

JOHNSTOWN CITY COUNCIL  
WORKSHOP MINUTES  
Thursday, June 18, 2020

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 following members of Council were present for roll call in chambers:

Mr. Arnone, Mr. Capriotti, Mayor Janakovic, Reverend King, Mrs. Mock,  
Mr. Vitovich (6).

Absent: Mr. Britt (1) due to medical reasons.

John Dubnansky, Economic Development Director; Dave Williams, Construction Coordinator, Building Codes Officer (BCO); Robert Statler, Fire Chief; Samuel Barber, Codes Officer were also present.

Mayor Janakovic noted the purpose of the Workshop was to review Code Enforcement practices and to review options on improving the efficiency of code enforcement within the City of Johnstown.

John Dubnansky, Director of Economic Development, discussed working with Codes Enforcement and staff since coming on board approximately eight months ago but really had not had enough time to assess the system currently in place until recently. He referred to a list of topics that would be discussed at the Workshop.

With regard to property maintenance and ticketing, Mr. Dubnansky stated there are currently two codes officers. 417 tickets were issued last year. He noted, as of this time, nearly the middle of the year, 420 tickets have been issued. He noted confusion over the prior years regarding what should be ticketed and when and how to do ticketing. In December of 2019, Mr. Dubnansky issued a three-page short-sheet policy for codes officers to follow.

Mr. Dubnansky indicated, once a resident is ticketed, the resident would have ten days to remedy the violation and then another period of time before it becomes a court matter. He stated there were over 800 vacant properties and hundreds more vacant lots. Since 2017, there were approximately \$90,000 in unpaid violation tickets, and out of that amount, approximately \$24,000 had been collected. He noted many of the property owners with codes violations were out of state and could not be tracked down, even local individuals could not be located.

Council members had questions and comments. Litigation costs and fine limitations were discussed as well as ways that properties can actually be attached for nonpayment of fees/fines. Comments were also made concerning grass cutting options. It was noted that other communities should be researched to see how they handle code enforcement matters.

It was noted the City spends a lot of money doing demolition and clean up of a property but still does not have control of that property. There was discussion regarding creation of a land bank going forward.

There was discussion regarding the demolition of properties at 1156, 1158, 1201, 1111, 1117, and 612 Bedford Street and stopping a tax sale if redevelopment plans are not provided. It was noted that rental inspections would resume in August. Mayor Janakovic suggested an updated plan be put in place regarding addressing these matters. There was discussion regarding previous ordinances that were not being enforced, as well as residential permits not being obtained for work done on a property.

Mr. Dubnansky stated his goal was to train and certify Mr. Williams and utilize in-house staff instead of hiring ABD Construction to do what City staff can do.

Mayor Janakovic commented, this is the first time in six years that Council has had this kind of stability with staff and "it's a pleasure to be Mayor." Mr. Dubnansky commented on the great communication between department directors. There was discussion regarding restoration of the Pasquerilla Fountain in Central Park, sidewalk shoveling in the winter months, and utilizing SAFER grant monies, which allow firefighters to become involved in building code matters. Reverend King commented on a subcontractor for PennDOT starting its workday at 5:30 a.m. and storing equipment on her property without permission. Mr. Dubnansky will remind PennDOT of the seven o'clock starting time.

Mr. Dubnansky will work with the City Manager and move forward with the hiring of four additional staff.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Workshop was concluded at 6:24 p.m.