

**ALTOONA CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY – SEPTEMBER 11, 2013 - 7:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS - 1320 WASHINGTON AVENUE, ALTOONA, PA**

The meeting was televised live on cable Public Access Channel 14 and re-broadcast Thursday, September 12, 2013.

CALL TO ORDER – by Mayor Schirf at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers.

SILENT MEDITATION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL – taken by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer

Present: Councilmen Butterbaugh, Cagle, Geis, Haire, Kelley, Neugebauer and Mayor Schirf

ALL PUBLIC COMMENT – Bryson Peterman, AFD, President, IAFF Local 299, asked if the City was accepting the SAFER grant; Omar Strohm stated the City has a tentative agreement with the Act 47 coordinator but it is needed in writing before the City proceeds; Peterman also said 20 or so firefighters who were eligible for military buyback were upset with the City because the City would not back this and that they could not get even a political statement out of City Council to back them and they were also upset because the City filed an appeal in this matter; Peterman stated he also had an issue with unfair labor practices being committed by the Fire Chief; Peterman stated he notified the Fire Chief verbally and in writing; Peterman stated the Chief called a Firefighter at home and intimidated the Firefighter for conducting union business; Peterman stated City Council brought the Act 47 legal team upon the Firefighters and Peterman said the Firefighters are now threatening City Council that the city either follow the rules or the Firefighters are going to start filing their own legal issues with the City

Scott Brown, Race Street, stated his Toytown neighborhood is still having problems with traffic and they would still like a commitment from Council that 1. traffic detours will never again be directed into his neighborhood and 2. that traffic and planning will work together with PennDOT; Scott provided Council with a handout identifying Toytown, what the detour was supposed to be and what was actually occurring, and the traffic counts for the state routes; asked that this trend of high traffic in their neighborhood which has been building be stopped; the neighborhood wanted to bring this to Council again because of the change in management; Scott stated the spillover is affecting the character of their neighborhood and the street is not built to handle that load; Scott stated a cattle truck came through the neighborhood recently and a basketball size pile of cow feces projected out of a cow and onto Race Street and he was almost hit by it

Mayor Schirf stated a traffic count had been done during the detour and now there will be milling and paving and the detour will come down and they will do another traffic count and then a meeting with city departments and PennDOT

Paul Myers, 901 Race Street, Altoona, PA-concerned about Broad Avenue extension and bus stop and traffic and the number of children

PRESENTATIONS – A Proclamation was presented by Councilman Neugebauer on behalf of Mayor and Council to Dawn Morden for National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and Gold Ribbon Day; Dawn stated their group will sell gold ribbons at Mansion Park at the September 20th Altoona football game; the other fundraisers for the Brian Morden Foundation include History of Christmas and the play Danny Girl next summer at the Mishler

Annual Audit Review – Dan Bradley, YOBCO thanked the City Departments for their assistance and discussed the audit and reviewed various portions of the audit; Mr. Bradley stated a lot of progress has been made by the City to improve their internal controls; Mr. Bradley stated there will be a 22 million dollar increase to the City's liabilities; the City also has five material deficiencies – one is a repeat finding, one with the City's prior tax collector who failed to provide the City with certain documents and was difficult to deal with, and three which will stay because of segregation of duties issues

2014 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) Certification – Omar Strohm, Finance Director reviewed the MMO numbers line by line with Council which are based on three separate actuarial reports performed in 2011; the contributions for police are \$6,798 less than what was contributed in 2013, the contributions for non-uniformed were \$9,778 less than what was contributed in 2013 and fire was \$41,883 more than what was contributed in 2013

Altoona Fire Department Annual Report – Chief Tim Hileman did a power point presentation for Council which will be included at the end of the minutes and posted on the City's website

MANAGER'S REPORT – this was distributed previously; Councilman Butterbaugh asked for any detail available on the downtown study; Omar referred to Planning Director Lee Slusser who stated the purpose of the study is to identify several buildings that make the most financial sense to re-use; there is a concentration on residential use downtown and the project is largely being run through GAEDC because they represent most of the property owners, investors and businesses downtown; the City Solicitor is currently finalizing a contract with the GAEDC Solicitor to bring to Council at a future meeting

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS – Mayor Schirf stated he saw the former City Manager Joe Weakland on a recent talk show speaking about the land value tax and asked Omar if this is something the City should look into and can Council get an update; Omar stated he is aware of the land value tax idiosyncrasy; Omar stated it is a revenue neutral item and it is not something that would generate revenue but a study as to whether it has actually achieved

what it was projected to achieve would be appropriate; Omar stated he will contact Joshua Vincent to do an update to their most recent study as well as look at the downside; Omar will provide Council with an update in the future

Councilman Butterbaugh asked what the process would be to reverse this if Council decided they wanted to go in that direction; City Solicitor Larry Clapper stated they may be able to reverse it all at once and that it is set through the millage petition; Councilman Butterbaugh asked for this to be a discussion item for a future strategic planning meeting; Councilman Geis said business with large lots like car dealers were affected the most and those who did home improvements saved money

Councilman Neugebauer stated Blair County Community Action Agency will Assist with a grant for the Veteran's Leadership Program of Western PA that will assist homeless veterans with shelter and counseling; the Penelec Customer Assistance Program has been renewed in 2014 and BCCAP has received a 98% rating on a recent audit; BCCAP Executive Director Allan Robison will be retiring in March 2014 and the agency is forming a search committee for his replacement; Councilman Neugebauer mentioned all of the good work Allan has done for this area and that he will be sorely missed

RESOLUTIONS

approving the minutes of the Altoona City Council Meeting held Wednesday, August 28, 2013. (109-13)

the resolution was read by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer; the vote was taken and passed 7 to 0 with all present

DISCUSSION ITEMS – Councilman Butterbaugh asked for an executive session since the leadership of the local 299 showed up tonight at the meeting and threw allegations and threatened litigation; Councilman Geis stated since the City and fire are going to binding arbitration as the City was recently put on notice of that an executive session is appropriate

MEDIA – those in attendance included Bill Kibler, *Altoona Mirror*, Chris Forshey and Steve Willett, WRTA

ADJOURNMENT – City Council went into executive session at 8:45 p.m. for the purpose of potential litigation; Mayor Schirf stated the meeting would not reconvene and it would adjourn following the executive session

Mayor Schirf adjourned the meeting after the executive session at 9:45 p.m.