

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BECKLEY CONVENED AT 6:30 PM ON JULY 25, 2023, IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIA WEB-X.

PRESENT: Mayor Robert R. Rappold, Recorder-Treasurer Billie Trump, City Attorney Bill File, and Secretary Susan Miller. Council Members: Janine Bullock, Robert Canter, Robert Dunlap, Sherrie Hunter, Cody Reedy, Tom Sopher, and Kevin Price. The following Department Heads were present: Assistant Director of IT Amy Evans, Anthony Martin (IT), Captain Coughlin of BFD, Director of Board of Public Works (BPW) Pam Frey, Chief Code Enforcement Officer Donald Morgan, Chief of BPD Dean Bailey, Director of Parks & Rec. Leslie Baker, Director of Beckley Events Jill Moorefield, Grants Administrator Angela King, and City Controller Jessica Chandler.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The public had the option to join 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.

Council dispensed with the reading of minutes from the City Council meeting dated July 11, 2023, 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, Angela King, Grants Administrator for the City, summarized the amendments to the 2021 and 2022 CDBG Grants. She said money included in these grants will be allocated differently than originally intended. There were unused funds for paving and administration.

Those funds will be used to finish the work on Scott Avenue. She said item number six on the Agenda, approving the FY 2023 CDBG Annual Action Plan is to approve the new action plan which begins October 1, 2023. This money will be used to cover the administration cost of consulting firms hired by the City for various improvements, pave two streets (Russell and Garfield Streets), and for new security cameras for the Beckley Housing Authority. The Mayor asked Council if there were any questions or comments regarding the resolutions.

There were no questions or comments. The Mayor asked Mr. File if all three resolutions had to be voted on separately or could they be voted on collectively. Mr. File advised that all three resolutions can be adopted in one motion if that is the desire of Council. He read each by title with the first being, A Resolution Of The Common Council Of The City Of Beckley

Amending The FY 2021 CDBG Programs. The second resolution was also read by title, A Resolution Of The Common Council Of The City Of Beckley Amending The FY 2022 CDBG Programs. The third resolution was read by title, A Resolution Of The Common Council Of The City Of Beckley Approving The FY 2023 Annual Action Plan. Councilman Price moved that the three (3) resolutions be adopted, and Councilwoman Bullock seconded the motion, which was unanimously passed by Council. The resolutions are hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Next, Recorder-Treasurer Billie Trump reviewed with City Council the Budget Revision for the FY 2023-24 Budget. A copy of the revision had previously been provided to Council members. He said the City is required by Code to revise the general fund budget in July for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Trump said the City looked for a small increase in sales tax as extra revenue. Mr. Trump said the Recorder-Treasurer's budget, the contingency budget, and the Beckley Police Department's budget include the substantial elements of the revision. He said the budget balanced which made him happy. The Mayor asked if there were any questions from any member of Council on this budget revision. There were no questions or comments. The Budget Revision for the FY 2023-24 Budget was unanimously approved by Council on a motion made by Councilman Price and seconded by Councilman Sopher. The revised Budget Revision for the FY 2023-24 Year is incorporated into these minutes.

Next, Recorder-Treasurer Mr. Trump discussed the FY 2023-2024 Coal Severance Budget. He said the City is required by Code to revise the Coal Severance Budget to account for any money that the City anticipates coming in and any Coal Severance money the City still has. Mr. Trump said Coal Severance has requirements on how this money can be spent. Some of the anticipated money would go towards streets/highways, and parks/recreation. Both areas are approved for expenditures of Coal Severance money. The Mayor asked if any member of Council had any questions or comments regarding the FY 2023-24 Revised Coal Severance Budget. Council unanimously approved the FY 2023-24 Revised Coal Severance Budget on a motion made by Councilman Dunlap and seconded by Councilwoman Bullock. The FY 2023-24 Revised Coal Severance Budget is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

OLD BUSINESS: The Mayor asked if any member of Council objected to City Controller, Jessica Chandler, addressing Council regarding the City's finances. No one objected. She addressed the budget carryover which is approximately \$4M a year. She said this is not \$4M per year, it is \$4M total that the City carried over year over year. She explained that this is the only savings account the City has. This would help the City in the event of a crisis such as another derecho, a road collapse, or another epidemic. This allows the City to fund payroll and general operations for sixty to ninety days for two hundred fifty-five employees. She said one of the biggest financial problems the City has is its pensions which are terribly expensive. This year the required contribution by the City increased \$116K and every year it increases by an additional seven percent. She said this is just for police and fire pensions and does not include the remaining employees' pensions. She said she and Mr. Trump are trying to find a solution for this problem. She said the City's predecessors did not leave the City in a good financial place regarding pensions or pay for City employees. She said she feels comfortable with \$2,500.00 as a salary increase for the BPD and suggests reassessing it again in six months. She said this gives the City the opportunity to find places where it can cut more expenditures and potentially allow for more of an increase in salaries later. She said if one department (such as the BPD) receives a big pay raise, the City has to cut from the other departments in order to accommodate the raise. She said Department Heads cannot increase the salary of employees in their departments if they have to cut their budget, in order to help meet the pay increase for another department. She suggested raising the salary of the BPD incrementally. She said if an across-the-board \$2,500.00 increase is given to just the BPD it would be an additional cost to the City of \$146K/annually. If a \$4,000.00 across-the-board increase for just the BPD is given it would be an additional \$236K/annually, and if an \$8,000.00 across-the-board increase for just the BPD is given it would be an additional \$470K/annually. She said this includes salaries, worker's compensation, and Medicare, it does not factor in the pensions with necessary changes. She said if other departments request across-the-board pay increases of \$2,500.00 it would cost the City approximately \$700K/annually, an increase of \$4,000.00 would cost the City \$1.1M/annually, and an increase of \$8,000.00 would cost the City \$2.2M/annually. Councilman Sopher said that it upsets him that this raise for the BPD should have been resolved at a departmental level. He said this issue should not have had to come before Council. He said if any department's budget needs to be revised it should go to the City's administration who should have been involved in finding necessary cuts to give the employees a raise. Councilman Reedy said he thinks Chief Bailey discussed this issue with the City's administration. Chief Bailey said he has cut the BPD's budget so no other department would have to cut their budget. Chief said he discussed this with his supervisors, (City's administration) who suggested he come before Council. Councilman Sopher said he did not realize that. Councilman Sopher said that he wants to make note that in the budget revisions presented tonight reflect the BPD account (number seven hundred) shows a two hundred-thousand-dollar increase. The Mayor asked City Attorney Mr. File to advise how to take item number three on the July 11, 2023, Agenda

off the table tonight. Mr. File advised that item number three on the July 11, 2023, agenda simply needs a motion, seconded and a majority vote of Council to take the item off the table and open for discussion. He said a motion can be made to approve the proposed \$2,500.00 across-the-board increase for the BPD. He said there could be a motion to increase the amount to a certain extent. He said the amount of eight thousand dollars was also proposed two weeks ago, which would be considered a material change because at that time the public was not aware due to the amount of \$2,500.00 being listed on the Agenda. Mr. File said if the amount of \$8,000.00 is what Council desires, Council needs to approve a motion that this amount of increase be placed on the Agenda for the first meeting in August. Mr. File said tonight Council can consider \$2,500.00, less than that amount, or more than that, but it needs to be relatively close to the amount of \$2,500.00. Council unanimously passed a motion made by Councilman Reedy seconded by Councilwoman Hunter to bring item number three from the July 11, 2023, Agenda off the table. That item was listed as "Compensation for BPD- Approval of a \$2,500.00 across the board increase for sworn police officers." Councilman Reedy made a motion seconded by Councilman Dunlap to reject the amount of \$2,500.00 as a pay increase for the Beckley PD, and to place on Council's August 8, 2023, Agenda an across-the-board increase in the amount of \$8,000.00 for the BPD. The Mayor asked if there is any further discussion. Councilman Dunlap said that he appreciates Mr. Trump, Jessica Chandler, and Councilman Sopher's comments. Councilman Dunlap said this is not a business, it is government, and Council expects people to lobby for what they need. Councilman Dunlap said the City is saving money for a crisis and there is a crisis present. He said if the crisis is not addressed the City is saving dimes and losing dollars as they walk out the door to other opportunities. Council unanimously approved the motion. The Mayor asked Council if anyone had a comment. Councilman Price asked where the money for the pay increase will come from within the departments if Council decides to approve an increase in the amount of \$8,000.00 for sworn police officers. He said he does not have a problem with the increase of \$8,000.00 but wants to know where it will come from. Councilman Price said salaries of other City employees need to be evaluated. He thinks they deserve an increase also. Councilman Reedy said Chief Bailey previously said he can cut the BPD's budget to cover the cost of the eight-thousand-dollar increase. The Mayor said that this is the first time in the thirty years of his service to the City that a Council has blatantly disagreed with the recommendation of the City's Recorder-Treasurer and the City's Controller. Mr. File said that when tonight's meeting adjourns the next regular City Council meeting Agenda will list the item, "Approval of an \$8,000.00 across-the-board increase for sworn police officers." Mr. File said at that time Council will have the option to amend any motion made to approve that amount. Eight thousand dollars is not the only amount that can be discussed at the next meeting. He said the \$8,000.00 can be subject to an amendment prior to being voted on at the August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. Councilwoman Hunter asked Mr. Trump if the \$470K Chief Bailey cut from his budget would suffice. Mr. Trump said a lot of the figure(s) Chief Bailey alluded to are through attrition, decreasing the number of police officers, not rehiring or filling vacancies along with other cuts

that may or may not be practical. Councilwoman Hunter asked Mr. Trump if he could elaborate on the “wobble room” (cushion) in the budget that he mentioned in the workshop last night allowing him to be more comfortable with an increase of \$4,000.00 rather than the \$2,500.00 he proposed. Mr. Trump said last year the City spent close to \$1.2M in capital improvements for the BPD buying cruisers, etc. He said he does not anticipate that a new fleet of cars will need to be purchased for the BPD, but when you look at capital improvements, other departments need things. He said a substantial amount of the \$1.2M will be spent. The Board of Public Works needs vehicles. He said Parks & Rec. needs equipment. He said if Council approves more than a \$4,000.00 increase for the BPD the City will be in uncharted territory. Councilman Sopher said Council cannot be naive because there are more than two hundred other employees for the City that deserve competitive pay. He said the City may not have to spend the same amount on the other departments to receive an increase, but the other departments also deserve an increase. Councilman Dunlap said as Council becomes more involved in the meetings where decisions are made regarding payroll, he asked what the role of Council could be until the City transitions to a strong Council form of government. The Mayor said Council members are welcome to discuss the City’s finances one-on-one with the Recorder-Treasurer by stopping by his office or making an appointment with him. He said things like grant opportunities, matching earmarks, etc. could be discussed.

NEW BUSINESS: Councilwoman Bullock asked when the City’s ten-year comprehensive plan expires. The Mayor said the City is working on a new one. The Mayor said that Corey Lilly, Outdoor Economic Development Director, is heading up that effort and has already conducted workshops and public meetings. Councilwoman Hunter said she was asked what the City could do to help the traffic situation when exiting the auditorium at Woodrow Wilson High School, turning left to enter on Stanaford Road. Pam Frey, Director of Board of Public Works, said Stanaford Road is maintained by the State so DOH would need to take care of those concerns. Councilwoman Hunter said she would relay this information to the person that asked her the question. The Mayor complimented the BPD on their efficiency in conducting traffic there when big events are held. The Mayor said having access to the Z-Way helps this situation also. He said perhaps a traffic light may be needed there in the future. Councilwoman Hunter asked that the family of Virginia Mahan who recently passed away be remembered in prayer. She was a former member of the WV Legislature. The Mayor said a retired member of the BPD, Al Grey passed away recently. The Mayor asked that his family be remembered in prayer.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: The Mayor announced if calling in by phone dial \*3 to raise your hand. If connected by computer: Click the “hand icon” on your participant’s panel. Mary West voiced her concerns regarding drivers speeding on Larew Avenue. She stated her concern regarding the four way stop at Earhart Street and Larew Avenue. Chief Bailey said he would look into this matter. She stated that she supports Beckley PD officers receiving a pay increase. Councilwoman Bullock thanked Mary for the signage she put up on Larew Avenue as an effort to slow down traffic. Joe Norris said his vehicle was hit by a fire truck belonging

to the Beaver Volunteer Fire Department. The Mayor advised that he needs to discuss this matter with the Beaver Fire Department. James Watkins, an employee at Board of Public Works (BPW), said the employees at the BPW need a raise. He said he is not speaking against a raise for the BPD but, he is simply saying that the BPW also needs a raise and should not have to cut their budget. He is the supervisor of the maintenance department which needs equipment and vehicles. He said he realizes that the BPW does not defend the City, but they keep the road conditions safe, clear brush, pave streets, clean debris, and keep everything else running. The Mayor said in a lot of respects the BPW is the face of the City. They are out at 3 a.m. in subzero temperatures removing snow, laying asphalt in the summer heat, picking up trash in the City, and help at Beckley events. The Mayor thanked Mr. Watkins for attending tonight and thanked him for his comments. Howard Cox, a supervisor at the BPW, said the BPW is not against the BPD. He said the BPW appreciates everything the BPD does. He said he wanted to speak on behalf of himself and the employees at the BPW regarding their current salaries. He said that he has been with the City for thirty-seven years and the BPW has always been the least recognized department. Some of their duties include maintenance, mechanics, carpentry, welding, fabricating, electrical work, small engine repair, sign shop (making street markers and other signage), body work to vehicles, attend events, keep the City clean, various construction jobs including making parking lots, gazebos, and fountains. The BPW is responsible for five hundred thirty streets both day and night. He said the BPW paves the streets within the City. A lot of other Cities contract that work out. He said the BPW is expected to and does a good job at working with every department in the City and helps each department in any way it can. He said the BPW has lost a number of talented employees to better paying jobs and people retiring. Some employees at the BPW have to work two jobs to survive and some employees at the BPW are eligible for public assistance due to the low pay scale at the BPW. He asked Council and the administration in the City to look at the pay scale for the BPW and see what can be done to increase their pay. Howard thanked the City for everything it has done for the BPW. The Mayor said the BPW never fails to show up and help any department in need and he appreciates that. Dustin Potter, an employee at the BPW, said there is a huge problem with the pay scale for the BPW employees. He said August of 2023 will be two years he has worked at the BPW and started at \$10.50/hr. His pay is \$14.25/hr. now. He is having a difficult time making it on his pay. He has two licenses for asbestos abatement and a class B-CDL license and he works in the sign shop. Doug Leeber, the President of Beckley Babe asked for contributions to help fund the Beckley team playing in the Babe Ruth World Series in Fredericksburg, Virginia. They need help to pay for hotel costs and meals for ten days. Beckley Events Director Jill Moorefield said that a parade will be held Saturday, July 29<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the car show and the team will be presented certificates at 6 p.m. at the gazebo. Everyone is invited. The Mayor said that this is the first time in the history of Beckley that a Babe Ruth team will have gone to the World Series. The City matched the Raleigh County Commission's contribution of \$3,000.00. when the teams went to Wisconsin and Kentucky. The Mayor invited Council members to contribute. He said the

team is leaving August 3<sup>rd</sup> and needs financial support quickly. He thanked Sergeant Jamie Wilhite of the BPD for the great job he does coaching the All-Star team. Mr. Leeber said they need \$36,000.00. Councilman Dunlap asked about the program City administration started in which each Council member can donate a certain amount of City funds on certain projects. The Mayor asked Mr. Trump about the program he started allowing each Council member to spend \$1,500.00 of discretionary funds from the City to support non-profit programs in Beckley. Mr. Trump confirmed that each Council member can spend \$1,500.00 of City funds. All seven Council members agreed to spend their \$1,500.00 discretionary funds (collectively being \$10,500.00) in support of the Beckley Babe Ruth All Star team. Mr. Leeber thanked Council and expressed his appreciation. Tom Taylor, an employee at the BPW, said the BPW does a lot of work and the money they are paid does not show that this department is appreciated. He said that he is not against a raise for the BPD but the BPW employees also deserve a raise. The Mayor told him that he and his department are far more appreciated than he may realize. The Mayor said the City will work on the issue of pay. Danielle Stewart said that she visited the State Auditors Office's website and is reporting from the City's official reports filed on that site. The Mayor said the website is open.gov and is open to the public. Danielle said the reports reflect surpluses in each year starting in 2017 and the City should spend this extra money on its employees. With there being no further comments, Council unanimously approved adjourning the meeting on a motion by Councilman Dunlap and seconded by Councilwoman Bullock. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

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Mayor

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Recorder-Treasurer