

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING
February 28, 2017

The Regular Meeting of City Council was called to order at 7:30 p.m. with Mayor Domenick Mucci presiding. The meeting was opened with a silent prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Councilmen Timmons, Villamagna, DiLoreto, Dressel, Hahn, Johnson and Paul.

Also present; City Manager James Mavromatis, Law Director Gary Repella, Fire Chief Carlo Capaldi, City Engineer Mike Dolak, Urban Projects Director Christopher Petrossi, Recreation Director Mary Beth Sills, Dave Gossett from the Herald Star and WTOV9.

APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Mrs. Hahn moved that the minutes of February 21, 2017 be accepted as written. Second by Mr. Johnson. Roll call. All ayes. So moved minutes accepted declared Mayor Mucci.

PETITIONS/COMMUNICATIONS

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

NO. 2017-16 – BY COUNCIL AS A WHOLE

A RESOLUTION OF COMMENDATION TO RICH DONNELLY.

Mr. Villamagna made a motion that Resolution No. 2017-15 be adopted by roll call. Second by Mr. DiLoreto. Roll call. All ayes. Resolution No. 2017-15 duly adopted declared Mayor Mucci.

Mr. Villamagna – “Rich; it is a personal honor; you graduated with my brother; I’ve watched you since I was a kid; I’m very proud of you; I couldn’t be prouder. Not only are you a baseball coach but you’re also a mentor to all the kids in this community; you’ve always stepped up to the plate to help them and I appreciate it; the City appreciates it and just win it all.”

Rich Donnelly – “I’m so proud to represent my country and the Ohio Valley; but more importantly my home town. I grew up on these fields and this tournament that we’re in; I’d like to dedicate it to all the kids, past, present and future who have a dream of playing in the big leagues at Belleview, Pleasant Heights, North End; like I said, I was one of them and I’ve been so fortunate and I really appreciate this. Thank you very much.”

REPORT OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Timmons – “I just had a question; the trash can roll out for April 1st; I just want to make it clear; what if you have more bags than what fits in them; are we going to as soon as we start is that going to be a charge or how is that going to work?”

Mr. Mavromatis – “There are two ways you can go about this, what our plans are; one, you can buy additional stickers at the Utility Office and tag your bags; or, the second can you will purchase; it’s a reasonable price but it’s still our can; and you can have two cans there; so it’s really up to the homeowner.”

Mr. Timmons – “So right off the bat?”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Well the first thing off the bat is getting the distribution of that and getting people to comply with what they need to do.”

Mr. Timmons – “Are we going to have a little leniency for the first week or two?”

Mr. Mavromatis – “You can’t just put the line in the sand and this is the way it’s going to be.”

Mr. Timmons – “That’s what I wanted to know.”

Mr. Paul – “We need to have an educational process.”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Exactly; I’ve already talked to News9; I’ve talked to the Herald Star; and also with the cans there are directions that come but I can’t make them read them.”

Mr. Paul – “Could you actually maybe one day have a meeting and bring one of the cans in here before we do that? Kind of like a show and tell.”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Yes; I’ll bring it to Council so you can see it. Again; I would like to tell you this is going to solve all our problems; it isn’t; it’s the people where the problem is. We’re giving them the tools to do this; it will make it easier; a lot of people put their garbage out there way ahead of schedule which they’re not supposed to do; then the animals get in it, they shred it all up and it’s all over the place because of the winds, basic vehicle traffic, whatever. But I think this is a first step forward in trying to make this city better. What I’m also looking at here; we may be able to do this in certain neighborhoods; get one of these roll offs to put in a certain area so people can come down and put whatever they need to put in there to help offset some of that. But again; until you get these people compliant, you’re trying to change a culture and they’re used to doing things that they shouldn’t be doing; and that is the sad part of it. And it’s not just the people; you’ve got some landlords that aren’t right in what they do; you’ve got a tenant that skips out on them and they go and empty out the whole place and put it in the alley; again, we got to deal with those things. But the short answer is yes; this is just not going to show up one day the cans are there; the public will be educated and again; there is a trial and error period there. But we’ve already discussed this with Mr. Baird and he has a good plan in place and we’re going to stick to it.”

Mr. Villamagna – “Two things; first, Efts Lane; I’d like to get some kind of meeting set up with the Engineer where we can discuss some kind of plan for Efts Lane; money wise or whatever; all the options that are open to us and go from there whether it can be done or not. Also, at some point this month we’re supposed to have an answer from Bob Baird about that compacter also; and I’m not forcing him tomorrow.”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Bob, what I want to do at that meeting on the 25th and this is why it’s important; to get a proper briefing on that and you’ll understand everything there; and it’s the perfect time because Council will see what direction you want to go in and again that’s why when I get my time here I’ll double check on that day; but that is the purpose of that meeting is to brief Council by all these sections because I know the calls you get and it’s very difficult; you’re a little more knowledgeable about the construction side but some Councilmen aren’t; but again this is trying to educate that with documentation and that way it’s easier to feel some of them. And again, I’m not shy about this; if they can’t have them call me. If I don’t have the answer I will get it for them because I’ll make sure I get them the right person to talk to.”

Mr. Villamagna – “The meeting; should we do that with a committee; is that something you can set up?”

Mr. Mavromatis – “I think it would be good for you to have a town hall meeting with the people in that area and just send out a notification; we can have it maybe at that church there at the beginning of Efts Lane, somewhere out there.”

Mike Dolak – “I think it would be best, Jim; maybe me and you and Councilman Villamagna could sit down and go over the process first and then maybe develop some numbers on construction cost and everything and then we can discuss a public meeting. There is a process and there are some ordinances that are already set in place that I really need to go over with both of you.”

Mr. DiLoreto – no report

Mr. Dressel – no report

Mrs. Hahn – “I would like to sunshine a resolution proclaiming the month of March, 2017 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.”

Mr. Johnson – no report

Mr. Paul – no report

REPORT OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS

Mr. Mavromatis – “Thank you, Mayor; I would like to ask Council if March 25th works for your schedules to set up that meeting at the Inn at Franciscan; what I will have is our different department heads to brief you with documentation to give you as well as listening and you can ask your questions of what you have. Now, again; does that fit with everybody here?”

Mr. Johnson – “That’s one of the weeks that I’m out.”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Ok, I will see that you get what is there; but it’s important that we get to it but again, Mike; I’ll make sure you get everything you need.”

Mr. Villamagna – “Is this meeting for the code enforcement meeting?”

Mr. Mavromatis – “It’s everything; the different things where we have our major problems that you can get briefed on; and again, the press is fine; there are no issues here but at least we’ll get you the tools that you need.”

Mr. Timmons – “What time were you thinking?”

Mr. Mavromatis – “9:00 a.m. on the 25th at the Inn at Franciscan Square. That will also give you the chance to look at the facility; in their meeting room; I’ll get it set up. Tonight while we’re sitting here; at 7:10 our Narcotics Division was executing a search warrant at one of the hotels here in town; they’ve arrested three people from Chicago; they seized sixty grams of crack and approximately forty grams of heroin. So you’re going to be seeing more and more of this. We’re getting additional resources here and clearly I’m not going to go public on what we are and aren’t going to do but I can clearly tell you this; the enforcement effort is going to be far greater than it’s ever been; we’ve got cooperation from across the river up in our Ohio Valley here and this is what we need. I will tell you this; Judge Mascio is doing an outstanding job here with the tools that he has and probably the best thing that we could have done was when we put a full time prosecutor on with Mr. Lamatrice. This was over a month and a half ago at that time when I talked to him; at that time he had thirty one bills of information; what does that mean; that means once they plead guilty to whatever charge they’re going to plead guilty to and the sentencing goes to the judge, they’re off our books and they’re off the County’s books; so we’re saving thousands of dollars for the City by housing them but also for the County; so it was a very smart move to do and Mr. Lamatrice is doing his job. So at the end of his one year which will be in May; we’ll see exactly what he’s been able to do in that year.”

Mr. Villamagna – “I noticed on the news; people that have been getting arrested are already bound over to the grand jury and going to trial which that never happened before because of the process. I noticed that just by watching the news.”

Mr. DiLoreto – “That judge, he’s giving out some heavy fines; I appreciate that.”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Yes, and the high bonds; so you have an excellent team that is in place right now and it’s going the way it should; that’s all I have to report.”

Mr. Repella – no report

MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS

PUBLIC FORUM

Mayor Mucci – “If there is anyone wishing to speak to City Council on City business please come forward and state your name and address.”

Jerry Barilla – “I live at 4353 Steuben Woods Drive. A recommendation or suggestion to Council; we just had Rich Donnelly in here for this resolution; my suggestion would be we have several ball fields in the City; it would be nice if we named one of them Rich Donnelly ball field. Also we have another outstanding baseball player from years back by the name of (Moses) Fleetwood Walker and that would be another ball field that we could name after him; because you have Vaccaro field, Murphy field, Reno Saccoccia field; and I don’t see why we can’t say we have a field named after Rich Donnelly and also Fleetwood Walker; Fleetwood Walker may not have played at Belleview but I’m sure he played at the North End Field; that’s just a suggestion, recommendation to Council; thank you.”

Mayor Mucci – “If there is anyone else wishing to speak to City Council on City business please come forward and state your name and address.”

Frank Calabria – “I live at 3975 Argonne. Mr. Dolak, last week I asked about that guardrail on Sunset; I was wondering if you got a chance to look at it; the one where they cut the trees and made it look nice.”

Mike Dolak – “Yes; I looked at it; we’re working on pricing to get it replaced; I may fit it in with another guardrail project later on in the summer.

Mayor Mucci – “If there is anyone else wishing to speak to City Council on City business please come forward and state your name and address.”

John Mascio – “I live at 567 Braybarton Boulevard. Mr. Villamagna brought up about Efts Lane and I can recall many years ago the entire Efts Lane before it came into the City there used to be a chip and seal program done by the township and the county and it was a decent road and over the years it has been let go for a variety of reasons; but when I was the Law Director years ago we had a meeting at Starkdale Church with the people there about fixing that road and paving it with gutters and curbing and the whole thing; the cost back then was so astronomical I didn’t think we were getting out of that church alive that night; it was horrible. I’m not so sure the City could afford to do something like that now; but perhaps start on the chip and seal program and try to maintain that might build that up to where it’s passable and you don’t have the problems that you have. Mr. Timmons brought up about the sanitation collection; is it possible to maybe a couple weeks before maybe some sort of a flyer or informational sheet can be sent to everybody letting them know what the procedure is; how much it will cost to buy these extra bags or get the tags or whatever; and I speak for myself, I guarantee one can is not going to be enough for what I do especially in the summer with yard work and things like that and it is an imposition for them to pick all this up; paying for it is fine, I don’t have a problem with that; but I think it would be nice if we knew where to get these tags and how much it’s going to cost us and how the system is going to work; and I agree with you, you can’t make them read it but at least nobody has an excuse as to not having been told what the procedure is going to be. I got in on part of this sign thing and I was going to comment on it; I don’t think anyone has a problem with the City enforcing its ordinances, building permits, sign requirements, whatever it is; but I know from the people I run into in town that sometimes perception is worse than reality but the perception is that the City is overbearing, hard-handed, has no willingness to work with anybody on developing anything. There was a story in the paper the other night about this phone place on Market Street about putting edging around their sign to comply with historical décor; I stood in front of my office this morning and looked at the four signs on that building; they all look alike; why this one has to have some sort of a border is beyond me because it blends in perfect with the others. Up there on Market Street; a story in the paper tonight; he wanted a variance and I think he’s going to get it because there wasn’t a quorum last night but if he wants to put his sign over a waterline; hey, if that waterline breaks he loses his sign, that’s the way I look at it; he’s taking a chance. We should be encouraging business; if they want to move a sign five feet, so what; let’s encourage that business to go ahead and do it. The reason I mentioned perception is two weeks ago I had dinner with a businessman and his wife in a local restaurant who has a lot of investments in Steubenville; he told me he would never again invest in Steubenville because it’s too difficult to do work until you get permits and get licenses; last weekend at the same restaurant I ran into another businessman who rents, looking to buy a building; not buying in Steubenville; not because he’s had problems; he’s talked to too many friends of his in business who are having problems getting their permits and licenses or whatever it is. Now, whether it is true or not doesn’t make any difference; perception is we are not business friendly; we are actually deterring people from setting up their businesses here and that is not how it should be. How many businesses had problems recently with signs; of all the stupid things in the world, a sign; pick up the telephone and say hey you didn’t get your permit, come on down and give us your \$2 or \$10 or whatever it is and be done with it. After the fact, to go in and say you have to tear this out or tear that out and it’s not just signs, its construction that’s been going on, it’s minor deficiencies in construction; they’re 1/16 of an inch underneath the height of a cabinet in a handicapped place; tear it out; give me a break! In the law there is such a thing as compliance and substantial compliance; sometimes substantial compliance is just as good and I think we’ve got to go ahead and start looking at this and we’ve got to start encouraging these people to come in; work with them; don’t sit down and slap them down because all we’re doing is keeping them from developing businesses, creating jobs and helping our economy; we got to something; we just can’t let it go the way it’s going and when you hear day after day, night after night from different people; there is a problem and we’ve got to take care of that problem; whatever you’ve got to deal with or work with, sit down and work with them and get it taken care of.”

Mr. Villamagna – “I want to say something; I agree with you, perception has a lot to do with it; but if you perceive something that’s not there I don’t know how you really go about changing it; I want to address the sign because I have a little experience with signs; when I was putting the signs up at the entrance to the City of Steubenville I

had to get an architectural drawing so I called Dolak up and said Mike; I'm replacing a sign; well I was replacing a different type of sign."

John Mascio – "You mention architectural drawings; I looked on the City website today and looked on the codified ordinances; there are two chapters on signs; I thought I heard somewhere that you have to have an architectural drawing but I did not see it in either of the chapters that I looked at today unless I missed it somewhere."

Mr. Villamagna – "I can't answer that."

John Mascio – "Do you need an architectural drawing because if you do that's ridiculous."

Mr. Villamagna – "That's what I said too; I said Mike, that's stupid. But it wouldn't be stupid if that sign breaks off because I put a bolt in there that can't withstand 65 mph winds and it hits a car coming down Route 7 and goes through the windshield and hurts someone."

John Mascio – "I think our ordinances already cover that. I think they already cover how you are to put them and where you are to put them and what they have withstand in the way of wind and storms and things like that."

Mr. Villamagna – "That's what I'm saying, but I didn't know that; so it was my fault. The sign on Market Street, that was the problem; the trim, that has to do with the Historic Society what they said about putting that wood trim around it. Again, if it's windy on Market Street and you just nail it up there instead of bolting it up there; that's where the problem lies; I was inside there; the electrical problems were unbelievable; they just didn't get a permit. I don't know how you pacify; and I don't mind talking to people but I don't know how you change perception because the perception is like I told everybody earlier; perception is that we're all on the take and we're all a bunch of idiots. We aren't on the take."

John Mascio – "As I opened up with; I have no problem with the City enforcing ordinances and making sure people comply with the regulations."

Mr. Villamagna – "All the problems that I found were people; the one I left out was a handicap ramp; a handicap ramp was 1/8 of an inch off; so he said I'll tell you what I'll do; if you bring your surveyor over here and he'll ok that, if he'll sign off that he's ok with that I'll let it go as long as he signs off. Well, they brought the architect and the surveyor said grind it down; they made him grind 1/8 of an inch off of the thing. We say it's silly but if a guy comes down there in a wheelchair and he falls out a lawyer is going to get ahold of that and say who built this and we're going to say Mr. Smith and Mr. Smith will say the City ok'd it; well, the City didn't ok it because it's 1/8 of an inch off and that caused the wheelchair to come down there. One thing I'll say about the Building Department; in everything that I've checked out tells me the same thing; everybody is treated the same; there is no we like John Mascio or we like Bob Villamagna or we don't like Bob Villamagna; everybody gets treated the same so the perception part; I don't know the answer to that."

John Mascio – "But that's the problem; I'm not saying that the City is wrong in what they're doing but I'm telling you the perception in the community and there's got to be something done to overcome that perception; that's the problem and believe me it can be worse than the truth; because once people start believing this and start hearing enough about it we're dead; somehow it's got to be overcome and if you have to go pat them on the back or whatever you have to do to smooth things out sometimes a phone call would make a big difference in getting things done instead of sending a nasty letter or citing them in to court. One guy was cited in court on a demolition building; the way I got it from what I believe is a good source; he had applied for an asbestos removal permit from the State; you have thirty days to tear your building down; I don't know if I'll have my permit from the State in time; you have thirty days to tear your building down; well he didn't get the permit from the State, he gets cited in to court for not tearing the building down; now, do you take a chance of violating a City ordinance and not tear the building down or I'll tear my building down and be prosecuted by the State for not properly doing asbestos abatement; which one; personally, I'll take my chances with the City. Why couldn't, hey, we'll give you an extra thirty days and see what happens; how bad is that; how hard would it be to do something like that; now the case ultimately got dismissed; they continued it on and it got worked out; the building got torn down because he got his permit and everything was taken care of; it shouldn't have gotten to that point. It's things like that when you start getting stories out and people start getting upset with and people start talking; we have to do something to encourage people; not to put roadblocks in front of them and if you start encouraging them all this perception will eventually go away; that's all I'm saying."

Mr. Villamagna – "I agree with you but they have to follow the rules and that's the biggest part of the problem."

John Mascio – "Sometimes you can work with them to get them to comply without having to be cited and all that stuff."

Mayor Mucci – "If there is anyone else wishing to speak to City Council on City business please come forward and state your name and address."

Mr. Paul moved to adjourn. Second by Mr. Villamagna. Roll call. All ayes. So moved; meeting adjourned declared Mayor Mucci.

Mary F. Anderson
Clerk of Council

ATTEST: _____
CLERK OF COUNCIL

APPROVED: _____
MAYOR