

WILKINSBURGH BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
Council Work Session
February 18, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

President McCarthy-Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 6:40PM in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal Building, 605 Ross Avenue, Wilkinsburg, PA.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Council members present were Ms. Macklin, Mr. Lefebvre, Ms. Garrett, Mr. Taiani – absent, Ms. Trice, Vice-President Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck and President McCarthy-Johnson. Also present were Finance Director, Dave Egler, Interim Borough Manager, Amanda J. Ford and Mayor John Thompson – absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, President McCarthy-Johnson requested a moment of silence to remember victims of violent crimes.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Announced Mr. Taiani arrival at 6:47 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. David Adams – My comments would fall under the second public comment session.
2. Richard Bradford – My comments fall under the second public session as well.

FINANCE

1. Exoneration of 2014 Real Estate Taxes.
 - Berkheimer will turn over the collection of delinquent real estate taxes to MBM. The difference in the numbers between this year and last year is \$6,000.

Motion: Ms. Macklin

Second: Ms. Trice

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

2. Review of pre-audited 2014 Financial Report.

Dave Egler – Finance Director – This review is a pre-audit discussion; the auditors will be in next week to go over some preliminary processing before the actual audit is scheduled for March

12th 2015. The finance reports in front of you are actual numbers. If there are any questions, I will try to answer them for you. If need be for me to research the answer and get back to everyone I would be glad to do so.

- First report for review is the revenue.
 - Real Estate Tax – The numbers show that we were slightly over budget.
 - Delinquent Tax – We may play catch-up in collections due to the switch over from Portnoff, where there was a gap in collections. We are down in the collection amount, but I feel strongly that we will make that up in the collection by end of 2015.
 - Earned Income Tax collection under Act-32 has been great. Employers are required to withhold the EIT from the employees.

Mr. Lefebvre – Requested that the Director prepare information regarding the Business Privilege Tax for the next meeting.

- Further questions and discussion regarding the revenue report.

Ms. Macklin – Raised a question regarding the MSF fee collection being less from a previous year collection from last years' collection due to the tax amnesty collection.

Mr. Egler – Agreed with the question presented by Ms. Macklin. Tax Amnesty was offered in November.

President McCarthy-Johnson – We need to look at the tax amnesty again in conjunction with the School District because they will offer their tax amnesty at end year. We should consider a tax amnesty in May or June around tax refund time.

Mr. Egler – Informed Council that he has received a number of calls inquiring as to whether or not we will have another amnesty program.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Requested that the Finance Director make contact with the School District and check to see if they would be interested in doing a joint amnesty tax program.

Mr. Taiani – Madame President could we entertain a monthly payment for the MSF fees?

Mr. Egler – Financial Review moves on to the Expense Report

- Further discussion follows regarding various questions regarding expenditures.
 - Property Assessment Appeals – Court ordered refunds property owners.
 - Suggestions shared to aggressively challenge property assessment appeals.
 - School District seeks out the commercial property and the Borough seeks out residential property assessment appeals.

- Issues discussed about the updated software from Freedom System.
- DPW fuel (diesel) cost increase.
- Insurance cost increases (General Liability and Worker's Compensation).
- Safety Committee reactivated.

General Matters

1. Report – Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation (WCDC)

- Mr. Shattuck reports on the activities of the WCDC being very good. WCDC provides the update activities to the Planning Commission meetings and is preparing a CITF Grant for the train station renovations. As well as the Planning Commissions' submission of CITF Grant Application for the Ardmore Boulevard Gateway Project. Both entities providing letters of support for the projects.

2. Discussion regarding Talent Bank Applications

- President McCarthy-Johnson – Expressed her desire to discuss this line item tonight for appointments to the Authorities, Boards and Commissions. Positions are open and it's important that we fill these vacancies. Also, the Council Committees are just as important and we need to prepare ourselves for lengthy discussions regarding these boards.
- All Committee reports are due the first meeting in April.

3. Discussion regarding Abandoned Property Policy.

- Mr. Shattuck comments on the process of this topic. Questions regarding registration of abandoned properties through a Blight Busters Program. Included in the packet were two Ordinances, one from Penn Hills and the other a model sample. This registry holds people and financial institutions accountable for maintaining the property with a \$400 registration fee.
- Further discussion follows to put this policy in place.
- Implementation of the Ordinance is the first step that needs to take place.
- Policy that strengthen our solicitor to go after these properties.

Mr. Shattuck – We can have this Blight Buster Company come and present to Council their program. Kate Luxemburg has asked to present briefly on Estate Administration.

Kate Luxemburg – Provided information on Estate Administration, which is defined as selling houses owned by deceased people.

- Who becomes the owner of the property once the owner is deceased? (Owner's children, State of PA, Borough of Wilkinsburg, Creditors that have liens on the property)
- Property remains owned by the deceased owner.

Mr. Taiani – Are you proposing that the Borough opens an estate on behalf of deceased parties?

Ms. Luxemburg – No, that's not the function of a Borough government.

- Further information provided about the Estate Administration.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Ms. Luxemburg your handout is well written and most can follow it on their own. Would you please wrap up your presentation?

Ms. Luxemburg – Orphan's Court does not want to see a Redevelopment Authority as the administrator they want to see an attorney.

Mr. Taiani - Kate, let me ask a question. You are saying that this is all done by the Redevelopment Authority correct?

Ms. Luxemburg – That's a loose yes.

Mr. Taiani – The Redevelopment Authority hasn't met in two years and I am deeply concerned.

NEW BUSINESS

Acting Borough Manager – I met and interviewed two African American women today for the temporary services of Clerical/Secretary. I liked both candidates; however, my recommendation to council is that we hire the candidate affiliated with Carol Harris Staffing, LLC. Hourly rate is economically suited for our budget at a rate of \$11.00 per/hour, and billing rate at \$16.50, which covers employee's taxes and social security, etc. If council accepts my recommendation I would have this candidate start effective Monday, March 23, 2015.

Motion: Ms. Macklin

Second: Ms. Moore

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Acting Borough Manager – Once I have completed all the legalities and discussion with our solicitor, I will secure a signed agreement contract and submit to council for review by end business day on Friday.

- I have worked and prepared the Borough Manager's ad for publication along with Ms. Trice. My question to Council is whether or not if you would like a joint publication of the Finance Administrative Assistant position ad to be advertised with the Borough Manager's position.

Ms. Trice – Madame President I believe that both positions can be advertised, but not jointly. They would need to be separate advisements. Would Council like for a deadline date, or just to keep the ad open until we hire a candidate for the position.

Agreement to keep the ad open until position is filled. Also, arrangement for a P.O. Box has been established for confidentiality of the resumes and candidates for both Borough Manager and Finance Administrative Assistant position.

Ms. Moore – Ms. Trice, can you tell me if the Borough Manager’s ad included that the Borough is an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE).

Ms. Trice – Yes, that was also included in the ad.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Any other new business.

Mr. Shattuck – Ms. Garrett and I are working on a Neighborhood Allies Grant for \$75,000 dollars.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Moore – Reminder on the Black History Month movie series held in our local library.

Mr. Shattuck – Tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. the second community meeting will be held regarding Whitney Park. Nine-Mile Run has committed trees to Ferguson Playground.

Ms. Garrett – Reminder regarding ALOM Spring Conference April 9th – 11th; we are also being recognized as a Banner Community and it would be nice for a show of good presence from Council.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Reminder of dinner invite to Helen’s Restaurant sponsored by our Pension Group. Click on the link to RSVP.

Ms. Moore – On February 26th, the Annual Whitney M. Young, Jr. Banquet held at 6:00 p.m. at the Westin Convention Center, Downtown Pittsburgh.

Ms. Macklin – Saturday, February 28, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. the Wilkinsburg Democratic Committee will meet in the Council Chambers to interview candidates for judge elections.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Announced Ralph Watson Hosanna House recognizes local legends from Wilkinsburg, formal gathering and tickets are \$25.

Ms. Macklin – Reminder of event for Founders Day Base of Religions at 1:00 p.m.

President McCarthy-Johnson – Reminders about the sale of Pittsburgh Symphony tickets.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. David Adams – 119 White Pine Place Pittsburgh, PA 15221- Invited by Ms. Marita Garrett and I represent the Conscious Group Cooperation. We specialize in solving problems of critical issues. Surrounding communities are vulnerable to dangerous emergency threats.
2. Richard Bradford – 1315 Singer Place, member of Wilkinsburg School District – Requesting Council's interest in participating re-establishing the Junior Council Government Program late September/October. Hands on and to mock a Council Meeting as you are doing tonight.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Vanessa McCarthy-Johnson
President of Council