

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

February 8, 2023

Easton, Pa
Wednesday
February 8, 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, Sultana, Panto (7)
Absent: None (0)

Also, participating in the meeting were Rita M. Messa, City Clerk, Luis Campos, City Administrator, Mark Lysynecky, Director of Finance and Joel Scheer, City Solicitor. At the beginning of the meeting there were seven (7) other participants present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Mr. Brown seconded by Mr. O'Connell to approve the agenda.

At this time, Mayor Panto stated that he wanted to present an award to Mrs. Margaret DeBona before the Public Comment part of the meeting.

The agenda was then approved by the following vote:

Yea: Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown (7)
Nays: None (0)

ACTION ON THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Dr. Ruggles seconded by Mr. O'Connell to approve the January 25, 2023 meeting minutes. The minutes were approved by the following vote.

Yea: Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto, Brown, Edinger (7)
Nays: None (0)

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PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Mayor Panto stated that he attended the South Side Civic Association meeting and one of the topics that was spoken about was how to get more small businesses in the South Side since many of them are closing or have closed on the South Side. Mayor Panto stated that the West Ward is having the same problem.

Mayor Panto acknowledged and presented Mrs. Margaret DeBona with an award. Mrs. DeBona just closed her hair salon after 66 years of being in business. Her business was located in the West Ward. Mayor Panto thanked her for being a loyal business owner/resident of the West Ward neighborhood.

There was no other public comment at this time.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Bill No. 8 (Ord. 5815) – Amending the 2022 Health Benefits Fund Budget

Resolution 19-2023 – Approval to apply for COVID-19 ARPA H20 PA – Water Supply, Sanitary Sewer and Storm Water Projects Grant (\$753,300)

Resolution 20-2023 – Approval to apply for PennDOT Green Light-Go Grant (\$405,572)

Resolution 21-2023 – Approving the 2023 Outdoor Dining Program Guidelines

Resolution 22-2023 – Approving a Cooperation Agreement with Lafayette College

Resolution 23-2023 – Approving various ABC appointments/reappointments

Before the vote was taken, Mr. Melan asked how the Health Fund Budget increased since the 2023 budget was just approved a short time ago.

Mr. Lysynecky stated that budgets do not continue on and this change is for the 2022 budget not the 2023.

There was a brief discussion on this matter.

Mr. Lysynecky stated that he would have to check to see if other budget amendments were done, however, some monies may have been transferred internally for additional claims/expenses.

The Consent Agenda was then approved by the following vote:

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Yea: Brown, Edinger, Melan, O'Connell, Ruggles, Sultana, Panto (7)
Nays: None (0)

REPORTS RECEIVED BY COUNCIL

Council received the Fire Department Report for January, 2023

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Brown, Chairperson of the Finance Committee had no report.

Mr. O'Connell, Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee had no report.

Mrs. Sultana, Chairperson of the Planning & Code Committee stated that the Planning Committee is discussing the two ordinances that she would like introduced at the next meeting: 1) Declawing of Cats and 2) Retail Pet Shops/Puppy Mills.

Dr. Ruggles, Chairperson of the Public Safety Committee stated that there will be a Public Safety Committee meeting on Tuesday March 7, 2023. The Fire Department will present a facilities report – with the focus being on the Main Fire House and the South Side Fire House.

Mr. Melan asked if there was a previous report done. Mr. Campos stated that the safety committee previously did a “walk through” basically looking at code issues. This upcoming report would be more comprehensive looking at the needs of a “modern day” fire department and what they may need to move the department forward. For example, what would need to be met if the City were to have female firefighters. Also, this would include the potential for training and what the fire departments role would be with ambulance services, etc.

Dr. Ruggles stated that one of the reasons for this report is there is presently a bill before Congress on funding construction of new fire stations and if this bill were to pass, he would like for the City to be in the position of hopefully securing funding.

Mr. Melan asked to have the code report available at this meeting. Mr. Campos stated that it was not a Code Report but it was part of the Safety Committee Report. Mr. Melan would like a copy of that report at the time of this presentation. Mr. Campos stated that he would look into it.

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

Mr. Melan, Chairperson of the Administration Committee had no report, however, he was hoping that Mr. Wheeler would be present at this Council meeting – Mr. Wheeler did not show up.

Mayor Panto stated that Mr. Wheeler is still operating under a Memorandum of Agreement that is no longer in effect. The City's impression was that this Memorandum expired in November.

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Mayor Panto stated that Mr. Wheeler was told that he had seventy-two (72) hours to vacate the trailers that are parked on the streets. These trailers are not allowed to be parked on the streets and the City has received many complaints regarding this.

Mayor Panto thought it was a good idea to allow Mr. Wheeler to sell pumpkins and mums to the residents of the West Ward at a reduced rate, however Mr. Wheeler then decided to sell Christmas Trees. Mr. Wheeler now has advertised a Chicken Wing Event on Super Bowl Sunday without notifying the City. The City's concern is that there is no Certificate of Insurance for this event. Mr. Wheeler has since filled out the paperwork for this event but does not have the proper insurance. If he does not have the insurance by the end of this week he will not be able to have the event.

Also, one of the concerns is that he was going to be making the wings in the food trailer but that is not the case. Big Papa's, who is licensed, will be making the wings.

Mr. Melan asked Mr. Scheer if he had reviewed the Memorandum of Agreement. Mr. Scheer stated that he has not seen the Memorandum. Assistant City Solicitor, Mr. Clark has the Memorandum for review.

Mr. Melan asked if it is the City's intent to have a Memorandum of Agreement with Mr. Wheeler or is the City not going to offer it to him.

Mayor Panto stated that the Administration is not recommending having a Memorandum of Agreement. The City thought it was good idea as a Community Development Project in the West Ward, however, the place is a mess and Mr. Wheeler went from being a friend to their villain to the people in the neighborhood.

The City would like to help him get set up someplace else. This property is public property/park and City has plans to potentially a build community center there.

Mr. Scheer, City Solicitor stated that after this meeting is adjourned there will be a brief Executive Session for an update on the ongoing negotiating for the lease of property with the New England Hydro Lease.

Mayor Panto stated that the Administration supports the Green Energy Project however we feel very strongly that the lease that was presented to the City will expose the City to tremendous liability and costs in the future which the City is not in favor of.

Mayor Panto also stated that at the South Side Civic Association Meeting some of the topics that were discussed is recruiting of small businesses as well as parking and traffic control.

Mayor Panto also stated that PennDOT agreed to give a dedicated pedestrian stage at the Circle which will allow for people to cross the street without cars moving.

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Mr. Campos, City Administrator stated that the Human Resources Department has advertised for the next Civil Service Test for the Fire Department. There was a “commercial” placed on the City’s Facebook Site. Mr. Campos requested that everyone look at it and share.

One of the items that was brought to Mr. Campos’s attention is that the salary for a new Firefighter is not always clear.

This matter was highlighted in the video.

Regarding the needs of the Fire Department – we are working with the other Cities to get their support in creating a video that supports diversity. It will show female firefighters and firefighters of color. The goal is to show people of different backgrounds.

Mr. Campos spoke about Dr. Ruggles previously asking about a budget amendment with regards to the non-resident EIT.

Mr. Campos looked at this with the Finance Director, the City’s Actuaries, the City Controller and the City’s outside Labor Counsel. There will be a new Budget Amendment which will be submitted at the next meeting. Mr. Campos explained this in detail.

Mr. Campos addressed Mrs. Sultana regarding comments for the two ordinances that she would like introduced regarding Declawing of Cats and Retail Pet Shop/Puppy Mills.

Mayor Panto also stated that next year is a big year for construction within the City which will include Cattell Street being more pedestrian friendly, Wood Ave. , St. John Street. Also, UGI through Court Order, will be replacing old gas lines on all of Washington Street, Ferry Street and Butler Street, from 7th Street to 15th Street and Bushkill Dr. from toll bridge to 13th Street.

Mayor Panto stated that the City has met with UGI and we have been assured that they will patch up everything every night. Also discussed with them was emergency vehicle access and normal traffic.

Construction will begin in March and will go through November.

Mr. Brown asked if Wood Avenue traffic will change regarding a part of it becoming one-way. Mayor Panto stated that no decision has been made on that yet. The City will get more information from the Fire Department. Mayor Panto spoke briefly on this matter.

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CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence received by Council.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

Bill No. 9 – Amending Chapter 54 – Ethics, of the Code of the City of Easton was introduced by Mr. Melan and ordered processed for adoption.

The next item on the Agenda was a Resolution recognizing Black History Month

The following Resolution was introduced by Mrs. Sultana

24-2023

Before the vote was taken, Mr. O’Connell stated that he thought that the City already recognizes Black History Month.

Mayor Panto stated that the City does recognize Black History Month every year. He stated that former Council members asked whether we would even have to pass a Resolution since this is recognized Federally.

Mr. Brown asked about Bill No. 9 – the amendment to the Ethics Code with regards to the penalty of \$100.00 if Council members do not participate in the training.

Mr. Melan stated that this was just being introduced and that a Committee Meeting can be held to discuss Mr. Browns concern.

Mayor Panto stated that at a previous training he was advised that he was not able to charge a fee to perform weddings. Mayor Panto stated that he has never charged a fee for weddings, however, in the past, he would accept a donation to Safe Harbor or the Peace Candle Committee. He was then advised that he was not able to accept donations either – therefore he no longer performs weddings.

Before the Resolution was voted on Mrs. Sultana read the Resolution recognizing Black History Month into the record.

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The above Resolution was approved on motion of Mrs. Sultana and Mr. Edinger by the following vote:

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

Nay: None (0)

Mayor Panto stated that he was proud to announce that the City of Easton has been chosen to host the 1st Lehigh Valley Juneteenth Parade.

Mr. O'Connell stated that the banners honoring everyone should be hung. Mayor Panto spoke briefly on this as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT

On any item

Dr. Ken Green, 44 Center Square asked about the Grant for the Cattell Street, Wood Avenue and St. John Street. He noted that Mayor Panto stated that Cattell Street will have pedestrian improvement, however, he asked if the same would be for the other streets.

Mayor Panto stated that Wood Avenue is not specifically for pedestrian improvements but there will be handicap ramps installed. Cattell Street will have bump outs which will provide shorter distances for people to cross at intersections. The St. Johns Street grant, if approved, will improve the entire corridor from Route 78 to Downtown.

There was a brief discussion on this topic.

Mr. O'Connell stated that at the South Side Civil Meeting – he noticed that a lot of people do not realize that some of the streets in the City are actually controlled by PennDOT and not the City of Easton. Mr. O'Connell asked if there is there a list of streets in the City that are controlled by PennDOT.

Mayor Panto stated that on College Hill PennDOT controls, Lafayette Street, Cattell Street, Knox Avenue – in the West Ward the streets are Northampton Street, Butler Street and Wood Avenue – on South Side it is primarily St. John Street, Berwick Street and Philadelphia Road.

Mr. O'Connell asked if this information could be placed on the City's website.

Mr. Melan asked if cancelled meetings can also be placed on the City's website.

There was a brief discussion on this matter.

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Mr. Scheer spoke briefly about Bill No. 35 – Amending Chapter 560 – Vehicles and Traffic, Section 560-72 C – Meters stating that it was tabled and when it is brought back to the table there will be an added provision.

After some discussion on this matter, it was decided that Bill No. 35 would be brought back to the table, it will then be withdrawn and a new bill would be introduced with all of the amendments.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Yea: 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

February 3, 2023

COUNCIL MEETING NOTICE

A meeting of City Council has been scheduled for Wednesday, February 8, 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
February 8, 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 25, 2023 Meeting
7. PUBLIC COMMENT – Agenda Items Only
8. CONSENT AGENDA
 - (a) Bill No. 8 – Amending the 2022 Health Benefits Fund Budget
 - (b) Resolution approving application for grant Water Supply, Sanitary Sewer Grant (\$753,300)
 - (c) Resolution approving application for grant- PennDOT Green Light-Go Grant (\$405,572)
 - (d) Resolution approving the 2023 Outdoor Dining Program Guidelines
 - (e) Resolution approving a Cooperation Agreement with Lafayette College
 - (f) Resolution approving appointment/reappointments to various ABC's
9. REPORTS RECEIVED BY COUNCIL
 - (a) Fire Department Report for January, 2023
10. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 - (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)
11. CORRESPONDENCE
12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

13. NEW BUSINESS
 - (a) Bill No. 9 – An Ordinance amending Chapter 54 – Ethics of the Code of the City of Easton
 - (b) Resolution recognizing Black History Month
14. PUBLIC COMMENT – On Any Matter
15. ADJOURNMENT