

**WARREN CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 4, 2019 – 7:00 PM**

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**OPENING OF MEETING**

Mayor Cashman presided over the November 4, 2019 special meeting of Warren City Council in Council Chambers of the Municipal Building and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Cashman announced that Council met in executive session on October 23 for discussion of Fire and Emergency Medical Services and on October 29 for discussion of personnel matters.

**ROLL CALL**

Members present and responding to roll call were: Mayor Maurice Cashman, Gregory Fraser, Paul Giannini, Philip Gilbert, ~~Richard Kolchano~~, John Lewis, and James A. Zavinski, Sr. Members of City Staff present were Nancy Freenock, City Manager; Brandon Deppen, Chief of Police; David Hildebrand, Planner/Development Administrator; Michael Holtz, DPW Director; Teena Leary, Assistant City Clerk; Rodney Wren, Fire Chief; Donna Risinger, Finance Officer; and Terry Williams, Director of Codes, Permits, and Recreation Services.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Mayor Cashman welcomed all visitors. Present were:

- Pauline Steinmeyer: Observing
- Pam Lewis: Observing
- Aaron Stearns: Observing
- Sgt. Jeffery Dougherty
- Members of International Association of Firefighters Local No. 1835:
  - Andrew Moore, President
  - Jason Schott
  - Ted Catilion
  - David Krogler
  - Mark Schwanke
  - Jeremy Rulander
  - Gregg Ireland
  - Kurtis Maynard
  - Jerry Hammerbeck
  - Jon Ferrie
  - Mike Wadlow
  - Chris Whyte
- Josh Cotton: Times Observer Reporter

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)**

Mayor Cashman led Council through a line-by-line discussion regarding projects listed in the proposed 2020 Capital Improvement Program budget. It was noted that certain projects are mandated and cannot be delayed or removed from the list. Following discussion, Mayor Cashman (with no stated objections from Council) requested that:

- 1) The proposed project for street improvements in the 300 block of West Fifth Avenue be removed from the project list for 2020; and
- 2) Asked that City Staff contact the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DNCR) to determine to what extent the City may reduce the scope of the Crescent Park Project and remain within the terms of the grant previously awarded to the City. Mrs. Freenock and Mr. Holtz cautioned that, should the City forego the project and

relinquish the grant, it may negatively impact the City's future ability to acquire DCNR grant funding.

### **PROPOSED 2020 CONTRIBUTION ALLOCATION**

Council members reviewed the proposed contributions and there were no stated objections to the proposed allocations. Mr. Fraser noted that in prior years contributions were made to the Warren Area Student Union (WASU). Mrs. Freenock stated that during her 2018 review of contributions she found that there is no basis within the Third Class City Code upon which the City may make contributions to WASU. Mrs. Williams noted that the contribution to the City Redevelopment Authority is to cover administrative costs such as insurance.

### **ITEMS OF CONSIDERATION FOR 2020 BUDGET**

1. Mrs. Freenock suggested that consideration be given to discontinuing the Summer Recreation Program which would result in a savings of \$20,000.
  - a. In the event that the Summer Recreation Program is discontinued, the City-owned van would then be available for use by the Codes Department (the van is used by the Program to pick up lunches provided through the School District's free lunch program). This would allow the purchase of a vehicle for the Codes Department to be eliminated from the 2020 Budget.
  - b. No Council members expressed interest in elimination of the Summer Recreation Program.
2. Mrs. Freenock stated that she and Chief Deppen are confident that the City will be awarded a USDA Rural Development Grant/loan for the purchase of two Police Interceptor vehicles included in the 2020 Budget (see 10/21/19 minutes). Therefore, the \$45,000 grant amount may be included as revenue.
3. Mrs. Freenock proposed that the City move forward with establishing permit parking on Crescent Park Drive and on Fourth Avenue.
4. Mrs. Freenock noted that Chief Deppen previously suggested that the parking meter rates for the Midtown Lot and on-street parking be "flipped" so that the Midtown Lot would be the less expensive parking option. She recommended that if the rates are not flipped, they should be amended to be equal. It was recommended that the rate be set at \$1.00 per hour for both on-street parking spaces and the Midtown Lot. It was also suggested that the monthly parking permit rates for on-street permit parking, the Hickory Street Lot, and the Clark Street Parking Garage be increased to a standardized rate of \$30 per month for residents and \$35 for non-residents.
5. Chief Wren stated that the Fire Department is conducting an inhouse review of Emergency Medical Services billing and it is believed that there may be avenues to increase revenues to further offset expenses.
6. Mr. Lewis suggested that the changes to the CIP as discussed earlier this meeting would be sufficient to cover three years of debt service on the proposed fire apparatus purchase loan.

### **FIRE APPARATUS DISCUSSION**

Chief Wren provided information regarding the aerial (ladder) truck and engine that are in need of replacement. Chief Wren stated that the aerial truck has been routinely inspected; however, it has begun to require more maintenance. Upon assuming his duties as Fire Chief, he determined that

an in-depth inspection by a company specializing in such equipment should be conducted. That inspection revealed numerous deficiencies and the expense to repair or replace such is significant; additionally, more deficiencies may be found once repairs commenced. Chief Wren also noted that completion of the required repairs would still leave the City with an apparatus that does not meet current NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) standards for firefighting apparatus. Chief Wren stated that he has removed the aerial truck from front line service and, therefore, it will only be operated under normal driving conditions (i.e. no flashing lights, no sirens) and it will not be deployed unless there is a confirmed active fire.

Chief Wren stated that the Department has submitted grant applications over the past few years in an effort to acquire funding for the replacement of Engine 3. To date, those applications have been unsuccessful. The Department had plans to replace Engine 3 within the next few years.

Chief Wren outlined various options for the aerial and engine truck purchases and stated that he expects to have a proposal for Council's consideration at the regular meeting on November 18. He suggested that there may be cost advantages to purchasing the aerial truck and pumper at the same time. The vehicles under consideration are new stock vehicles which could be delivered within approximately six months. It was noted that some vendors will provide a loaner vehicle in the interim. The search for vehicles has been focused on new vehicles as they carry the latest and most significant safety features.

It was noted that new aerial trucks have a greater "driving height" than the current truck and, therefore, the bay door of the Fire Department will need to be modified to accommodate the increased height. An architect has been consulted and it was determined that such a modification is possible.

#### **CITIZENS' ADDRESS TO COUNCIL**

Pauline Steinmeyer inquired as to whether the Local Services Tax is still in effect and being collected from resident and non-resident wage earners in the City. Mrs. Freenock confirmed that the tax is being collected from those who earn in excess of \$12,000 annually.

Mrs. Steinmeyer also referenced §424-39 of the Code of the City of Warren which pertains to the imposition of the Real Estate Transfer Tax. She indicated that it is her interpretation that the tax may be assessed on all real estate transfers occurring within Warren County and that, perhaps, the City is not realizing revenue by only collecting the tax on transfers occurring within the City. It was indicated that City Staff and/or the Solicitor will review the referenced section of the Code. *(Secretary's note: Upon review, it was determined that §424-37 of Article V states that only real estate transfers within the City are subject to the transfer tax).*

Andrew Moore, President of the I.A.F.F. Local 1835, addressed Council and requested that the City give consideration to the purchase of new types of personal protective gear as well as a stretcher designed for bariatric transport.

Aaron Stearns referenced the removal of two items from the CIP budget to allow funds to be applied to the debt service on the proposed fire apparatus purchase(s) (see above) and inquired what the plan is to fund the debt service upon depletion of the amount removed from the CIP. Mr. Stearns suggested that there be incremental tax increases over the coming years.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 3099: NON-UNION EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

Mrs. Freenock noted that the Early Intervention Plan (EIP) suggests that the City move to a plan for Employee Healthcare Cost Sharing that is based on a percentage of the premium rather than a flat rate. It was also noted that the trend across municipalities within the Northwest Region of

Pennsylvania is to establish the employee cost share as a percentage of the annual premium with pre-determined annual adjustments in the percentage.

It was proposed that commencing January 1, 2020, the Employee Healthcare Cost Sharing for non-union employees be set at ten percent (10%) of the annual premium for the selected coverage with an annual increase of one (1) additional percent until amended by Council. Payment of employees' contributions would remain as a bi-weekly payroll deduction.

It was also proposed that there be a \$25 bi-weekly surcharge for non-union employees whose spouse is eligible for insurance through their employer but elects to be covered under the City's Healthcare Plan.

Mrs. Freenock stated that it is well-established within the insurance industry that tobacco-related illnesses drive healthcare costs upward. Therefore, it was proposed that each non-union employee and each covered family member who uses tobacco products be subject to a \$25 bi-weekly surcharge. This is a common practice and is intended to promote cessation.

Lastly, it was proposed that the deductible be increased from 500/1000 to 750/1500. This would, in essence, decrease the increase in premium for the year 2020 from 8% to 6.5% and would be reflected in the amount contributed by employees.

Upon motion by Mr. Lewis and second by Mr. Fraser, Council members present voted unanimously to adopt the resolution establishing Non-Union Employee Benefits.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before Council, Mayor Cashman declared the meeting adjourned.