

**ALTOONA CITY COUNCIL MEETING & 2014 BUDGET REVIEW MINUTES
WEDNESDAY – OCTOBER 23, 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, October 24, 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 (via phone), Haire, Kelley, Neugebauer and Mayor Schirf

Mayor Schirf announced that a resolution was added to the agenda regarding Blair County and delinquent real estate taxes.

ALL PUBLIC COMMENT – none

PRESENTATIONS – PROCLAMATION – presented to Parade Marshal and Blair County War Veteran Council Member Floyd Dutton and Korean War Veteran and POW William Knipple for Veterans Day in honor of the Korean War Veterans

MANAGER'S REPORT – distributed previously; Omar Strohm reported that the wi fi camera now has a clear view of Heritage Plaza and staff will notify Pat Miller

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS – Mayor Schirf congratulated the Altoona Police Department for their facebook page being ranked second in the country among cities with 50 to 99 police officers; the page received 15,551 likes; the page is very informative and has homeowner tips and information about wanted persons and arrests made

Councilman Butterbaugh stated the Government Study Commission met on October 22nd and received information from Michael Foreman of DCED and Kristen Denne, City Manager of Johnstown

Councilman Neugebauer attended the Explore Altoona luncheon and website launching and encouraged residents to visit the site for which there is a link to on altoonapa.gov

Councilman Geis mentioned the improvement project on 17th Street stating it is imperative that this project is completed by Penn Dot as people need to be able to cross this intersection; Councilman Geis encouraged a formal letter to PennDOT; Councilman Kelley stated the City is trying to improve neighborhoods and some have already invested in their sidewalks and although

it will be a long process it needs to be done to make the neighborhoods more livable; Councilman Butterbaugh stated this was the biggest complaint by neighbors during the comprehensive plan meetings; Council agreed that a letter would be sent signed by the Mayor on behalf of Council stating where the City stands on this issue and what the City expects; Councilman Geis stated the letter to PennDOT needs to convey that the City of Altoona is willing to do what the City needs to do and the City needs to have pedestrian crossings with buttons and the buttons need to shut down both intersections since there are six lanes

Mayor Schirf stated he went to Harrisburg to accept the 2013 Daniel Burnham Award for the City's Comprehensive Plan entitled Positively Altoona.

2014 BUDGET REVIEW

Interim City Manager and Finance Director Omar Strohm reviewed the revenue portion of the budget with City Council and discussed particular line items with changes as follows:

Real Estate Taxes:

Due to a small increase in the City's Assessed Valuation and increased current year collections, Real Estate Tax revenues are projected to increase. *2013 Budget = \$8,989,500 and 2014 Budget = \$9,060,000*

Earned Income Tax:

Earned Income Taxes are projected to decrease next year based on the 0.05% reduction in the Act 47 Earned Income Tax, which was authorized by Initiative TAX05 of the City's Recovery Plan. *2013 Budget = \$5,184,000 and 2014 Budget = \$4,797,200*

Act 511 Taxes:

Revenue received from the Mercantile Tax is anticipated to increase in the 2014 Budget based primarily on historic and year-to-date revenue receipts. *2013 Budget = \$410,000 and 2014 Budget = \$425,000*

Licenses, Permits & Fees:

As you know, Initiative TAX06 of the Recovery Plan called for an increase in the Mercantile and Business Privilege License Fee in 2013. The revenue derived from this fee has not met expectations to date. The City is currently reviewing the collection process in order to assure the efficient collection of this license fee. However, revenue received from these fees is projected to be reduced from the 2013 budgeted amount.

Mercantile License: *2013 Budget = \$46,000 and 2014 Budget = \$35,000*

Business Privilege License: *2013 Budget = \$160,000 and 2014 Budget = \$110,000*

Due to a continued expectation of somewhat diminished activity related to construction in the City, and reduced revenue receipts in the current year, the revenue received from Electrical and Plumbing Permits, as well as Plan Review Fees has been adjusted down in the 2014 Budget.

Building Permits: *2013 Budget = \$40,000 and 2014 Budget = \$30,900*

Plumbing Permits: *2013 Budget = \$35,000 and 2014 Budget = \$28,840*

Plan Review Fees: *2013 Budget = \$10,000 and 2014 Budget = \$5,150*

Conversely, current year revenue receipts indicate greater activity related to Mechanical Code Permits. Therefore, revenue received from this activity is projected to increase next year.

Mechanical Code Permits: *2013 Budget = \$15,000 and 2014 Budget = \$20,600*

Charges for Service

Initiative IGR02 of the City's Recovery Plan calls for the City to negotiate a \$250,000 per year increase in the Altoona Water Authority's payment to the City for use of the City's services, facilities, property, personnel, and rights of way. This increase has been included in the City's 2014 Budget. *2013 Budget = \$3,208,290 and 2014 Budget = \$3,554,539*

Recently, City Council passed an Ordinance that allows the City to attempt to recover costs related to responding to emergencies. This was undertaken in conformance with Initiative FD05 of the City's Recovery Plan. Revenue from this effort is expected to exceed expectations in 2014. *2013 Budget = \$10,000 and 2014 Budget = \$15,000*

Intergovernmental Revenues:

Revenue received through the new SAFER grant, which will pay the wages and benefits for three firefighters over the next two years, is a large increase in revenue projected to be received in this category of revenue in the 2014 Budget. *2013 Budget = \$0 and 2014 Budget = \$174,768*

Mr. Strohm stated that the revenues show an increase of 3% for fees including permitting, licensing and related activity and this increase is in compliance with the Act 47 Recovery Plan which states fees should be increased 3% in 2014 to capture the increased employee costs and as stated in the plan due to their correlation with the services being rendered.

Council discussed and will hold a budget review meeting on Monday, October 28th at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers to review the 2014 expenditures.

RESOLUTIONS

a) approving the minutes of the Altoona City Council Meeting held Wednesday, October 9, 2013. (0119-13)

b) awarding the Fitness Equipment for Fire Stations Nos. 1,2,3 and 4 Bid to Promaxima of 5310 Ashbrook, Houston, TX 77081 in the amount of \$31,165.90 payable from FEMA Homeland Security Grant (City Account No. 10-54450-2400) and further authorizing the Interim City Manager to execute all documents and the City Clerk to attest to same. (0120-13)

c) amending the 2012 CDBG Program transferring \$246,168.15 from the Blighted Property Program and \$69,108.36 from the Neighborhood Police Program to the Street Resurfacing Project in the amount of \$265,276.51 and to Unprogrammed Funds in the amount of \$50,000.00. (0121-13)

d) approving the Repository Bid submitted by David Caldwell of 1604 14th Street, Altoona, PA 16601 for property located at 1606 14th Street, Altoona, PA, Control No. 11-311670, in the amount of \$50.00 and further authorizing the Interim City Manager to execute all documents and the City Clerk to attest to same. (0122-13)

e) approving the Repository Bid submitted by Donna Houck of 824 3rd Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601 for property located at 826-828 3rd Avenue Rear, Altoona, PA, Control No. 12-40530, in the amount of \$250.00 and further authorizing the Interim City Manager to execute all documents and the City Clerk to attest to same. (0123-13)

f) approving the Repository Bid submitted by Thomas Bickel Jr. of 200 E. 3rd Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602 for property located at 722 4th Avenue, Altoona, PA, Control No. 12-61980, in the amount of \$300.00 and further authorizing the Interim City Manager to execute all documents and the City Clerk to attest to same. (0124-13)

g) authorizing the City of Altoona enter into an agreement with TLC Properties, Inc. t/d/a Lamar Outdoor Advertising for street tree removal and replanting as outlined in the agreement and further authorizing Mayor William Schirf to execute the agreement and the City Clerk to attest to same. (0125-13)

h) authorizing the recovery of delinquent real estate taxes through a Declaratory Judgement action being filed in the Blair County Court of Common Pleas. (0126-13)

the resolutions were read by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer; the consent vote was taken and passed 7 to 0 with all present; Councilman Geis voted by phone

ORDINANCES

Introduction

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA BY ADDING A NEW SUB-CHAPTER 11 TO CHAPTER 550, TO BE ENTITLED "REGISTRATION OF PROPERTIES IN DEFAULT OF MORTGAGE" PROVIDING FOR: A PURPOSE; INTENT AND APPLICABILITY; THE REGISTRATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY BY MORTGAGEES; PENALTIES AND ENFORCEMENT; AS WELL AS THE REGULATION, LIMITATION AND REDUCTION OF ABANDONED REAL PROPERTY WITHIN THE CITY OF ALTOONA; ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS; THE REPEAL OF ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF LAWS IN CONFLICT THEREWITH; SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Ordinance was read by the City Clerk and introduced by the Governing Body.

Councilman Haire asked how the mortgage holders would be notified to comply with the above ordinance; City Solicitor Larry Clapper said they would be notified by the address on the deed and it would only be to those individuals in default; Attorney Clapper stated all mortgage companies and banks must comply with this ordinance and have to let the City know when someone is in default; this will be done through advertising the ordinance and sending the banks and mortgage companies notice of the adoption of this ordinance

DISCUSSION ITEMS – Mayor Schirf asked for an update on the 8th street trees; Planning Director Lee Slusser stated the Shade Tree Commission had already allowed one of the residents of that neighborhood to remove their trees and another resident was placed on the shade tree list for removal ; Mr. Slusser stated the Shade Tree Commission is using this opportunity to focus on shade tree maintenance; the actual project on 7th and 8th streets was done by the City and not the Shade Tree Commission in 1983 as a neighborhood improvement project; Mr. Slusser will contact the parties in that neighborhood and give them an update

Councilman Geis recently read an article about the City of Lancaster possibly adopting legislation regarding utility companies and street cuts and to date Philadelphia is the only City that has done something and Pittsburgh and Lancaster are contemplating legislation; Councilman Geis asked Councilman Kelley if the Pennsylvania Municipal League was doing anything collectively;

Councilman Kelley said Lancaster is moving forward and he has a copy of the ordinance; Councilman Geis thought Altoona may be able to do something collectively with the other Third Class Cities; City Solicitor Larry Clapper stated the City had already done the first phase of the study through the IRC and there are two phases; the next phase is very specific to the municipality; Councilman Geis thought spreading the cost over several municipalities would be helpful; Councilman Kelley stated he will investigate the PA Municipal League and their future plans

Councilman Butterbaugh stated the Government Study Commission will need funding for 2014 should the vote they take in December be to write a home rule charter and do a referendum; there will be legal, consulting and advertising fees; Larry Clapper stated other than the recommendation that the City consider the study commission the Act 47 plan never addressed a budget for the study so the city can budget whatever is needed or appropriate

MEDIA – those in attendance included Bill Kibler, *Altoona Mirror*, Steve Willett, WRTA and Ben Manning WTAJ TV 10

ADJOURNMENT – by Mayor Schirf at 8:30 p.m.