

JOHNSTOWN CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, May 6, 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, Michael Hamacek, Nicolas Spinelli, Lorraine Brandon-Taylor

Taylor Clark was absent from the meeting.

Art Martynuska, City Manager; Mike Capriotti, Assistant City Manager; Carmen Truscello, Public Works Director; Aimee Willett, Solicitor; Jennifer Burkhardt, Executive Secretary; Jim McCann, Fire Chief; Tony Penna, Recreation Director; John Rutledge, Economic Development Director; Mark Britton, Police Chief; Brandon Palmer, EADS Group; Brooke Chambers, Aspire; Allie Hoffman, Aspire; Elizabeth Shaffer, Laurel Municipal; Melissa Stiles, Laurel Municipal; Lisa Rager, Visit Johnstown; Jon Bosio, MERJE Design; Rob Forcey, Vision Together; Justin Steinbugl, PA Code Alliance; Rebecca Dulany, PA Code Alliance; Karen Welsch, UpStreet Architects; Jeff Kent, Maher Duessel; Jon Tilelli, Maher Duessel; and Cara Nicoletti, Maher Dussel were also present.

PROCLAMATIONS: NATIONAL PROVIDERS DAY

Mayor King shared a proclamation with Christy Leito and Brandon Ward representing The Learning Lamp:

Whereas the Learning Lamp, Early Childhood Alleghenies and organizations nationwide are recognizing childcare providers on this day. And whereas the childcare system supports children's growth, development and educational advancement while creating positive economic impacts for families and communities. And whereas childcare providers are essential to the health and well-being of our communities by fostering safe and welcoming environments, supporting working families and helping children develop lifelong skills. And whereas the City of Johnstown recognizes that childcare has been and continues to be a vital lifeline for families, communities and the economy and has taken steps to support providers in sustaining the viability of these essential services. And whereas support for affordable, accessible, high quality childcare represents a meaningful commitment to helping families work, promoting children's healthy development and learning and

strengthening our economy. Now, therefore, I, Sylvia King, Mayor of the City of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim May 8, 2026 as Provider Appreciation Day in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and urge all citizens to recognize and honor childcare providers for their invaluable contributions to our community.

SOLICITOR REPORT

Aimee Willett, Solicitor, noted a public hearing scheduled for May 13, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. for the comprehensive plan. A hearing was required by statute before City Council could act on the comprehensive plan. She requested City Council to meet for Executive Session during the following week regarding pending and threatened litigation.

WORKSHOP ITEMS

Prior to the workshop items, Art Martynuska, City Manager, provided remarks on the recent violence in the City, which had stretched the City's resources. He gave credit to public safety officials, especially the Police Department, for their response. He stated all avenues are monitored to curtail the violence. There are internal efforts, in addition to working with state and federal groups, to enhance the safety of residents and visitors. He stressed the importance of the public knowing everyone is working together regarding initiatives and ideas to help curtail incidents.

Mr. Martynuska shared current efforts that included applying technology as a force multiplier, camera systems, and drones tied into the Real Time Crime Center. He thanked Council for their support.

PA Code Alliance

Justin Steinbugl, PA Code Alliance (PMCA), provided an introduction to his company. He explained PMCA works as an extension of municipalities. PMCA focuses on educating and creating partnerships in the community to foster compliance and eliminate issues that arise when codes or ordinances are not maintained. PMCA is local with an office about 25 minutes away and staff throughout Central Pennsylvania. Services are provided to just over 170 municipalities, including Dale, Windber, Somerset, and Altoona. Mr. Steinbugl provided information on the code's enforcement team experience and PMCA's philosophy for code enforcement. PMCA uses their own platform, Community Core. The Community Core platform allows PMCA to track all code enforcement, inspections, and plan reviews. The platform also allows residents to apply online for building permits and pay

online. Municipal leadership has visibility into all actions of PMCA on Community Core.

Mr. Steinbugl shared details of regulated rental inspections by PMCA's team with the code enforcement officers. The in-house team in Chambersburg maintains a database for regulated rentals. PMCA schedules inspections, ensures someone is present for the inspection, and follows through with improvements, which would take the entire workload off of the City staff. PMCA is proud of their good relationships with property owners.

Mr. Steinbugl discussed following the Uniform Construction Code (UCC). PMCA has seven plan examiners. Community Core allows contractors residents to submit their plans electronically if desired, which adds another layer of convenience.

PMCA has a team of building inspectors. Mr. Steinbugl explained PMCA does not work with a municipality if it is unable to commit. All inspections are recorded in Community Core. PMCA has options for remote inspections if the municipality is interested.

Mr. Steinbugl reiterated Community Care is the complete database for PMCA, which adds convenience for the municipality, residents, and contractors to submit applications and payments online. Each month an executive report is provided to municipal leadership reflecting the actions of PMCA that month for code enforcement, regulated rentals, and inspections.

Mr. Steinbugl recommended appointing PMCA as the building code official, which would allow PMCA to support UCC and implement Community Core. If the City were interested in regulated rental inspections, the City could adjust the fee schedule to make the program revenue neutral, aligning the fee schedule with PMCA's schedule. Regarding code enforcement, PCMA could supplement with two to three days a week in the field and one day doing follow-up to ensure activities are moving down the right track.

Mr. Hamacek asked, if PCMA did code enforcement, would it only respond to complaints received by the City or if PMCA would go out and look for violations. Mr. Steinbugl replied PCMA could do both. He noted, in many communities, code enforcement is complaint driven; however, in larger municipalities, PCMA is proactive in issuing notices of violations. He added the City would decide PCMA's actions.

Mr. Hamacek asked if the City would retain records from code enforcement or rental inspections should PMCA stop working with the City. Mr. Steinbugl confirmed all records are the property of the municipality.

Mr. Spinelli asked Mr. Martynuska if PCMA would be supplemented or be a substitute for Laurel Municipal. Mr. Martynuska stated PCMA could be either a substitute or supplement. He asked Mr. Steinbugl to describe how PCMA works with Altoona. Mr. Steinbugl explained Altoona has an in-house codes team that does most of the code enforcement. PCMA assists with commercial building inspections. Altoona allows the permit applicant to choose which organization to work with on their application. He noted every municipality is a little bit different.

Mr. Barber noted Johnstown previously worked the same way as Altoona.

Mr. Spinelli asked what Johnstown currently allowed. Mr. Martynuska confirmed Johnstown only has Laurel Municipal for commercial inspections. He stated the concept was to be proactive instead of reactive.

Rebecca Dulany, PA Code Alliance, explained a sweep would work by PMCA sending out a team to document all the found instances after which dated letters would be sent. The letters would include follow-up dates for when PMCA would do follow-up site visits to see if there was compliance. If there was not compliance, PMCA would proceed to the next steps which would depend on the violation.

Mr. Barber asked what the turnaround time would be for violations that do not comply, specifically asking how long it would take for PMCA to submit a violation to the magistrate for a court date. Ms. Dulany stated the approximate time would be 30 to 45 days. She explained the steps between the initial letter and citation phase.

Mr. Hamacek asked if PMCA would go to the court hearing. Ms. Dulany replied PMCA works closely with solicitors when needed but will handle small matters themselves.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor noted in Johnstown there are many LLCs. She asked if PMCA had experience with LLCs and what they do to contact the owners. Ms. Dulany stated PMCA has special tools to track down who owns the LLC. If the owner is out-of-state, the additional challenge sometime requires assistance from the City or solicitor. She added PMCA is used to dealing with LLCs.

Mayor King questioned the payment arrangement with PMCA. Mr. Steinbugl shared PMCA's fee process in which they work off a percentage of a City's fee schedule or the City adopts PMCA's fee schedule. With regulated rentals, PMCA would recommend raising the fee from \$50 per residence to \$82.50 per residence, which would cover PMCA administering the whole program. Code enforcement would be at an hourly rate, and he presented a slide showing a breakdown comparing PMCA's fees for one person to the cost of a full-time codes officer. He explained a sweep would be front loaded in the beginning of a partnership, and the hours would taper off. He noted there is no retainer and no minimum number of hours. PMCA is supplemental to the City's code enforcement team. He added the City would be receiving an experienced person who knows how to accomplish the job.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor asked Mr. Martynuska what the agenda was for using PMCA and if it would lessen the load on the fire department. Mr. Martynuska stated the fire department would still be utilized for property maintenance; however, PMCA would definitely help with codes. He noted several people had been interviewed for the third codes officer position with no success. He stated PMCA would be another set of eyes and ears and the sweep component would cover the City from one to the other. PMCA would help with the follow-up which appears to be the biggest pinch point.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor asked if the City would be doubling up with both PMCA and Laurel Municipal. Mr. Martynuska had not discussed the work model as he wanted PMCA to present to Council before getting further into the conversation.

Mr. Arnone asked how long the City had Laurel Municipal and the percentage success of Laurel. Mr. Martynuska stated the City had Laurel for about a year, and Laurel would be reporting later in the meeting.

Mr. Barber suggested Laurel present next to respond, so there could be a comparison. He noted, in the Laurel report, there were still eight violations listed from September 2025 that have not been followed up on. He questioned if PMCA would work the same way.

Ms. Dulany explained situations where PMCA would be waiting on information. She noted, for basic follow-up and next steps, there should not be that long of a wait.

Mr. Spinelli commented on the cost comparison, noting PMCA would be paid the same as a full-time person but would only be providing a part-time person.

Mr. Steinbugl reiterated PMCA would be supplemental. He agreed the City could speak with municipal officials in Somerset and Windber for their opinions on PMCA's work.

Laurel Municipal

Elizabeth Shaffer, Laurel Municipal, presented a workflow breakdown Laurel's process for property maintenance. Laurel requires an initial complaint form from the municipality signed by a Council member or employee. Laurel charges \$85 per case. Residents are told to call the City to submit complaints. After receiving the complaint, Laurel conducts a complete inspection based on the initial complaint. A notice of violation is sent giving the person 30 days for compliance as recommended by Laurel's solicitor. If the person appeals, the matter goes to a separate appeals board to explain the reason for appealing.

Ms. Shaffer explained the steps before taking the matter to court, such as assuring compliance before charges are filed with the magistrate. Ms. Shaffer will check with the City on the proper action. If the violation is cleared up, the case is closed. She noted, at the magistrate level, the case proceeds depending on the magistrate's decision. If the person is found guilty, then Laurel's case is usually closed and turned over to the City solicitor.

Mr. Barber stated Laurel's report reflected 96 cases were closed by Laurel. He asked how many were remediated and how many were due to being unable to track down the owner. Ms. Shaffer was unable to provide a number as the property maintenance manager for the cases, James King, was released in February 2026. Laurel was working to catch up on his cases.

Ms. Shaffer explained, when Mr. King was let go, he wiped his computer of all evidence for all cases located in Johnstown. She explained Laurel's efforts thus far to recover any evidence from the computer. In addition, Mr. King did not keep any paper copies. Ms. Shaffer noted Laurel had a backup system, which Mr. King failed to use.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor asked what system Laurel would use moving forward to ensure a rogue employee did not wipe files again. Ms. Shaffer stated Laurel would no longer give employees their own laptop. The employees will be required to work at the Carrolltown office, so all files are backed up to the cloud. Mr. King was released March 10, 2026. Ms. Shaffer confirmed Laurel had known for about a couple weeks of Mr. King's actions.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor asked what Laurel's call to action looked like for the cases where the information was wiped. Ms. Shaffer has the addresses from the last

monthly update provided to Council from Mr. King and will reinspect all of the open cases Laurel has with no evidence.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor asked if Laurel receives the \$85 fee upon completion of the violation or if they are paid to initially take the case. Ms. Shaffer stated Laurel invoices the City after the initial inspection and notice of violation are sent. She confirmed Laurel had already been paid for the cases in limbo, which will be completed first. The City would not be paying a second time.

Mr. Barber commented Laurel seemed to be putting the blame for all of the cases on Mr. King. He noted recently talking to the owner of one of the cases on the report.

Mr. Hamacek asked who was Mr. King's superior. Ms. Shaffer confirmed his superior was Melissa Stiles. Mr. Hamacek questioned if there should be correspondence that the City could see where a property should be in the process.

Mr. Barber stated the system being used by the City was Edmonds, which Ms. Shaffer confirmed Laurel does not use. Mr. Hamacek commented the system allows the City to see what code violations were entered and have a record of the actions. Ms. Shaffer stated if Mr. King was using the City's system, Laurel was unaware.

Mr. Barber echoed Mr. Hamacek's concerns over the chain of command. Ms. Shaffer stated Ms. Stiles was receiving the same monthly updates as City Council.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor expressed concerns regarding the lack of an action plan and the lack of accountability. She questioned what was going on with codes prior to Laurel's rogue employee.

Mr. Barber stated none of the City's code officers had been trained to do codes prior to recently. The latest City code report was the best he had seen yet with 136 violations issued.

Mr. Spinelli asked what the dates were for the graph Laurel provided to Council. Ms. Shaffer stated, since January 2025, Laurel has received 186 complaints from the City. 96 complaints were closed, 72 were still open, and she had not worked on the 19 complaints received since March as Laurel was trying to figure out Mr. King's cases.

Mr. Arnone asked how long Mr. King had worked for Laurel. Melissa Stiles, Laurel Municipal, stated Mr. King started January 1, 2025. Ms. Stiles reviewed

Laurel's work with the City 2012, taking over as the City's building code official about a year ago. Laurel agreed to employ Mr. King as one of its employees from the City. Mr. King would remain in the City and have an office in City Hall. Ms. Stiles learned from Mr. Martynuska, Mr. Capriotti and Judge Price that Mr. King was not attending court hearings.

Mr. Hamacek questioned how Mr. King was paid if the City had only turned in 186 cases in a year. Ms. Stiles stated Laurel was able to pay Mr. King because Laurel covers 60 municipalities.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor questioned why the City had only turned over 186 cases. Mr. Martynuska replied to the City triages cases and turns the more severe cases over to Laurel with the less severe cases being handled in-house.

Mr. Barber questioned whether Ms. Stiles, out of the 96 closed cases, knew how many were closed due to remediation or due to not being able to locate the property owner. Ms. Stiles stated some were remediated but some may have been out-of-state owners or LLCs. She offered to provide an answer the next morning for Mr. Barber.

Mr. Martynuska asked if Laurel intended to move forward with criminal charges over the wiping of documents. Ms. Stiles confirmed charges would be filed.

Mr. Spinelli asked how many cases the City logged in-house for the same period that Laurel had 186 cases. Mr. Capriotti offered to obtain the matrix.

Mr. Barber asked how close the City was to being able to go back to the way it was when the City went to the magistrate themselves. Mr. Capriotti stated the City was close as it had been awarded an ORI (Originating Agency Identifier) and staff was going through training related to filing criminal charges. Mr. Martynuska noted the need for added staff. Mr. Capriotti noted additional work to be done with the police chiefs working through the training process. Both code officers are doing an online module and will have to take certification exams.

Mayor King questioned the period of time was between the City receiving a complaint and the complaint being sent to Laurel. Mr. Capriotti explained, within three days of receiving a complaint, code officers determine if, based on their inspection, the case will be sent to Laurel or handled internally.

Ms. Shaffer stated, once received, Laurel is sometimes able to go out the same day, but if busy, it may take two days for the inspection to transpire.

Mr. Spinelli understood, from a security perspective, Laurel would no longer allow cases to be logged in Johnstown. He asked if Laurel anticipated the quality or quantity of work to suffer if the employee had to return to Carrolltown before doing their work. Ms. Shaffer replied to the work would not suffer as Laurel is down in Johnstown every day. She has 280 cases in other municipalities across multiple counties, and she does well with those cases.

Maher Duessel

Jeff Kent, Maher Duessel, explained Maher Duessel began working with the City in March 2026. He stated the presentation would provide Council financial information for discussion throughout the year. He stated the PowerPoint provided high level summaries. Maher Duessel was in the process of developing financial reports for management and Council. He noted more detailed information would be provided monthly.

In terms of the financials, Maher Duessel would focus mainly on general funds, providing additional material as Maher Duessel learns of the required information by Council for decision making. In March and April 2026, Maher Duessel worked to gain an understanding of the systems, processes and activities to develop an internal financial reporting framework. Maher Duessel is providing limited support to Wessel and Co. for the 2025 audit but is focused on 2026 financials.

Mr. Kent explained that one of Maher Duessel's big roles is to provide assistance and be a resource for management and staff. He outlined Maher Duessel's work with assisted with required reporting for grant funding, bank reconciliations to ensure being up-to-date and accurate, and the upcoming priorities that include designing and implementing a monthly close process for staff.

Mr. Kent reported Maher Duessel would assist with finalizing the 2025 audit and merge activity from the 2025 audit into what Maher Duessel is doing for 2026.

Mr. Kent presented high level financial information, showing the cash balances as of March through the first quarter of the year. He noted the biggest balances are the general fund, capital investment fund, and ARPA with the rest of the funds being more specific.

Jon Tilelli, Maher Duessel, pointed out the ARPA funds need to be spent by the end of 2026. Any remaining balance will be returned to the Treasury unless the date is extended. Mr. Kent explained the balances being made up of restricted

and unrestricted funds. Mr. Arnone commented the ARPA funds are committed.

Mr. Kent discussed the revenue and expenses. He noted Council would see the revenue numbers increase over the next couple of months. He noted a significant part of the budget is the state pension aid; however, the funds come in later all at once. Expenses were more consistent with the expenditures, roughly a quarter of what was budgeted. He stated the expenses are higher than the previous year, mainly due to personnel costs, specifically in the public safety areas.

Mr. Kent showed a slide with revenue components including real estate tax, local taxes, state aid, and service contracts. He presented a summary of expenditures by function with a year-to-date balance and percentage of budget. He noted some expenditures only happen at the beginning of the year such as insurances. He pointed out that personnel drives the overall expense activity.

Mr. Spinelli asked why the debt service was lagging.

Mr. Kent replied the big debt service payments are typically only paid twice a year in April and October. The April principal payment would show about a month after the numbers in the presentation with what was shown being interest payments.

Mr. Kent noted year-over-year personnel costs for the first quarter. The increases in police and fire were largely driven by increased headcounts and collective bargaining implementations. Public works had decreased due to a reduction in personnel. He noted the 2016 general obligation note issuance will be paid in full in 2026.

Mr. Tilelli commented the 2016 payment is in May with the 2020 general obligation bond being the previously mentioned April payment.

Mr. Kent stated Council would see an increase on the next report for the debt service expense.

Mayor King noted Mr. Kent indicated Maher Duessel was assisting Wessel with the 2025 audit and asked if the findings had been cleared up. Mr. Kent replied Maher Duessel was assisting as needed with the 2025 audit but is more focused on 2026 activity.

Mr. Tilelli expected many of the same findings as the previous year, mainly related to reconciliation and procurement. Mr. Kent pointed out the establishment of monthly processes should help clarify matters for the next audit.

Ms. Willett stated a finding last year and in previous years was to have a procurement policy in place. She noted a procurement policy was put in front of Council in December but tabled for additional time for review. In the meantime, it was asked if the policy needed to be an ordinance as the City has a procurement manual. Wessel indicated an official ordinance approved by Council was needed. She intended to have an ordinance for Council to consider in June.

Mr. Spinelli asked if Council could expect reports from Maher Duessel monthly.

Mr. Kent stated Maher Duessel wanted to work towards recurring financial information, such as a monthly report.

Mr. Spinelli asked who they envisioned to be the main presenter, citing concerns about billing. Mr. Kent indicated Maher Duessel is working on a fixed fee, so Council was making out by three people attending the meeting. He noted all three of them would be familiar with the account activity to allow for flexibility in who attends.

Mayor King asked if there would be some type of financial presentation at every meeting. Mr. Tilelli stated the intention was to update the PowerPoint presentation every month with new data. Council could request specific information be included.

Mr. Kent pointed out the presentation was meant to be a starting point with details added after the 2025 audit was complete. He noted the importance of consistent dialogue of the financial information.

Mr. Martynuska added a more granular report might be presented quarterly to give the Council a bigger snapshot.

Aspire

Brooke Chambers, Aspire, presented a spreadsheet overview of Aspire's upcoming grants. She noted daily changes to her spreadsheet with new opportunities. She stated opportunities were taking place now that the federal and state budget standstills are resolved. She shared a new opportunity through the Appalachian Regional Commission for federal funding for workforce development and revitalization opportunities.

Ms. Chambers reported on working on writing grants for Flood Mitigation Grant Program and the Greenways, Trails, and Recreations program. In addition to submitting new grants, she reported on working on research and assisting with reporting.

Ms. Chambers noted receiving an application for \$4,000 through the Community Foundation for pumps and generators. Since the beginning of 2025, the City has been awarded \$312,500 through grants. Aspire has worked on a number of pending applications. She is tracking grants not awarded, many of which could be attributed to the budget standstill.

Mr. Spinelli noted the City was awarded six grants since Aspire began at the beginning of 2025.

Ms. Chambers noted several pending grants. Aspire had to close out open grants, which were awarded prior to Aspire working with the City, but for which no reporting was done. She will provide another updated report for the next meeting.

Mr. Martynuska noted receiving a letter from Housing and Urban Development indicating the City was awarded \$2.85 million for the Public Safety Building.

Ms. Chambers responded to questions from City Council members regarding working on grants from start to finish and payment to Aspire for monthly flat fee retainer charges. Ms. Chambers discussed completing a project management proposal for RACP funding for the Public Safety Building for City Council's review.

Mr. Barber thanked Ms. Chambers for her work.

Mr. Spinelli asked how Council members could request that Aspire keep an eye out for different types of projects. Ms. Chambers noted Aspire has a monthly formal meeting with the City to review priorities in addition to regular email correspondence. Mr. Martynuska added Aspire sends the City potential grants, and the City will send Aspire information.

Mr. Arnone commented, as someone who has been on the Council for a while, the information presented by Ms. Chambers was the best information he had seen since starting on Council.

Visit Johnstown

Lisa Rager, Visit Johnstown, noted Visit Johnstown to be the destination marketing organization for Cambria County. Visit Johnstown facilitated a community wide-branding initiative to shape and share a new story about the Johnstown area. She noted the process was guided by a diverse brand development team. She explained branding is not a logo or a slogan but instead is the art of differentiation. She indicated, at its core, branding is a perception and promise, which Visit Johnstown has to consistently deliver on.

Ms. Rager stated the initiative is important to the City as it goes beyond tourism. The initiative is about growing the City's population, attracting new residents; positioning Johnstown as a desirable place to live, work and invest; keeping local dollars local; increasing Johnstown's tax base; and importing new dollars into the local economy. She explained, through funding support from the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, Visit Johnstown engaged a nationally recognized expert to guide the process. A full community assessment was completed, and a brand development team was formed. Input was gathered from 1,600 public responses and stakeholder interviews. The brand direction is rooted in recreation with many local trails, waterways, and outdoor assets connecting directly to downtown. She added while recreation leads, a broader story is told including Johnstown's arts and culture; history and heritage; festivals; and resilience of the community.

Ms. Rager stated downtown is the centerpiece of the brand, because downtown is the first impression for visitors, a gathering place for residents, and the economic engine for small businesses. She stated the action plan is a detailed roadmap outlining what needs done, who is responsible, costs, funding resources, and timelines. The plan aligns branding, development, and marketing into a coordinated effort. She encouraged City Council to adopt and champion the brand as every decision made by Council can either work against or reinforce the brand. She added the effort is about getting everyone, public and private, on the same page and pulling in the same direction.

Ms. Rager shared one of the primary product development initiatives is a redeveloped wayfinding system. She explained what a wayfinding system is, noting a modern system is essential to the success of access for downtown. She noted the current system is outdated, in disrepair, creates confusion and signal neglect. Replacing the system with clear, attractive, and strategically placed signage will help visitors and residents easily find parking and key destinations while presenting a cohesive welcoming image.

Visit Johnstown and Vision Together worked with MERJE Design, a nationally recognized, Pennsylvania-based graphic design firm to conduct a comprehensive wayfinding assessment of Johnstown and develop preliminary design concepts that integrated the new brand. Ms. Rager explained the City's buy-in is essential in pursuing grants and funding opportunities. Ultimately the City would also be responsible for maintaining the wayfinding system going forward.

Jon Bosio, MERJE Design, presented information on the old wayfinding system which is no longer PennDOT or MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices) compliant with regard to copy height, reflectivity, typeface and number of messages. He explained MERJE had three potential options for wayfinding signs. The first option would be to reuse the existing poles while replacing the sign panels. The second option would also reuse the existing poles while adding shape to the new signs with the brand. The last option would be a modular panel which can be more easily updated in the future as things change.

Mr. Bosio noted there are very strict PennDOT regulations regarding design criteria. He stated MERJE's scope of work was to look at the wayfinding analysis and come up with a strategy on how to move forward with wayfinding as a big picture. He explained the system can be layered with many pieces which can be added over time.

Mr. Bosio was questioned by City Council members' as to the cost and Vision's willingness to assist the City with purchasing the equipment for the project. He explained the project could be thought about in three aspects. The first aspect was the administration and would include the budget, who is included in the system, and who would maintain the system. The second aspect is the design which MERJE has already been commissioned to do. The third was the way finding of how people are moved around to different places.

Rob Forcey, Vision Together, explained the current wayfinding signs were put up by Richard Burkhart through Heritage Johnstown in 2005 at which time the ownership was turned over to the City. He noted there are currently both missing and incorrect signs. He stated the idea of a wayfinding system had been questioned in the past by other organizations and other cities because people can use GPS. However, he noted the wayfinding system is marketing for the entire area and allows people to discover attractions they may not know about.

Mr. Forcey explained, during the process, he realized it should be up to City Council to decide which of MERJE's recommendations was selected. He also

noted the current gateway signs vary throughout the City. As for funding, he stated, while there were contributions which could be brought to the table to offset costs, there were also major infrastructure and transportation grants that the signs would fall under. He explained once City Council decided how they wanted to move forward, Vision could either work in conjunction with the City or turn everything over to the City.

Regrading what would be permitted on the signs, he noted only three items could be listed per sign and the signs would have to be a certain size. With the exception of the hospital, no business would be permitted to be listed on the signs. The signs would be focused on attractions like Central Park and the Inclined Plane.

Mayor King asked if a business could pay to have their name on a sign. Mr. Forcey replied they could not due to PennDOT regulations and the signs could only be for attractions determined by the City.

Mr. Martynuska asked about the signs seen along interstates or turnpikes for businesses. Mr. Bosio explained PennDOT has very specific destinations that are eligible for the signs mentioned by Mr. Martynuska. The logo program relates to specific services that have to be promoted to travelers along the highway. The wayfinding system being discussed is a different kind of program with very specific criteria for destination inclusion.

Mr. Arnone commented the program should go into process along with the Main Street finishing work, noting the completion of Main Street, Central Park and the Inclined Plane would tie together as an attraction. He added the construction can be frustrating for people traveling.

Mr. Forcey mentioned the Main Street project also included some wayfinding signage.

Ms. Rager stated it was critically important that all the signing look like a seamless system that works together to guide people. She added, if there was signage associated with the Main Street project, it would need to be integrated into the wayfinding plan.

Vision Together

Rob Forcey, Vision Together, stated he recently realized City Council might not know everything Vision was working on at any given time. He presented Council with a list of projects with brief explanations. He highlighted items on the list. Regarding the Main Street Manager working for Vision, he noted

Vision was able to pay for her through grants while the City would have had to put out a business improvement district tax to pay for the position. He noted Ms. Cashdollar answers questions for businesses, advocates, and ensures Vision is doing fun things in the downtown area.

He mentioned additional programs, such as the Neighborhood Partnership Program, refurbishing the Johnstown sign, mobilizing volunteers to work on the landscape, and facade grants. All the programs had been done through grants and private contributions with the only City contribution related to the RAISE grant program.

Mayor King asked if Vision had any money over to help mow lots as done in the past.

Mr. Forcey replied they did not. He hoped Senator Langerholm would be able to assist with funds to support mowing. He noted, through the Tree Vitalize Grant, Vision was using the same landscaping firm to help water the trees planted around town like the ones going into Central Park.

UpStreet Architects

Karen Welsch, UpStreet Architects, provided an update on the Public Safety Building improvements. She noted a timeline and a budget. UpStreet would soon be presenting drawings for bid. She called attention to four items in the budget which were not in the initial project scope and had elevated the budget.

The first item addressed Labor and Industries report regarding the structural conditions in the basement. UpStreet identified the structural issues were mostly related to salts coming through the concrete and deteriorating the concrete as a structure. UpStreet is investigating possible solutions but added the worst-case scenario to the budget which would be a geofoam system being pumped into the basement. She explained they were currently exploring the possibility of helical piers, posts and beams. She stated there was not a change order as construction had not started.

The second issue was with the new public lobby. She explained with where the new elevator would be people would have to wind through a narrow hallway to get to the Council chambers. With other issues such as unclear exits and bad acoustics, UpStreet recommended the Council chambers be flipped around. She described the changes that would shift the anteroom to the back, provide upgraded restrooms for the public and Council, increase seating, and improve both acoustics and audiovisual arrangements.

Mr. Arnone asked if police would be able to pull their vehicle into the building to withdraw from individuals. Ms. Welsch stated it would be the same set-up, which was discussed with the police department and Chief Britton.

The third item added to the budget related to windows. The original proposal had 50 percent of the windows being replaced. However, by evaluating the windows, it was discovered they were all beyond their useful life. Investigations also indicated masonry repairs and failing steel lintels over the windows. UpStreet recommended all of the windows and the associated repairs be completed at the same time as money was available.

Ms. Welsch stated UpStreet intended the base bid to only include the elevator addition, necessary lobby work, and the mechanical, plumbing and electrical improvements for the entire building. Everything else would be structured as an alternate that could be accepted at the beginning of the contract or throughout construction should additional money be available.

Mr. Barber questioned why the structural issues were not noted during the initial tours of the building when the RFP was initiated. Ms. Welsch explained the original scope of the project did not include the structural issues. She noted, as the architect and engineer, UpStreet's job was to include a review of the provided documents for the contractor's bid.

Mr. Hamacek asked about the steel on the windows. Ms. Welsch stated the issue was discovered through drone inspections. A masonry expert investigated and confirmed some of the steel would need replaced.

City Council discussed the cost and the specifications for the repair of the roof.

Mr. Hamacek noted initial discussions included a glass elevator that would not need a deep foundation. However, the recent rendering showed brick being used. Ms. Welsch explained, to save money, UpStreet opted for brick with a steel frame, which work was determined through a geotechnical investigation. The steel frame elevator would be clad with steel studs and brick with partial glass.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor asked if prisoners would be kept separate when being brought into the building. Ms. Welsch explained the plans changed in consultation with the City including the Chief. The intention is to have modular holding cells in the garage bay area, so prisoners were not moved through the building. The booking counter would also be near the cells, and there would be elevator access if needed for the upper floors.

Chief Britton stated the area for the prisoners would be separate from the public.

Mayor King asked how prisoners would enter the building if they were not able to be driven in. Discussion ensued about what doors would be present.

City Council members discussed the design variation from the RFP and the higher budget figure.

Ms. Welsch explained the use of the garage door, the location of the booking counter, and entry of the public and prisoners into the building. Chief Britton commented on not recalling some of the proposed changes.

Mr. Martynuska stated remodeling the cells on the second floor had been considered; however, the orientation of the cells would physically not allow the remodel. Other possibilities were discussed before arriving at the current proposal.

Mr. Barber stated the Police Chief should be included in the conversations involving his force.

Mr. Spinelli noted, with project still in the design phase, there should be more Council involvement. He suggested one or two members from Council be appointed to review the design.

Mr. Arnone reminded everyone some of the money had a deadline on being spent. He suggested upgrades be prioritized to use the money.

Mr. Martynuska explained value engineering was being used on the project as the City worked with the architects and engineers. Regarding the jail cell location, he stated, if they cells were left on the second floor, the entire system would need gutted and the costs would increase. The decision to move the cells to the sallyport on the first floor would save money over gutting the second floor. He noted the countless hours spent on the project that never moved forward from previous administrations. He stated everyone has been working very diligently and effectively on the project and if there were any questions regarding the integrity of the project, they could be directed to him.

Mr. Barber asked why the Police Chief had not been consulted. Mr. Martynuska stated Chief Britton has been involved in parts of the conversations; however, some decisions have fallen to administration for the cost effectiveness of the program.

Mayor King suggested moving forward the conversations involve a City Council member as well as the Police and Fire Chiefs to ensure everyone is on the same page. She noted she had concerns about the integrity of investigations if police were unable to drive people into the building.

Mr. Hamacek expressed concerns that the basement was not considered from the start when people were touring the building during the initial evaluations to determine the scope of work. He noted, if the full scope is not considered, there would always be change orders.

Ms. Welsch noted UpStreet is exactly where Mr. Hamacek is requesting they be in the process. UpStreet is not the contractor where change orders come from. UpStreet is evaluating the building and bringing the issues to the City's attention. She stated UpStreet's job is to do the due diligence, bring it to attention, document, and provide estimates so it can be decided what fits in the budget.

Mr. Spinelli commented there was still time to change the design. Ms. Welsch replied Mr. Spinelli was correct as the bid advertisement date is June 6, 2026. UpStreet's date to turn documents over to the Council is May 29th. She noted they are still in the design process because the whole process has been short and they are designing, drafting and engineering at the same time.

Mr. Hamacek asked for more details on what was going on in the basement.

Mr. Martynuska explained, after having a structural engineer assess the basement, there were a couple of different options. The first option was filling the basement in with concrete; however, the weight would put too much on the structural load of the building. It appeared the most economical option would be to build new columns in the basement and repair what was existing. He noted a compounding issue was a lack of communication from Labor and Industry on what they saw as the problems. He also noted there was additional weight on the Fire Department's floor from concrete added after the 1977 flood.

Mr. Arnone asked when the completion date was for the elevator. Ms. Welsch stated the project still needed to be bid but the substantial completion by the contractor was scheduled for March 2027.

Mr. Martynuska noted the parts covered by ARPA money would be completed by September.

Mr. Arnone stated Council would have to approve plans before September, because work could not be implemented without approval. He added Council needs to know what needs done and who is going to bid to get the process started.

Mr. Martynuska stated a timeframe had been given to either the current or previous Council with dates of when they would receive designs, when a vote would occur and when the project would go out for bid.

Ms. Welsch commented, in the timeframe, UpStreet was to deliver the documents by May 29, 2026.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor asked if the recommended priorities were the projects that absolutely had to be done.

Ms. Welsch confirmed the base bid were the items that needed to be complete. She noted the primary goal of the project was accessibility with the second goal being to replace all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. She added everything else would be listed as an alternate so Council could review and accept based on available funding.

Mr. Martynuska commented the basement should be a primary goal. Ms. Welsch stated the basement was listed as an alternate so Council could see the broken-out cost. She added she could also break down the elevator and mechanical costs.

Mr. Martynuska commented the total available funding was currently \$7 million.

Mr. Arnone asked if the estimated proposal of \$6.83 million included the basement. Ms. Welsch confirmed the basement was included.

Mr. Capriotti noted the costs were all projected until the project was actually bid.

Mayor King asked if the City could have applied for an extension on the ARPA funds. Mr. Capriotti stated it could not have applied for an extension; however, Maher Duessel indicated there had been talk of a potential extension for everybody with ARPA funding.

Mr. Arnone asked what Council's next priority was.

Ms. Welsch stated the next priority would be for Council to approve the drawings on May 29th and ask any other questions in the meantime.

Mr. Spinelli noted the renovations of the Council chambers would be almost a million dollars.

Ms. Brandon-Taylor stated the chamber renovations could be scaled back.

The Council discussed if separate restrooms were needed for the Council with Ms. Brandon-Taylor noting they could continue to use the public restrooms.

Ms. Welsch commented the wage rates attached to the project also affect some of the costs. She also noted the chamber renovations included acoustic considerations. She offered to provide a third-party breakdown showing the costs were reasonable.

Mr. Spinelli asked if the Mayor was permitted to appoint people to be included in the design phase. Ms. Willett stated Council can participate in the review of the drawings and give input. If the review were to include the entire Council, then the discussion would have to be public.

Mr. Spinelli stated the entire Council needed to be involved as it would be inefficient. He felt one or two people could report back to the Council.

Mayor King volunteered Mr. Hamacek and Mr. Barber. Mr. Spinelli asked if the decision had to be made during the meeting or if it could be done later.

Ms. Willett stated the decision on who to appoint should be made soon as the project was scheduled to be delivered in about three weeks. She added, in her legal opinion, the project cannot be put out to bid if Council has not agreed on what the project would be. She noted the base bid and alternates would give Council options to consider based on what the bids came in at, allowing Council to pick and choose the final project after the bids. She recommended Council select a person at the meeting.

Mr. Hamacek volunteered to walk through the project with someone from UpStreet to see exactly what is being done. He added Mr. Martynuska could also walk through with them.

It was agreed Mr. Hamacek was more than capable to do the review and report back.

The Council recessed from 7:35 p.m. until 7:45 p.m.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Mayor King noted Council was provided with full written department reports. She asked Council if they had any questions for the department heads in lieu of full verbal reports. She asked Chief Britton if he would say a few words on his report.

Police Department

Mark Britton, Police Chief reported that JPD handled about 3,300 calls in April as well as one officer completing about 250 traffic stops. JPD also worked with Codes to establish the ORI. JPD received grants with the assistance of Frank Burns' office and Senator Langerholc's office. The grants will help purchase new PTU, neighborhood cameras, and license plate readers.

Chief Britton noted he met with the Mayor regarding the security detail for Governor Shapiro. He added Governor Shapiro was aware of what was happening in Johnstown and had offered assistance from his office. He also noted he was continuing to work with Aspire on available grants.

He reported on a saturation patrol from April 29, 2026, in which there were 25 traffic stops with two people arrested. He thanked law enforcement partners who helped with search warrants. He noted Senator Langerholc rode along with the men and women who took time away from their families to help keep the streets of Johnstown safe.

Chief Britton stated CIT training continues. Officers Miller and Mowery have completed DRE training. He noted he would pass along a breakdown of DRE training to Ms. Burkhart for the Council.

Mayor King asked if Council had any specific questions for Chief Britton.

Mr. Spinelli asked for an explanation of the Watkins cameras.

Chief Britton stated the Watkins cameras were on loan for at least a month from Watkins Securities. The three portable surveillance units were set up in the Moxham neighborhood. He noted he hoped to extend the loan to two months.

He reported over the summer there would be a dedicated officer for the downtown area doing foot and bike patrol. After looking at new tire replacements for existing bikes, Eastmont Auto reached out and donated funds to purchase a new patrol bike. The officer will be centralized on the parking garages and business district.

Chief Britton shared JPD is starting to prepare for the backpack project over the summer as well as National Night Out.

Mr. Spinelli asked if patrols would be increased in Moxham and high crime areas.

Chief Britton replied the patrols had been increased with the zone one and zone two roaming cars centralized in Moxham and Hornerstown. He noted the increased patrols would continue.

Mr. Spinelli commented he had previously asked about the police cars cruising with their lights on to increase visibility for law-abiding citizens.

Chief Britton emphasized running with the lights is a safety concern for officers. He noted the procedure has proven ineffective in bigger municipalities. He added he respects Mr. Spinelli's opinions but through research he has found the practice is not proactive for officers.

Mr. Spinelli argued police are already using marked vehicles.

Mr. Barber agreed the LED lights are a safety risk for officers. He stated he understood the City had gone through an ordeal but at the end of the day, you cannot stop someone from pulling a trigger. He stated it starts at home, noting even the President of the United States is the most guarded person in the world and has been shot at.

Mr. Arnone commented the lights make police officers a target.

Mr. Spinelli appreciated Mr. Arnone's comment, however he stated the marked vehicles already make the officers a target.

Mr. Arnone disagreed, stating the vehicles do not make officers a target if they are just patrolling.

Mr. Spinelli argued increased visibility with lights will help put law-abiding citizens at ease. He asked if they were prioritizing the law-abiding citizens peace of mind knowing officers were in the neighborhood or were they saying the police were a target when they are already driving around in vehicles that make them stand out.

Mr. Barber stated Chief Britton would know better than Council if there was a risk to an officer.

Mr. Spinelli stated he would like to have evidence of the added risk.

Mr. Barber commented that in addition to the marked JPD vehicles, there was a presence of unmarked vehicles through the City including state police.

Mr. Spinelli stated the added presence was a good thing, but they were unmarked due to the type of work being more covert. He stated the officer driving around in a marked vehicle with a light bar is not doing covert work and that officer is already in a high visibility position. He reiterated his stance that while he did not want police to be a target of violence, he felt they should be visible in communities for law-abiding citizens to feel safe.

Chief Britton respected Mr. Spinelli's opinion, however, noted his job is to protect both the communities as well as the officers under his command. He stressed the lights are a detriment to his officers.

Mr. Hamacek pointed out, in the case of the Secret Service, you do not see all the agents. If people knew where all of the agents were, they would feel safe, but the agents would then be a target.

Mr. Spinelli requested acknowledgement that some police departments use a running lights program.

Chief Britton agreed there were departments which used the program, however there were no local departments to his knowledge including the state police.

Mayor King stated she agreed with Mr. Spinelli. She also stated she was glad none of the JPD officers were hurt and emphasized the importance of both the physical and mental health of officers.

Mr. Spinelli commented he did not want any of his comments to be construed as not respecting the work Chief Britton does.

Chief Britton responded that Mr. Spinelli did not have to worry.

Codes

Mr. Spinelli asked if there could be a code report on Laurel versus PMCA.

Mike Capriotti, Assistant City Manager, shared his opinions of the two agencies. He noted the proactive approach with PMCA would be a benefit. He noted the Laurel employee who worked for the City until February made it clear on multiple occasions that he did not answer to the City. He added Ms. Shaffer had been assigned to Johnstown while Laurel looks for a new person; however, he expected she would return to her other assignments once a new person was located. He noted the report received from Laurel was vastly different than previous reports with more concise information.

Mr. Capriotti stated ultimately the decision would be up to Council. He like the idea of proactivity when needed, especially with targeted area. However, he acknowledged some of the hurdles will remain no matter who the Council selects. He explained the magistrates have made it clear that if the City cannot provide proof someone has received their notice, the case would be dismissed or continued for the City to keep trying to make contact. The magistrates will not have a hearing in absentia as seen in other types of cases. He expected the struggle with out-of-area owners and LLCs to continue.

Mr. Capriotti shared there has been some improvement with the Codes Department with the additional staff member. He noted they continue to look for a third person whom he thought would improve upon what the department is doing. He added out of six potential interviews, four did not show up, one did not clear their background check, and he's waiting to hear from the sixth person to set up the interview. He also noted he was pleased with the work being done by the recent hire.

Mayor King commented on the mail issues. She asked if there was some kind of ordinance that would help resolve the problems.

Mr. Hamacek asked if the person could still be fined.

Ms. Willet commented on the difficulty of getting people to accept notices which she sends both regular and certified mail when trying to place liens on properties. She noted there are a couple of ordinances which require property owners to fill out paperwork with the City when they are renting or vacating a property notifying the City of their mailing address so they can be tracked down if needed.

Mayor King stated the ordinances mentioned still will not solve the problem as people can still claim they did not get their mail. She asked if a confession of judgement could automatically be signed when someone purchases property in the City which would allow the City to automatically place judgment against a person.

Ms. Willett was unable to comment on the confession of judgement suggestion. She did not think the issue was people not receiving their mail, but they are not responding so the City does not have proof to show the magistrate.

Mr. Barber commented, if someone was ticketed by the police for a criminal offense and the person did not respond, there would be a warrant. He asked why the criminal code offenses were not treated the same way.

Mr. Capriotti stated the magistrates stated if someone chooses not to show up for a criminal offense the magistrate can find them guilty in absentia; however, they will not do the same for code violations.

Mr. Arnone commented a law was passed in Pennsylvania stating a property lien could be placed on the property owner's residence, not necessarily the property in violation.

Ms. Willett agreed Mr. Arnone was correct; however, there was still a notice requirement. She also noted that the process still does not get compliance, which is the goal of codes. Mr. Spinelli asked if the City could use process servers. Ms. Willett stated process servers could be an option. Ms. Brandon-Taylor noted the servers would not work for corporations or LLCs.

Mr. Capriotti explained a recent experience where he spent a weekend tracking down LLC owners to get physical addresses, noting he was doing everything possible to find them.

Mayor King asked if people were required to give a physical address with identification when they purchase properties at the tax sale. Mr. Martynuska stated that was only at the tax sale. He noted there is currently legislation in Harrisburg that would require a name and physical address for someone associated with any property sold to an LLC. The county would be required to maintain the information.

Mr. Capriotti explained there were many activities at various levels that are putting the City behind when trying to hold people accountable. He reiterated that City staff is trying, but he wanted Council to understand the task was Herculean.

Mr. Rutledge commented, when he attended a recent blight conference, one of the biggest issues raised was the difficulty of getting ahold of residents with violations. Mr. Spinelli noted Pennsylvania recently started requiring a name and address for annual business entity registrations. Mr. Martynuska commented process servers were fine until the person was out of the state.

Mr. Capriotti noted the City could be spending money repeatedly with process servers if the person is served but then does not show up to court. He added, at some point, the City would be spending more money than they were collecting in fines.

PUBLIC COMMENT: NON-AGENDA ITEM

Dustin Greene, 312 Chestnut Street, commented there were still 15 people watching the live feed of the meeting even after three hours and 18 minutes. He noted the length of the meeting was a good thing because there was work to be done and questions to be answered. He thought there needed to be further discussion regarding using running lights on JPD vehicles. He commented the website needed to be updated. He stated Laurel Municipal did a terrible job, and the City should fire them and get a refund. He stated the City needs to hire local people who care about the way the City looks and not an outside agency. He added the City needs to pay local people enough money for the job.

Regarding the discussion on a brand, he stated looks were mentioned which is codes. He stated the City must find a solution. He found it outrageous Laurel did not have backups of the information. He also noted experiences were mentioned during the brand presentation. He stated residents cannot experience the great things in Johnstown, because there is a transportation issue. He pointed out the Inclined Plane is still not operational.

Mr. Greene commented on the Public Safety Building roof. He wondered if the conference center received the same treatment. He heard the word 'segregation' mentioned throughout the evening. He requested 'separation' be used instead as segregation had done with race and ethnicity.

RECESS/ADJOURNMENT

The public hearing regarding the comprehensive plan is May 13, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.
The next regular scheduled meeting is May 13, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8:21 p.m.