

**WARREN CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 30, 2021 – 7:00 PM**

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Cashman presided over the August 30, 2021, special meeting of Warren City Council in Council Chambers of the Municipal Building and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Members present and responding to roll call were: Mayor Maurice Cashman, Kimberly Exley, Paul Giannini (via Zoom), Philip Gilbert, Douglas Hearn, and John Wortman. Gregory Fraser was absent. Members of City Staff present were Nancy Freenock, City Manager (via Zoom); Vincent DeJoy, Director of Zoning, Codes, and Economic Development; Michael Holtz, DPW Director; Teena Leary, Assistant City Clerk; and Andrea Stapleford, City Solicitor.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mayor Cashman welcomed all visitors. Present were:

- Jim Decker: Warren County Development Association
- Brian Hagberg: YourDailyLocal News
- Josh Cotton: Times Observer Reporter

TERMINATION OF HIY, INC. RACP SUB-GRANTEE AGREEMENT

Mr. DeJoy stated that the City previously entered into a sub-grantee agreement with HIY, Inc. under which \$360,000 in 2017 Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project (RACP) funding was allocated to HIY to be utilized for improvements to its Clark Street Property (former Loranger building). As indicated in a letter from Ruzhdi Bakalli, HIY's president and CEO, HIY has not been able to obtain necessary additional funding which conforms to the requirements of the sub-grantee agreement. Therefore, HIY stated its intent to terminate the sub-grantee agreement contingent upon Council's approval of a new sub-grantee agreement as contemplated under a separate agenda item.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to accept the HIY, Inc. letter of termination contingent upon entering into a new sub-grantee agreement for RACP funding. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously (six members present).

AGREEMENT: NORTHWEST COMMISSION SUB-GRANTING RACP FUNDS TO CITY

Mr. DeJoy stated that the Northwest Commission (NWC) applied for, and was awarded, \$1,500,000 in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project (RACP) funding for which the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry (WCCBI) was the intended sub-grantee. However, WCCBI's proposed project did not come about as the proposed tenant opted to locate outside of Warren County.

The WCCBI Board of Directors voted to terminate its arrangement with the NWC and requested that the RACP funds be re-allocated to the City of Warren for the purpose of furthering economic development projects in and around the Allegheny Riverfront within the City. A sub-grantee agreement was drafted and submitted to the Northwest Commission for its review.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to authorize the sub-grantee agreement between the Northwest Commission and the City of Warren regarding \$1,500,000 in RACP funding to be allocated to the City with Section 6 to be amended by removing "HIY, Inc." and replacing it with "Northwest Commission." The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously (six members present).

AGREEMENT: HIY, INC. SUB-GRANTEE FOR RACP FUNDING

Mr. DeJoy indicated that Ruzhdi Bakalli, HIY, Inc.'s President and CEO, stated that he has shovel-ready plans for a boutique hotel which would be located on the upper level of HIY's Clark Street property. Mr. Bakalli requested that the City allocate up to \$2,000,000 in Redevelopment Capital Assistance Project (RACP) funding to HIY, Inc. for completion of this project. Mr. Bakalli advised the City that he has qualified matching funds available to him. Mr. DeJoy stated that \$1,000,000 in 2018 RACP funding and up to \$1,000,000 in 2019 RACP funding may be allocated to HIY, Inc. under the terms and conditions stipulated in the proposed agreement.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to approve the sub-grantee agreement which provides for the allocation of \$1,000,000 in 2018 RACP funding and up to \$1,000,000 in 2019 RACP funding to HIY, Inc. for the purpose of developing a boutique hotel at its Clark Street location with the hotel to be open within twenty-four months. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously (6 members present).

AGREEMENT: WCDA SUB-GRANTEE FOR RACP FUNDING

Mr. DeJoy stated that the City's 2017 Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project (RACP) funding award was in the amount of \$1,000,000. At the time of the award, the City entered into two sub-grantee agreements with one being in the amount of \$640,000 for the Warren County Development Association's (WCDA) PNC Building Project and the other being for \$360,000 to HIY, Inc. for redevelopment at its Clark Street property.

As the result of Council's action earlier in this meeting, the \$360,000 amount in 2017 RACP funding previously allocated to HIY, Inc. remains available. The WCDA continues to make systematic improvements to the PNC Building to provide opportunities for economic development. Therefore, it was recommended that the \$360,000 be re-allocated to WCDA in accord with the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement.

In response to questions from Council, Jim Decker, representing the WCDA, indicated that the funds will likely be used for a necessary roof replacement project.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to approve sub-grantee agreement and allocate \$360,000 in 2017 RACP funding to the WCDA. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously (6 members present).

ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Cashman announced that Council members would adjourn to executive session for receipt of legal advice regarding a personnel matter and discussion of an EMS matter.

The meeting was reconvened, and the following motions were made (*see also September 20, 2021 minutes*):

Mr. Wortman made the motion to engage the firm of Page, Wolfberg & Wirth, LLC to represent the City in regard to an Emergency Medical Services personnel matter. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously (6 members present).

Mr. Wortman made the motion to engage the firm of Page, Wolfberg & Wirth, LLC to prepare a letter to be submitted to municipalities in regard to information contained in Dr. Dylan Ferguson's (Pennsylvania Department of Health) letter to the firm with the firm's fee not to exceed \$2,500. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously (6 members present).

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further agenda items to be addressed, Mayor Cashman declared the meeting adjourned.