

Minutes of the Council of the City of Easton, Pa.

January 25, 2023

Easton, Pa
Wednesday
January 25, 2023
6:00 p.m.

City Council met in stated session at the above date and time, in Council Chambers, located on the Third Floor of City Hall, 123 S. Third Street, to consider any business that may lawfully be brought before the body.

The invocation was given by Mayor Panto, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Brown, Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Panto (6)

Absent: Sultana (1)

Also, participating in the meeting were Rita M. Messa, City Clerk, Luis Campos, City Administrator, Jeremy Clark, Assistant, City Solicitor, Carl Scalzo, Police Chief. At the beginning of the meeting there were seventeen (17) other participants present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Mr. Brown seconded by Mr. O'Connell to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved by the following vote:

Before the vote was taken, Mr. Melan asked that Bill No. 35 be removed from the Consent Agenda and placed under Unfinished Business.

Yeas: Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Panto, Brown (6)

Nays: None (0)

ACTION ON THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. O'Connell seconded by Dr. Ruggles to approve the January 11, 2023 meeting minutes. The minutes were approved by the following vote.

Yeas: Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Panto, Brown (5)

Nays: None (0)

NOTE: Mr. Edinger abstained since he was not present at the January 11, 2023 meeting

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SWEARING IN OF NEW POLICE OFFICERS

At this time Chief Scalzo thanked the Mayor, City Administrator and all of Council for their unwavering support over the years to the Easton Police Department.

Chief Scalzo then introduced four (4) new police officers: Kade McNally, Tanner Shetler, Kyana Villalobos and Justin Nemchick.

Chief Scalzo stated that these officers are committed to protecting and serving the City of Easton and they should be very proud of their accomplishment thus far of being selected to join the ranks of the Easton Police Department. Becoming a Police Officer is a calling not just a job.

Chief Scalzo stated that being a Police Officer requires dedication and devotion and thanked the officers and their families for their sacrifices that they have already made and will make in the future. Chief Scalzo wished them a long and safe career.

At this time Mayor Panto administered the Oath of Office to the new Police Officers.

Mayor Panto thanked the officers' friends and families for their sacrifices.

Mayor Panto stated that they will have everything they need to do their jobs safely. Our police officers have made this City safer.

Mr. Brown welcomed the new officers and wished them well in their career.

Mr. O'Connell welcomed the new officers to Lehigh Valley's Best Department and wished them well in their career.

Mr. Edinger welcomed the new officers and also thanked their families.

Mr. Melan thanked the officers for choosing the Easton Police Department and wished them well.

Dr. Ruggles congratulated the new officers on their accomplishments which resulted in being chosen to join the Easton Police Department and wished them well.

Mr. Campos addressed the new officers stating that the Easton Police Officers are properly paid and believes that we are the best department in the Commonwealth. He stated that the

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Administration values the City's employees and the Administration will support the new officers. He also thanked them for joining the department.

PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

There was no public comment at this time.

CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were approved on motion of Dr. Ruggles seconded by Mr. O'Connell by the following vote:

Bill No. 1 (Ord. 5808) - An Ordinance amending the 2023 General Fund Budget
Bill No. 2 (Ord. 5809) - An Ordinance amending the 2023 Recreation Fund Budget
Bill No. 3 (Ord. 5810) - An Ordinance amending the 2023 Wastewater Fund Budget
Bill No. 4 (Ord. 5811) - An Ordinance amending the 2023 General Fund Budget
Bill No. 5 (Ord. 5812) - An Ordinance amending the 2023 Recreation Fund Budget
Bill No. 6 (Ord. 5813) - An Ordinance amending the 2023 Wastewater Fund Budget
Bill No. 7 (Ord. 5814) - An Ordinance amending the 2023 Revolving Capital Fund Budget
Resolution 11-2023 – Approving a COA for Northampton Street
Resolution 12-2023 – Approving a COA for 228-230 Northampton Street
Resolution 13-2023 – Approving a COA for 33 N. 5th Street
Resolution 14-2023 – Approving a COA for 533-535 Northampton Street
Resolution 15-2023 – Approval to apply for Small Water & Sewer Program Grant (\$145,000)
Resolution 16-2023 – Approval for a 3rd handicap parking space in the 1100 Blk. of Ferry Street
Resolution 17-2023 – Approving an Agreement with Colliers Engineering (MS4 Program)
Resolution 18-2023 – Approving the purchase of a Mobile Hydraulic Stage

Before the vote was taken, Dr. Ruggles had some questions regarding Bill No. 1 regarding moving monies from the non-resident EIT to another account – he asked if this was allowed.

Dr. Ruggles also questioned Bill No. 7 as well.

Mr. Campos stated that he would have to get back to Dr. Ruggles regarding his questions.

After a brief discussion on this matter the vote was taken to approve the Consent Agenda.

Yeas: Brown, Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Panto (6)

Nays: None (0)

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REPORTS RECEIVED BY COUNCIL

No Reports were received by Council.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Brown, Chairperson of the Finance Committee spoke about the legislation he would be introducing later in the meeting.

Mr. O'Connell, Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee attended the GEDP's Economic Vitality Committee meeting which was held last week on January 18, 2023. They are creating programs aimed at business recruitment and business retention.

Mrs. Sultana, Chairperson of the Planning & Code Committee was not present at the meeting.

Dr. Ruggles, Chairperson of the Public Safety Committee had no report.

Mr. Edinger, Chairperson of the Public Works Committee had no report.

Mr. Melan, Chairperson of the Administration Committee stated that the Administration Committee met on Tuesday, January 24, 2023 regarding the New England Hydro Electric lease along with a representative of Northampton County.

Mr. Melan stated that at the next Council meeting he would like a Memorandum Agreement brought to Council for Mr. Lance Wheeler to be able to continue using the 1218-1220 Ferry Street.

Mr. Melan stated that he would give a copy of the agreement to the Solicitor for review.

Mayor Panto stated that that agreement with the Redevelopment Authority was limited to selling mums and Christmas trees.

Mr. Campos stated that Mr. Wheeler spoke with him regarding a lease agreement.

Mr. Brown stated that while he did not attend the Executive Session he is well aware of what was taking place by speaking with Mr. Campos and the City Solicitor.

Mr. Clark stated that he would look at the previous Memorandum Agreement that Mr. Wheeler had with the Redevelopment Authority.

Mr. Clark, Assistant City Solicitor stated that there was an Executive Session held on Tuesday, January 24, 2023 regarding a lease option/issues with New England Hydro Electric.

Mayor Panto spoke about Fulton Bank that is located in the South Side which is scheduled to close. Mayor Panto noted that there are also no banks on College Hill or in the West Ward.

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Mayor Panto stated that the City will be putting together a Task Force that will look solely into neighborhood services organizations.

Mayor Panto stated that many years ago neighborhoods had bakeries, grocery stores, bars, dry cleaners and gas stations. These things no longer exist.

Mayor Panto also stated that the City will be putting together a Grant Assistance and Business Plan to attract more small businesses.

Mayor Panto noted, however, Fulton Bank indicated they do not want to close their bank on South Side but the landlord hasn't been very cooperative with changes that are needed but they are willing to have the City look into another location.

Mayor Panto stated that Mr. Harrison who is developing the Mill at Easton on Lincoln Street may be able to help the Bank and maybe even a drive-up window could be created even though it may not be needed. Mayor Panto stated that he tried to reach Mr. Harrison earlier today but he was unavailable.

Mayor Panto recognized Mr. Barry Schafer who recently retired from the Easton Fire Department with thirty-four (34) years of service. Mayor Panto stated that Mr. Schafer's words to the new firefighters were very encouraging.

Mayor Panto stated that while he was in Washington D.C. he stopped by the Department of Housing and Urban Development Office. There was some conversation regarding the Choice Neighborhood Grant which is between \$30,000,000 to \$50,000,000. The City has received an implementation Grant and the COA that was just approved for the Arch over Northampton Street is an identification arch – one side will say Welcome to the West Ward and the other side will say Welcome to Historic Downtown Easton.

Mayor Panto also stated that he is looking to have the implementation grant turned into a full grant. This was done with the HOPE VI Grant which is the same as the Choice Neighborhood Grant. The HOPE VI Grant helped revitalize the housing in South Side.

Mayor Panto spoke briefly on this matter.

Mr. O'Connell stated that there were two ribbon cutting ceremonies for two new small businesses in Easton this past weekend. The first one was for "Punch Out" which is a Board Game Store which is a very family-oriented business located at 161 Northampton Street and the second one is Seth & Company, a coffee shop located at 13 S. Bank a/k/a 322 Northampton Street – the owners of this business only hire people with special needs to staff the store.

Mr. O'Connell stated that both events were very well attended.

Mr. Campos, City Administrator had no report.

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CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence received by Council.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No. 35 - An Ordinance amending Section 50-72 (C) in Chapter 560 (Meters) was moved by Mr. Melan and seconded by Mr. O'Connell.

Before any action was taken on Bill No. 35, Mr. Melan asked that a message from Valarie Simmons be read into the record:

Message: In reference to the new proposed changes to meter hours, I think this is something that the City should think about waiting until after the public market garage and the few major construction projects coming in the next few years. Businesses are still recovering from covid, then the circle construction and limited parking for outdoor dining. As the VP of the EBA I have had the pleasure of chatting with many business owners/employees and I know it's been really tough for many. Of course, meters & inflation are parts of living in the city, I just think waiting a bit longer would be more thoughtful of the downtown businesses as they recover from what has been a bid dip in their numbers.

Mr. Melan asked if there was a need to push this right now.

Mayor Panto stated that he also received Val's message and that she is talking about retailers. No other retailers, that he is aware of, is open until 9:00 except for Duchess Cookies.

Mr. Melan asked when the 4th Street garage will be open.

Mr. Campos stated that the tentative date for the opening of the new 4th Street Garage is March 15, 2023.

Mr. Ron Morris, 1002 Washington Street, owner of the Mercantile Home and Mercantile Outpost stated that it is not about the hours but an overall feeling with everything that is going on now. All businesses are feeling the impact. Mr. Morris spoke briefly on this matter.

Mayor Panto stated that he just wanted to get back to the hours (9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.) for parking meters which is what they were previously.

NOTE: Mrs. Sultana joined the meeting at 6:33 by telephone.

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Mr. Campos clarified that the garage fees past 5:00 will be \$.50 per hour.

Dr. Ruggles stated that while the parking garage won't open until at least March 15th – this Bill would not go into effect until March 1 because there is a 30 days wait period after passage.

Mayor Panto stated that the good news is that all of the needed equipment for the 4th Street Garage is now on site.

Dr. Ruggles then made a motion seconded by Mr. Brown to table Bill No. 35 until the February 22, 2023 Council meeting. Mr. Clark stated that Council could just set a different effective date if they chose to do that. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter.

NEW BUSINESS

Bill No. 8 – Amending the 2022 Health Benefits Fund Budget was introduced by Mr. Brown and ordered processed for adoption.

PUBLIC COMMENT **On any item)**

Mr. Frank Pintabone, 1107 W. Berwick Street stated that he spoke with Mr. Joseph, the owner of the building that houses Fulton Bank that is scheduled to close on South Side. The owner feels that there is a disconnect between Fulton Bank and himself and he stated that he, as owner of the building, is willing to do whatever is necessary to keep Fulton Bank where it is.

Mr. Pintabone asked if the Mayor can meet with the owner and the bank and do everything he can to encourage the bank to stay on South Side where it is as there are many elderly on the South Side.

Mayor Panto stated that he spoke with Mr. Joseph, owner of the building, a few months ago and with talking to Fulton Bank – the property is too large for the amount of business that they do. Fulton Bank indicated that they only need about 1500 square feet. Mayor is hopeful that a new place can be found on South Side – the bank would like to be on Philadelphia Rd.

There was a brief discussion on this matter.

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ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m. on motion of Dr. Ruggles and Mr. O'Connell by the following vote:

Yeas: O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown, Edinger, Melan (7)

Nays: None (0)



Rita M. Messa
City Clerk



CITY OF EASTON

PENNSYLVANIA

City Clerk's Office

January 20, 2023

COUNCIL MEETING NOTICE

A meeting of City Council has been scheduled for Wednesday, January 25, 2023 beginning at 6:00 p.m. for the transaction of Regular Business.

The meeting will be held in Council Chambers located on the 3rd floor of City Hall, 123 S. 3rd Street, Easton, Pa.

All meetings of City Council are open to the Public and are accessible to persons with disabilities.

The City of Easton Council Meeting will also be live streamed starting at 6:00 p.m.

Live Stream video: <http://bit.ly/EastonLiveStream>

MASKS ARE OPTIONAL

Rita M. Messa
City Clerk

CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA

Stated Session
Wednesday
January 25, 2023
6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. INVOCATION
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
4. ROLL CALL
5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
6. ACTION ON MINUTES – Approving minutes of January 11, 2023
7. SWEARING IN OF POLICE OFFICERS
 - Tanner Shetler
 - Kyana Villalobos
 - Kade McNally
 - Justin Nemchick
8. PUBLIC COMMENT – Agenda Items Only
9. CONSENT AGENDA
 - (a) Bill No. 35 – Amending Section 560-72(C) in Chapter 560 (Meters)
 - (b) Bill No. 1 – Amending the 2023 General Fund Budget
 - (c) Bill No. 2 – Amending the 2023 Recreation Fund Budget
 - (d) Bill No. 3 – Amending the 2023 Wastewater Fund Budget
 - (e) Bill No. 4 – Amending the 2023 General Fund Budget
 - (f) Bill No. 5 – Amending the 2023 Recreation Fund Budget
 - (g) Bill No. 6 – Amending the 2023 Wastewater Fund Budget
 - (h) Bill No. 7 – Amending the 2023 Revolving Capital Fund Budget
 - (i) Resolution approving COA for Northampton Street (Gateway sign)
 - (j) Resolution approving COA for 228-230 Northampton Street
 - (k) Resolution approving COA for 33 N. 5th Street
 - (l) Resolution approving COA for 533-535 Northampton Street
 - (m) Resolution approving application for Small Water & Sewer Program Grant (\$145,000)
 - (n) Resolution approving a 3rd Handicap Parking Space in the 1100 Block of Ferry Street
 - (o) Resolution approving an agreement with Colliers Engineering
 - (p) Resolution approving the purchase of a Mobile Stage
10. REPORTS RECEIVED BY COUNCIL

11. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

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|-----|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) | Finance | (Kenneth Brown) |
| (b) | Economic Development | (David O'Connell) |
| (c) | Planning and Code | (Taiba Sultana) |
| (d) | Public Safety | (Roger Ruggles) |
| (e) | Public Works | (James Edinger) |
| (f) | Administration | (Peter Melan) |
| (g) | Report of City Solicitor | (Attorney Joel Scheer) |
| (h) | Report of Mayor | (Salvatore J. Panto Jr.) |
| (i) | Report of City Administrator | (Luis Campos) |

12. CORRESPONDENCE

13. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

14. NEW BUSINESS

- (a) Bill No. 8 – Amending the 2022 Health Benefits Fund Budget

15. PUBLIC COMMENT – On Any Matter

16. ADJOURNMENT