

Altoona City Council Worksession Minutes 06/28/2021

ALTOONA CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION MINUTES
MONDAY – JUNE 28, 2021 - 6:00 P.M.
CITY OF ALTOONA TRAINING FACILITY & COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1320 WASHINGTON AVENUE ALTOONA, PA 16601

The public is welcome to view the meeting live on Atlantic Broadband Cable Public Access Channel 14, listen live via telephone conference (phone # and access code below)* or stream live on Youtube at www.altoonapa.gov then Quick Links: City Council Meeting Livestream

*Phone No#: 1-408-418-9388 Access Code: 173 509 5879 then ##

Agenda

Call to Order – by Mayor Pacifico at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

All Public Comment – Attorney Tom Foor, representing John Helfrick (present at this worksession) and Catherine Steck, a 2 member LLC with 50/50 ownership of the McCrory's Building, stated they know the building is being considered for eminent domain and they would like to meet with the City for a reasonable solution; Attorney Foor stated they plan to have the roof replaced and they wanted to complete a clean out of the building as soon as possible; they are willing to sell it but refuse what they consider as less than reasonable offers; they also want to get an update appraisal completed within the next 2 weeks with the current roof and with a roof replacement; Attorney Foor stated an appraiser was in the building today and they expect to receive his appraisal in 1-2 weeks; Council stated the building was purchased for \$50,000; the assessed value is \$153,200 and one of the offers received (with an appraisal) consisted of \$20,000

Council held an additional lengthy discussion regarding the McCrory Building stating the fact that the deterioration of the building has been ongoing for at least ten years; Council discussed placing a resolution on this agenda which would authorize the City Solicitor to proceed with preparing the documentation for the filing of an Eminent Domain proceeding without filing the declaration of taking until they discuss the matter and receive appraisals by the next Council meeting, which is July 12th

Worksession Items:

Alleghenies Broadband, Inc. (ABI) – Jim Foreman and Steve McKnight

Jim Foreman stated he is the Blair County representative for ABI, a 501 C 3 non-profit and non-governmental agency, operating through the geographic framework of Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development in 6 counties; Mr. Foreman stated they began studying internet accessibility in 2018 and the lack thereof; in a more densely populated area with easier terrain, it is a lot more commercially attractive for providers to get services into cities and to densely populated suburbs

and more challenging for the rural areas; surveys were done in Blair County and surrounding counties and maps were generated that established that there is a need which appears to be an overwhelming need; there are unserved, underserved and intermittent service; Mr. Foreman stated problems on such platforms as Zoom meetings could be the speed as well as how the media is being delivered or the numerous "cars on the highway"; the ABI Board was formed almost 2 years ago and Steve McKnight, with his expertise in economic development, sits on the Board, as well as Brandon Carson as Executive Director; Mr. Foreman referred to the City's ARP funds and the potential eligibility and how the City might use some of the money for broadband; Mr. Foreman stated he has met with the Blair County Commissioners, and is working to meet with all of the townships, schools districts and the hospital to discuss broadband and collaboration between all entities throughout the County, and for taking the needs that have been established and implementing them so that there is competitive, consistent and reliable broadband service throughout Blair County; ABI believes this is approximately a 12 million dollar project; any money that the City of Altoona would consider using from the City's ARP funds would be used in the City in addition, and in collaboration with the County's money, and the school districts money, and the projects would be managed through ABI; the request to the City is a 15% allocation of ARP funds that have to be used in 2 years, and as projects are identified in the City limits, and they are presented working cooperatively with the County, would be the trigger to funds those projects; there is a grant cooperation agreement that Council would need to review; there will be a collective meeting of Solicitors in the future; ABI is not intending to be the end provider but if one of the providers chooses not to be, then ABI is in the position to be able to be a provider; ABI was granted the ability to take things by eminent domain; ABI is a utility and that will be helpful if they need a tower; ABI will be self sufficient and will not be coming back to the City post ARP funds to request more money; the future money will come from the lease of infrastructure; the commercial providers can erect their own towers but if they chose not to and ABI erects the tower, ABI is then leasing the space to the commercial providers; ABI has a proforma on self sufficiency

Council asked for the mapping and the report that details some of the areas

McCrary's Building Eminent Domain & Resolution

Council motioned and seconded as a Governing Body an eminent domain resolution on this agenda as follows:

authorizing the City Solicitor to proceed to prepare documentation and filings for the purpose of an Eminent Domain proceeding regarding the property located at 1306-10 11th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601, Tax Map No. 01.03-10-058.00, with no formal filing to be made prior to July 13, 2021. (0082-21)

City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer read the resolution into the record; the vote was taken by the City Clerk and passed 6 to 0; Councilmember's present included Dave Butterbaugh, Matt Cacciotti, Joe Carper, Jesse Ickes, Bruce Kelley and Mayor Pacifico; Councilwoman Jordan was absent

Food Truck Ordinance

Council reviewed a draft food truck ordinance with the City Solicitor and Codes Director, at the request of the Zoning Hearing Board, as there is nothing in the City's current ordinances that addresses food trucks; they are currently licensed by the Department of Agriculture but not for hours or parking or general traffic in a neighborhood; currently if there is an issue they can only fall back on the licensing for a home-based business; Council stated they would like to review and make comments and suggestions to Rebecca and Omar over the next several weeks and re-visit and discuss further in the future

Demolition Specifications

Council reviewed a draft ordinance with the City Solicitor and Codes Director; previously demolitions were inspected based on language and regulations in the Commonwealth of PA and specific contracts; there is nothing in the UCC that references demo specs and procedures; municipalities are tasked with creating their own regulations on demolition; the draft prepared references total and partial demolition, and provides for pedestrian safety, protection for adjacent buildings including damages and traffic control, and debris control on the right of way, dust control, asbestos removal and procedures for backfilling, grading and seeding the demolished site; most contracts that work in the City are aware of what the City requires but without anything on the books there is nothing to enforce if there is a problem; Council stated they were pleased with the draft; City Solicitor Tom Finn stated he would prepare the final form and it could be introduced at the July Council meeting and adopted in August

American Rescue Plan

City Manager Omar Strohm stated the dates established for the ARP Public Meetings are Tuesday, July 20th at an AASD property and Monday, August 16th at 6:00 p.m. at the Devorris Downtown Center

City Manager Updates

The City is still responding to and investigating flooding complaints regarding property and vehicles

Each of the City's three pension plans has a separate actuary and they are in the process of completing their bi-annual actuarial reports; they are considering a phased in lowering of the assumed rate of return which is 7 ¼ %, toward 7 %; any reduction in the assumed rate of return will make the MMO higher; it will

require the City to contribute more money but this will not be aggressive over a period of ten years

The former J&J Recycling Building, which is now owned by the City, is looking better and better each day and than it has looked in decades

At the July 12th Council meeting there will be four blighted properties, already designated as blighted, for demolition which are on the agenda which the City will pay for and then CDBG will reimburse the City; they are addressed as 1902 10th Street, 1318 N. 4th Avenue, 1808 11th Street and 1800 6th Avenue

Recruitment for a Community Development Director is now underway

Mayor/Council Open Discussion

Councilman Kelley brought up concerns regarding juvenile crime and the use of firearms; Chief Merrill stated he is on the July agenda for the Altoona Police Departments annual report for 2020 and his intention is to include what is relevant now in 2021 as well as to include juvenile crime and anything else Council may want to add

Vice-Mayor Butterbaugh stated the Silk Mill property is complete and they did a great job and it looks great and they are looking for tenants

Mayor Pacifico stated the City is looking for photo submissions for the new website and asked that beautiful photos be submitted to Victor or Linda

Councilman Ickes wished everyone a great Independence Day weekend!

Councilman Cacciotti stated for the record that he loves food trucks!

Media Attendance – included Bill Kibler, *Altoona Mirror*

Adjournment by Mayor Pacifico at 7:56 p.m.