

CITY OF MCKEESPORT
WORKSHOP MEETING

WEDNESDAY

6:30 P.M.

JUNE 2, 2021

The Work Session portion of the Council Meeting was called to order on the above-stated date by President of Council Richard Dellapenna.

Secretary James read the following proposed Bills:

Bill #32 - Introduced by Jim Barry – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Authorizing the Proper City Officers to Execute All Documents Necessary to Enter Into a Managed Services Subscription Agreement with AEC Group, LLC for the Phone System.

Mayor Cherepko said AEC is a local business right down where World Auto Electric used to be. They are the ones that did our phone system a couple years ago and this is just to renew the Contract for their services. Our other one was very outdated and we had problems all the time, so they have done a good job for us.

President Dellapenna asked for questions or comments and there were none.

Bill #33 –Introduced by Jill Lape – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Amending and Supplementing Ordinance #1835 of the City of McKeesport Approved January 7, 1949, and as Amended by Ordinance From Time to Time Relative to the Establishment and Maintenance of City Employees Pension, Annuity, Insurance and Benefit Fund or Funds, to Amend Certain Provisions of the Pension Plan or Program Applicable to Certain Employees of Said City, and to Amend the Survivor Benefit of Such Pension Plan or Program.

Mayor Cherepko said this Bill, along with 35 is the Pension Funds. We had to clarify some language with the bargaining units. Like for example, there was one in there which I think was absolutely horrible. If an employee was working and they hit their 20 years, which is fully vested for a full pension, if they continue to work like so many of our employees do, if something would have happened and they would have passed away while they were working there would have been no spousal benefit. But if they would have retired and was collecting a pension there

would have been. So, we didn't want to penalize employees that are just working beyond their 20 years so we cleared the language up to make sure and it was literally no effect on the pension fund at all because I think it was always interrupted that is the way it was supposed to be.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mayor and asked for questions on Bill 33 and there were none.

Bill #34 – Introduced by Brian Evans – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Awarding the Bid for Demolition/Clearance to Minniefield Demolition Services, LLC, and Authorizing the Proper City Officials to Execute All Documents Necessary to Enter Into An Agreement with Minniefield Demolition Services, LLC, for an Amount Not to Exceed \$219,850.

Mayor Cherepko said this is a CDBG Demolition Project. It's not just demo, this is really part of a critical component of redevelopment, of attracting new businesses. This particular contract targets all of the properties that you see from 9th Street to 13th Street, from Walnut Street to Jenny Lind. So, when you are driving down Walnut Street and you see all the vacant hill, which also kind of helps in a way where we don't like people seeing that on our main drags, but the more important part is that's the area where businesses are trying to purchase. Vegely came in, that's where the new construction company, Cupelli Construction, they came in and built a new building. We have someone interested right now in the parcel that we do own and they are looking to work out an agreement and the other properties we want to have them all demolished and ready, shovel-ready and in our hands. So, in addition to us demolishing these properties the Redevelopment Authority is taking ownership as well. So, when someone comes to us and says I need an acre or two we say we do have it because obviously any of our large areas in the City of McKeesport are not owned by us. They are RIDC or some developers, private developers, so this will give us the opportunity even if we have to put a few blocks together and vacate roads, as long as we have easements for utilities and what not. This will give us potential to develop all that. I truly believe that from 13th Street all the way down to the Daily News, well not the Daily News, but 9th Street for the most part you start getting into town, we are going to have that developed in the next couple years. There's no question in my mind once we obtain ownership for these properties. Like I

said, for the longest time we were knocking on doors and we still are pounding and recruiting people but there's people calling me every day. The unfortunate part is we can't help some. Someone wants 5 acres right now. They are ready to move in and build a brand-new building, we don't have it. It's a good problem to have that people are so eager to come here but we are trying to get these parcels together so we said let's see if we can do this. I'm excited about this project. This part took a lot longer because it had to clear the State Historical Preservation Organization, for how many months until we finally had clearance and went out for bid. This was the lowest bid, this is Minniefield. Minniefield did our other large ones. Just so everyone is very clear, especially on counsel, for all transparency, Minniefield Construction, kind of split, they split, the two brothers are now separate. There was Jaydel and Odel and that's why they had issues finishing our contract off. We still have 50 homes in the City that are approved for demolition and are going to be coming down. We finally got those two gentlemen to sit down. I told them we need a resolution and they are basically taking 25/25 homes to finish the contract. This particular brother is Jaydel. He is the one that applied for this. They've done a good job for us until they had their little falling out, really, they had 3 crews out sometimes dropping houses, they were moving right along. So, I think this price was very good with everything that is going on. We were hoping to be under \$300,000 and we've come in \$80,000 under. I try to estimate a little high so I don't get surprised by things so in all reality I was trying to be below \$250,000, worst case scenario \$300,000, so we are happy to be at \$219,000.

President Dellapenna asked, are they still doing any demolition here, and how many houses do they have left? Mayor Cherepko said yes, they are, 50. The one brother is taking 26 the other is taking 24, they did it based on money but it ended up being proximity of houses. Regardless, it's so they can both walk away with the same amount of money left in the contract. They do an incredible job, they really do, so that's where we are at with this particular contract.

President Dellapenna asked if anyone had any questions and there were none.

Bill #35— Introduced by Jim Barry – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Amending and Supplementing Ordinance #87-22 of the City of McKeesport, Approved September 24, 1987 and as Amended by

Ordinance from Time to Time Relative to the Establishment and Maintenance of the City Employees' Pension, Annuity, Insurance and Benefit Fund or Funds, to Amend Certain Provisions of the Pension Plan or Program Applicable to Certain Employees of said City, and to Amend the Survivor Benefit of Such Pension Plan or Program.

Mayor Cherepko said this is as I said earlier.

President Dellapenna asked if anyone had questions regarding Bill 35 and there were none.

President Dellapenna called for Council Reports.

Council Reports

Mrs. Nesbit – I don't have any at this time.

Mr. Evans – nothing.

Mr. Barry – I'd just like to report two things and the Mayor and I have talked about both of them. The first is I'm getting some constituent complaints about parking on sidewalks throughout the City. I noticed it mostly on Walnut and Fifth Avenue when I travel and my understanding it's moving into the neighborhoods too. So, like in Grandview and Fawcett Plan and other places, people just find it fashionable to park on the sidewalk. I mean it causes so many problems besides people can't walk up and down the sidewalk, they got to go into the street, it's a safety issue, plus it's busting up the sidewalks and the curbs bad and, quite honestly, it looks like hell and I don't know how we enforce that or what we have to do to make that not happen but we got to start tagging these cars. I'm not saying go out and give everyone a ticket, give them a warning and if they keep doing it, ticket them. But something has to be done because it's like the Wild, Wild West, people think they can park wherever. Like, on Walnut Street, some people park like 6" from the front door, it's crazy.

Mayor Cherepko said if I may Mr. Barry, I don't even warn Walnut Street anymore. We just go out and give tickets. We send them out. We probably go out once a month when it starts getting out of control, I send them out again and we ticket. I think last time we ticket 30 some vehicles.

Mr. Barry said I counted like 12 the other day from Walnut, just on Walnut.

Mayor Cherepko said we had 30 some the one time we went out, a couple of them were businesses as well and I said I don't know what to tell you. I mean, you literally are parking underneath a sign that says no parking on the sidewalk. We try to be as business friendly as we can but it's an issue. I don't disagree one bit and it's frustrating and it's starting to really carry over into the neighborhoods. In the neighborhoods it really gets messy because sometimes you have a sidewalk with maybe a two foot section of grass and now that grass is becoming mud and they are tracking mud all up and down the streets. So, I definitely see the issue or the problem there. When we get into the neighborhoods, we will go one neighborhood at a time and give warnings first and then when the warnings don't work that's where we will head.

Mr. Barry said I think it's disrespectful too.

Mayor Cherepko said it's a very serious problem for anyone physically disabled. I mean wheelchair access, especially on Walnut Street. If you are in a wheelchair or a motorized chair, whatever the case may be, it's definitely a concern without question so when you get a complaint like on a particular area, just send it on to me and I will have our Traffic Inspector go out. Our Traffic Inspector will be free from school for the next two months which is good because he gets tied up in the mornings and afternoons for schools. He still does things all day long but it will be easier now to say I want you hitting this, I want you hitting that, we are doing it right now with speeding, stop signs, people just ignore them, it's the reality of it.

Mr. Barry said I see it. It's egregious on Walnut and Fifth. That's the two places I see it most and that's the biggest thoroughfare. Like you said, people are riding down and seeing other folks park on the sidewalk they are like heck why can't I do that in my neighborhood.

Mayor Cherepko said I lived in Fawcett Plan my entire life and I never had anyone park on the sidewalk and all of a sudden everyone seems to be doing it. Part of it might be they don't want their cars hit, roads are narrow, but I can tell you in the 70's the cars were not any smaller than the cars today.

Mr. Barry said the other thing I wanted to mention is related and I see Tom Rosso here also, I don't know who's purview this is but the streetlights, there's so many

streetlights in the City that are out right now and there's a lot of dark areas. I notice at night when I am driving, I think because I can't see at night well, it just gets so dark and I look up and there will be two and three streetlights on certain streets that are out. So, if we can pay attention to that, I don't know if that's the Police Department. I mean I don't want to pile on anything because that's a lot.

Mayor Cherepko said those are the types of details Rosso will go out in the evening and do it s well, but our Police can. I was actually just earlier this week talking about we have an officer or two who might be on light duty and that would be a good job for them to go out and ride around and mark down poles. Duquesne Light gets a little overwhelmed if we put too many in at once but that's not our problem. Our electrician gets upset at me at times but I tell him I don't care if we have 100, send 100 of them.

Mr. Barry said he's shaking his head; he doesn't get upset with hit.

Mayor Cherepko said one thing I will tell you is Duquesne Light, when you get the report over to them, they will try to turn it over in 3 days, 3-5 days.

Mr. Barry said that's fair.

Mayor Cherepko said so if you give them 200, then they start panicking as well, but there's no reason why we can't go out and at least give them 50-100 a week and see where they are at until we get this right.

Mr. Barry said that's all I have.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mr. Barry.

Mr. Soles – nothing.

Mrs. Lape – nothing.

ADJOURNMENT:

President Dellapenna said that concludes the Work Session portion of the meeting.

Mayor Cherepko said if you want me to just chat, then I won't say anything during the meeting?

President Dellapenna said sure.

Mayor Cherepko said obviously if you have been out to the park, you might see how the trail is coming along. The access to the pavilions. I hope when you guys are running into people, I can tell you people are grabbing me and it looks great, you guys are doing this, you're doing that. So, I thank Council obviously for all your support. It's something to be proud of. Our part is a tremendous asset to the City and people come from all over. You had a baseball tournament this weekend and it was tough to get through with the rain but they made it through – 60 teams. Now put this in prospective. When you have 60 teams, from outside communities and on those teams are multiple communities. These aren't like when we played ball when everyone from McKeesport played with everyone. I mean you go on a team and you might have someone from South Fayette and North Strabane and some of the other, you have these areas that are no different than McKeesport, White Oak and East Allegheny, and you have players. So, when you start thinking about the amount of communities that came to this park with a positive experience, I always say you can't put a value on what that means. I think you have heard me say it, if I've said it once I've said a thousand times. One of our largest obstacles we have in the City is the media. I mean the bottom line is when 2, 4 and 11 come out here to cover every negative thing that happens that becomes the perception of what people have of McKeesport. I can't tell you how many emails I have received; Facebook messages; and everything else, some from former McKeesporters, saying I was so proud of people from my City. People saying, I couldn't believe that was McKeesport. It's so nice for them to see the side of McKeesport I know is what people are saying. Other people come up to me and said beautiful park, it's a great tournament, are you going to have another tournament. So, those are the things we started doing a couple years ago and it's one of those things that sometimes it cost a little money when we call our guys out with all the rain and make sure the fields are ready, try to get them in condition, but I look at it as an expense that really falls in under the marketing type part of where you can't put a value on what it means for someone to change a perception and say, well listen, that might be what you see on the news, but I was down on McKeesport and the tournament was wonderful; the park was beautiful; we can't wait to go back. That could have been someone that may have been scared to come to this tournament because people only know what they see. So, we are excited for that.

There's going to be another tournament, this one is going to be softball tournament in September. That will be the next tournament and they will probably have 40-50 teams. That is going to be the first, the 11th and 12th of September, and that is going to be our first Jamie Brewster Filotei Memorial Tournament. So, the proceeds are going to go, they are trying to form a 501©(3). If you will remember, Jamie was responsible for starting Christmas Adopted Families with the School Teachers. They carried that on without her in December and it was not easy, the first Christmas without her. Last year, I think they adopted I think 10 or 11 families and when I say adopted 10 or 11 families, I am not talking giving a child a gift. I am talking I had the privilege of going out and delivering some gifts to the houses and I am talking 50 gallon garbage bags already wrapped for kids. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed it and many people didn't know who I was which even it made it more enjoyable because I didn't want anyone to think I was out there as Mayor I was just out there helping the School Teachers. So, we are going to try to fundraise for them, not only for Christmas but they want to try to do a Scholarship and do other things. So, when we had the opportunity for this softball program and they said we'd like to do something for the City, as nice as that was and as much as I appreciated it, I said well, we are going to continue to invest thanks to RAD and other funding into our parks but I will tell you what we could do. Jamie was very symbolic of this City. When you think of McKeesport you think of Jamie. So, I said why don't we do this and indirectly you are going to help families that may not have Christmas without these individuals and things like that. So, last year they did 10 or 11 families. They fundraised, they went to the Community Fund, Luethel sits on the Community Fund, as well as myself and Mr. Gergely and other representatives and they received money there. They had some private donations that wanted to be anonymous. One guy gave \$2,500 towards it. So, and you know the teachers put a boatload of money into it. So, that will be in September. That will be our next tournament and we are excited with regard to that. I had the privilege to sit down at the tournament for the championship game on Monday night. Tommy was there as well and the Senator came up after he was done at the gym and we got to sit on the wonderful Jamie bench and watch a championship game that our Police Chief was coaching. They did lose and he's not here to make fun of but they lost in the last inning actually. It was a good game watching those kids, those young men compete. It was the best seat in the house without question.

Mr. Barry said Mike I wanted to mention I was at a Graduation Party on Sunday night and three people came up to me separately whose kids played in that tournament, one was from Irwin, one was from North Huntingdon and one was from Latrobe and they said the field, Jamie's field, was incredible. A lot of people didn't even know that was there and they said how nice it was and how well things were run and how nice the park looked and it was good to hear good stuff.

Mayor Cherepko said those fields, obviously, a lot of people didn't even think at the time that those fields could be built there. Senator Brewster who sat in my seat at the time believed that they would and I was sitting up there with you and supporting everything that he wanted to do and it is what it is today and we are very proud of that. We will continue to invest in our park and to make the upgrades that we can. We are actually looking to get like an exercise facility out there. Tommy has been in contact with a few different businesses that have this equipment. They have them elsewhere, very durable equipment as well. So, anything that we can do to beautify the park. All the structures in the park, the structures, pavilions, now have addresses so people can gps them. We never had that before when they are looking around.

We did secure funding to pretty much clear out the blight on the Minerva block. So, we are going to. We didn't go out to bid yet. We are going to be going out to bid for that. We are hoping to expedite that process. You have some vacant buildings down there which will help that block. Now, once that block goes away; once the block from City hall goes away; everything else is almost developed in our downtown which, three years ago, wasn't looking very good. We will still have the eyesore of Midtown, which is there, the Plaza, but other than that, by the end of this year I am hoping that's really the only blight in the downtown area on Fifth Avenue. We are excited. John Stark, once again with the Executive Building, has tenants lined up for all his storefronts. I had a young lady call me today, her and a few investors, are looking to purchase the building which was right next to the Executive Building and which was most recently the Pool Gardens. I explained to her that we are not looking to have a bar or restaurant or Club or anything like that right now. She understood that and she called me back today after I talked to her a week ago and they have some other things planned that will fit in there as well.

Our other demolition project, as I said, they are going to continue. There is a possibility because of a lot of things I want to get done before September we may cancel July's meeting and do it the first week of August because August is the month, we don't have a meeting. So, between CDBG and the way that works out, we want to really not only go out to bid and get some things in we want to rewrite some Ordinances, we can have the public at the next meeting in case we need a Public Hearing. I didn't want to do a Public Hearing remotely. I didn't want to get into that and dance around any issues that someone can look at and allege that maybe we weren't transparent. So, because there's some things we need to straighten out, I am thinking if we push it back and give us two months, rather than three, I don't want to wait all the way until September to award a bid. We probably won't have enough time to award a bid by July anyways. There's a chance we will do that. So, if you have plans in August and can't be here it's understandable. You guys can call in as a Council person because I do apologize for that but I just wanted to give you a heads up if you didn't have plans that I am really leaning towards doing that as long as we can get the things accomplished that I like to get accomplished over the next month, month and a half to be set up for that meeting.

Paving, our crews are out and we paved, obviously the new parking lot by the ballfield. We have some smooth overlays we are going to do.

CDBG paving we are going to award a contract for that. I'd like to award that contract for CDBG. I don't think we can get that done by July's meeting so that's another reason to push it in August rather than wait until September and maybe they will get it done before the winter.

So, there's a lot of things that we have going on. Don't forget the one change, Good Neighbor Day is on the 16th, which will be down here on Fifth Avenue. Last year we had to cancel because of the Pandemic. We are excited to get that up and running again. I think we have a lot of vendors coming and businesses from downtown.

The Fishing Derby, the kids Fishing Derby will be June 12th. The Fishing Derby will be on June 12th as well. It will be nice to see the kids gets out and do some fishing.

We will also, typically we start our Concerts in the Park on Father's Day. We are delaying them a couple weeks. By the Fourth of July I think we are going to be ready for our Concerts in the Park. We are going to run a normal International Village in August. Labor Day we are having a big weekend planned for Labor Day, lots of different bands to go along with the Ribfest. We have some special treats for Labor Day.

Movie in the Park will be June 25th. I bought glasses two years ago but clearly never use them.

It's not a City event but it kind of is. The Great Pittsburgh Soapbox Derby takes place on June 20th, Father's Day.

So, that's a lot of things that we have lined up. If you have anything on top of your mind for me.

Mr. Barry asked has the Concert schedule been finalized or released yet?

Mayor Cherepko said no, Dan is finishing things up.

Mayor Cherepko said that concludes my Report Mr. President

President Dellapenna said thank you Mayor. Alright, that concludes the work session portion of the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette James
City Clerk and Clerk of Council

APPROVED:

Richard Dellapenna
President of Council

/das