

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING
March 7, 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 Villamagna, DiLoreto, Dressel, Hahn, Johnson, Paul and Timmons.

Also present; City Manager James Mavromatis, Law Director Gary Repella, City Engineer Mike Dolak, Urban Projects Director Christopher Petrossi, Dave Gossett from the Herald Star and WTOV9.

APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Mrs. Hahn moved that the minutes of February 28, 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. 2018-8 – BY THE PLANNING COMMITTEE – 3rd reading

Messrs. Johnson, Dressel, Hahn

ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 1175 OF THE ZONING CODE CREATING THE STARKDALE ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT.

Mayor Mucci – “Before we move on we have two pieces of correspondence from the Planning and Zoning Commission.”

The Clerk read a letter of positive recommendation from Chris Petrossi to the Planning Commission and a letter of positive recommendation from the Planning Commission to Council. Hearing no objections the correspondence is ordered into the record.

Mayor Mucci – “You have heard the third and final reading of Ordinance No. 2017-8. If there is anyone wishing to speak on Ordinance No. 2017-8 please come forward and state your name and address.”

Mr. Paul called question. Roll call. All ayes. Ordinance No. 2017-8 duly adopted declared Mayor Mucci.

NO. 2017-17 – BY COUNCIL AS A WHOLE

A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING THE MONTH OF MARCH, 2017 AS DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH.

The Clerk read Resolution No. 2017-17 in its entirety.

Mrs. Hahn made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2017-17 by roll call. Second by Mr. Paul. Roll call. All ayes. Resolution No. 2017-17 duly adopted declared Mayor Mucci.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Villamagna – no report

Mr. DiLoreto – no report

Mr. Dressel – no report

Mrs. Hahn – “Just one comment; this coming Thursday Andrea Irland is returning to Steubenville to have the second series of meetings having to do with the possible development of the marina and linear park; she’ll be meeting with City officials in the morning and due to how we just heard about the date for sure today so I don’t know whether we’re going to be able to pull together a community meeting with her in the afternoon yet or not but she said she would come back for that; so anyway I’ll discuss that with some of the people that will have the biggest impact on; but she will return at least five more times to Steubenville to try to assist us. This is the grant for helping us with her expertise and connections and grant recommendations; it’s not financial but it should be valuable to our city; thank you.”

Mayor Mucci – “Thank you, Mrs. Hahn; and the technical assistance that we receive without a doubt will be beneficial; do we have a time?”

Mrs. Hahn – “I believe it’s going to be in the City Building in the morning; that is not an open to the public meeting.”

Mayor Mucci – “Ok, will it be the majority members of Council; because we have sunshine laws and I just want to make sure if we have meetings where there is a majority of members of Council or at least two members of a Committee of Council then we need to announce the meeting to the public; we could make those arrangements.”

Mrs. Hahn – “I’m not aware; I wasn’t even invited myself until today; Mr. Mavromatis, are there any other Council members that are on the guest list?”

Mr. Mavromatis – “No; I think she was more looking for the group that you have.”

Mrs. Hahn – “I would like to sunshine a resolution proclaiming the month of April as Minority Health Month.”

Mrs. Hahn went on to list activities that will be scheduled for that month.

Mr. Johnson – “I would like to sunshine an ordinance authorizing submission of the 2017 Community Housing Impact and Preservation Program; also known as the CHIP program; to the State of Ohio on behalf of the City of Steubenville.”

Mr. Paul – “Yes, your honor; I have two things; under Finance Committee I have an ordinance authorizing and directing the approval of expenditures without a purchase order over \$3,000.00 pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 5705.41. Next Tuesday I’d like to call a Finance Committee meeting at 6:30 here in Council Chambers.”

Mayor Mucci – “Thank you, Mr. Paul; the Clerk will facilitate the proper meeting notice.”

Mr. Timmons – “I have something I want to talk about under Safety and Health and Pride Committees; three weeks ago I brought up about a couple mattresses and some garbage on Foster Place; also on Kendall Avenue. It’s actually gotten worse in the past three weeks and I expected it to be picked up. At that meeting we did talk about, I think Council agreed we wanted to go in the direction of where we pick that up because it’s a health hazard, it looks terrible, the people that live next door shouldn’t be subjected to that; people wanting to rent the adjacent properties can’t do it because of the way the properties look. Then Mr. Baird spoke and he said it would be condoning it if we picked it up; it would also be a cost. I’ve talked to Council; I think the direction we want to move in is to incur the cost and pick it up; you had asked before what the direction was that Council wanted to go and this is the direction we want to go.”

Mr. Mavromatis – “That’s fine, we can do that; just understand what you’ve opened up.”

Mr. Timmons – “Yes; and we absolutely want to cite anybody that is breaking the law. The one on Foster Place I believe is on City property. Bob said we’re condoning it if we pick it up; everybody thinks they can do that; but we’re also condoning it if we don’t pick it up; people will just keep dumping there in those same spots.”

Mr. DiLoreto – “Is this a landlord in town? Pick it up and dump it on his property; he’ll clean it up real fast.”

Mayor Mucci – “Let’s do this in an orderly fashion; if we want to have a conversation we should maybe have a committee meeting for that conversation but right now I believe, Mr. Timmons, you’re indicating to the administration that we’re picking this up and that is the consensus of Council and I would ask the Law Director to make sure that if there is any legislation that needs to be attached to that; which I don’t think so; but the legislation will be officially sunshined.”

Mr. Timmons – “I believe everybody on Council is agreeing with that.”

Mr. Dressel – “Can I add something to that; one is we do have a new ordinance coming into effect about keeping the garbage out of your yard so this ordinance should help; we have the administrative warrant which we probably could use to get on the property if we have to; and then the third thing there is actually a litter ordinance and if you violate it in Follansbee apparently even if it’s a cigarette butt it’s like \$350; use that ordinance, fine them, have our judge who has these new rules that apparently can lock up somebody’s driver license for not paying a fine they owe the City; and put some paint on this mess so that we aren’t; we’re not condoning anything if we take your driver license away. So I don’t know what the solution is but it’s repetitive; especially on the hilltops; there’s a couple of alleys between Maryland and Pennsylvania west of the 1400 block that look just as bad as they did a year ago; there are couches, mattresses; this isn’t even what he’s talking about; this is a whole different pile I happened to see the other day when I was driving up there. We need to figure out a way to use that if we can figure out whose garbage it is. I actually saw somebody picking garbage up in a yard so that was a nice change; they bagged it and everything; so some people are paying attention to it. Maybe we can use that litter ordinance to put some fines out there.”

REPORT OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS

Mr. Mavromatis – “Thank you, Mayor; I’d like to have Mr. Dolak at this time brief Council on some possible grants we may have access to.”

Mike Dolak – “Just a quick update; the City Manager and I met last week with our federal grant manager, BHJ; they’re our local MPO that distributes all our grant dollars; and we sat down with them and went over a number of projects for the future. The last time we developed a list like this was back in 2010 so the City Manager and I are going to further discuss that and hopefully in the near future within the next two weeks we’ll bring you that project list for the future; these are major construction projects that would institute and use federal funds. We’ll bring you those in the next few weeks; we want to discuss those and then if everybody is on board pass a resolution and then move forward with those projects and planning; we’re talking projects that may be some done in 2020 and 2022.”

Mr. Paul – “Did you say a dollar figure?”

Mike Dolak – “There are multiple projects; one is a trail that connects the downtown over to the marina; another one is phase III of Lovers Lane; and then there are some larger resurfacing projects along Sunset Boulevard and a couple others; so we need to actually develop a little further a cost estimate and then we’ll bring them to you. The other thing we wanted to update you on; we talked about the Lawson Avenue Bridge; we’re working with the contractor and ODOT developing the lettering and the size; it appears that from one of the sides, if you’re going up the hill or west bound; due to the size of the parapet wall that is smaller; if you notice on that portion of the bridge that is the side the walk is on which means the parapet is smaller which means the lettering going up the hill would only be fourteen inches high and with a bridge of that magnitude you would not be able to see that; coming down the hill is a different scenario; the parapet wall is much wider and those letters would be twenty-four inches high, two feet, and those would be much more visible. So we’re still looking into it; the probably scenario is we’re only going to be putting lettering on one side of the bridge. I just wanted to give you guys an update on that.”

Mayor Mucci – “Thank you, Mr. Dolak; and just as a follow up; I believe I is the week of March 19th if I’m not mistaken; I will be attending the DDAA, which is the developmental planning association ARC funding; in Arlington, VA as a representative of OMEGA; and quite frankly the federal highway project dollars that you’re mentioning depend on the funding for ARC; there is a continuing resolution by the federal government but there is also talks of cutbacks in the ARC region. I want to remind everybody that includes thirteen states in the U.S.; or parts of thirteen states in the U.S.; more importantly twenty-eight counties; most of them in eastern Ohio. We will be lobbying with our legislators; both U.S. Senators from West Virginia and Ohio and also our Congressional delegation. So hopefully we’ll have some encouraging news thereafter that there will be a continuing resolution for continuing funding of ARC project dollars. We have some projections; if there are any federal cutbacks what it would mean to our region; and they’re not the best projections we have; so we really need to put our selling hats on to our federal legislators and I think the conference is going to be an outstanding one this year; this is probably about the fifteenth or sixteenth conference that I’ve attended and they continue to get more and more in depth and more and more in talking about regionalization and sharing of services and we’re already doing that here in Eastern Ohio so I’ll report back to this Council after I come back from the conference. Which leads me to; there was a change of dates for the workshop that we’re going to have with our department heads to the 22nd; I know I’ll be in Arlington, VA at the conference so I won’t be able to attend that. And since I’m on a roll before Mr. Mavromatis finishes his report; as I mentioned to several members of Council I am looking for two members to serve on the Tree Commission; so any names please submit them and that goes the same with the public; anyone interested in serving on the Tree Commission that was formed by City Council; I had two resignations so I’ll be looking for two names to recommend to the members of Council.”

Mr. Repella – no report

MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS

Mrs. Hahn – “I wanted to follow up with our Law Director; so on the addresses, how many addresses has your office now issued letters to regarding the demolitions?”

Mr. Repella – “Maybe twenty or twenty five; same as last week. Like I said, I’m waiting for the files to come over from Chris and once I get the files I’ll get the letters out.”

Mrs. Hahn – “Is there a way to move this along more quickly because I was reading back through minutes and I believe the Mayor directed the office of Planning and Zoning in early November to do this.”

Chris Petrossi – “It’s just so time consuming because we have to go through each of the files; Gary needs specific pieces of information from each file and as you know our secretary is busy in the office with contractors constantly coming in and out for permits; we’ll do it as time permits and Frankie has volunteered to help so we’ll probably take her up on that.”

Mrs. Hahn – “And for the letters that went out initially; my understanding is the letters said they had thirty days to comply; have we passed that thirty day limit and if we have; have we followed up with any legal action?”

Mr. Repella – “Not yet.”

Mrs. Hahn – “My concern is if the word gets out that only a couple of people have paid and there has been no legal action they’re not going to take us seriously.”

Mr. Villamagna – “I’m having a hard time understanding the letter; isn’t this a standard form letter? Can’t we just make a copy and send out one hundred letters all at one time?”

Chris Petrossi – “No, Gary needs certain information that come from different vouchers and different things that we’ve paid.”

Mr. Villamagna – “So there is more to it than what I thought.”

Mr. Repella – “Yes; we’re putting the file together with all the information so that the next Law Director comes in here I’ll be able to hand that off to him and he’ll be able to go with it; and then out of the twenty or so we don’t have good addresses on at least a handful of those.”

Mr. Johnson – “Did we get letters out to the main seven that I told you about?”

Mr. Repella – “Yes.”

Mrs. Hahn – “I just; how are we proceeding?”

Mr. Repella – “We’re proceeding as fast as we can; one of the other problems we have right now too is that we have the health care lawsuit and I was in here on Saturday and Sunday and all last week and all this week I’ve been getting ready; because they’re going to take my deposition in Columbus on Friday and so I’m traveling to Columbus on Thursday to spend the day with our attorneys up there. So right now that’s been the biggest; I’m a one man operation; so that’s the biggest effort that I’ve had in regard to the lawsuit because remember we just got that filed maybe three weeks ago. And then there were two main motions that were just filed this week that I’ve been working on so the majority of my time right now is being spent on the lawsuit.”

Mr. Johnson – “Could we get Costa to help with the letters?”

Mr. Repella – “Well, Costa is helping me with the lawsuit right now too because we were just in court because we have a hearing date coming up on April 3rd so he’s been back and forth with those people. But as soon as I get that from Chris I’ll get the letters out for you.”

Mr. Dressel – “Is it possible to use a collection agency or do we need to do legal action before we can get to the point of that?”

Mr. Repella – “We’ll get the letters out through my office and you can always use a collection agency but the majority of these people we are pursuing are uncollectable so we’re going to be extremely lucky if we get 10-15% of these people to pay; but we’ll send out the letters to everybody and chase them down.”

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.”

John Mascio – “I live at 567 Braybarton. I have a couple questions I guess for the City Manager; are we going to have a crack seal program this year?”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Yes.”

John Mascio – “How about weed control? I know Bob was licensed last year and never did it.”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Yes; Bob went back to get recertified last week; so yes to both of those.”

John Mascio – “My understanding is there are plans to pave an alley in the 600 block of between Fourth and Fifth Street which from my understanding has very minimal traffic on that; the alley between Market Street and Washington Street services several businesses and is in deplorable condition and I’m wondering how we are picking an alley up on the North End with minimal traffic and ignoring an alley in the middle of town that has a lot of traffic and several businesses that utilize that alley every single day and I don’t know how you can support that one up there as opposed to the one up the street here.”

Mike Dolak – “That is through our Community Development Block Grant program through Chris’ office; the original roadway that was in there and the only roadway that was in there was Logan from west of the railroad tracks all the way down to Steubenville High School and then jump over Route 7 and go all the way down to where Voto dead-ends by the river; that was the original project was. Council asked if we could include some alleys and we had a certain budget number we were working with; we allocated a little bit more dollars and the alley that is right adjacent to Steubenville High School; I believe that is Court Alley; from Logan to Clinton; the base bid is Logan Avenue.”

John Mascio – “Why that one as opposed to the one up here; why would that one have been selected as opposed to the one up here which has much more traffic.”

Mike Dolak – “I don’t necessarily say it has more traffic; we really don’t know what the traffic is in the alleys; but Court Alley right off of Logan, right off the entrance; there is quite a bit of traffic there; there is the parking lot for the high school that uses that alley quite a bit; I received numerous calls over the last four or five years from the Serbian Church; so what we did was we had a base bid of Logan; so the project is awarded off of the base bid and if there is enough money we chose that as alternate one. Then we’re getting down to budget constraints so the next thing I said was let’s take a look at another alley; when you look at these alleys we’re not sure how the asphalt is going to peel off these alleys; it may peel right off and we can plaster the asphalt back on; what might also happen is when we go to pull the asphalt off, I may be pulling brick and I may need to rebuild some of these alleys which doubles the cost. So I looked at the alleys and I thought that one is close to the site; we’ll limit the mobilization cost of having the contractor travel from one location further to another; and then I thought that alley would peel off the best. If prices don’t come in real well we may not even get to alternate one or alternate two; that’s how those were picked.”

John Mascio – “Are there any plans down the road to take care of these alleys down the middle of the City that are used by businesses every day?”

Mike Dolak – “Not at this time.”

Mr. Mavromatis – “Mayor, just to make sure I have the right alley; he’s talking Commercial Alley from Market to Washington; is that what you’re referring to?”

John Mascio – “I think that’s the name of it; I’m not sure; by Rite Aid, Yorgo’s and all those other businesses right along there; it’s really in bad shape. Finally; it’s my understanding and if I’m wrong, correct me; money is a problem for the City?”

Mr. Johnson – “We could use more.”

John Mascio – “The lettering on this Lawson Avenue overpass which I think I heard a quote a couple meetings ago was \$50,000 that we’re going to spend to do that; if we are so tight of money why are you putting Steubenville on both sides of that overpass; that lettering does nothing for anybody and if I’m driving up Washington Street I know I’m in Steubenville and if I’m coming down I know I’m in Steubenville; why do we have to do that; why don’t you use that money for something else that we can really use; fix your ballfields; fix your parks; pave another alley; whatever you want to do.”

Mr. Johnson – “You can’t fix your ballfields with Street money.”

John Mascio – “Access to them can be done though.”

Mr. Johnson – “Access can; my logic for being for it; we’re only going to do one side now; he just said we’re only going to do one side.”

John Mascio – “Why do either side?”

Mr. Johnson – “It is a project that is going to last forty years.”

John Mascio – “So what? What good does it do the City?”

Mr. Johnson – “It beautifies the area; if you drive up to Canfield, Boardman and you see that bridge, it looks awful nice; if you drive to Gahanna, Columbus and you see that bridge, it looks awful nice; why can’t we have nice things in Steubenville?”

John Mascio – “Because you can’t afford it; you can’t afford a frill when you have essentials that aren’t being done.”

Mr. Johnson – “It will be less than \$1000 a year over the course of the lifetime of that.”

John Mascio – “Are you going to maintain it over that lifetime?”

Mr. Johnson – “It’s concrete.”

John Mascio – “You don’t think concrete needs maintained?”

Mr. Johnson – “That bridge has been here for forty years.”

John Mascio – “What I am saying is it is money that doesn’t need to be spent; there are other things you could use it for; if it is street money there are other streets that could be fixed with that.”

Mr. Johnson – “You can’t fix a street for \$20,000.”

John Mascio – “No, but you can certainly do some improvements on them and some maintenance and upgrading on some of them; it may not be a total job but you can get some. I’m just saying the benefit to the City as a whole would be better taken care of by spending that money on other things than beautifying an overpass just because you’ve seen it in some other city and it looks beautiful. If we had the money I don’t care what you do; but we don’t have the money so sometimes you have to do away with some of these things and take care of what is necessary; that’s my point.”

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.”

Justin Sofio – “I live at 385 Rosemont Avenue. Regarding the Tree Commission; I’d be happy to get some more information about that; I happen to love trees; I think they’re great; I’ve been involved with different forests and plantations in different parts of the country so whoever I could talk to about that I would like to put my name forward to get some information about that. Second; just regarding what this gentleman had brought up; it’s kind of interesting; honestly I wasn’t familiar with this but a point of interest I’d be curious to find out about is if the alley fund; we were just talking about earlier cleaning up the alleys so if the street fund; we could use some of the \$50,000 if we’re only going to do half the bridge; we’re probably going to save some money so I’m thinking we could use some of the street money to clean up the alleys which maybe would count; I don’t know if it would count or not because you’re not paving the street but you are cleaning up the street and if you’ve got a lot of mattresses and we’re concerned about spending money and using up funds for that it seems to me that possibly the street fund maybe you could find a loophole to make it work to use some of the funds to clean up some of the mattresses. I know as a resident of Steubenville I would say I’d be happy if we’re going to save some money if we’re only going to do half the bridge now maybe if there is \$10-\$20,000 maybe we could utilize that too; to this gentleman’s point making Steubenville actually look prettier and beautifying some of the neighborhoods; \$25,000 would probably go a long way toward picking up some mattresses. I don’t know if it can be done or not but it’s just a data point; thank you.”

Mr. Johnson – “It’s a good point; we can’t use the street money to clean the alleys but we have a Sanitation fund with \$4.5 million; there is plenty of money in the Sanitation fund to clean the alleys currently.”

Justin Sofio – “Do you think that could go toward cleaning up the mattresses which is I know a huge concern?”

Mr. Timmons – “Yes it can; and if we’re not going to spend that on that sign I would like to see of course some of those alleys paved on Labelle and Pleasant Heights.”

Justin Sofio – “To this gentleman’s point; I can totally understand his frustration; I’m sure a lot of us here share similar frustrations; when you hear about a project and it’s a good project and something we would like to see done; but at the same time you’re frustrated because there are so many projects in Steubenville; I know City Council has done a great job addressing a lot of the problems so I want to tip my hat to you guys on that; clearly there is a lot more to be done but I think this is great having residents speak up about what is important to them. I do empathize with this gentleman’s frustration; like a lot of people here in this room; keep fighting the good fight; I think we’re making progress; thank you.”

Mayor Mucci – “Thank you, Justin; if you would leave me with your contact information.”

Justin Sofio – “I’ll shoot Jim an email with my contact information; that would be great.”

Mayor Mucci – “Well, I make the recommendations to the members of Council. If there is anyone else wishing to speak to City Council on City business please come forward and state your name and address.”

Mr. DiLoreto – “JJ, every week you come down and tell us all about our problems and I understand that; but we need people to get involved like this young gentleman right here did; we have a lot of problems, we need help; we don’t need criticism. Everybody knows the problems; we need solutions and people to work. Thank you for coming up; anyone else that wants to volunteer, there are a lot of positions on these Commissions and the Mayor cannot find anyone to fill them; same as the housing project; nobody wants it. So get involved and don’t criticize; that is the easiest thing to do is criticize; thank you.”

Mr. Villamagna – “I talked about this stuff; the alleys are in bad shape; and we don’t have anything lined up for the alleys right now but we did start looking at the alleys and try to get some more of them taken care of. But part of what Council is trying to do is take a nickel here and there and try to accomplish a lot of things. We’ve got some of the roads taken care of; Lovers Lane was taken care of last year when we had that extra money; we did that stretch from Coal Hill down to the Mall Drive; we did some of the alleys on Labelle, they’ve been addressed. Also, part of it is pride and coming in to town it’s going to look nice; \$20,000 to me at home sounds like a lot of money; to the City \$20,000 isn’t a lot of money; talking about that alley and it’s \$50,000 to do the one alley; so we’re trying to spread it all around and that is what we have to do. We have a little budget to spread around and try to make it work and try to do things with recreation to make it nicer; we’ve got money donated for the asphalt up at North End field; Pittsburgh Pirates came down here to look at Belleview Park to try and help us out; the grounds crew from PNC Park came down to look at the park. So everybody is trying to do a little bit; a little bit of pride; that thing coming into town; is it a necessity; no; a lot of things we do aren’t a necessity but it does have a little bit of pride to it and it does look nice and it makes the City appearance look nice and I know where downtown is but people coming through town maybe will see it and they’ll feel a little bit better. Does it make a difference; I hope so; we’re trying to spread it around.”

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