

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
May 4, 2020

Members Present: Douglas Baker, Mayor  
Donna Fletcher, Deputy Mayor  
James Johnson  
Samuel Lyons  
Christian Marshall  
Fred Mays  
Ryan Rudegear

Members Excused: None.

In Attendance: Tracy Jamieson, City Manager  
Brian Spaid, Esq., City Solicitor  
Jim Wetzel, Fire Chief  
Harmony Motter, Finance Director  
Sheila Boughner, Recording Secretary & Community Development  
Sarah Titley, Venango Newspapers, Inc.  
K.C. Miller, Assistant Principal, Franklin Junior-Senior High School

In keeping with social distancing measures relating to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the meeting was held via tele/video conference.

Mayor Baker called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA - Resolution No. 50**

Mr. Johnson moved to approve the agenda, as presented. Mr. Rudegear seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Resolution No. 51**

Mr. Marshall moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of April 6, 2020, as presented. Mr. Mays seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**PAY THE BILLS - Resolution No. 52**

Mr. Johnson moved to pay the bills as presented. Mr. Rudegear seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**CITIZENS' INQUIRIES** – None

**FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL REQUEST – Resolution No. 53**

Mr. Miller presented a request from Franklin Area School District seeking permission to display multiple banners recognizing the Franklin High School Class of 2020 on the bridges at Eighth Street, Allegheny Boulevard and 13<sup>th</sup> Street and flags bearing the FASD logo on light

poles in the 1200 block of Liberty Street. He said the displays would show community support for the graduating seniors, who are missing out on many of the typical activities of their senior year. He suggested that the flags and banners fly at least through the end of the school year in the first week of June. Ms. Jamieson indicated City staff would be responsible for hanging the flags and banners and taking them down, so the displays would remain until staff could remove them. Mr. Spaid noted that American flags are generally displayed on the Liberty Street flag poles for Memorial Day, and suggested the possibility of an alternating display of school flags and American flags. Mayor Baker moved to grant permission for the banners on the bridges and school flags on every other flag pole in the 1200 Block of Liberty Street. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

#### **CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS – Resolution No. 54**

Ms. Jamieson presented a request for certificates of appropriateness for the replacement of a fence and a deck at 1102 Elk Street. She said HARB members had received the request via e-mail but reached no consensus and therefore, provided no recommendations on the matter to Council. Mayor Baker moved to approve the certificates of appropriateness, as presented, and Mr. Mays seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

#### **UPDATE TO CDBG CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN – Resolution No. 55**

Ms. Boughner presented an update to the City's CDBG Citizen Participation Plan for Council approval. The plan was updated in accordance with new guidelines received from the Department of Community and Economic Development and includes new provisions for temporarily revising the Citizen Participation Plan under special circumstances, such as the COVID-19 crisis. The update includes an amendment permitting virtual instead of in-person public hearings for the CDBG program when social distancing is required. Mr. Johnson moved to approve the update, and Mr. Lyons seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

#### **ANNUAL FAIR HOUSING RESOLUTION -- Resolution No. 56**

Mr. Lyons moved and Mr. Marshall seconded a motion to approve the annual Fair Housing Resolution for compliance with Community Development Block Grant requirements. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **PARADE AND PARK REQUESTS – Resolution No. 57**

Ms. Jamieson indicated that while the City is currently putting off most parade and park requests in light of the pandemic, she recommended granting permission for the summer meal program for children in light of the economic hardships many families are facing. She said there would be no meals in group settings but only pick-ups of the meals.

Mr. Marshall moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the following request:

- June 3, 2020 to Aug. 26, 2020 • Atlantic Avenue and Third Street playgrounds and Riverfront Park • Venango County Human Services • **Meal pick-up from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. weekdays**

Motion passed unanimously.

## REPORTS

### Manager

- Provided a COVID-related financial status report including the following:
  - Real Property Tax Revenues are down slightly from where they were at this time in 2018, but are up about \$100,000 from this time in 2019
  - Earned Income Tax Revenues are down about \$57,000 from this time last year, and it remains to be seen what this figure will look like by the end of the second quarter
  - The City is currently leaning toward paying off its Tax Anticipation Note on time in June rather than extending the terms until December
  - The City should start to see some relief in personnel costs as those who were furloughed will be transitioning to unemployment as their accrued time is used up. The shift of some street department personnel to the water and sewer departments is also resulting in savings to the General Fund, and the use of Liquid Fuels funds for street-related expenses is also reducing the pressure on the General Fund.
  - The City is eligible for \$193,732 in COVID-related Community Development Block Grant funds. The funds must be used for COVID-related activities, and the City is hoping to use the funds to assist the City's public services and to provide economic assistance to local businesses. The City is awaiting additional guidance from DCED on eligible uses and grant requirements.
  - The City's MMO obligations later this year could be affected by the economic disruptions stemming from the pandemic. The City was planning on \$400,000 in State funds to assist with its pension plans, but could receive less than that, as the state funding is greatly impacted by the stock market. Should the City receive less from the State, it will have to make up the difference.
- As Venango County prepares for the easing of some COVID-related restrictions as it enters the "Yellow Phase" under Governor Wolf's reopening plan on May 8, the City must make some decisions as well. Ms. Jamieson said she is not in a great hurry to open City Hall to the public, and that when the building is re-opened, visitors will be limited to the first floor. The question of re-opening the building will be re-visited in early June.
- **Resolution No. 58** – Ms. Jamieson indicated that deciding whether to hold the City's summer events involves a two-tier process: determining if such events are permitted under the state's guidelines, which are still prohibiting large gatherings, and whether the City has the funds and staff available to carry them out. With the street department at half-staff for financial reasons and the events staff on furlough, and as some events take months of advance planning, Ms.

Jamieson suggested that it would behoove the City to make a decision now on some events. She indicated this year's Blues and Bar-B-Q Fest has already been cancelled by its organizers and raised the possibility of cancelling the Memorial Day Parade, the Flag Day Parade and Ceremony, all July 4<sup>th</sup> events and the Movies in the Park (at least through mid-July). She noted that all the events draw sizeable crowds and cost the City money. After some discussion, Mr. Johnson moved to cancel the above-mentioned events through July, and Mayor Baker seconded the motion. Mr. Lyons's connection to the meeting was disrupted just prior to the vote. The motion passed by a vote of 4 to 2, with Ms. Fletcher, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Johnson and Mayor Baker voting in favor and Mr. Rudegeair and Mr. Mays voting against.

- Ms. Jamieson relayed a request from the Franklin Retail Association for permission for 15 banner flags on stands to be placed around the downtown through the summer. Erie Insurance would commission the signs that would carry messages urging people to shop local. As such signs are not addressed in the City's zoning ordinance, it is up to Council. Ms. Jamieson suggested that it should be required for shop owner to agree for one of the signs to be placed in front of their business, and that the Retail Association be responsible for safely placing and maintaining them. Mr. Marshall moved to approve the request, and Mr. Johnson seconded the motion, which passed with six votes in favor. Mr. Lyons then returned to the meeting and indicated his support of the motion and indicated his support of the previous motion as well.
- Ms. Jamieson shared a request from a woman for permission to have a 6-foot, commercial grade memorial swing to be installed by a contractor at Riverfront Park in memory of her classmate. Ms. Jamieson indicated street department supervisor Jeff Reed had located a good spot for the swing and said if there were no objections from Council, she would grant permission for the swing. There were no objections from Council.
- Advised that the milling and paving carried over from last year is set to begin next Monday, weather permitting. The work will be completed under two contracts awarded in 2019 to I.A. Construction Corp. – one funded by Liquid Fuels and the other by the City's Community Development Block Grant program. The streets include: Liquid Fuels -- the 800 Block of Elk Street, Elk Street (South Park to 12th Street) and the 600 Block of Pacific Street; CDBG -- Railroad Street, 1400 Block of New Street, 1400 Block of Chestnut Street, and Elm Street (11th to end).
- Indicated Farmer's Market is open and operating with 17 feet of space between stalls.

### **Solicitor**

- Advised that the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board received the City's petition for the extension of permission to substitute and enforce the City of Franklin Noise Ordinance for Section 493(34) of the Liquor Code for all licensees in the area of the Central Business District designated in the petition. The City's original petition on the matter was granted last year for a period of one year. Mr. Spaid

indicated that the PLCB will hold a public hearing on the petition, and it is not yet clear if the hearing will be virtual or in-person at City Hall.

**Mayor • Appointments**

- None.

**COUNCIL REPORTS**

**Mayor Baker**

- Thanked local churches for participating in the Bells Across Pennsylvania event, initiated by the State Mayors Association to honor the front-line workers in the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Shared a request for a Council member to serve on the Franklin Public Library board.
- Strongly encouraged citizens to follow the social distancing guidelines issued by the Department of Public Health

**Mr. Marshall**

- Said he is encouraged the State is taking steps toward reopening but expressed disappointment that the easing of restrictions does not yet extend to establishments like salons.

**Mr. Mays**

- Stressed the need to support the Downtown and to find a way to help the local businesses.

**Mr. Rudegeair**

- Noted that he voted against the cancellation of events through July because he did not want to cancel other people's events, such as weddings. Mr. Spaid indicated the vote was to cancel only City-sponsored events, but Ms. Jamieson added that the City does reserve the right to cancel private events, if necessary.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Boughner, Recording Secretary

