

JOHNSTOWN CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES
Wednesday May 14, 2025

City Council met in a stated session for the general transaction of business. Mayor Frank Janakovic called the Workshop to order at 5:00 p.m.

Reverend King offered the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The following members of Council were present for roll call:

Mayor Janakovic, Reverend Sylvia King, Mr. Arnone, Mr. Britt, Mr. Clark, Ms. Huchel, Mrs. Mock (7)

Arturo Martynuska, City Manager; Michael Capriotti, Assistant City Manager; Sara Williams, Executive Secretary; Aimee Willett, Esquire, Solicitor; Lavona Smith, HR Manager; John Rutledge, Community and Economic Development Director; Melissa Layton, Residential Development/Construction Coordinator; Carmen Truscello, Fleet Maintenance Director, were also present.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Bill McKinney, 605 Main Street, Johnstown, noted that he has been a resident of Johnstown for four years. He praised City Council and City Management for their decision to invest RAISE and ARPA funds into revitalizing Main Street and Central Park, emphasizing the importance of starting at the core of the city and building outward. He commended Council for selecting SCAPE, a nationally recognized architectural design firm, to lead the Central Park project, drawing a comparison to the visionary decision made over 100 years ago by the Sunnehanna board to bring in A.W. Tillinghast to design their golf course. Mr. McKinney asserted that the \$1.6 million investment in SCAPE would establish a lasting gem in the city and credited Council for enduring criticism in order to make a forward-thinking choice.

Mr. McKinney cited SCAPE's recent accolades, including projects in Memphis, Staten Island, and San Francisco in 2025, as well as earlier recognitions in Louisiana, Salem, Washington D.C., Little Rock, and Atlanta. Mr. McKinney argued that SCAPE's involvement would elevate Johnstown's profile, attracting visitors similar to how the Sunnehanna course draws national attention. He expressed concern over potential changes to the SCAPE design and strongly recommended maintaining the integrity of the original plan, warning that alterations would undermine the value and reputation of the design. He likened changes to putting an outhouse in the middle of the Tillinghast golf course or a dormer on Falling Water. He concluded by noting SCAPE's year-long engagement process and thorough

community involvement, stating that the plan authentically reflected the identity of Johnstown.

Janean Wheeler, 549 Park Avenue, Johnstown, expressed concern over actions that threatened the confirmed plans for Central Park. She explained that she moved to Johnstown three years ago from New York City, having also lived in Southern California and South Carolina, and had 20 years of experience as a designer. She emphasized that a designer retains copyright over their work even after payment, and altering SCAPE's design would constitute copyright infringement. She warned that significant changes could result in SCAPE removing its name from the project, which would diminish its value and recognition.

Ms. Wheeler highlighted the importance of honoring the community's decision, noting that three conceptual park designs had been presented to the public. The version featuring a central circle and traditional paths was not selected. Instead, the majority voted for the bold redesign known as Concept Central Park Heart. She stated SCAPE conducted an 18-month community engagement process, culminating in a final design that was approved, delivered, and paid for in July of the previous year. She warned that only 16 months remained before funding expired in September of the following year, leaving no time for major changes. She urged Council not to jeopardize the funding, subvert the public's choice, or sabotage the project, and stated SCAPE's design reflected the vision and change Johnstown needed to demonstrate a commitment to its future.

Michael Cashaw, 249 New Street, Johnstown, spoke in opposition to the proposed changes to the Johnstown Central Park plan. He emphasized that the original park design had community consent and involvement, and as a photographer with global experience, he underscored the importance of copyright. He described the agreed-upon and paid-for design as a beautiful park and criticized the new plans as unimpressive and a dramatic departure from the approved concept. He noted that the changes would revert the park to a design similar to the current one, which the community was trying to move beyond. He concluded by urging the city to proceed with the original design approved over a year ago.

Norman Ed, 625 Horner Street, Johnstown, is a longtime resident. He noted that he previously lived on Clinton Street for over 20 years, during which he spent significant time in Central Park. He described the park as a valuable public space where he frequently relaxed and utilized available Wi-Fi. He expressed support for SCAPE's community engagement and professional approach during the planning process, stating that he initially participated heavily but

withdrew once he saw they were competent and receptive. Upon learning about proposed changes, he reviewed both the finalized SCAPE plan and the modifications, concluding that the SCAPE design was solid, cohesive, and clearly superior. He criticized the alternate proposal as less effective and expressed frustration that taxpayer money spent on a strong design might be discarded for an inferior one.

Mr. Ed also addressed the pavilion, emphasizing that the SCAPE design offered an effective performance space based on his personal experience as a downtown performer. He noted the proposed changes would unnecessarily complicate a simple and functional design. He further critiqued the artistic direction of trying to visually replicate existing landmarks like the incline plane or blacksmith shop, suggesting that public art should enhance the city's aesthetic rather than duplicate what already exists.

WORKSHOP ITEMS:

PARKING APPLICATION CHANGES

Mr. Ed Kinkade, Vice-President of Sales, FlowBird America, and Michael Didas (ph) introduced the company as the world's largest manufacturer of on-street parking technology, recently merged with ParkMobile. He represented the hardware division and provided a demonstration of the CWT S4 Plus, a 200-pound solar-powered parking kiosk with a high-definition touchscreen. The kiosk accepted credit cards, coins, and optionally, bills. It supported tap-to-pay systems like Apple Pay and could be fully customized with city branding and multilingual functionality, including Spanish, French, Chinese, or any requested language. Mr. Kinkade explained that the kiosk used license plate-based payment, which enabled session uniqueness, simplified enforcement, and allowed integration with apps and permitting systems. He noted the kiosk's high screen visibility, customization capabilities, and adaptability to city-specific rules and events, such as farmers markets or snow emergencies.

There was a question regarding confirmed integration with ParkMobile to which Mr. Kinkade explained that the system supported open APIs and could link with all mobile payment providers, enforcement platforms, and license plate recognition technologies.

Mr. Arnone inquired regarding enforcement, and Mr. Kinkade explained that session data was transmitted to the back office and allowed officers to query plates and make real-time enforcement decisions. Mr. Kinkade added that the system aggregated mobile and kiosk payments for unified enforcement, and

could support policy features such as free weekend parking or snow emergency notifications.

Mayor inquired about how the kiosks would fare against vandalism. Mr. Kinkade responded that the kiosks were made of stainless steel with graffiti-resistant paint and protective glass over the screen, which could be replaced if damaged. He confirmed the kiosk included no camera to respect privacy.

Reverend King asked whether mobile payment would remain an option, and Mr. Kinkade affirmed it would.

Mr. Taylor asked about the possibility of weekday free parking periods, and Mr. Kinkade confirmed it could be programmed, citing examples from other cities with free-time buttons for quick errands. He added that the cloud-based system enabled remote configuration.

Mr. Britt inquired about violation handling after expiration. Mr. Kinkade explained that enforcement remained manual and policy-based.

Mayor Janakovic asked if the system allowed variable parking durations by zone. Mr. Kinkade responded that all settings would follow city ordinances, such as shorter limits in downtown and longer durations in mixed-use areas.

Reverend King asked about kiosk quantity, specifically between Franklin Street and Walnut Street. Mr. Kinkade replied that typically one kiosk was placed per block face, with placement adjusted for accessibility, and noted his rule of thumb was based on how easily someone like his grandmother could access the kiosk in winter. He stated mapping was underway to refine recommendations with local input.

Mr. Arturo Martynuska, City Manager, added that the city had been in discussions with FlowBird for months and anticipated further recommendations. He noted potential cost savings, including eliminating the need to change 9-volt batteries in 700 existing meters twice annually and reducing the frequency of coin collection. He explained that the kiosk featured a vault system that remained locked until bank delivery and could accept any coin denomination, increasing efficiency and labor savings. He stated some low-use areas may retain existing meters.

Mr. Kinkade concluded by highlighting the improved recordkeeping offered by the kiosks, which provided transaction reports unlike single-space meters that lacked tracking.

CENTRAL PARK PROJECT UPDATES

Alyssa Rouser, CJL Engineering, took the floor for Central Park revision updates and colleagues Benjamin Gagen and Karen Welsh, Upstreet Architects also introduced themselves. Ms. Rouser stated the Central Park project remained on schedule, with draft bid documents set to be released the following week. A third-party consultant was preparing an updated cost estimate to confirm the project remained within budget. Bids would be advertised by mid-June, with the goal of awarding contracts in August and beginning construction after Labor Day. In response to prior council feedback, the fountain was removed and redirected to Sandyvale. A new centerpiece with connecting walkways was added to improve access between Main Street and the post office and to better position the Christmas tree. The modification also included additional hardscaped areas for seniors and disabled individuals to sit comfortably. All original elements such as the memorial walk, gazebo patio, water feature, and event lawn remained intact.

Mrs. Mock confirmed that the original SCAPE plan only included a placeholder for the pavilion, not a final design. Reverend King agreed, noting the image had been selected from a magazine. Ms. Rouser clarified that a custom-designed pavilion of similar cost had been selected, with optional drop-down sides for year-round usability. Mrs. Mock also inquired about the gazebo cut-through, which Ms. Rouser confirmed was part of SCAPE's original design and would still feature removable walls.

Ms. Rouser explained that CJL had been part of SCAPE's original team. Final plans were delayed due to the need to separate the park from the Main Street project for funding reasons. Budgetary concerns led to scaling back some elements. SCAPE ultimately withdrew, and after a cooperative transition, the local team assumed project control. Mrs. Mock supported the changes, referring to adjustments like the reduced mound height, which improved visibility and accessibility. She likened the changes to adjustments during home construction and affirmed her support, expressing confidence in the local firm's commitment and abilities.

Mayor Janakovic asked for a summary of changes. Reverend King reiterated the addition of the central walkway and Christmas tree location as the major modification. The grade was lowered six inches for better visibility and accessibility. Ms. Rouser noted that costly bluestone walls were replaced with concrete seating walls and locally sourced boulders, saving approximately \$900,000. She emphasized these were functional improvements and maintained the park's natural aesthetic.

Mrs. Mock praised the cost-cutting measures due to uncertainty in future construction costs, stressing the importance of maintaining a financial cushion to prevent funding shortfalls. She emphasized the prudence of using a reputable local company with vested community interest and noted her pride in their leadership.

Mr. Arnone asked about the water feature's maintenance. Ms. Rouser confirmed it used potable water drained to storm sewers and did not involve a recirculation system. The only maintenance required was winterization. Operation could be scheduled remotely via Wi-Fi, or triggered by a push button that could be disabled to prevent overuse. Mayor Janakovic supported a controlled water feature for children and families, and Ms. Rouser confirmed flexible controls were available.

Lighting was also addressed. Ms. Rouser confirmed that the two 35-foot light poles originally planned for the main lawn were replaced with 14-foot pedestrian lights due to the addition of internal walkways. Reverend King added that lighting would now consist of pedestrian-scale lights and in-ground up lighting. Mr. Taylor agreed that shorter lights were appropriate, especially near the Christmas tree, and while he supported most modifications, he did not consider the center circle and added concrete a small change. He emphasized the importance of considering year-round use and suggested removable art as a potential off-season feature.

Ms. Huchel inquired about the origins of the park redesign presented at the last council meeting, asking if someone had directed the changes. Ms. Rouser explained that while no directive was given, budget constraints and necessary updates led the design team to agree that accessibility from corner to corner was needed.

Ms. Huchel clarified that no one directed the redesign, to which Ms. Rouser confirmed, stating her team had taken over as lead designers. Ms. Huchel stated CJL had recently been awarded a contract and questioned Upstreet's involvement and payment method. Ms. Rouser affirmed that Upstreet was a subcontractor, not directly engaged by the city.

Ms. Huchel voiced concern that Upstreet was influencing cultural decisions and questioned how the process shifted to a Beaux Arts-style redesign, especially after completed, city-funded bid documents were delivered.

It was explained that those documents were not complete or biddable, lacking grade details, and though 95% finished and stamped, they would have required change orders.

Ms. Huchel challenged that assessment, believing the bids looked sealed, and expressed frustration over project delays and social media backlash, lamenting the year and a half of stagnation.

Mayor Janakovic acknowledged public criticism over perceived wasteful spending.

Ms. Huchel objected to the justification of redesigning the park under the guise of minor changes, pointing out the cost and time involved, and criticized the shift from SCAPE's completed designs.

Ms. Rouser maintained that they were not starting from scratch but modifying elements to improve accessibility, and current plans are now under CJL, not SCAPE.

Ms. Huchel challenged the extent of the changes, citing modifications to plantings, elevations, lights, rock features, and more, indicating they were substantial.

Mrs. Mock suggested cost savings were driving these changes.

Mayor Janakovic called for Mr. Martynuska to clarify and refocus the discussion.

Mr. Martynuska explained that SCAPE had been unresponsive to prior suggestions, and they indicated in August their work with the city was complete. CJL had since taken over. Design updates included changes to lighting to avoid overpowering Christmas displays, adding light stanchions for safety, and revising the pavilion from a placeholder to a semi-octagon design with a potential cupola, increasing costs from \$153,000 to \$207,000. He stated the pavilion would be made weather-resistant and suitable for year-round use, and walkways were added to improve accessibility. The pavilion was enlarged to accommodate more events, and a central park area was designated for a 360-degree tree view. Removable planters and dual power services were also added for seasonal flexibility. Mr. Martynuska reported coordination with monument stakeholders and confirmed that only the fireman's bell would be moved. The Sandyvale fountain would be repurposed as a flower bed. Donated native rocks would enhance landscaping. The cannons would be removed in alignment with historical beliefs. He noted that these were functional changes aimed at accessibility, aesthetics, and flexibility. The water feature would remain, though its flow rate and metering costs would be monitored. CJL also improved infrastructure for Christmas Village by ensuring non-vehicular access and individual electrical outlets.

Mayor Janakovic emphasized that the decisions were not arbitrary.

Mrs. Mock asked about cost savings, to which Mr. Martynuska responded that a third-party, Trophy Point, was reviewing estimates. He cited the water feature's cost from Vortex at \$175,000 to \$177,000 compared to Trophy Point's estimate of \$187,000.

Ms. Rouser confirmed no updated plans had been received yet.

Mrs. Mock expressed understanding that design changes could not satisfy everyone, but believed the project remained largely consistent and praised the team.

Ms. Huchel countered, asserting SCAPE had offered \$850,000 in savings on Blue Rock that were rejected. She insisted SCAPE was unfairly blamed and had remained collaborative until the process shifted. She read SCAPE's March 24 memo into the record as follows:

Dear Art: Following the latest meeting between City of Johnstown, CJL and SCAPE, on Wednesday, March 19th, our consultant team of design professionals would like to express several concerns about the Johnstown Central Park Project. These concerns are not only regarding the City's consideration of major design changes, but also the overall process in which we are currently engaging and operating. In the interest of reestablishing a collective spirit and collaboration and trust between all parties we have prepared a brief memorandum to share our concerns for the City's consideration.

Ms. Huchel noted that "we really don't have time for these changes". She highlighted other concerns over major design changes made without community input, despite the original design being shaped by over 300 people.

Councilwoman Huchel went on to read public opinion as follows: Given that the details of the park design and all of its features were the direct result of intensive community feedback, and the final design was approved by the City Council, we are concerned that such significant changes to the look, feel and impact to the park may be viewed negatively by the public, stakeholders and Council members, especially if these elements are changed without a notice or a similar level of public input.

Mayor Janakovic urged clarity and unity in messaging before adjourning.

Mrs. Mock asked if CJL was confident continuing from SCAPE's work. Ms. Rouser confirmed a good working relationship with SCAPE remained. Mrs. Mock

praised CJL's efforts and the transition, stating the project needed completion before December 31, 2026, and believed changes were modest.

Ms. Huchel reiterated SCAPE's past contributions and expertise, objecting to claims that they failed to meet accessibility needs. She detailed SCAPE's community engagement with disabled individuals and criticized the resulting extra costs from lighting and path changes. She questioned why the redesign continued when SCAPE's plans were nearly complete and more cost-efficient. She also emphasized that SCAPE's original placement of the Christmas tree was based on thoughtful design.

Mayor Janakovic noted that council members were entitled to differing views, and while public input was valuable, final decisions rested with elected officials.

Ms. Huchel stressed the collective input of the public, referencing the community engagement that shaped SCAPE's design.

Mrs. Mock concluded the discussion by stating that the engagement phase was over, and no final design vote had occurred.

Councilman Clark stated as someone not present at the beginning of the project, his earlier comments were not intended as an attack on CJL. He echoed Mrs. Mock's appreciation for CJL's efforts and their quick action on the project. However, he emphasized that reintroducing a circular layout in the park, with the Christmas tree occupying the space only two months per year, constituted more than a minor change from SCAPE's original design. He acknowledged that some seasonal uses were planned for the space but maintained that the change was significant. He supported the removal of the 39-foot light poles, calling them inappropriate. While he understood that the new design might enhance ADA accessibility through added walkways, he pointed out that alternate routes had already existed. He concluded by reiterating gratitude for CJL's work and cautioned against describing the redesign as a minor change, stressing that language and terminology are important.

Mayor Janakovic stated the primary goal of the Central Park project was to attract people to the downtown area, including families, children, and parents, in order to support local businesses. He reiterated that this objective had been consistent throughout the planning process.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the Workshop adjourned at 6:07 p.m.