WILKINSBURG BOROUGH
Council Work Session
February 19, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

President McCarthy-Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:37 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 (via FaceTime), Ms. Garrett, Mr. Taiani, Ms. Trice, Ms. Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck, Ms. Macklin, President McCarthy-Johnson. Mayor John A. Thompson and Cindy Bahn, Administrative Assistant to the Borough Manager was also present. A quorum was established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

President McCarthy-Johnson suggested that agenda item 4 regarding Capital Improvement Projects, be moved to the second item on the agenda to take advantage of Borough Engineer Dave Gilliland's presence as he could respond to any questions. Council agreed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None at this time

FINANCE

1. **Approving Resolution No. 14-023 – Application for funding for Hay St. Reconstruction.**

Moved: Ms. Trice **Second:** Mr. Taiani

Mr. Gilliland provided his opinion, and responded to questions and comments as follows:

- Mr. Gilliland informed Council that the Port Authority, Westmoreland Transit, and PHLF have provided letters of support, and he believes the application for CITF funding is strong.
- Mr. Shattuck asked about re-bricking, and commented that being more "clean and green" aligns with the historic preservation of the train station. Mr. Gilliland responded that the maximum CITF award is $250,000, and that brick is not as aesthetically pleasing as Council members may believe.

- Ms. Moore noted that last winter, bricks in another block of Hay Street completely lifted.
- Ms. Moore asked if Hay Street has the same problem as Rebecca. Mr. Gilliland responded that the problem is similar, but Rebecca is strictly residential.
- Ms. Macklin commented that South Avenue was paved with concrete, and asked about the life expectancy for asphalt. Mr. Gilliland responded that asphalt should last about twenty years.
- Ms. Macklin referred to Marlboro Avenue and stated that it has been done twice, and for that reason she hates the idea of asphalt on Hay Street.
- Mr. Shattuck asked about a hybrid approach, and suggested brick be used from Penn Avenue to South Avenue and asphalt for the remainder. Mr. Gilliland responded that the biggest problem is between Penn and South Avenues; he further noted that Hay Street is very wide, approximately 33 feet. He suggested that if Council wants to maintain an historic look, the asphalt could be stamped and painted to resemble brick, an expensive alternative.
- Ms. Macklin asked if there are any other grants the Borough can apply for to help with the costs of paving; Mr. Gilliland is not aware of any, and noted that this project does not qualify for CDBG funding.
- Ms. Grannemann asked about if the street would be asphalt over the bad sections only, and Mr. Gilliland responded the entire street surface would be completely new.
- Mr. Taiani questioned if Council can increase their request to include redoing sidewalks, lights, etc. The response from Mr. Gilliland was that yes, decorative lighting, etc. could be done. Mr. Taiani then suggested that Council apply for the full $250,000.
- Mr. Taiani asked about asphalt except for crosswalks, which could be brick. Mr. Gilliland noted that Forest Hills recently used stamped asphalt (to resemble brick) at crosswalks which mitigates the problems associated with two different materials.
- Mr. Taiani asked if Mr. Gilliland would return with options if the application is approved for $250,000, and Mr. Gilliland responded in the affirmative..
- Mr. Gilliland noted that the grant contract will simply state the dollars are to be used for Hay Street repairs, and that there is some flexibility in how the monies are spent..
- Ms. Macklin suggested a friendly amendment to increase request to $250,000, and there was no objection to adopting the resolution as amended.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

2. Status of Capital Improvement Projects.

Ms. Macklin asked when the bench in front of the Municipal Building would be installed. Ms. Bahn informed Council that a deposit has been paid and the bench is currently being fabricated. The bench will be installed when the weather is warmer.

Mr. Taiani asked about the Lincoln Highway Monument stone in front of the Municipal Building, particularly the area under plexiglas that is no longer readable. Ms. Moore asked if it can be brought inside. Ms. Bahn responded that she will investigate.

Ms. Macklin asked about the engineering study on the trestle and confirmation that the cost was $250,000. Mr. Lefebvre suggested that the WCDC would have updated information on this.

Mr. Taiani noted that the city has installed I-beams for traffic lights along Penn Avenue. He expressed his belief that Wilkinsburg has been short-changed as the Borough's lights are strung on wires. He asked how this happened, how to fix it and what the cost would be. Mr. Gilliland responded that the Borough asked PennDOT for more than what was actually received. Mr. Taiani suggested looking at the costs of new light fixtures (traffic signals and cross beam poles)and do a comparison. Ms. Macklin asked for the location of Penn DOT's office and the name of the person in charge of the office. Mr. Taiani suggested starting at the top with the Governor.

Ms. Macklin and Ms. Moore asked about the status of street signs. Mr. Gilliland responded that a study was conducted three years ago. The signs need to be consistent, and compliant with Federal regulations for reflectivity, font, capitalization, etc. Mr. Taiani noted his belief that the new Kelly Street sign was installed too high.

3. Approving Resolution No. 14-024 – Tax Collector Exoneration.

Several Council members questioned the purpose of this Resolution with the response from Ms. Macklin that Berkheimer is exonerated so that delinquent taxes can be sent to Portnoff Law Associates for collection.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

4. Monthly Financial Reports.

Ms. Macklin noted that she sent in a few questions. Ms. Grannemann would like to see a balance sheet and inquired as to the assets on hand. Mr. Lefebvre responded that there was over one million dollars in reserve at the end of last year. Mr. Taiani asked if there is a "rainy day" account and if the Borough is collecting interest. Ms. Macklin asked Council members to refer to page eight and asked why Public Officials insurance has increased so much. Ms. Bahn responded that all rates increased, and that in addition to the across the board increases, companies base rates on claims experience.

Announcements

Ms. Garrett announced the Sanctuary Project and distributed flyers about the upcoming Talent Show.

President McCarthy-Johnson announced that the Wilkinsburg High School Boys' Basketball team won against Monessen at Baldwin.

Mayor Thompson announced a Fraud and Theft Seminar on February 25 at Community Life, and a meeting on February 20, 2014 regarding warming/cooling centers at 3:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. This latter meeting is intended for community leaders to begin a planning process.

Karen Payne from the Wilkinsburg School Board asked to speak about a proposed joint RFP to identify a new delinquent tax collector. She apologized for not arriving in time for the public comment period. Ms. Payne noted that the current contract expires June 30, 2014. If the Borough and School District take no action, the contract automatically renews The Wilkinsburg School Board has drafted a Request for Proposals, but there has not been Council input. Several meetings have been held, and there will be two more on Wednesdays at 4:00 or 4:30 p.m. at 718 Wallace Avenue. Ms. Payne will send the draft RFP and President McCarthy-Johnson will distribute it to Council. Ms. Macklin will look at Portnoff Law Associates and other collectors, and asked if there is a penalty for termination. Ms. Payne is interested in how a "regular firm, not a law firm, would collect taxes and fees". Ms. Payne proposed the following schedule:

> March 15, 2014 - present Request for Proposals to the School Board for approval
> April 15, 2014 - due date for Request for Proposal.

She estimated that it will take two to three weeks to review proposals and identify 2 or 3 firms to interview. Ms. Payne questioned whether the current tax collector is not collecting taxes from 2003 to 2010, and noted that the school district collected nearly a million dollars in delinquent taxes.

President McCarthy-Johnson stated that she will send a pdf of the current Portnoff Law Associates contract for Council to review.

Black History Month concert will be held on February 27, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wilkinsburg High School Auditorium.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, on motion by Ms. Grannemann, with a second by Ms. Trice, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:47 P.M.

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Vanessa McCarthy-Johnson, Council President