JOHNSTOWN CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, February 4, 2026

The Greater Johnstown City Council met in a stated session for special business. Mayor Sylvia King called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

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

The following members of Council were present for roll call:

Mayor Sylvia King, Charles Arnone, Samuel Barber, Lorraine Brandon-Taylor, Taylor Clark, Nicolas Spinelli

Art Martynuska, City Manager; Mike Capriotti, Assistant City Manager; Carmen Truscello, Public Works Director; Aimee Willett, Solicitor; Jennifer Burkhart, Executive Secretary; and Joel Valentine, Wessel & Co. were also present

PUBLIC COMMENT-AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

John DeBartola, 1197 Bedford Street, commented he did not know what would be entailed with the East Side Fire Station relocation but wanted to know where funding would be coming from. He also commented on the timeline for using the ARPA funds and funds from Representative Burns for the Public Safety Building. He questioned if the building rehab could be done in time to spend the money before the money is lost. He added a newspaper article quoted Mr. Martynuska saying the building would require $11 million to rehab the entire building. He asked where the additional $6 million would come from. He looked forward to hearing about the Quality of Life Ordinance and the Business Security Camera Initiative.

Charlene Stanton, 184 Sell Street, provided comments on the Public Safety Building. She noted the building was a central hub for first responders. She stated state and federal laws entitle employees to a safe work environment. She added conditions present in the building were not acceptable. She explained she had filed a complaint with the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) who inspected the building on November 25, 2025 in response to her complaint. She noted she had also filed a complaint in December 2019 and believed violations persisted from six years ago. Ms. Stanton expressed frustration and concerns over the condition of the building. She noted she would keep an eye on the situation as she did not believe the Council would comply with laws to ensure the health of first responders. She added the Council needed to establish priorities.

Dustin Greene, 312 Chestnut Street, expressed concerns about the architecture in the City. He shared his experiences with the State Theatre, noting he expected it would become one of the many buildings demolished in the community. He hoped the Public Safety Building would not be another building torn down. He noted he had a picture of the Fort Stanwix Hotel which once sat next to the State Theatre and was demolished in the 1970s to make way for Lee Hospital. He added the hotel could have been repurposed into housing today. He did not want to lose the Public Safety Building. He was interested in the Quality of Life Ordinance. He also commented a Business Security Camera Initiative would be helpful.

BUDGET PRESENTATION

Joel Valentine, Wessel & Co., reported the City management team had asked his company to look at the information presented in the 2026 budget that was proposed and on display for the last month. He explained how budgets are prepared, noting budgets are reported on the modified as a whole basis and include items like receivables and deferred revenue. He added, when budgeting on a cash basis versus the actual as reported on financial statements, differences can occur which need to be reconciled or explained.

Ms. Stanton interrupted Mr. Valentine with a point of order. She noted the budget was not on the Agenda to be discussed. She believed the budget discussion was a violation of the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act.

Ms. Willett stated Mr. Valentine was asked to appear to review budgetary items. She recommended Council allow him to proceed.

Ms. Stanton reiterated her objection.

Mr. Valentine explained the columns on a budget document prepared for the Council. He used the 2025 Revenue and Expenses to compute the 2025 surplus or deficit, which could change once audited financial statements are prepared and released. There was also a column showing the cash basis as budgeted. He noted there had been questions raised regarding ARPA funds and the Capital Budget Fund showing a deficit in the budget on a cash basis. He added the capital fund by its nature would build up reserves over time. He looked at the fund balance on the last audited financial statements from 2024.

Mr. Valentine explained he had a column on the far right, which reflected the projected ending fund balance which took into account the 2025 surplus/deficit, the 2026 cash basis as budgeted, and the starting point from 2024 to project where the City would land at the end of 2026. He noted the City has substantial reserves to cover any expenditures that are on a cash basis exceeding the revenues coming in. He added the City is at a solid financial point. He also explained the City has two types of fund balances. Unassigned fund balances or the general fund which can be used for anything the City government deems appropriate and follows normal government expenditures. The assigned fund balance or capital fund is money set aside for future capital projects by the management team. He noted funds from the capital fund can be unassigned to the general fund if needed.

Mayor King stated, in the spirit of fairness, she wanted to open the floor up to public comment because the budget was not on the Agenda. Other Council members agreed with her decision.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John DeBartola thanked Mayor King for her professionalism. Regarding the budget presentation, he noted there was a lot of money and questions. He reiterated the Public Safety Building needed to be saved. He noted he had seen and heard reports regarding the roof leaking and the health conditions of people working in the building. He encouraged the Council to find a way to fund renovations to save the building for future generations.

Charlene Stanton declined to speak. She believed the Sunshine Act was violated, and she would proceed as she saw fit through court action.

Dustin Greene stated he thought it was respectful that Council gave the public time to speak. He noted he was confused when the budget was brought up. He added, as a resident, when attending a meeting, he expects the Agenda to set the expectations of the meeting. He stated, in the future, if there is a surprise guest, it should be announced prior to the meeting to avoid people being upset.

Mr. Arnone stated, several months ago, the ventilation in the building had been cleaned. He noted Mr. DeBartola had been at the meeting where the roof repair contract was signed. He added the roof cannot be worked on with the bad weather, but the money was in place to complete the repairs. He also stated the Council has no plans to demolish the building and are working to restore the property.

Ms. Stanton asked if Council was violating Code of Conduct and policies by addressing members of the public and speaking back and forth.

Ms. Willett recommended the meeting move on to the workshop topics.

WORKSHOP ITEMS

1. Public Safety Building

Art Martynuska, City Manager, explained an RFP was released for the Public Safety Building with a list of priorities for the building. He noted there was a contract in place for the roof repairs and repairs to the electrical feed had been signed off on. He added remediation had already occurred in the basement to resolve water issues. He also noted DLI had completed a reinspection, which Mr. Truscello would report on.

Regarding the RFP, he shared contractors would be walking through the building on February 5, 2026 with Mr. Capriotti and Mr. Truscello. He stated much of the repair is dependent on installing an exterior elevator, which would be handicapped accessible. In addition, there would be some rearrangement of the interior of the building, HVAC work, and plumbing work. He added Council was provided a schedule with the project timeline and completion dates, which would be within the parameters of the ARPA funding. He further added the RAC-P funding has a slightly different timeline.

Mr. Martynuska mentioned the City had also requested an additional $2.8 million in Congressional funding and was waiting to see if the request was approved to add to the building funds. He noted repairs were being worked on in the meantime.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor asked if Mr. Martynuska could explain the priorities for people who may not know about them.

Mr. Martynuska explained it was cost prohibitive to renovate the current elevator, which would need significant construction. The first priority was the new elevator system followed by HVAC, plumbing, and internal infrastructure changes.

Mr. Barber asked if everything was being done as asked by DLI.

Mr. Martynuska stated the City has met DLI compliance and asked Mr. Truscello to explain further.

Carmen Truscello, Public Works Director, explained based on the December inspection, the basement was under control. The City was asked to repaint pillars in the basement that had some chipped paint. In addition DLI would like to see the structural report completed when additional support pillars were installed in the 1990's. He noted one of the biggest problems is the back stairwell, which does not get used so it has no heat and chipped paint. DLI has requested the stairwell be cleaned up and repainted. He added an air quality test also needed to be completed.

Mr. Truscello noted there is a public works employee who does custodial cleanup of the Public Safety Building, City Hall, and the garage. Mr. Truscello reviewed general work that needs completed in the building, including ceiling tile and HVAC filter replacements. He noted it would be better to do a big scope of work for the HVAC out of RAC-P or ARPA funds instead of spending money for repairs every year.

Mr. Spinelli asked if project prioritization would happen if there were multiple bids.

Mr. Martynuska noted the priority list went out with the RFP and would be set by the City.

2. Quality of Life Ordinance

Mr. Martynuska explained Council had been provided a sample of a potential Quality of Life Ordinance. He noted similar ordinances had been passed in other municipalities. He read through the proposed ordinance that would address code violations which contribute to the deterioration of property values and general disorder in the community. He stated the ordinance had been provided for the Council's review, for further consideration to be discussed at a future workshop or meeting. He also explained the ordinance would empower code officers and other officials to hand out tickets for violations, thereby increasing enforcement and compliance capabilities. He noted the ultimate goal would be compliance.

Mayor King requested clarification on what Mr. Martynuska meant by officials empowered by the City.

Mr. Martynuska replied inspections could be done by codes officers, the fire chief, the police chief, police officers, and firefighters. The ordinance would give trained people the ability to address potential violations instead of just notifying Laurel Management.

Mr. Barber noted the City already has ordinances in place for codes. He asked if the Quality of Life Ordinance would strengthen existing ordinances which Mr. Martynuska confirmed.

Mr. Spinelli asked if it would make sense to repeal some of the existing ordinances if the Quality of Life Ordinance was sufficient.

Ms. Willett stated a new ordinance would have to work with current ordinances to reconcile any inconsistencies. She noted the document presented to Council was only for review and would require revisions before any action could be taken.

Mr. Spinelli asked if the intent was to have one big piece of legislation to update several parts of code. Mr. Martynuska stated the ordinance would not have to affect all of the code, but if there were conflicting ordinances, they would need resolved.

Ms. Willett reiterated a new ordinance would have to be consistent with existing ordinances.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor referenced fines listed in the proposed ordinance. She asked if there were already fines in place for things like snow removal.

Mr. Martynuska stated there were fines in place already, and the ordinance would bring everything together. He also noted some of the violations did not have any current fines while others stayed with the current fines.

Mayor King noted the issue seemed to be enforcement.

The Council discussed snow removal at vacant properties.

Mr. Barber questioned why a new ordinance was being written if the ordinances were already in place.

Mr. Martynuska stated there were two reasons. The first reason would be to empower more people to help with enforcement. The second would be to give different enforcement levels which the City may not have.

Mr. Clark stated, if Council were to pass something like the ordinance, it would need to ensure it was applied equally across the City and not just in certain areas.

Mr. Martynuska suggested Council review the ordinance and provide feedback. In addition, legal would need to provide input. He added, at the current moment, he was providing the ordinance for informational purposes.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor inquired if there was a way to provide a booklet or pamphlet to residents, particularly new residents, so they know the codes. She noted a person does not know they are violating a code if they do not know what they are violating.

Mayor King stated there is not currently anything to provide residents. She noted she has been working with Maria Mock and the tax office to create information which could be provided at City Hall.

Mr. Barber suggested a quarterly flyer could be sent out with seasonal reminders for issues like grass and snow.

It was asked if information could be added to the new website. Mr. Martynuska explained the website would likely go live in March.

3. Business Security Camera Initiative

Mr. Martynuska explained he was looking at a program for the City that would help provide funding to businesses and nonprofits who want to put in a security camera system. He noted the idea was in its infancy, but he was looking into different funding and what collars there may be on existing donations. He added the cameras could be tied into the real time crime center and possibly tagged into 911. He stated the technology could be leveraged to assist law enforcement.

It was noted the program would be voluntary like the facade program.

Mr. Clark asked if businesses who take funding from the program would be required to tie into the crime center.

Mr. Martynuska stated they would need to tie into the crime center. In addition, he thought part of the program would be that, if the businesses did not stay open, the cameras would be returned to the City to be reallocated to another business.

Mr. Clark clarified, if a business opted into the program, they would be required to be a part of the crime center; however, businesses with their own system would not be required to be a part of the center.

Mr. Barber asked if there would be an initiative to give money back to businesses who already had established systems.

Mr. Martynuska stated Mr. Barber's idea could be investigated but would likely depend on the system being able to be tied into the crime center.

Mr. Clark noted he would love to have his camera system tied into the crime center as he has assisted police in the past. He suggested a consideration could be to allow businesses with existing systems to add one or two cameras instead of entire systems.

4. East Side Fire Station

Mr. Martynuska explained the fire chief had approached the City about possibly relocating the East Side Fire Station from Ash Street to a better location, which would be news and help enhance response times. One location on Horner Street had been examined. Community Foundation was also helping to explore funding options. The potential location would include nine lots that would also provide space for an East Side salt depot and public works depot. He noted there were a number of questions being explored including rescoping RAC-P funding. He also noted the existing station on Ash Street could potentially be sold or leased for someone to put in a new business.

PUBLIC COMMENT: NON-AGENDA ITEM

John DeBartola, 1197 Bedford Street, commented on the camera initiative. He suggested the City may want to consider if having cameras in the City would open the footage up to right-to-know requests similar to how body cam footage can be requested.

Regarding the Quality of Life Ordinance, he stated it sounded like the City should do a complete revamp of all codes. He added the ordinance would basically change the nature of codes and enforcement. He agreed with Ms. Brandon-Taylor that they needed to figure out how to tell people. He suggested information could be sent with tax bills in June to save on postage. He also agreed with Mr. Clark regarding equal enforcement of the codes.

Mr. DeBartola expressed reservations about the East Side Fire Station relocation. He noted he often hears the work "potential" which scares him. He noted potential was recently used to reference the landfill. He shared concerns over perception, particularly how people sometimes see the City as corrupt. He concluded his remarks by stating he hoped to be able to note positives, not just negatives, in April when he looks at the first hundred days of the new administration.

Charlene Stanton declined to speak. She reiterated her belief that the meeting was a violation of the Sunshine Act.

Dustin Greene. 312 Chestnut Street, stated he would like to know the details of existing ordinances regarding snow. He expressed frustration that local businesses did not take care of clearing snow following the recent storm. He shared actions he took to maintain his business and to help his neighbors. He noted the City needs to do better with code enforcement. He added businesses who do not take care of their property should not be allowed to be in the City. He added he heard nonprofits mentioned during the presentation on security cameras. He explained nonprofits seem to receive preference over businesses, but for-profit businesses need help too and are a part of the community.

Mr. Clark addressed the comments about a potential landfill in the Rosedale area. He stated the issue was raised at the Downtown Business Owners meeting where nothing discussed is policy. He stated, out of the number of things discussed at the meeting, one was selected to be blown out of proportion. He stated a landfill would not be something that happened and listed a number of reasons as to why it would not happen. He stated, when the landfill was mentioned at the meeting, all he noted was that it could potentially be a revenue producer for the City and could potentially help bring back a municipal waste department. He reiterated the landfill was not something that would happen and was only brought up in discussion.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor noted Rosedale was not even owned by the City.

Mr. Arnone stated the City had owned a dump in the past and sold it due to the liability.

Mr. Clark added the action taking place in Rosedale as mentioned by Mr. Greene was reported on in the August 19, 2025 issue of *The Tribune Democrat*. At that time, the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority stated they would be putting in an access road for a future industrial or tech park. It was noted the City did not have anything to do with the land being moved around in Rosedale.

RECESS/ADJOURNMENT

The next regular scheduled meeting is February 11, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6:10 p.m.