

A Business Meeting of the Johnstown Common Council was held on February 17, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall.

**PRESENT:**

Michael B. Julius	:Mayor
Christopher Swatt	:Council Member-at-Large
Kathi Iannotti	:Council Member
Cynthia Lakata	:Council Member
Helen Martin	:Council Member
Edwin Queeney	:Council Member
Brett Preston	:City Attorney
Bruce Heberer	:Fire Chief
Mark Gifford	:Police Chief
Michael Gifford	:City Treasurer
Chris Vose	:City Engineer
Mary Jo Smith	:Deputy City Clerk

**ABSENT:**

Cathy A. VanAlstyne	:City Clerk
Michelle Jones	:Senior Center Director
Frank Parker	:Assessor
Erica Wing	:Library Director

Mayor Julius called the meeting to order and led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL- All Council members present.

**PUBLIC SPEAKERS-** Mayor Julius introduced Dave Barnett, project manager for the Reassessment Project with GAR Associates. Mr. Barnett gave an update of the project and explanation of mailings that will be going out soon. He said March 1 is the legal statutory date for when the preliminary property assessments must be mailed to property owners. He then went on to explain the project. First, there is the data verification/ data collection phase, then the verification phase, and finally the formal review/challenging phase. There will be an informal review period through most of March. The mailing will include a disclosure notice and meeting dates for which the property owner can sign up. The mailing will inform the property owner of what information to bring to the meeting and what resources will be available. There will be resources on line, as well as, paper information on hand at the library and a dedicated toll free number call center available. He encouraged property owners to call to make appointments for workshops and to obtain general information. Mr. Barnett handed out a packet to all the Council members explaining each sheet. He said the general press release will be sent to all local publications announcing the mailing of the new full value assessments being mailed to all property owners on March 1. The rest of the packet included examples of what will be sent to all property owners. He explained that there is a disclosure notice which is state mandated and there isn't much leeway in terms of customizing it. He said typically there will be a third of the property owners' assessments staying the same, a third increasing and a third decreasing. The new assessment is preliminary. There will be an informal assessment review process. The tentative roll is filed May 1. There will also be a grievance day, as usual, where there might be reductions. Additionally, litigation could happen. He explained that the top half of the disclosure notice is the assessed value and change in value. At the bottom, there is a hypothetical tax illustration. GAR will take the old levies and previous taxable value, and now the new preliminary taxable value and set a hypothetical tax rate which may or may not be in effect on our taxes. He noted that the levies for the next year haven't been decided yet. He further explained that the only figure they can control is the assessed value. Also included in the packet is a sheet showing a step-by-step procedure to follow if the property owner disagrees with the figures. He gave everyone a schedule of planned workshops stating they will generally have a 30 to 40 minutes presentation followed by a question and answer period. Council Member Lakata added that she thought it was important for taxpayers to do homework before coming to the informal review. He agreed and pointed out the green form, the Residential Review Application 2015, which should be filled out on both sides ahead of time. To help with the full evaluation, it would help GAR if additional information is provided, such as a property survey, photographs of the property, and or copy of the sales contract or recent appraisal. He said GAR does not make a decision at that time. They will review it further, and send the information to the Assessor who will make the final determination from the informals. He said the informals typically take a month to month and a half, so everyone will have enough time to go to grievance day if still not satisfied. Council Member Martin asked if GAR did any follow up after the initial notice was sent to property owners last summer. He said there was not, but any information correction submitted on the inventory was made at that time. If any property owners did not respond to that initial notice, they can do so at the informals. There was also a course outline for the workshops included. He encouraged people to call to sign up for the workshops, but indicated that GAR is not disclosing where the workshops are because too many people could show up for them to handle at one time. If more dates and times are needed to accommodate all who call, they will set up additional workshops. Mr. Barnett said they will mail the packets out on Friday, Feb. 27 since March 1 falls on a Sunday. The workshops probably won't start until the second week in March. Council Member Lakata asked if the packets go to the same address as their tax bills are sent, since some go directly to the bank. He said each packet will go directly to the property owner's address. Council Member Lakata noted that there is a very short turnaround time

between getting the packet and the informal assessment review times. He said that is true, but when property owners receive the information, they typically call immediately to schedule an appointment.

APPROVE MINUTES- The minutes of the January 20, 2015 Business Meeting were approved with a motion from Council Member-at-Large Swatt and seconded by Council Member Martin. Motion carried.

CLAIMS AND ACCOUNTS- Council Member Iannotti moved to pay the bills for the general audit and place on file with a second from Council Member Lakata. Motion carried. Council Member Iannotti moved to pay the bills for the housing audit and place on file. Motion was seconded by Council Member Martin. Council Member Queeney abstained. Motion carried.

#### LIASONS' REPORTS

POLICE DEPARTMENT- Council Member Lakata reported that there were 704 calls for service in January, 38 arrests were made, 130 parking tickets were issued, 41 traffic tickets issued and there were 31 motor vehicle accidents.

FIRE DEPARTMENT-Council Member Lakata said the Fire Department responded to 58 calls which included 3 structure fires, 1 mutual aid fire in Gloversville, 6 motor vehicle accidents, 16 hazardous condition calls, 9 medical assistance, 3 vehicle fires, 6 carbon monoxide alarm calls, and 14 service calls. The Codes Department reported 27 permits issued, with an estimated cost of improvements of \$104,680 with fees in the amount of \$950. Residents were reminded to obtain permits before beginning work.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS-Council Member Iannotti reported that DPW has been very busy removing snow, including nights removing sand banks along the curbs. Residents were encouraged to report if any sand barrels need to be refilled, and were reminded that there is a pile of sand available for residents' use by the fence at the end of Prindle Ave. with commercial use prohibited. Unless an emergency arises, there are no plans to work on the street or storm water projects until spring. She said she thought the department has done a great job given all the snow and cold the past few weeks.

WATER DEPARTMENT- Council Member Iannotti reported that Scott Jeffers will be the liason for the Water Department to attend the Council meetings. They have been clearing fire hydrants, and she thanked all the residents who have helped to clear hydrants near their homes. The Water Board voted to hire 360 Security to install cameras and audios in the Water Department facilities.

SENIOR CENTER-Council Member Martin stated that the Johnstown Senior Center will offer an AARP Smart Driving course on Tuesday, February 24. It is \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-AARP members with advance registration required. They are also taking reservations for the 2014 AARP tax aid program. Appointments are on Wednesdays. She also reported that the Center is very grateful to the DPW for keeping their driveway and sidewalk clear in this difficult winter season.

PLANNING BOARD- Council Member Martin reported that the Planning Board met on February 3. There were two public hearings pertaining to projects that receive funding through the New York Main Street Grant program for which we were rewarded funds: the Black Tie Pub and Brewery at 19 W. Main and exterior renovations for 17 W. Main St. Both proposals had passed unanimously.

LIBRARY- Council Member Queeney informed everyone that some New York State tax forms with instructions are now available at the Library. The Federal 1040, 1040A and 1040EZ forms are available. The instructions for these can only be obtained by requesting the staff to print out the desired pages at a charge of 10 cents per page, or patrons may check out a complete copy of the instructions for 3 days with a fine of \$1.00 for each day overdue. During the winter school break, the Library is encouraging children to visit and enjoy different activities and crafts offered each day during this break. This month's book discussion has been moved to Friday, February 27 at 10:30.

ASSESSOR'S OFFICE- Council Member Queeney announced that all exemptions, new filings, and renewals must be filed in the Assessor's office by March 1. Failure to do so could result in loss of exemptions.

SEWER BOARD- Council Member-at-Large Swatt reported that the Gloversville-Johnstown Waste Water Treatment Plant was given the Sustainability Award at the New York Water Environment Association's annual meeting in New York City. All of the improvements at the treatment plant have strengthened the overall sustainability of the local community, as well as, Fulton County. Energy reductions at the plant have resulted in reduced sewer and water costs for the residents and industrial users, as well as, providing increased well-paying jobs for the local community.

The Mayor asked if there were further comments. City Engineer Vose reported that there will be a D.E.C. public hearing on the old Karg site on March 2 from 5 to 7 before the Council meeting.

RESOLUTION No. 10, 2015 was presented by Council Member-at-Large Swatt to rescind Resolution #89, 2014, which was the December 15, 2014 Lease Agreement with the Johnstown Area Community Center. Seconded by Council Member Iannotti.

Ayes: 5  
Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 11, 2015 was presented by Council Member Queeney to authorize a Lease Agreement with the Johnstown Area Community Center for four years at a yearly lease amount set at \$1.00. Seconded by Council Member Martin.

Ayes: 5  
Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 12, 2015 was presented by Council Member Iannotti to authorize Fulton County Electrical and Electronics to replace old insufficient electrical equipment with new cost-cutting, energy efficient equipment at the DPW garage. Seconded by Council Member-at-Large Swatt.

Ayes: 5  
Noes: 0

Council Member Queeney asked how the City planned to pay for this. Treasurer Gifford responded that the City would pay the full amount at one time and thus receive the 15% discount.

RESOLUTION No. 13, 2015 was presented by Council Member Lakata to authorize the Mayor to execute a contract with the James A. Brennan Memorial Humane Society, Inc. for services in connection with lost, stray or homeless dogs and cats commencing January 1 through December 31, 2015. Seconded by Council Member Martin.

Ayes: 5  
Noes: 0

DISCUSSION- Council Member-at-Large Swatt asked what has happened with the sale of property at 24 Briggs St. Chief Heberer reported that the offer was rescinded and the property remains for sale as it has been for a few years. It is listed on the City's website.

ANNOUNCEMENTS- The Mayor announced that there will be several Charter Review Commission Meetings starting at 6:30 on the following dates: March 4<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, May 13<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, and June 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, and the public is welcome to attend.

ADJOURN- At 7:33, Council Member-at-Large Swatt moved to adjourn. Council Member Queeney seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryJo Smith  
Deputy City Clerk