

CITY OF MCKEESPORT
WORKSHOP MEETING

WEDNESDAY

6:30 P.M.

JANUARY 6, 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 #1 - Introduced by Brian Evans – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Establishing Regular Meetings of City Council for the Year 2021 and January 2022.

President Dellapenna asked are we just on Wednesdays? Mayor Cherepko said yes, I don't even think, I don't believe we even had to move anything. Annette, do you recall? I think it's just the first Wednesday in every month. Secretary James said it is the first Wednesday of every month except for Monday, January 3, 2022. Mayor Cherepko said yes, for the record that's because the Charter, 2021 is an Election year for us so in every even year we are required by the Charter to hold a Reorganization Meeting on the first Monday in January. So, we will hold a Reorganization Meeting that Monday and also just conduct general business and get it done in one night.

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

Bill #2 –Introduced by Luethel Nesbit – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Authorizing the Proper City Officials to Execute Any Documents Necessary to Transfer the Property Known as 0308-M-00129, Located at 626 Market Street, to the Redevelopment Authority of the City of McKeesport.

Mayor Cherepko said this is the property on the corner of 7th and Market. I believe this is the old Eagles property. If you recall years ago, I think that property got put in the names of the McKeesport Preservation and the City of McKeesport. That has been resolved now and it's the City of McKeesport and obviously we want to get it into the Redevelopment Authority's hands for development. I'm just doing that on a whim but I think that's exactly what happened. Solicitor Elash said yes, I am almost positive. Mayor Cherepko said it's definitely the Eagles lot

and we are getting it in our hands in order to, we have someone interested in purchasing it.

President Dellapenna asked for any questions or comments on Bill #2 and there were none.

Bill #3– Introduced by Keith Soles – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Requiring the Purchaser of Any Real Estate Within the City of McKeesport to Apply for a Certificate of Occupancy, Within Ninety (90) Days of Purchasing Said Real Estate.

Mayor Cherepko said we wanted to just clarify a little bit in regard to occupancy. Once again, we do have an ongoing issue where people purchase property and they don't apply for occupancy. So, we want to make sure that if for some reason someone does sneak in without following proper protocol. That we have a little more leverage to help remedy the situation.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mayor.

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

Bill #4– Introduced by Jill Lape – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Establishing Official Stop Signs on Versailles Avenue and Freemont Street to Regulate Traffic Upon the Removal of Outdated Traffic Signals in the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

Mayor Cherepko said this is right at Craig's Funeral Home on Versailles. As you are aware, probably all of us here, that light, we've had stop signs there for many, many years. It's not as simple as just removing those. You need traffic studies and things like that. We now have approval from the State that we can officially remove those traffic signals. That will be a four-way stop sign, which is what's in there now.

President Dellapenna said we are going to have to make a Motion to Amend the Agenda and then we will go to Bill #5.

Bill #5– Introduced by Keith Soles – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, approving a Reverse Subdivision Request from Glenn & Louise Marrow to Combine 380-C-254 and 380-C-255. The Combined Lot

Will be Known as 2210 Cronemeyer Street, McKeesport, PA 15132. The Property Exists in an R-3 Zoning District.

Mayor Cherepko said Cronemeyer is in Highland Grove neighborhood. This was a house. I believe this is a house we did tear down and the neighbor has purchased it and now doing a reverse subdivision, which is really good and that's what we try to encourage our residents to do but now they are going to do a reverse subdivision and combine it into one lot. In the City if you have two separate lots and there's no house on the lot you are not allowed to build and do things on it but once you are combined into one lot that allows you to put fences up or build a shed or garage and things like that.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mayor and asked for questions and comments on Bill #5 and there were none.

Bill #6– Introduced by Luethel Nesbit – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania Approving a Reverse Subdivision Request from NLCP Industry PA, LLC to Combine 307-C-110 and 307-C-2. The Combined Lot will be Known as 511 Industry Road, McKeesport, PA 15132. The Property Exists in a I-U Zoning District.

Mayor Cherepko said this is a reverse subdivision, Pure Penn, as we are very well aware, had a very large addition put on with what they are doing in their operations and this is taking those lots and combining them into one. Of course, it's recommended by the Planning Commission as well. We are very excited about what is going on as far as that goes. I am not sure if any of you had the opportunity to watch the interview of Gabe Perlow, CEO of Pure Penn. Pure Penn has been sold. It's now called TrueLeaf. They are a major company. I think their main base is out of Florida and they are really looking to really make a very large footprint here up North and specifically not only here in Pennsylvania but here in McKeesport. So, we are very excited about the addition they put on now and I think they are even looking to grow more than that. So, we are very excited about what the future holds with the company, the number of jobs that can be brought to this community as well and, of course, when you have jobs coming into the community it's an opportunity to have people say hey, I could live within five minutes of work and find houses. Because, we all know here in McKeesport we have nice neighborhoods we can move into with nice houses and the reality of

it is because sometimes the location you take those same houses and put them in other areas and you'd pay double. So, it's a chance to have a payment in most cases that would be lower than rent yet own your own property and things like that. So, I think we all understand how it becomes a true domino, snowball effect, so to say when you bring jobs in and that's where it all starts. We are very excited with that.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mayor and asked for questions and comments and there were none.

President Dellapenna called for Council Reports.

Council Reports

Mrs. Nesbit – No, I don't really have a report except to encourage people that the crisis has started and I continue to hear elderly people say they paid for new furnaces when they don't have to. They just need to apply to Leap Crisis to get the furnaces. So, please remind the people that you know before they go out and spend their hard-earned money on it to first call the Leap Crisis Program.

Mayor Cherepko said thank you Lu. President Dellapenna said thank you Mrs. Nesbit.

Mr. Evans – Nothing, thank you.

Mr. Barry – Nothing to report.

Mr. Soles – Nothing.

Mr. Brown – Nothing Mr. President, sir.

Mrs. Lape – Nothing.

President Dellapenna said thank you.

President Dellapenna said that would conclude the meeting unless the Mayor wants to speak. Mayor Cherepko said yes, we have 15 more minutes before the meeting starts. I will just talk a little bit now and then I won't have to do a Mayor's Report. So, we can get it done very quickly once the official meeting starts at 7.

Some of the things that we have going on, obviously from a development perspective we are very, very excited for 2021. There's been a lot of things that have been a long time coming and some things like we just mentioned with the Pure Penn and the growth and expansion, major expansion. Just to put it in perspective, they are basically just on their addition they have down there now that's currently being finished up, you are talking four times the operation size of their original plant and also looking to purchase more in addition to that. So, the potential down there is incredible.

The downtown area in the City of McKeesport, I mean obviously we know we have development down on East Fifth that's still going to take place. You know, the Christy Park Section, we have a couple things in the works as well. But you know when you look at the downtown area and I know I have said this numerous of times but when you really look you know, three or four years ago, cause people tend to just naturally have short-term memories, I really don't think people remember all the vacancies and all the blight that was in the downtown area. In 2021, although things were put into place for 2020, maybe even 2019 a little bit. But, just to put it in perspective, just in the immediate downtown, we are all very well aware of the Tube City Center, which is the old Daily News Building. We are going to have signage coming very soon. The parking garage next to it thanks to the Grant from Senator Brewster we are going to be ready to go out to bid for contract work on that parking garage. I would think we will award it, in all reality, probably March's meeting. We will be coming to Council with bids so you will have the parking garage getting finished up. The Port Authority is going to be closing while they work on this transportation center. You are going to see fencing put up because they are putting a few million dollars into the transportation center which is right there.

We know the Peoples Building that was open and we are literally searching for some tenants. The building right next to the Peoples Building, My Foot has started a new business. I had the opportunity to go down last week and talk with them and it's more of a very small scale of type of Ollie's where they buy, go in and buy things bulk or buy the pallet and then they come in and sell them at discount prices. It's a nice little store to have right there on Fifth Avenue.

The Executive Building, not sure if you have had a chance to go by the Executive Building. I think Mr. Stark had a goal of 2020 and New Year's Eve of 2020 they finished the actual lighting and the signage out front above that now reads "Executive Building." It goes really well along with the steel pillars look because he didn't replace the brick all the way up. Gives it more of a modern look to be quite honest with you. The signage is set to where it actually says the Executive Building is off to the side and the reason why is because there's individual panels that can be moved so that tenants inside the building, not on the store fronts, but the ones you can't see would be able to identify themselves on that sign as well. There are also four tenants that are ready as soon as we get moving. They are going to be coming in right there in those store fronts which is only going to leave just a couple store fronts immediately that aren't going to be filled. Like we talked about earlier, I hate using the same terminology over and over but when you talk about a domino effect, you talk about a snowball effect, I think once people see these coming in you are going to see much more movement where people have the opportunity to be right here on Fifth Avenue and get a location like that right there a nice store front in the Executive Building. We also talked to a couple tenants, possible governmental tenants, which would bring many bodies, many people I should say through town, and when you have people you need other types of things, eateries and things like that. One of Mr. Stark's tenants, I am not sure what he said public and what not, so I don't want to ruin anything, one is an eatery that we will be able to go and get takeout. The other one is another type of coffee shop type idea thing and the other two that was a spot where there was a barber, we will be having a barber come in and there's another one as well that's coming in.

So, that's just right off the top right there in that particular area. You go a block down and of course you have the Jaison's building which has been empty and we are really moving along with that owner. I can't get into details too much because of litigation but we are hoping to have that building come down this year as well.

Going the other way, toward City Hall, because of our MPP Project, the entire block across from City Hall will be removed, which happens to also be right across the street from the transportation center. That should be getting done in 2021 as well.

When you go up Walnut Street as well, we have the construction company, KCA Construction, corner from the Tube City Beer Distributor. You can see that building is pretty much almost finished at this point. We also have a buyer for the property that's about two blocks up that the Redevelopment Authority currently owns and they are working out a Sales Agreement and of course, Vegely came up the road from there. The Redevelopment Authority is in the process of getting in their possession all of the properties along that corridor from Ninth Street all the way to Thirteenth.

In addition, we have a demolition project that we will be coming to City Council with, no I think we already approved that actually, or no, maybe we have to go out to bid. I'm getting confused now, but the bottom line is all those houses on that hillside from Thirteenth Street down to Ninth, oh yea, we are waiting for the State Historical Preservation Organization to approve some of that and then we will be going out to bid.

So, there's really a lot of good things happening in downtown area. Of course, we have the Penn McKee Project in which we really are starting to spur some interest. We are in the process now of securing a loan which I believe Council may approve for us to go after that would really let us tie up all the loose ends in that building as far as getting rid of part of the building that is absolutely dilapidated and in securing the building from the standpoint of not looking like a blighted building on the outside until we can get a developer to move forward.

You can see the amount of movement that has been made. We forget that you had the Executive Building empty; the Peoples Building empty; a parking garage that's been empty forever; the Daily News building was empty for quite a long time. Because I will tell you, we will continue to say this as we always have knocked on doors recruiting people, at the same time we have people knocking on our doors. I hate to say this because I think things were different but the problem is, we don't have enough land in our possession. I mean, there's no question we have lost some development opportunities because we don't have the land available for what they may have needed for whatever company they were looking to bring in.

So, between that right there along on Walnut Street as well, from Thirteenth Street all the way down and up Walnut Street, Fifth Avenue especially, it's going

to be a totally different look from what you had seen just two or three years ago. So, we are very much looking forward to development on that end of things.

A lot of other exciting things such as upgrades to our Trail that we will have. That's been a long time coming. The Trail in Renzie Park, Renzie Park itself is just such a tremendous asset. The Trail, the amount of people that use that is unbelievable and that's 12 months a year. I mean they are out there in the winter months. If you have a day where it's not snowing or it's not raining, and sometimes even when it is raining or snowing, you will see some people out there. But to be able to upgrade that and to be able to really pull together, the Lickert Family as well, being the Trail was named after Mr. Lickert, for us to be able to rededicate that and open it up so that our residents and surrounding communities as well can utilize it as well and enjoy it even more because it will be pretty much a brand new condition, something exciting for the upcoming year.

Obviously, the December month has been one of the snowiest ones for quite sometime here for the City of McKeesport and Christmas Eve we were out and it was almost like chasing, fighting a win-less battle so to say. Our men were out for 12 hours all through the night and hit every street and threw lots of salt down and unfortunately the snow came Christmas morning and covered it all again and then we ran into a situation where I don't know what else to say we were short on salt and we had to hold salt back for a couple days. It wasn't our doing to an extent. I mean, I am not passing the blame, at the end of the we didn't have it, but just so everyone understands the reality of it when we put an order of salt in, we expect to have it 3-5 days. We went over 3 weeks without getting our orders in and I am not talking a small order I am talking a large order. So, we did have a couple rough days there. But it wasn't because people weren't out working. I was out with the men throughout the night and I could tell you all night long it was a battle with the snow. We have both salt bins for the most part filled right now. Keep this in mind, we talked about short-term memories earlier, this administration and this City Council choose to build another salt bin about 3 or 4 years ago and I think people don't realize that I could tell you we've been here 9 years now, starting our tenth year, we basically put down twice, double the amount of salt of past administrations. I know some people might not realize it. Some people unfortunately think that they need to come out of their house and their roads be crystal clear and just wet but that's just unrealistic. Although if we

would have had salt that we did not have to hold back for an emergency because you have to understand we weren't out of salt we just had to be careful. If you have a fire, if you have accidents, things like that where our firemen are out putting out a fire and you have water everywhere, of course water turns to ice, we need salt, we need all this to keep everyone safe, those things tend to happen. You know, you live in Southwestern Pennsylvania. We have more streets than any community around us, it's not even close, of the communities most near us. If you live in the City of Pittsburgh, on their secondary streets sometimes they tell you they will get to them within 72 hours. We pretty much try to get to ours, even though they might not be totally wet, we get to them within 24. The reality of it is sometimes you might have to drive through snow for a block or two. That's the goal, get through the neighborhoods, get all the main arteries through the neighborhood, get them clear so that if you can just get off your block or two and get on these roads you can make it all the way from if you live up in the 7th Ward we try to get Jenny Lind clean, you get Bailey clean, so now if you live between there you need to make it to Jenny Lind and then you can take Evans to Versailles or down through Meyer Park. That's the strategy that goes in. No different than Grandview or any other area. But sometimes they may not hit the street and of course hills. We try to get all the hills when we can. So, just bear with us and you know the men are doing a tremendous job. Don't forget because we are a City that's just so financially, we are not financially stable. We keep filling deficits and things like that and we are doing more with less and that's in every single department that we have. Public Works is probably down over 10 people, which would be over 33% of the total Department. I came in and there was over 30 people, I think there was 30 or 31 full-time people and in Public Works we are sitting with 20 right now. We would love to have 30, I would like to have 50 or 60. I would like to have 90 police officers, but we are around the 40 mark in Police Officers. We were up over 50. So, all the Departments are doing more with less but we are now at the point where we realize we don't want to affect the level of service that we provide to the residents that we know they are so deserving of so we will continue to do what we can. We feel we can be efficient with what we have but I didn't want to hide from the whole issue of the salt issue. But that's the reality of how it works. You are supposed to have it within 3-5 days and we went 3 weeks without having anything delivered, almost 3 weeks, it was the upwards of between 2 and 3 weeks. I didn't want to exaggerate

but it was between 2 and 3 weeks before we actually got any and we had to beg for that to be quite honest with you. Part of it was because of the salt that we had ordered from last year that we didn't use and in full transparency they wanted to ship our salt from Cleveland rather than where we normally get it up in Elizabeth. That became a problem. We had to fight with them to move our order down from Cleveland, OH down to the Elizabeth plant and that's how we ended up getting the salt when we did but it wasn't an easy thing to get accomplished.

Other than that, if anyone doesn't have any questions for me, I think we can just start the meeting and that will conclude by report. Jennifer is going to have to change the tape.

ADJOURNMENT:

President Dellapenna said 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

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