

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMON
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BECKLEY CONVENED
AT 6:30 PM ON JANUARY 10, 2023, IN COUNCIL
CHAMBERS AND VIA WEB-X.

THOSE PRESENT: Mayor Robert R. Rappold,
Recorder-Treasurer Billie Trump, City Attorney Bill
File, and Secretary Susan Miller. Council Members:
Janine Bullock, Robert Dunlap, Sherrie Hunter, Cody
Reedy, Bob Canter, Tom Sopher, and Kevin Price. The
following Department Heads were present: Director of
IT Bill Kelly, Assistant IT Director Amy Evans, Corey
Lilly Director of Outdoor Economic Development, Chief
Ed Wills with BFD, Captain Frankie Shelton of BPD,
Chief Code Officer, Donald Morgan, Director of Parks
& Recreation Leslie Baker, and Director of Board of
Public Works, Pam Frey.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at
6:30 p.m. Council members, Department
Heads and the public joined the meeting
either in person or by WEB-X from their
computer, or by phone, using the weblink
or phone number provided the day of the
meeting on the City's webpage at
Beckley.org or the City's Facebook page.
The Mayor led the Pledge of Allegiance.
Council dispensed with the reading and
approval of minutes from the City
Council meeting dated December 13,
2022, copies of which had been
distributed to each member. Council
unanimously approved the minutes as
written on a motion by Councilman
Sopher and seconded by Councilman
Price.
Next on the Agenda was the
Supplemental resolution for the Pension
Funding Bonds. Recorder-Treasurer

Billie-Trump said that interest rates are still less than favorable, and this will likely be delayed until interest rates improve. The Mayor stated that he received notification from Rob Steptoe that he is monitoring the situation closely.

Councilman Sopher asked if this item may be removed from the Agenda. Mr. File said that due to inactivity the item can be removed and put back on the Agenda later.

Next, Councilwoman at Large Sherrie Hunter reported on the bid previously submitted by Destination By Design. She explained that depending upon the amount and level of services requested from Destination By Design, the bid amount could range from ten to twenty thousand dollars to three hundred thirty-seven thousand, one hundred dollars.

Council recommends the bid be accepted with the understanding that Council will review and approve each successive step in the process. Outdoor Economic Development Director, Corey Lilly explained that this is a strategic plan to address the needs of becoming a gateway city to the newest national park. The Mayor said that Eric Woolridge, Owner of Destination By Design (originally from

Welch, WV) presented at the Workshop regarding this master plan. Corey said that this firm specializes in downtown revitalization, outdoor economic development, outdoor recreation development, and place branding. Corey said these are all things the City needs, and this firm focuses on communities above four thousand and below fifty thousand in population. This firm has worked in western NC and on the east coast. The Mayor asked City Attorney, Mr. File if he sees any issue with the way Council has requested to proceed with this master plan. Mr. File said he does not. Councilwoman Hunter made a motion to accept the bid which was seconded by Councilwoman Bullock. The bid was unanimously approved by Council. The bid by Destination By Design was incorporated into the December 13, 2022, minutes.

Next, Council considered the award of bid for the refurbishment of tennis courts at New River Park and converting some of the tennis courts to pickleball courts. Councilman at Large, Cody Reedy said three bids were submitted. One bid was disqualified because it was improperly submitted. (It was not a sealed bid.) The

bid from Exterior Services met all the requirements and was the lowest qualified bid. The bid was sixty-four thousand, three hundred seven dollars. Councilman at Large Reedy made a motion to accept the bid seconded by Councilwoman Hunter and the motion was unanimously approved by Council. This bid was incorporated into the December 13, 2022, minutes.

OLD BUSINESS: The Mayor said that Leslie Baker, Parks & Recreation Director, has crafted an ad for the newspaper regarding hiring a swimming pool manager. The Mayor asked her to follow up on this within the next few weeks.

Councilwoman Hunter handed out a “Smart Recycling” sheet as an effort to help educate residents on what to recycle and how to recycle. She asked the Mayor if she could discuss the possibility of this being a bill insert with the GM of the Beckley Sanitary Board, Jeremiah Johnson. The Mayor said yes.

The Mayor said there is good news regarding the Hartley, Hunter, Hagar, Little League, and Pinecrest program.

Mr. Trump said the City has been awarded an earmark for more than four

million dollars. He said there is still a lot of paperwork to do. He said there is a match that is involved and as soon as the engineering and paperwork is complete the progress should begin.

Councilman Sopher asked for an update on a new community center at Maxwell Hill. Ms. Baker said that the City did not get the earmark this year. She and Angela are going to talk to two engineering companies to get plans. She said a nice community center with a new shelter and new playground equipment would be put there. Mr. Trump said the best way to be successful with earmarks is to submit them before others do which would be within the next month and a half. At the earliest, the City would be informed in October when the appropriations bill is passed. It may be later than October before the City learns if the earmark has been approved. Ms. Baker said the City hopes to have the new community center completed in 2026 pending approval.

The Mayor asked Mr. Kelly, Director of IT, for an update on the Coal Heritage sign. Mr. Kelly responded that Public Works installed the three-panel sign. It is in a group of three high quality signs that

are at the entrance of the IT/Municipal Court building.

Mr. Kelly said letters (for signage) will be mounted on the IT/Municipal Court building. Mr. Kelly said that the letters have been ordered. The Mayor said that he thinks it will help quickly identify the building and the letters are of good quality. He likes the idea of mounting the letters on the building as opposed to a free-standing sign. The Mayor said that Mr. Kelly's department has done a wonderful job on municipal court collections.

Councilwoman Hunter stated that Citizen's Police Academy begins in March. It is a ten-week course. She and the Mayor spoke highly of this program.

NEW BUSINESS: Councilman Dunlap said that Gayle Manchin was at Black Knight today. She is the federal co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission and the wife of Senator Joe Manchin. He said her position is of great importance.

Councilman Dunlap said President Biden appointed her. He said Gayle Manchin made no bones about it, "there is money behind her power". She has access to grant money for well thought out plans. He said she made it plain to understand

that she invites people to bring her ideas and concepts that she can get funded. He said it was a great day at Rotary and it's great to see people within our realm that can fund solutions.

Councilwoman Bullock asked if there are any contingency plans in reference to the recent water situation. Councilman Price said that there will be meetings to create an "After Action Plan" that he thinks will be shared with the public in case a similar event would occur. The Mayor said that the Rotary Club delivered four pallets of water. Councilwoman Bullock thanked the BFD for the help they gave during that time.

OLD BUSINESS: There were no comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Ann Parker voiced her concerns regarding the junk yard at 618 F. Street, which is next to her home. The Mayor asked Captain Morgan, Chief Code Officer if he has an update. Captain Morgan said that this matter is currently in municipal court and should be resolved soon. Councilman Dunlap explained that the property owner at the location referenced has been cited and will need to appear in municipal court. He assured her that this should get

taken care of and to feel free to return if it doesn't. The Mayor invited Ms. Parker to follow up with him or Code Enforcement. The Mayor assured Ms. Parker that the City is at work on this issue. The Mayor stated that improvement has been made to a similar situation at a location at Five Corners. Vast improvement has been noted since this situation was sent to municipal court. Captain Morgan said Code Enforcement has six similar situations they are working on.

Next, Alicia Macia (daughter of Ann Parker) said that she would like to add to what her mother said about the situation at 618 F. Street. She said there are drug addicts and rodents there and safety is also a concern. Mr. Kelly said that since the issue is in municipal court, he could get an update for her based on court records. The Mayor said that is a good idea. Alicia Macias asked who the property owner is at 618 F. Street. The Mayor asked Councilman Sopher if it is his brother. Councilman Sopher said, "yes". The Mayor said the property owner is Joel Sopher. Mr. File said the matter is in court. The City asked the court to order the owner to clean up the property. He said the court has discretion

and thinks the matter will be resolved soon.

Johnathan Moore voiced his concerns regarding the condition of Stiffler Drive.

He asked for an update on the road

condition and drainage issues. He

requested the results of Thrasher's

investigation. The Mayor said that it has

taken Thrasher longer than anticipated to

complete their Stormwater report. Mr.

Trump stated that the report is still with

Thrasher. He said that discussions have

taken place with Stormwater employees,

and they are still looking at the best way

to deal with the Stormwater issues, if

anything is done. Mr. Trump said that he

does not have a formal report from

Thrasher to update Mr. Moore with. Mr.

Moore asked if the process with Thrasher

could be expedited quicker because the

road condition is worse. Mr. Moore

asked who is responsible for the road.

The Mayor said the problem lies with the

developer. Mr. Moore said the original

developer sold the property so taking the

responsibility to the original developer for

repairs isn't likely to happen. Mr. Moore

asked for information and guidance as to

where the residents of Stiffler can go to

get updates. He wants to know what

Thrasher reports that may or may not take place so this issue can get resolved. Mr. Moore said EMS cannot gain access to the road. The Mayor explained that the City wants to help but is also somewhat constrained due to ownership of the road. The Mayor said that if the citizens would decide to join efforts and get the road up to code standards the City would be able to accept the road into its road system and then could maintain it. Mr. Moore asked how he can find out who has control of the road. Mr. File said that this road is not owned by the City. Mr. File said there is a legal question as to whether the City can go on private property and repair/build a road. Mr. Moore asked where he can look to see who owns the road. Mr. Moore said property lines do not cross the road. Mr. File said whoever developed the property initially is the one that owned the property. Mr. Moore said he will go to the courthouse and research it. Mr. File said that when Thrasher's report is received the City will share a copy of the report with Mr. Moore. Mr. File said he would be glad to discuss with him options as to what the City may be able to do to help. Councilman Reedy suggested that this was previously

mentioned during the Stiffler Drive Workshop several months ago. He asked if this is something that could be incorporated into Code Enforcement stating that a developer cannot build or sell the first house (or property) or even get the permits to do so until the road is up to code. Councilman Reedy said that homeowners aren't going to know the situation and get stuck in a situation similar to this one. Developers need to be held accountable and Councilman Reedy thinks the City should write this into code. Councilman Dunlap said that developers that come to the City with a plan(s) that is not compliant with code could have a Lis Pendens filed on those properties to notify anyone who does a title search through a mortgage entity informing them that they are on notice and that they are considering purchasing a property that was not up to code specifications. Mr. Dunlap said it requires a ten-dollar filing fee. Mr. Dunlap said that there are creative solutions to this issue. Mr. File said there are some issues the City can look at and seek resolutions for. He said that it has not been a requirement for a property to be sold, that the road in front of it meet

certain specifications. Mr. File said this road was apparently not built to any standards and has not survived harsh weather. He recognizes that these property owners are in a difficult position and the City is willing to see what it can do to assist.

With there being no further comments the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Mayor
Recorder-Treasurer