

The Johnstown Common Council held their Business Meeting on May 16, 2016 at 7:00p.m., in the Council Chambers, City Hall.

PRESENT:

Michael B. Julius	: Mayor
Christopher Swatt	: Council Member-at-Large
Bradley Hayner	: Council Member
Kathi Iannotti	: “ “
Helen Martin	: “ “
Vernon Jackson	: “ “
Bruce Heberer	: Fire Chief
Michael Poulin	: City Attorney
David Gilbo	: Police Lt.
Christopher Vose	: City Engineer
Erica Wing	: Library Director
Michael Gifford	: City Treasurer
Cathy A. VanAlstyne	: City Clerk

ABSENT:

Mark Gifford, Police Chief and Michelle Jones, Senior Center Director

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

ROLL CALL – All council members present

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

DOWNTOWN GRANT - Nick Zabawski from Orion Management was asked to speak about the new downtown revitalization grant the governor is making available. It will be awarded to one community in each region of the state. It would be a real long shot for the City to get. This is a \$10 million dollar incentive grant. It is a \$60 million dollar project that would be required to include low income housing, middle income housing, luxury housing, libraries, theatres, walkable downtowns, job creation, commercial and mixed use activities, etc. It is a very large scale project so you would have to have in mind between \$30 and \$50 million dollars in project for downtown. This is not a city wide grant but for downtown only. Our downtown would probably not have \$60 million worth of projects. This would also take some commitment to run the program. The city would have to hire a downtown program administrator with approximately \$100,000 salary and at least one assistant. So it would be about \$160,000 for five years. As a consultant, he doesn't see this as a good fit for the City of Johnstown.

Council Member Martin said she would like to see the City work towards creating some of these staffing positions for future opportunities.

Council Member-at-Large Swatt is disappointed that this grant is not available for a combination of downtowns. Mr. Zabawski said the State is very clear that it is for one city only.

LAND BANK – Vincent DeSantis urged the City to support this proposal. It is an important tool for cities that do their own foreclosures. In Fulton County the only tax foreclosing entities are the City of Johnstown and County of Fulton. The Land Bank covers a six county region and is funded by the State. Many properties that have been foreclosed on by the Cities are auctioned off and the new property owners don't do anything with the property that is beneficial to the City. The money used to fund these land banks is not taxpayer money but settlement money that was paid to the State by the banks, due to the foreclosure crisis. Mayor Julius asked, what happens when that money runs out. Mr. DeSantis said it would be funded every year. Land Bank funds can also be used to rehab the property. When that property is sold that

money would go back into the Land Bank funds. There is a Board that decides what would be done with the properties in the Land Bank. Fulton County is represented on that Board but is not a majority.

Tolga Morawski from MVEDD and Chairman of the Land Bank Committee, said that Fulton and Montgomery Counties are two of the most distressed areas. The Land Banks can take foreclosed properties and fix them up to sell and put back on the tax roll. Currently there is \$17.3 million in the current cycle with five different Land Banks competing for the money. They estimate we would get at least \$1 to \$2 million in the first round. In Montgomery County they are using tax credits. They get 40% back when the project is completed. This can be carried forward for future projects. Another funding source is the 5/50 split. Buildings that have been rehabbed by the Land Bank have the option to partner with the Land Bank to split the taxes for the first five years that the property is back on the tax roll.

Mayor Julius said the City is not ready to sign any contracts but would vote on the concept of land banks. Mr. Morawski would like the City to appoint a representative from the City to join in the discussion and report back to the Council. There are special Brownsfield money allocated only for project of Land Banks for commercial properties. One of the projects they are looking at in Montgomery County is Beechnut. That project could potentially bankrupt the county.

CITATION – Earth Day Clean Up Volunteers – Mayor Julius read a Citation thanking the volunteers who did clean up along the Rail Trail and Cayadutta Creek.

APPROVE MINUTES – Council Member Martin made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2016 Business Meeting. Seconded by Council Member Jackson. Motion carried.

CLAIMS AND ACCOUNTS – Council Member Iannotti made a motion to approve the bills and place on file in the City Treasurer's Office. General Fund (A) unpaid \$67,472.46; General Fund (A) paid \$568,366.41; Capital Fund 2012 (H12) \$7,270.14; Sewer Fund (G) paid \$512.55; Sewer Fund (G) unpaid \$4,182.22 and Voucher Fund (VO) paid \$45,785.70. Motion was seconded by Council Member-at-Large Swatt. Motion carried.

#### CITY OFFICIAL'S REPORTS

FIRE DEPT. – Chief Heberer reported the new Code will go into effect on October 1, 2016. They have predominately adopted the International Code and a supplement book of NYS Code. In April they received 58 calls for service that included 3 structure fires, 7 motor vehicle accidents, 18 hazardous condition calls, 10 medical assistance calls and 20 service calls. Members of the fire department have revamped the upstairs of the fire house. The Code Office issued 50 building permits with an estimated construction cost of \$331,508.00 and fees of \$1,165. Ward sweeps will start June 1<sup>st</sup>. In 2013-14 there were 13 structure fires in the City and only one has not been put back on the tax roll.

POLICE DEPT. – Lt. Gilbo reported the department has a new officer, Jase Kollar, who is currently attending the police academy. By the end of July he will be full time. This brings the department to 24. They have another officer that will be retiring soon. They are having issues with some of the traffic lights. E. State St. and Chase traffic light went down in a recent storm. They are not sure if that will be replaced. They have a request to have a turn light going south at N. Perry St and Main St. If that is done they will have to put a no turn on red sign on S. Perry St. and Main. With these recent storms they are looking at the safety features of the lights.

Council Member Iannotti has received complaints about homeless people. Someone has been living in the doorway of Nathan Littauer's medical building on S. Perry St. Lt. Gilbo said they have sent people to mental health for evaluation. He said they will deal with the situation and try to find a solution.

DPW – City Engineer Chris Vose said he has had some discussions with GPI about the traffic lights and what needs to be done. It would be worthwhile to get a structural engineer here to look at the brackets and hardware that supports the traffic lights and tell us where we can make improvements. Council Member-at-Large Swatt feels that the lights at Chase & Main St. and Chase & State St. may not be necessary. Mr. Vose said we can get engineer reports to back that

up. The light at Crescendoe and N. Perry St. has never been replaced from an accident that took it down. Mr. Vose will contact National Grid to see where that stands.

We are now in the information gathering stage of the Flex Tech Study taking light counts and other information that they need. They will come back with areas we need improving. The asphalt plant opened last week so DPW has been busy with patching. Caleb Creek is now separated from the retention pond. This will hopefully decrease the flooding problem. More work downstream will be done in the future. Mapleton Tract has been cleared from Caleb Creek to Pleasant Ave. A decision will have to be made about how the parcels should be split, then the sewer laterals can be run to the property lines. Paving will be done after the sewer work. The street will run straight through from N. Perry to Pleasant Ave. The traffic light will be moved back before Linden Ave. Chief Heberer said there is an engineer plan for lot size there that makes more sense. Thirteen lots would not be up to code. That would be less than the required 5,000 sq. ft. It is designed for six large lots and a couple of smaller lots. Mr. Vose said all the utility work will be done before any paving.

Mr. Vose reported the easement for Kargs has been signed by DEC and will go to the County for filing and back to Arcadis because it is part of the site management plan. We should be able to move forward with marketing the property.

The sewer jet needs to be repaired at a cost of approximately \$10,000.

**LIBRARY** – Director Erica Wing reported the early literacy program that was piloted last year is growing and progressing very well. Two picture books have been added to the collection. Heidi Sprouse will be discussing her latest book on June 16<sup>th</sup>. The library is closed for Memorial weekend and will re-open Tuesday after the holiday with their summer hours.

**CITY TREASURER** – Michael Gifford reported last month City taxes were collected. The next project he is working on is the SEC filing.

**TOURISM COMMITTEE** – Council Member Martin thanked the DPW for cleaning up and painting the community bulletin board on S. Market and Main St. The 2016 Events Calendar will be out soon. This was designed once again by Linda Hinkle. The Easter event held with the Council of Churches was very well attended. The Tourism Committee did crafts with the children. The fireworks and Summerfest will be held on June 25<sup>th</sup> this year at Knox Field. The hanging flower baskets will be hung along Main St. before the Memorial Day Parade that will be held on Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:30p.m. Donations are being accepted for the flowers. The next meeting of the committee is May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6pm, City Hall.

**WATER BOARD** – Council Member Jackson reported GPI did a complete camera view of Cork Center Reservoir and Christman Reservoir. They found some slight issues but everything looked good. The Water Dept. set up an information booth in the park during the Earth Day celebration. They were busy with hand outs and answering questions. Johnstown had the water tested for PFOA and none was detected. Fire hydrants are being flushed.

**ASSESSOR** – Council Member-at-Large Swatt said the 2016 Tentative Roll was filed May 1<sup>st</sup> and can be viewed in the City Clerk's Office.

Grievance Day is May 24<sup>th</sup> from 4-8pm.

**CRG** – Council Member-at-Large Swatt met with Ron Peters. He would like to come and meet with the Council. He would like to talk about things that could be done on Main St. There was an issue with a downtown property owner concerning whether or not the City allows third floor occupancy. Chief Heberer said it is allowed if there is a second means of egress such as a fire escape. Mr. Swatt said they also discussed getting more people living downtown. Lt. Gilbo said that the more people living downtown creates a problem for parking. We don't have enough parking lots. In the winter when we go to off street night parking it becomes an issue. The more tenants downtown the more parking spots needed. Mr. Swatt said one complaint from a downtown merchant was that some of the other merchants were parking on Main St., taking up spots that customers needed.

RESOLUTION No. 47, 2016 was presented by Council Member Martin to cover certain events under the City of Johnstown's liability insurance. Seconded by Council Member Iannotti.

Ayes: 5

Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 48, 2016 was presented by Council Member-at-Large Swatt to accept the offer for property on N. Perry St. SLB #162.8-4-23. Seconded by Council Member Martin.

Ayes: 5

Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 49, 2016 was presented by Council Member Jackson to accept the offer for property on Frasier Ave. SBL #175.9-1-6.2. Seconded by Council Member Hayner.

Ayes: 5

Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 50, 2016 was presented by Council Member Iannotti to enter into an agreement with Nathan Littauer Hospital for a Health Officer. Seconded by Council Member Martin.

Ayes: 5

Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 51, 2016 was presented by Council Member Hayner to accept the proposal from Orion Management Company for a consultant to assist the City with administration of the grant for St. John's Episcopal Church. Seconded by Council Member Iannotti.

Ayes: 5

Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 52, 2016 was presented by Council Member Martin to support the concept of a Land Bank. Seconded by Council Member Iannotti.

Ayes: 5

Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 53, 2016 was presented by Council Member Iannotti to advertise in the Leader Herald and Daily Gazette that the City is accepting sealed written bids for the design and manufacturing of a pre-engineered replacement bridge of the Miller Street Bridge. Seconded by Council Member-at-Large Swatt.

Discussion: Chris Vose said this will save time and should be done this fall.

Ayes: 5

Noes: 0

RESOLUTION No. 54, 2016 was presented by Council Member Hayner to accept an offer for property at 112 E. State St. Seconded by Council Member-at-Large Swatt.

Ayes: 5

Noes: 0

MAPLETON TRACT – Council Member Iannotti would like to have a discussion between the Council and Chief Heberer to decide the lot sizes. This will be done at the next council meeting.

Council Member-at-Large Swatt brought up the subject of blight. If anyone has an issue with neighboring properties they should call the Code Office. Council Member Jackson said he is getting a lot of calls.

## ANNOUCEMENTS

The citywide garage sale is set for May 20-22, 2016. Grievance Day is May 24<sup>th</sup> from 4-8pm. Farmers' Market begins on Tuesday May 24<sup>th</sup> from 3-6pm and they will be there every Tuesday through October. Memorial Day Parade and Program will be Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup> beginning at 6:30pm.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – At 8:17pm, Council Member-at-Large Swatt made a motion to enter into executive session for the discussion of pending litigation. Seconded by Council Member Jackson. Motion carried.

At 8:20pm, Council Member Martin made the motion to come out of executive session with a second from Council Member-at-Large Swatt. Motion carried.

The Council discussed and approved the settlement for Maple Knoll Apartments.

At 8:29pm, Council Member Martin made the motion to adjourn seconded by Council Member-at-Large Swatt. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy A. VanAlstyne  
City Clerk