of updating the Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Macklin asked about retrofitting of parking lots with permeable pavement and the possibility of tax credits for property owners who utilize pervious material on driveways to reduce source water. Ms. Smith stated that there are no such incentives of which she is aware. There was discussion regarding fees for storm water control. Currently, Mt. Lebanon is the only municipality assessing such a fee. There is a provision which allows to the municipality to exempt residents from paying the fee if mitigating measures are employed to reduce source water. Ms. Marcinko stated that green guidelines are most appropriately included in subdivision and land use legislation as opposed to zoning legislation. Updating of the subdivision and land development ordinance is being considered as phase two of the zoning ordinance update. Funding may be available for this project and the Planning Commission will be discussing that opportunity.

Ms. Trice inquired as to who maintains the permeable sidewalk. Ms. Smith commented that a vacuum would need to be purchased if there was a large scale installation of this type of material and that a cooperative purchase could be considered. Maintenance is performed once a year.

Ms. Moore asked about the rain barrel program. Grant money is no longer available therefore the program is no longer subsidized. NMRWA would like to put together another program in the future.

Ms. Macklin questioned how to measure the effectiveness of the different strategies to reduce storm water runoff. Ms. Smith advised that Three Rivers Wet Weather can help to identify alternatives and quantify results. Technical resources are available through 3RWW in helping to identify whether planting a tree, installing a rain garden, or permeable pavement works best for a

particular location. President Cohn asked if problem areas have been mapped. Ms. Smith advised that NMRWA is working with a consultant on such a project.

Ms. Macklin referenced green efforts in Philadelphia and New York, relative to wastewater treatment, and questioned how to rationalize potential service cost increases to residents.

Mr. Rickabaugh commented that the improvements resulting from the infrastructure projects will increase recreational use of the waterways which will benefit the economy. Additionally, projects will increase the economic investment in the region.

**Citizens Advisory Committee on Shade Trees – Bob Crusan, Borough Arborist**  
**Proposed amendments to ordinance**  
**Heritage Tree Document**  
**Rules and Regulations for Arbor Work**

Mr. Crusan provided a brief summary of the information distributed to them on the proposals from the Committee. He explained that the bulk of changes are not significant. The most significant change is the Committee's proposal for the Borough to accept responsibility for maintenance of trees between the sidewalk and the curb. The budget for the Committee will need to increase to accommodate this change. It is proposed that the budget will need to be doubled for effective management. Mr. Crusan explained that the cost on average would be \$80-\$100 per tree on a seven year cycle. Ms. Macklin questioned the potential liability to the Borough for sidewalks which have heaved from root growth. Mr. Crusan suggested considering alternative sidewalk materials and techniques as part of the zoning ordinance updates. Mr. Cohn asked about the budget for the TreeVitalize project. It was explained that TreeVitalize provides maintenance of the trees for the first two growing seasons after planting. This includes weekly watering, basic pruning, mulching, and basic tree care. NMRWA has been performing structural pruning of trees while the trees are still young. Ms. Marcinko commented that most of the tree problems are on properties without responsible owners. The responsibility falls on the Borough for maintenance. Ms. Marcinko commented that it appears that the problems attempting to be resolved by these proposed changes to the ordinance relate more to lack of resources than a need for a shift of the maintenance responsibility. Ms. Marcinko cautioned Council on losing the ability to hold property owners responsible to perform maintenance/removal of trees in cases where there is an owner that can be held responsible. In 2012, no monies were spent on maintenance or removal of trees. \$20,000 was budgeted. Ms. Ervin inquired as to how the Borough handles dangerous trees wherein there is not a responsible owner. Ms. Marcinko advised that it would be the responsibility of the Borough if it was determined that the tree posed an imminent threat to public safety. Ms. Macklin asked whether a program could be established to subsidize maintenance for homeowners. President Cohn commented on the ordinance in its present form and the possibility of including income guideline assistance from the Borough. Homeowners must follow the guidelines for tree maintenance with fines imposed for not doing so. More discussion ensued regarding the value of trees and the work being performed by the volunteers on the Committee. Ms. Marcinko commented on the value of their service to the Borough. Ms. Goodman believes the Borough should have some control over general maintenance of trees and a plan for removal of hazardous trees.

Mr. Crusan commented on the two other documents submitted to Council - Rules and Regulations for Arbor Work and the Heritage Tree Program document. Ms. Macklin asked if maintenance work in the winter is less expensive. Mr. Crusan stated that was not his experience. Ms. Moore commented on a resident's concern regarding a tree in the 1500 block of Center St. Mr. Crusan stated that he has inspected the tree on several occasions and that it is healthy and not at risk for failure. He will contact the resident. Ms. Macklin asked if there is an inventory of street trees. Mr. Crusan stated that there is but it is not a full inventory. President Cohn commented that there are many issues relating to trees on vacant property. Ms. Macklin does not believe the Borough should take responsibility for public trees. President Cohn expressed the need to develop a specific maintenance plan for implementation. Mr. Crusan suggested that a professional inventory be performed. The cost would be approximately \$5,000-\$7,000. Mr. Crusan will obtain quotes.

## **CAPITAL PLANNING**

### **1. Discussion – Capital Asset Planning and Policies Manual.**

Ms. Marcinko provided a brief summary of the proposed document. Council should have received the document in the agenda packet. Ms. Marcinko will provide the document in color which highlights those areas wherein Council action is needed.

Ms. Macklin asked about a capital asset inventory. Ms. Marcinko commented on the need to conduct an inventory as it has not been performed for several years. Ms. Macklin asked if department heads maintain an inventory of assets and Ms. Marcinko responded that they do. Ms. Macklin commented on the need for a repair and maintenance plan for capital assets. Ms. Macklin commented that this will result in more work for the Finance Department. President Cohn commented on the importance of being able to implement the plan and the need for it to be useful.

## **GENERAL MATTERS**

### **1. Approving Resolution No. 13-033 – Sponsoring Banner – Sr. Thea Bowman Catholic Academy.**

**Moved:** Ms. Trice

**Second:** Ms. Macklin

**All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.**

**Request for Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County (RAAC) to begin the process of acquiring the property located 789 Penn Avenue through the Vacant Property Recovery Program (VPRP).**

The condition of the building is extremely poor and a threat to public safety. The property is owned by Penn Lincoln Development, Inc. PHLF does not own the property. This action is needed in order to secure funding for demolition of the structure. Ms. Marcinko explained the action required is a motion to authorize the Council President to send a letter to the

Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County requesting that they begin the process of acquiring 789 Penn Avenue through the Vacant Property Recovery Program.

**Moved:** Eve Goodman

**Second:** Ms. Moore

**All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.**

Ms. Moore announced Mayor Thompson's wife Barbara Thompson won prizes on the Price is Right.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Being no further business, on motion by Ms. Trice, second by Ms. Ervin the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20 P.M.

---

Jason Cohn, Council President