

**WARREN CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 15, 2021 – 7:00 PM**

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**OPENING OF MEETING**

Mayor Cashman presided over the November 15, 2021, regular meeting of Warren City Council in Council Chambers of the Municipal Building and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Cashman announced that Council met in executive session earlier this date in regard to personnel (Emergency Medical Services) and property matters.

**ROLL CALL**

Members present and responding to roll call were: Mayor Maurice Cashman, Kimberly Exley, Gregory Fraser, Paul Giannini (via Zoom), Philip Gilbert, Douglas Hearn, and John Wortman. Members of City Staff present were Nancy Freenock, City Manager; Jessicca Byler, Acting Finance Officer; Michael Holtz, DPW Director; David Krogler, Fire Chief; Teena Leary, Assistant City Clerk; Randall Rossey, Codes and Zoning Director; Joseph Sproveri, Chief of Police; Chad Yurisc, City Engineer; Kelly Conti, Codes Clerk; and Andrea Stapleford, City Solicitor.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Upon motion by Mr. Fraser and second by Mr. Gilbert, Council members voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon motion by Mr. Wortman and second by Mr. Hearn, the minutes of the October 18, 2021, regular meeting were unanimously approved.

Upon motion by Mr. Wortman and second by Mr. Hearn, the minutes of the October 25, 2021, special meeting were unanimously approved.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Mayor Cashman welcomed all visitors. Present were:

- Kelli Knapp, Director, Warren Public Library: Request for RACP Allocation
- Jen Rossey: Observing
- Angie Dart, Warren General Hospital Maintenance Director: Requests for RACP Allocation & Right-of-Way
- Mark Cye, Warren General Hospital: Requests for RACP Allocation & Right-of-Way
- Jim Decker, Warren Co. Chamber of Business & Industry: Boat Launch Discussion
- Tom Christeson, DewBoi Properties, LLC: Request for RACP Allocation
- Sally Eaton: Requesting Public Support of COVID Vaccine and Masking
- Karen Black: Requesting Public Support of COVID Vaccine and Masking
- Jane Dunshie: Observing
- Andy Close: YourDailyLocal Reporter
- Joe Michaels: Council Member Elect Observing
- Wendy McCain: Council Member Elect Observing
- Jay Cotton: Observing
- Emily Cotton: Observing
- Josh Cotton: Times Observer Reporter

Karen Black, representing Indivisible Warren, stated that the group is concerned regarding the lack of response from elected officials in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and further stated that “all need to be involved.” She requested that City Council promote COVID-19 vaccines and the wearing of masks.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

Mrs. Freenock presented Randall Rossey's letter of resignation from the City Planning Commission and then introduced Mr. Rossey as the new director of the City's Codes and Planning Office.

## **TERMINATION OF RACP SUB-GRANTEE AGREEMENT: EAGLES CREST**

Mrs. Freenock noted that in January, 2021, Council entered into a sub-grantee agreement with Pennsylvania Senior Housing Associates, LP, (PSHA) under which \$1,500,000 was to be committed to the Eagles Crest Senior Housing Project. PSHA intends to fund the majority of its housing project with Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency Tax Credit Funding. Since entering into the sub-grantee agreement, PSHA learned that the relationship between it and The Hudson Group, Inc. (general contractor) is not acceptable under RACP guidelines. Therefore, PSHA requested that the sub-grantee agreement be terminated.

Upon motion by Mr. Wortman and second by Mr. Gilbert, Council members voted unanimously to accept Pennsylvania Senior Housing Associates' request to terminate the Sub-Grantee Agreement regarding \$1.5 million in Redevelopment Capital Assistance Program funding allocated to the Eagles Crest Project.

## **PRESENTATIONS: REQUESTS FOR ALLOCATIONS OF RACP FUNDS**

Mrs. Freenock stated that the City is the recipient of Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funds from multiple award years. At the time that applications were submitted, it was anticipated that a hotel would be constructed in the vicinity of Liberty and Clark Streets and infrastructure improvements would be required; however, this development did not come to fruition. Therefore, it is necessary to determine alternate uses which qualify for the use of RACP funds and for which matching funds and/or assessed values are available. Individuals were present in regard to the following projects:

### **Warren General Hospital – Maternity Ward Renovations**

Angie Dart, Warren General Hospital Maintenance Director, stated that the Hospital was previously awarded \$750,000 in RACP funding for its Maternity Ward renovation project (the City submitted the application on the Hospital's behalf). It was requested that an additional \$500,000 be allocated to the Hospital. Ms. Dart stated that matching funds are available should the City allocate RACP funding to the Hospital for continuation of the Maternity Ward Project and renovations to the Pediatric Ward. She further stated that construction is expected to commence in February, 2022.

Mrs. Freenock stated that the City is not in a position to allocate additional RACP funds to the Hospital until the Office of Budget makes its determination as to whether \$500,000 may be used for needed rehabilitation at the Clark Street Parking Garage. Mr. Wortman suggested that this request be brought back to Council at the December regular meeting.

### **DewBoi Properties, LLC – Wendelboe Hotel**

Tom Christeson, founder of DewBoi Properties, LLC, stated that the company owns the Liberty Street property which was previously the site of the N.K. Wendelboe Store and, most recently, Watt Office Supply. Mr. Christeson presented a Project Plan Summary for development of the building into the Wendelboe Hotel which would include fifteen guest rooms, conference rooms, a café, and efficiency apartments. He noted that efforts are underway to acquire adjoining properties to the left and right of the site (Allegheny Floral and Brickhouse); these buildings would be rehabilitated and utilized for stand-alone projects. Mr. Christeson stated that the boutique hotel project carries an estimated cost of

\$3,750,000 and requested that \$1,500,000 in RACP funds be allocated to the project. He further stated that his private funding paired with bank financing would more than cover the required matching funds.

Mr. Christeson stated that DewBoi Properties would seek a long-term lease for spaces in the Midtown Parking Lot for use by hotel guests in addition to the designation of a loading zone proximate to the hotel entrance.

Based upon a hotel feasibility study and his own personal experience in finding it difficult to book overnight lodging in Warren, Mr. Christeson stated that he believes that there is sufficient need to support the planned project.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to allocate \$1.5 million in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project funding to DewBoi Properties, LLC, for development of the Wendelboe Hotel. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fraser and carried with six votes in the affirmative and one nay vote cast by Mr. Gilbert.

### **Warren Public Library – Teen Room**

Kelly Knapp, Warren Public Library Director, addressed Council and outlined plans for the Library's renovation project. A key component of the project is the relocation and expansion of a Teen Room which will serve youth who have outgrown the Children's Library section. The Teen Room will provide a safe environment where students may gather to hold study sessions and work on group projects. The room will feature updated computers for research and graphic design, 3D printers, meeting room, lounge, gaming area, kitchenette, "whisper room" for recordings, "maker's space," photography and videography, and an office for the Library's Teen Specialist who will work with the youth. Ms. Knapp requested that the City allocate \$100,000 in RACP funds for this project and stated that the Library has the requisite matching funds in hand.

Mrs. Freenock noted that it will be necessary to ask State Senator Scott Hutchinson to provide a letter of support for the specific project; the letter will be submitted to the Office of Budget along with the project plan.

Mr. Fraser made the motion to allocate \$100,000 in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project funding to the Warren Public Library in support of its Teen Room project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously.

### **Robert Yoder – GeoThermal Well System**

Mr. Yoder was not present to provide information relative to his request for the allocation of \$500,000 in RACP funding to be utilized for system upgrades to the GeoThermal Well System. Jim Decker, Executive Director of the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry, stated that the system is "less than functional" in all of the buildings that it serves. Jane Dunshie, a resident of a building served by the system stated that the cooling during the prior four summers "has been miserable."

Mrs. Freenock stated that in addition to providing improved heating and cooling within the building served by the GeoThermal Well System, completion of the upgrades at this time would be advantageous to the City as the well project would entail excavation of an area that lies under the proposed walking trail along the Allegheny River Bank.

### **Boat Launch Project**

Jim Decker, Executive Director of the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry addressed Council in support of the proposed Boat Launch Project which would be located

at the southern end of Liberty Street. Mr. Decker cited numerous statistics regarding the volume of private watercraft that are put in at the Army Corps of Engineers Launch below the Kinzua Dam. He also cited data regarding canoe and kayak rentals via Allegheny Outfitters. He addressed the correlation between the volume of river traffic and the projected positive economic impact that may be expected as a result of a readily accessible boat launch adjacent to the core of the downtown commercial district.

Mr. Decker suggested that the City make a formal request to the Warren County Commissioners to allocate American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funds to the Boat Launch Project. He indicated that outdoor recreation projects are qualifying uses of ARPA funds.

### **WARREN GENERAL HOSPITAL RIGHT-OF-WAY PROPOSAL**

Mr. Holtz stated that Warren General Hospital's (WGH) emergency generator was installed in the hospital basement in 1975. The unit has surpassed its useful life expectancy and must be replaced. The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) recommends that the replacement generator be placed above ground due to its proximity to the river. This generator supports the east end of the building including the medical surgical unit, critical care unit, and operating room suite.

As indicated on the provided rendering, the recommended and least restrictive location is along Main Avenue near the intersection with St. Clair Street. The proposed concept sketch shows the new generator within a new brick building approximately 18' x 26'. City staff members reviewed the site and do not have concerns at the Main Avenue/St. Clair site.

In addition, WGH is updating external directional signage. The sign which is located near the proposed generator site is to be replaced and it is anticipated that it will be placed in the green space between St. Clair Street and the sidewalk; this area is in the City right-of-way.

Prior to finalizing its plans and requesting an agreement for its use of the City right-of-way, WGH requested this opportunity to receive comments from City Council and to answer any questions that Council may have. It is anticipated that the right-of-way agreement will be presented for Council's consideration at the December 20 regular Council meeting.

Mr. Fraser made the motion to authorize City Administration to prepare right-of-way documents relating to Warren General Hospitals' emergency generator and sign replacement/relocation projects. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wortman and carried unanimously.

### **PROPOSED SETTLEMENT BY STIPULATION: LUDLOW STREET, LLC, TAX APPEAL**

Ms. Stapleford noted that at its April 19, 2021, regular meeting, Council was advised that Ludlow Street, LLC (Days Inn) filed a tax appeal in regard to the assessment of its property at 210 Ludlow Street. At that time, Council voted to join the Warren County Commissioners and Warren County School District in retaining the services of Attorney Michael Musone of the Knox Law Firm in regard to the appeal. A Settlement by Stipulation was presented for Council's consideration.

During discussion, Mayor Cashman questioned what the amount of reduction in real estate taxes to be collected by the City would be as a result of the proposed settlement.

Mr. Fraser questioned whether the taxes due in 2021 have been paid and, if so, the amount of the refund that would be due from the City.

Mr. Fraser made the motion to table action regarding the Ludlow Street, LLC, Settlement by Stipulation pending receipt of further information regarding the resultant loss of tax revenue and whether 2021 real estate taxes have been paid by Ludlow Street, LLC. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wortman and carried unanimously.

**DISPOSITION OF SURPLUS ITEMS**

Mr. Holtz noted that Council periodically authorizes the disposition of supplies, materials, and equipment that are no longer suitable or necessary for City operations. The following items were listed for Council’s consideration:

1. 2004 F250 Super Duty Dump Truck with attached plow, VIN #1FTNX21S94EC78935  
This vehicle has been replaced and is no longer fit for use in the DPW fleet.
  
2. Horizon Model PF-P3100 Folding Machine. The machine no longer functions properly and the current need does not warrant the cost of the required repairs.

Upon motion by Mr. Fraser and second by Mr. Wortman, Council members voted unanimously to authorize disposition of the above-described items in a manner permitted by the City Code.

**BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING DATE**

Upon motion by Mr. Wortman and second by Mr. Gilbert, Council members voted unanimously to set December 13, 2021, at 6:00 PM as the date and time for the 2022 Budget Public Hearing.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS – OCTOBER, 2021**

The following reports were presented for Council’s review:

- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Department of Public Works
- Zoning, Codes, and Economic Development

**APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

Council acknowledged receipt of the following approved minutes:

Blighted Property Review Committee		
Index of Properties	– August 26, 2021	Regular Meeting
Planning Commission	– August 18, 2021	Regular Meeting
Street Landscape Committee	– September 28, 2021	Regular Meeting

**ADJOURNMENT**

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