

**WARREN CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 20, 2020 – 7:00 PM**

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Cashman presided over the April 20, 2020, regular meeting of Warren City Council. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was conducted online utilizing the Zoom virtual meeting platform.

ROLL CALL

Members responding to roll call were: Mayor Maurice Cashman, Gregory Fraser, Paul Giannini, Philip Gilbert, John Wortman, and Christian Zavinski. Participating members of City Staff were Nancy Freenock, City Manager; Brandon Deppen, Chief of Police; Michael Holtz, DPW Director; Teena Leary, Assistant City Clerk; Rodney Wren, Fire Chief; Chad Yuriscic, City Engineer; and Andrea Stapleford, City Solicitor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion by Mr. Wortman and second by Mr. Zavinski, the minutes of the March 16, 2020 Regular Meeting were unanimously approved with one correction.

Upon motion by Mr. Fraser and second by Mr. Zavinski, the minutes of the March 20, 2020 special meeting were unanimously approved with one correction.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mayor Cashman welcomed all visitors:

- Douglas Hearn: Observing
- Steven Blume: Observing
- Three unidentified visitors logged into the Zoom meeting
- Josh Cotton: Times Observer Reporter

CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Freenock presented an e-mail received from City resident, Sam Harvey, requesting that City residents be given relief under the burning ban issued by the County Commissioners. Mr. Harvey requested that “recreational fires” be permitted.

Ms. Stapleford stated that she conducted research and could find no legal authority for the City to override the County ban. Mr. Fraser suggested that Mr. Harvey be advised to contact the Warren County Commissioners.

ACCEPTANCE OF RESIGNATION – COUNCILMAN JAMES A. ZAVINSKI, SR.

Mrs. Freenock presented a letter from Mr. James A. Zavinski, Sr., stating that, effective immediately, he would resign his seat on City Council due to personal reasons. Mr. Fraser made the motion to accept Mr. Zavinski’s letter of resignation (with regret) and to approve the application procedure to fill the now-vacant seat. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously among the six seated members.

AGREEMENT: AMBULANCE BILLING AND REIMBURSEMENT SERVICE

(See March 16, 2020, Council minutes)

Chief Wren stated that the City presently contracts with Ambulance Reimbursement Systems (ARS) for patient billing and collections regarding Fire Department Emergency Medical Services. ARS operates on a flat rate system; therefore, the company receives payment regardless of its rate of collections.

Quick Med Claims, LLC, (QMC) operates under an “incentive based” program whereby the City would not make payment to QMC for its services until the amount due is collected from the patient/insurer and remitted to the City. City representatives have met and corresponded with QMC and are confident that QMC will provide a more effective means of collection which will improve the flow of revenues to the City.

Chief Wren noted that, upon approval of the agreement with QMC, it will be necessary to authorize termination of the ARS agreement in accordance with its terms.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to approve the agreement with Quick Med Claims, LLC, for the provision of ambulance billing services and to authorize termination of the agreement with Ambulance Reimbursement Systems. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously among the six seated Council members.

LACY PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

(See March 16, 2020 Council Minutes)

Mr. Holtz stated that bids for this project were let with a bid opening date that would have allowed for approval at this meeting. However, due to restraints brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, contractors requested that the bid deadline be extended; in the interest of obtaining as many bids as possible, the bid deadline was extended by two weeks to April 29, 2020. Therefore, it was requested that Council again consider allowing the City Manager to award the Lacy Playground Improvement Project contract subject to the lowest responsible bid being for an amount that is within the approved project budget.

It was again noted that grants obtained by private groups in support of the project will expire in 2020 so it is imperative that the project be set to proceed as soon as possible following the lifting of the Governor’s orders regarding the pandemic.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to table action on the request for authorization for the City Manager to award the Lacy Playground Improvement Project and, subsequently amended the motion to “postpone action”. The amended motion was seconded by Mr. Fraser and carried with five votes in the affirmative and one nay vote cast by Mr. Gilbert.

Mayor Cashman called for a special meeting to be held at 5:00 PM on April 30, 2020, for the purpose of approving the Lacy Playground Improvement Project contract.

RESOLUTION NO. 3116 AND AGREEMENT: EAST FIFTH AVENUE PROJECT

Mr. Holtz stated that East Fifth Avenue from the intersection with Conewango Avenue east to the City of Warren/Glade Township line is a Federal Local Aid Route. The City was awarded a grant in the amount of \$248,400 from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to complete a mill and overlay and curb ramp replacement project on this section of East Fifth Avenue. Federal funding for the project is not available (and therefore the project cannot be awarded) until after June 30, 2020. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) will administer the funding and the advertising, bidding, award, and notice to proceed process. In order to secure that funding, PennDOT proposes to advertise for bids on or about May 28, 2020 and award a construction contract around July 9, 2020. It was noted that construction will likely occur in 2021.

The FHWA grant is a reimbursement grant, and therefore PennDOT requires that the City enter into its standard reimbursement agreement; the terms and conditions may not be modified.

It was also stated that PennDOT now requires that the person who accesses and enters information into its electronic project management system be the same person who signs the

reimbursement agreement and all other documentation associated with the project. PennDOT requested that this person be authorized by City Council to sign on the City's behalf.

Mr. Fraser made the motion to approve the resolution designating Michael A. Holtz, DPW Director, as the authorized signatory for the PennDOT Reimbursement Agreement regarding the East Fifth Avenue Project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Zavinski and carried unanimously among the six seated members of Council.

Mr. Fraser made the motion to approve the PennDOT reimbursement agreement regarding the East Fifth Avenue Project (#JR20010002). The motion was seconded by Mr. Zavinski and carried unanimously among the six seated members of Council.

STREET PAVING DISCUSSION

Mrs. Freenock and Mr. Holtz outlined the standard process for bidding street paving projects and noted their concerns regarding the potential pricing impacts that may be realized due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant late preparation of bid documents by PennDOT. It was noted that the 2020 project could be reduced or eliminated in hopes of receiving more favorable pricing by bidding a project early in 2021. It was also noted that oil prices are at the lowest seen in many years and, therefore, asphalt prices may be lower when the plants are permitted to reopen. Following discussion, it was the consensus of Council that a full street paving project/list should be put to bid as soon as possible.

SUMMER PLAYGROUND PROGRAM AND C.A.R. POOL

Mrs. Freenock stated that following discussions with City staff, she determined that the Summer Playground Program will not be offered and the C.A.R. Pool will not open for the 2020 season. She noted that these decisions were driven by public safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the reduction in earned income tax revenues that will be realized by the City due to high unemployment brought about by the pandemic.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS – MARCH, 2020

The following reports were presented for Council's review:

- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Department of Public Works
- Community & Economic Development

APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings have not been held and, therefore, there were no minutes to be provided.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before Council, Mayor Cashman declared the meeting adjourned and stated that Council would move to executive session to receive legal advice from the Solicitor.