

CITY OF MCKEESPORT
WORKSHOP MEETING

MONDAY

6:30 P.M.

APRIL 6, 2022

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 #18 - Introduced by Timothy Brown – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Proclaiming the Month of April 2022 as “Fair Housing Month” in the City of McKeesport.

President Dellapenna asked for questions or comments on Bill #18 and there were none.

Bill #19 –Introduced by Jim Barry – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Awarding the Bid for the McKeesport Rising Demolition Project Phase 6 to Betters Company, Inc., and Authorizing the Proper City Officials to Execute all Documents Necessary to Enter Into an Agreement with Betters Company, Inc. for an Amount Not to Exceed \$174,600.00 for Phase 6.

Mayor Cherepko said I’ll go into this for a few minutes. That’s less I will have to do in my report. Phase 6, we did 4 and 5, last Council meeting, Phase 6 consists of mostly the 7th Ward as well. Some of the houses on the bottom of Coursin going up between the cemeteries, it’s a horrible sight to get up into that area, that’s on there. You sent it to me right Tommy, Council should have had this, that was a mistake because I want to make sure Council has these lists when they go out. Enterprise Street, Bellview, Park Street, Colfax, 2 on Colfax, a couple more on Park, there are a couple that were left off of 10th Ward that are in there, Sole Street, Evans, Soles again, like I said 5 or 6 on Coursin, Fairview Avenue, Bailey Avenue, Fern Alley, so part of these, there’s 30 of them on this list and I think the thing that we are excited about is I know a few years ago Council decided to go with that reverse bidding and we are finding that to be very, very successful for us. There’s basically 30 houses on this list. You can do the quick math, we are below \$6,000 a house, which is incredible and it was very, very competitive bidding. We started up on an average up over \$7,000 per house and it drove the costs all the way down to under \$6,000, now that’s without the asbestos, we do

the asbestos in-house, we find that to be more appealing to the contractors too because now they are not battling with the asbestos. If you remember maybe a year ago now, we went with our own asbestos in-house company, we contract out, so they get out there and they do the asbestos and the contractors don't have to worry about that as well. So, it seems to be very successful. This puts us up, 4, 5 and 6, puts us up to roughly 110 to 120 houses which you will have awarded with your blessing tonight on these 30. If not in May's meeting by June's meeting we are looking to have three more contracts which will be another 100 to 120 houses. All of those houses will be in the 7th Ward on down as we continue to tackle that. There may be a few that peak into the 3's which is like up behind St. Pius and that, but for the most part 95% of those homes will be in the 7th Ward on down. I personally have gone up and down every street in the City. Once again, I say to the public, I do say the "squeaky wheel gets the grease." I believe this will address all complaints that came into our office as well as a strategy that we put forth. We can't always tear down, we just don't have the resources to tear down every single house in the City but an area that we are going to hit hard on one of these phases that has really gone neglected for a little too long, we hit a house here and hit a house there but it's up off of Sumac and Grover as well. We have one of those Phases, 2700 block through on up which takes you down where Bailey comes into Grover, almost to Soles, so you have Garbett, Grover, some Stewart up in that area as well, not sure if we got Palmgreen or not on that particular one, but that will be, I am talking about the future, a couple you will have up on Palmgreen that were concerns. We really are just trying to clear these out. The main thoroughfares as well, focuses on hitting the main thoroughfares, hitting the main drags throughout the neighborhoods, connecting, same thing as the paving concept we did. But, that will give us up to about 240 houses if we come to you, I just don't know if we can do it fast enough for next month but maybe we can at least get a contract out next month of something, but by June at the worst we will have another 120 houses awarded. So, you will have 240-250 houses, and that doesn't count some of the other projects already in the works. It doesn't count emergency demos, but I think it is going to put us in a very good place. I think we also focused on the remainder of Jenny Lind, like once again that's a main thoroughfare. Bailey Avenue, we do want to hit Bailey Avenue, we have them up around Centennial as well, Beaver. I just can't even begin to tell you the amount of time, energy and thought that goes into this. There's no

perfect solution, I can tell you right now. It comes down to trying to make the living conditions much better for our residents in all communities, all parts of the City. We go into a street sometimes where there's six houses to take down, well if we have one or two houses there, we say alright let's try to get the one next to the houses where people are living. That's the type of stuff that we try to work on and people are usually pretty happy with that. We will continue to try to secure funding as we move forward with this but we should be very, very proud of what this Council's done, what this Administration has done. Between the downtown efforts, the commercial end, that's where we have always struggled because to us to tear down a commercial building when we could have gone and torn down 10 houses and made people's living conditions much better, we have always chosen to do the neighborhoods. I still believe it's the right decision. Thanks to Senator Brewster and his support and Representative Davis on some as well, to secure the State funding and these different types of Allegheny County funding, if you remember they put that tax in on real estate closings about a year ago, we have been able to get into some of the commercial things as well. But your downtown area is going to have very little to no blight in downtown and that's going from 2 years ago when it was not looking very good for downtown, let's just call it like it is. But, between us getting some back in the Executive Building, the Peoples Building, the Daily News building and the demolition we are doing through funding, the demolition we have forced other owners to do, with the Jaison's building and right across the street we are trying to utilize all of our resources to tackle this blight and to have property ready to be developed. So without question we are heading in the right direction and to the public just please be patient. If you are not sure if your house is on a list and you are concerned with it, then call our office. Because as I said we are not perfect but we do believe we address all concerns but I am sure we missed some. It is not done intentionally but things do fall through the cracks so if anyone has a complaint and they are unsure and they want to contact Jennifer, she will let you know if it's on the list already or if you are going to be on one of the next three lists going out. We can add to those lists going out because nothing is official yet so that's the nice part. But, \$5,800 a house roughly, I don't know, that's unbelievable, so that bidding process is without question paying for itself alone. Solicitor Elash said before we move to the next Bill, we kind of go out of order on the Agenda because when the Bills were put together this Ordinance #22 is a

housekeeping. There was some contradiction between our Ordinance about the Zoning Hearing Board and the new Zoning Ordinance so we were correcting that and we had to advertise Bill 20. When we advertised Bill 20 that number has to stay the same because we advertised it.

Mayor Cherepko said once you read 22, I will explain.

President Dellapenna asked if anyone had questions on Bill 19 and there were none.

Bill #22 –Introduced by Brian Evans – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Amending Ordinance No. 17-004; as amended, to Increase the Membership of the Zoning Hearing Board from 3 to 5 Residents of the City of McKeesport.

Mayor Cherepko said that's pretty much just a paper thing. We've already had 5 but there was a contradictory. Solicitor Elash said yes, that's what I explained there was a contradiction. Mayor Cherepko said we are just cleaning up because when we go into Number 20 the ones that we are putting forth are all reappointments, they are all people that already sit on it. So, we are not even adding anyone.

President Dellapenna said thank you.

Bill #20 –Introduced by LuEthel Nesbit – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Providing for the Appointment of Members to the McKeesport Zoning Hearing Board of Adjustments.

Mayor Cherepko said many of our Boards are just people operating with expired terms. It's my fault, look no further, I just don't bring it to Council and it's really not a big deal because they have full authority to continue operating until they are replaced, so it's not really a big issue, but the ones that still want to serve we are keeping them on. Some people have been on before I got here and they are still serving the City on some of these various Boards. These are all reappointments; we are also doing them according to Resolution so that we have a paper trail as well. A lot of times in the past and also because it feels I guess Jason correct me if I am wrong but a little bit with that law that's come out as well you have to have your Agenda posted, New Business, things like that, we don't want anyone to think we are sneaking anything through so for the sake of

transparency we are putting these out as part of our Agenda so a lot of times I would say I need a Motion for a Board appointment, well we are done doing it that way. We want to be as transparent as we possibly can. Solicitor Elash said plus it lets us keep track of it a lot easier than going through Minutes to figure out what we did.

President Dellapenna said thank you and asked for any questions but there were none.

Bill #21 –Introduced by Jill Lape – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Amending Ordinance No. 86-12, as amended, to Replace in its Entirety, Article 331 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of McKeesport, Governing the Operation of Mechanical Devices within the City and Establishing Fees for Same.

Mayor Cherepko said dealt with our Public Hearing, pretty much an electronic device in any establishment in the City will be a \$200 per year license fee. This will let us eliminate a lot of the confusion between these. It will also let us enforce it more fairly. A lot of times this particular Ordinance kind of the responsible business owners are the ones that come in and pay and a lot of the other ones really are not paying what they should and it's harder for us to enforce. This makes it much easier for us to enforce. It's across the board. We go in. This is what you have, pay your fee, and for the most part, these types of arrangements these are not going to hurt businesses because typically speaking even though it might be a fee that goes to the business, whoever it is that's supplying the juke box or the game of skill, they are the ones that usually take that cost on anyway. So, this will not hurt the businesses and it is a decrease on some machines as well.

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

Bill #23 –Introduced by Brian Evans – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Amending and Supplementing Ordinance No. 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 Transfer Participants of Such Pension Plan or Program.

Mayor Cherepko said if you remember months ago, we moved some pensions around and this is just basically tying up some loose ends to that.

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

Bill #24 –Introduced by Timothy Brown – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Relative to the Establishment and Maintenance of the Employees Pension, Annuity, Insurance, and Benefit Fund or Funds; to Amend Certain Provisions of the Pension Plan Known as the Combined pension Plan of the City of McKeesport.

Mayor Cherepko said this goes with that.

President Dellapenna asked for questions on Bill 24 but there were none.

Bill #25 –Introduced by LuEthel Nesbit – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Adopting an Updated Comprehensive Financial Management Policies and Procedures.

Mayor Cherepko said this was just something that was not done in a very long time. Our Auditor really recommended it. To the extent Jennifer took her time out, I think alongside Tasha, and really just put this in order for us.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mayor and asked for questions on Bill 25 but there were none.

President Dellapenna then asked for Council Reports.

Council Reports

Ms. Nesbit – I don't have anything at this time.

Mr. Evans – nothing.

Mr. Barry – just a couple things. I have been walking the park lately and the park trail, the new trail since they redid it, is absolutely beautiful. They are really taking nice care of it and I just wanted to mention that.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that the LaRosa Youth Club will be having a Summer Camp this summer for 10 weeks, from June 13-August 19 and registrations will begin next Monday, April 11.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mr. Barry.

Mr. Brown – just want to talk a minute about a basketball league we have every Thursday night at Founders Hall. 4th and 5th Grade we have 4 teams with 10 kids on a team and our 6th, 7th and 8th Grade we have 4 teams as well with 10 kids on a team, just something to keep the kids off the street. Every Thursday at 6:15 p.m. we have a mentoring session and all the kids have to come to the mentoring session before they play and that's all we are doing for now but we are going to start with high school kids after. We are just trying to keep them busy.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mr. Brown.

Ms. Lape – nothing.

President Dellapenna asked if Mayor Cherepko wanted to speak.

Mayor Cherepko said yes, I will take a few minutes. One of the first things. I probably will be coming to Council within the next month or two. We had the idea of using some of the ARPA money to get into the hands of some of our 501©(3) non-profits in the City. We know how they have struggled through the pandemic. So, I will be coming to you with a plan to try to help them out, maybe give Grants like upwards of maybe \$10,000 that can help them. I know we'd love to give more if we could but we are going to try to solidify what we want to do. That would not be part of the Budget so we would come here and ask for special approval. But if we are able to reach out and help some of our non-profits in any way, shape or form that we can, I know there's been some trying times. I know Mr. Giles just walked in as well and obviously he has been before this Council before and he and I spoke and we've spoken since so obviously he would be one I am sure that would apply as well. If it is not done in May, it will be done in June and then we can spend June and July trying to get some checks out. Jason is going to look over the ARPA Funding and see what we can do. We can't hit everyone but we are going to hit hopefully a couple dozen that we can reach out to. The ones, I won't get into details now but because the Grants that are so small, I am not going to worry about the ones that are running on multi-million dollar budgets to be honest with you. But the ones that are budgeting and

focusing on the efforts, whether it's an institution like Mr. Giles or Tim with Men of Valor, or LaRosa Youth Club, or Noah's Arc Community Center, and Salvation Army, NAACP, any type of institutions in town and program that is really trying to help the City in whichever way they can. We realize it's been tough during the pandemic and now things are loosening but that just means a lot of people are trying to dig themselves out of a hole. So just because the pandemic for the most part, which isn't technically over, we are really looking as close to normal as we have in a few years, doesn't mean that people aren't behind and trying to catch up. My goal would be by June's meeting to come to you with an official proposal. I will reach out to a lot of non-profits that I think would fit it. We will make the application. I don't think it will have to be very extensive with ARPA money, Mr. Solicitor. So, I don't think it will be something, a lot of the other money we have people running all through hoops and it is just so difficult to get through things but we will make it as simple as possible under the guidelines of the American Rescue Plan Funding. So, I think there's a need for it. We are excited to do it. We know everyone is trying to play a part in the City in whatever way they can. Everyone is trying to make a difference and that's what it is about. So, I did want to bring that up.

I will probably come to Council, which is a whole other expense as well, 9-1-1- is totally changing. I don't know the verbiage of this but basically the radios we have now will not work. Yea, that's right, Mr. Dellapenna will know. Is it just the frequencies or ? I know as a 9-1-1- employee, manager up there, but it's an unfunded demand. I don't know what else to say. They are basically coming out and saying this is what we are going to have to switch to and the County was, we are getting 8 radios out of them but we probably need about 70 radios, between fire and police, our vehicles and everything else. We have it estimated. We locked in a price before it jumped but it's like a \$400,000 expense and I want to bring that to Council. I realize we don't have an adopted line item in the budget but I think that's an expense I want to bring to Council, bring attention to it, because we did lock in the rate. That might even be next month's meeting. We are going to try to see what really would be nice is if we can tap into the CARES Funding, not the ARPA but the CARES. We do have another municipality or two, we have been doing our research, Mr. Elash and even Chief Tomasic reached out to a couple and they slid it under the CARES Act and they were granting funding. If you remember we had that CARES Funding but it's been very difficult to spend.

I wish that was a lot easier to spend but it's been pretty difficult. The ARPA, there's more leniency. We are going to come to Council with that as well. I believe they plan on implementing that by the middle of next year so we are only a year away. Is that right Mr. Dellapenna based on your hearing? We will come to Council with regard to that.

Paving, as we know, you awarded last month. One day it looked like we were going to get rolling and now it's talking about a little bit of snow on Saturday so it's just hit or miss this time of year. We aren't getting any major snow but temperature wise it just doesn't help us with milling, it doesn't help us with getting the paving ready, but we will be ready to pave in-house as well. We have a paving machine that will be delivered next week. We did lose the paving machine in the fire along with some other equipment as well but we are excited to get the paving. Between the paving and the demolition, you are going to see a major impact in this community. There's not any part of the community that we missed. Every single neighborhood will have something done. Without question, obviously, some have more than others, with demolition and things you get into in the lower wards there's just more to do down there. But we are very pleased with what we are able to do and what we hope to do moving forward with Council's blessing as well.

I do just want to remind the public that we do have a sidewalk program that we put out with the ARPA money. So, if you need your sidewalks done you can reach out. If you need to contact Jennifer in my office, she will lead you in the right direction. I think she's basically; we are basically running it through Re-Build Pittsburgh is that correct. We have the roofing program, if someone has trouble with their roof if we can get them qualified to get them through that's also partnered with Ms. LuEthel Nesbit and Action Housing with the weatherization but we are not just making it weatherization we just want to make sure that if someone needs their house weatherized and they are approved we want to make sure a bad roof doesn't prevent them from getting it so that money will be allocated for that as well. Continue to spread the word about that because I think that will really help people in these difficult times.

Other than that, we are looking forward to a beautiful summer in Renzie Park with a lot of the events taking place. Easter Egg Hunt was scheduled for this Saturday, when we sent the flyers out it did have a rain date on them so we are

just going to consider the weather and possible rain as a rain date now and we made the decision now it will be the following Sunday, no Saturday, sorry. So, Saturday, April 16th will be the Easter Egg Hunt at Renzie Park so hopefully it will be a little better day, right now it's looking to be 55 or 60 so hopefully that holds up for our young ones to come out and participate in that. Without saying any more in regard to that but I want to thank the Rec Board once again for all of their efforts and really trying to just make McKeesport a better place to live and enjoy it, not just McKeesport but people around the region. Jim Barry, Mr. Barry mentioned the walking trail. We have gotten an unbelievable amount of positive feedback. We do want to rename that, rededicate that so we are going to get the family out here when the weather breaks, Mr. Lickert, do a rededication of that walking trail. I think it will be very fitting being that we were able to do a lot of work and renovate that.

Renzie Park, the RAD money that came through for capital improvements, we will be putting a bid out to upgrade the bandshell and we are also looking to do adult exercise equipment in the park as well. So, we are excited about that.

Other than that, Mr. President, unless something pops in my mind, I won't have anything to say during the Council meeting so this will be my Report.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mayor.

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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