

**WARREN CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 29, 2021 – 6:30 PM**

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**OPENING OF MEETING**

Mayor Cashman presided over the November 29, 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; Jessicca Byler, Acting Finance Officer; Michael Holtz, DPW Director; David Krogler, Fire Chief; Teena Leary, Assistant City Clerk; and Joseph Sproveri, Chief of Police.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Mr. Wortman made the motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Exley and carried unanimously among the members present.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Mayor Cashman welcomed all visitors. Present were:

- Jared Villella: Council member elect observing
- Wendy McCain: Council member elect observing
- Ruzhdi Bakalli: Parking Lease request
- Robert Yoder: GeoThermal Well System
- Joe Rehe: I.A.F.F. Memoranda of Understanding
- Jane Dunshie: GeoThermal Well System
- Bonnie Riggle: GeoThermal Well System
- Bonnie Miller: GeoThermal Well System
- Lynda Church: Observing via Zoom
- Brian Hagberg: YourDailyLocal Reporter (via Zoom)
- Josh Cotton: Times Observer Reporter

**I.A.F.F. MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING**

Mrs. Freenock stated that, according to its terms, the current Collective Bargaining Agreement (as extended by the Arbitration Award issued on February 1, 2019) between the City and the International Association of Firefighters, Local Union 1835 (I.A.F.F.) will expire on December 31, 2021. A Memorandum of Understanding regarding the years 2022, 2023, and 2024 was negotiated and was ratified by the Union.

Mrs. Freenock further stated that Flex Scheduling was provided for within the 2019 Arbitration Award; however, its application as written in the Award has proven to be unfeasible. Therefore, the City and the I.A.F.F. negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding which provides for a more viable application of Flex Scheduling. This Memorandum was also ratified by the Union.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the I.A.F.F. for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hearn and carried unanimously among the Council members present.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the I.A.F.F. pertaining to Flex Scheduling. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hearn and carried unanimously among the Council members present.

**RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT: BREEZE POINT CIRCLE AND UNDEVELOPED TOWNHOME PAD**

Mr. Holtz stated that the property identified as WN-575-9921-00, commonly known as Breeze Point Circle, is owned by the City. The roadway on this parcel was constructed by the Innovate (Impact) Warren developer at the time that the Innovate Warren properties were built and the intent was that the City would accept the street. The roadway has a solid base; however, it does not meet the width and turning radius requirements to qualify for PennDOT State Liquid Fuels funds. Therefore, to date, the City has not accepted the street and its maintenance has remained the responsibility of the developer.

Mr. Holtz indicated that there is an undeveloped concrete pad with exposed utility conduits located on Parcel No. WN-575-9922-00. It was anticipated that additional townhome units would be constructed on this pad. Over the past several months, this land has been considered for use in furthering development along the Allegheny Riverfront (e.g. parking for the proposed boat launch project area).

Robert Yoder, owner, stated that he is agreeable to subdividing the portion of the property which contains the concrete pad and then transferring it to the City in exchange for the City's acceptance of Breeze Point Circle. Mr. Holtz stated that if the City accepts Breeze Point Circle, it will be necessary to mill and pave the cartway at an expense of approximately \$53,130 (based on 2021 prices) and the City would then maintain the street. It was noted that the street would continue to be unqualified for Liquid Fuels funding. The undeveloped concrete pad on the subdivided property would be demolished by the Public Works Department and the land would be prepared for planting and/or use as a parking area until such time as it is utilized for further Riverfront Development activities.

In response to questions from Council, Mr. Holtz stated that the annual cost associated with the street would be for winter maintenance. He further stated that there is a low traffic volume and, therefore, it is expected that the paving would last for approximately fifteen years.

Mr. Wortman suggested that an executive session be held for the purpose of receiving legal advice from the Solicitor.

Mr. Wortman then made the motion to table action on this matter to the December 20, 2021, regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Exley and carried with five votes in the affirmative, one nay vote cast by Mr. Giannini, and one member absent.

**REQUEST FOR RACP ALLOCATION: GEOTHERMAL WELL SYSTEM PROJECT**

Robert Yoder addressed Council regarding his request for an allocation of \$500,000 in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project (RACP) funding.

Mr. Yoder stated that the system is fifteen years old and, at the time of construction, was designed to provide heating and cooling for one million square feet. The hotel and conference center which were expected to be constructed did not come to fruition due to the market drop in 2008, 2009, and 2010 and resultant difficulty in obtaining financial backing. The planned projects would have increased the GeoThermal cash flow and the financial means to make system upgrades as the need occurred.

Mr. Wortman inquired as to how many people are impacted by the GeoThermal System on a daily basis. Mr. Yoder responded that the system serves forty-eight apartments, seventeen townhome units, ErieBank, approximately thirty people in community lease spaces, the Senior Center, Transit Authority of Warren County (TAWC) offices, and the TAWC bus washing system.

Mr. Yoder stated that the intent of the project is to upgrade it to the highest possible operating efficiency.

Jane Dunshie, a resident of one of the impacted apartments, stated that residents in her building have not experienced issues with heating; however, for the past three summers many have had to install window air conditioning units. She noted that some residents do not have windows that will accept a window air conditioning unit.

Mr. Wortman stated that he believes that RACP funds need to be allocated to projects that will result in the biggest impact for City residents and cited the rehabilitation of the Clark Street Parking Garage and the Warren General Hospital Maternity Ward.

No motion was made in regard to this item.

#### **PROPOSED LONG-TERM PARKING LEASE: HIY, INC. – BOUTIQUE HOTEL**

Mr. Holtz stated that Ruzhdi Bakalli is moving forward with plans to renovate a portion of the HIY, Inc. building for use as a boutique hotel. In order for Mr. Bakalli to obtain the necessary private funding for the project, he must provide the lender with evidence that he has long-term rights to dedicated parking spaces for the hotel.

Mr. Bakalli requested that the City establish a long-term lease which will dedicate twenty parking spaces for use by the hotel's guests and employees. Mr. Holtz noted that the City already leases Parcel No. WN-579-7730-00 to Mr. Bakalli on an annual basis. It was suggested that spaces within that parcel be subject to a lease which will match the term of the hotel financing. The lease would include a clause that would permit the City to designate alternate parking spaces should the subject parcel be developed in the future. The remainder of the parking lot would continue to be subject to an annual lease should Mr. Bakalli wish to continue to do so.

Mr. Wortman made the motion to authorize and direct City Staff to develop a long-term lease for fifteen to twenty parking spaces to be dedicated to use by guests and employees of the HIY Building's boutique hotel. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gilbert and carried unanimously.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Mr. Gilbert suggested that there be prominent signage indicating that after-hours parking is available in the Clark Street Parking Garage.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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