

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMON
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BECKLEY CONVENED
AT 6:30 PM ON SEPTEMBER 26, 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, Kevin Price, Robert Dunlap, Bob Canter, Tom Sopher, Sherrie Hunter, and Cody Reedy. The following City employees were present: Director of IT Bill Kelly, Anthony Martin (IT), Chief Ed Wills of BFD, Director of Board of Public Works (BPW) Pam Frey, Chief Code Enforcement Officer Donald Morgan, and Chief of BPD Dean Bailey.

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 September 12, 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 was the award of bid for the milling and paving of a section of Woodlawn Avene from 2nd Street to Clark Street. Council unanimously approved the bid from AAA Paving and Sealing in the amount of \$86,250.00 on a motion by

Councilman at Large Reedy and seconded by Councilwoman at Large Hunter. The bid is hereby incorporated into these minutes. The Mayor said that when milling and paving work first started on Woodlawn Avenue, he asked that the section close by his house be repaired last. This is the last section to be repaired.

Next, Mr. File presented, summarized, and read by title an Ordinance Annexing To The City Of Beckley 613.24 Acres, More Or Less, Located In The Piney Creek Preserve Adjacent To The City Of Beckley In Town District, Raleigh County, West Virginia. Mr. File said any Council members interested in hiking this part of the Preserve with the City's Outdoor Economic Director Corey Lilly are invited to contact Corey. Mr. File said the second reading of this ordinance and the public hearing will be October 10, 2023. Council unanimously approved the ordinance on a motion by Councilman Sopher and seconded by Councilwoman Hunter. A copy of the ordinance is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Next, Mr. File summarized a Resolution Of The Common Council Of The City Of Beckley To Permit The Open Burning Of Vegetation. The resolution was unanimously passed by Council on a motion by Councilman Price and seconded by Councilman Sopher. The resolution is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Next was a presentation by Heather Lilly with New River Transit Authority (NRTA). The Mayor said many years ago City Council approved an annual membership fee of \$35,000.00. The Mayor said this may go back as far as forty years. The Mayor said public transportation services are important. The Mayor said over the years there was a significant amount of money received by New River Transit by toll credits. However, the toll credit money has been reissued to a program called Roads To Progress which has left New River Transit in need of local funding. Heather said New River Transit is a federal entity that receives direct funding from the Federal Transit Administration. This is NRTA's primary federal funding source. She explained that for every federal dollar received it has to have a local dollar to pull down the federal money. During COVID-19 toll credits stopped funding NRTA. She said NRTA was told by the State that as long as the current administration is in place, public

transportation would not receive toll credits because it is going to highway projects. Heather said NRTA has not requested an increase in the membership fee in nearly forty years. She said the current fee is \$38,500.00 and NRTA is looking to double the fee. It is hoping to reach \$77,000.00. She said any additional funding would be greatly appreciated. She said operating costs have risen due to the expansion of routes, live bus tracking technology, extending the hours of operation, the cost of fuel, buses, and offering a program (partnered with the DHHR) called the State Opioid Response (S.O.R.). This service provides free transportation to anyone in recovery. This service is billed to DHHR. Recorder-Treasurer Billie Trump said the City is already committed to the \$38,500.00. He said the additional \$38,500.00 is within the City's ability and to keep in mind that for every local dollar comes a federal dollar. The Mayor said it is a great service and the new route alignment is noticeable throughout the City. The Mayor said this service helps Beckley and Raleigh County attract people looking for well-rounded services. Councilman Sopher asked Heather if

NRTA will be asking for help with funding from any other areas in which it serves. She said yes. NRTA serves Fayette County, Raleigh County, Oak Hill, Mt. Hope, Fayetteville, and Sophia. Heather said she is requesting to meet with each governing body in the areas that NRTA serves. The Mayor said NRTA is open to suggestions for specific routes. The Mayor said NRTA has made the use of its buses available to the City for special events, etc. Heather said NRTA also offers a Demand Response Service which allows people to call and schedule regular trips (such as being transported to and from the grocery store). Mr. File suggested that this item (request for additional funding in the amount of \$38,500.) be moved to the next Council meeting and listed as an agenda item to include any specific dollar amounts.

OLD BUSINESS: Councilman Dunlap addressed the issue of speeding drivers on Larew Avenue sharing research regarding the cost of 2" speed humps and two caution signs. He said this might be a good middle ground. The Downtown Beckley Business Association agreed to gift the City a speed hump and two signs totaling \$1,019.70 if the Board of Public

Works would do the installation.

Councilman Dunlap said the speed humps can be easily installed and deinstalled if the City wants to deinstall them before snowplows remove snow during winter.

Councilman Dunlap said he would like to make a motion to accept the charitable gift from the Downtown Beckley

Business Association of the speed hump.

The Mayor asked Mr. File if this could be voted on during this meeting. It is not an item on the agenda, and it involves contributions and the disbursement of City funds. The Mayor said he prefers a consultation with the Chief of Police and Director of Board of Public Works. Mr. File said this was not an agenda item and would need to be on the next agenda in order for Council to act on it.

Councilwoman Bullock asked Mr. Trump for an update regarding playground equipment at the Barber Avenue playground. Mr. Trump said some of the final ARPA funds will allow the City to move forward on this project and the playground in Councilman Price's ward very soon. Councilwoman Bullock thanked Angela King for the consulting group hired helping place Hunter's Cemetery on the National Registry of

Historic Places. Councilwoman Hunter asked for an update on Stiffler Drive. The Mayor said the City along with the residents of Stiffler Drive reached an agreement. Depending upon the availability of asphalt, the City agreed to patch some areas of the existing street. This will be a one-time project and does not make the street part of the City street system. The Mayor said the Stormwater Department of the Beckley Sanitary Board has this item on their list to work on also. Councilman Sopher invited people to view the recently installed historical markers on the side of Historic Black Knight off of South Kanawha Street. These markers share the history of Black Knight and Colonel Chilson. The Mayor asked Pam Frey, Director of Board of Public Works, to have the passage that runs parallel to the fence at Black Knight filled with asphalt when it is available.

NEW BUSINESS: The Mayor said Thursday, September 28th at 5:00 Council will have a Workshop regarding City Manager form of Government (CMFG). Councilman Dunlap asked if the Workshop is necessary. He said if Council took an informal poll, they are all in favor of the CMFG. The Mayor said

this Workshop is an opportunity for questions to be asked about the CMFG.

The Mayor said that he does not want to leave any stones unturned or leave the possibility that he railroaded City Council into something without thorough discussion and ample opportunity for questions to be addressed.

The Mayor said the City along with the Raleigh County Commission will observe trick-or-treat on Halloween, October 31st from 5-7 p.m. Councilman Sopher asked if Jill Moorefield, Director of Beckley Events, will host a trunk or treat. Mr. Trump said no because churches and other organizations offer numerous trunk-or-treats and the City hasn't held trunk-or-treat since COVID-19.

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. Mary raised her casted right arm saying she broke it while she was dodging a car on Larew Avenue. She said if \$900.00 is what is stopping the City from installing a speed hump, she would pay for it. Theresa Dennison asked

for the City's support in helping her and Debbie Miller trap, vaccinate, spay, and neuter cats. They transport cats to Charleston for adoption. She suggested that the City hire Debbie Miller to trap cats. Debbie Miller is the Founder of Laela's Hope Cat Rescue.

She said she has exhausted her personal funds in helping 275 cats for rescue or adoption and has helped 242 cats get spayed or neutered. She does not have a 501 C3. Ms. Miller asked for any discretionary funding the City might offer to help with this problem. The Mayor suggested that she send a letter to his office requesting a specific amount. He explained that as Mayor, he is allowed to offer a maximum of \$250.00 to help with the problem. She thanked him and said any funds are appreciated. Councilman Dunlap said the \$250.00 the Mayor pledged would cover the cost of the 501 C3 filing fee. He said his law firm or Danielle Stewart would be glad to help her with the application process. Tom Moseley thanked Councilman Dunlap for looking into the possibility of speed humps for Hull Street. He thanked Chief Bailey for the patrol on Hull Street.

Mr. Moseley said he has looked into speed bumps and found some costing less than \$100.00 each. He said they can be put down with a 3/8" bolt and removed when necessary. Mr. Mosley asked for the speed limit on Hull Street to be reduced to 15 mph. He said he has had several speeding drivers end up in his yard over the past few years. The Mayor said with the amount of traffic on Hull Street he can understand reducing the speed limit there. Mr. File said that before the speed limit can be reduced on any City street it requires an ordinance because it amends the City maps. Mr. File said the City has historically relied upon the Police Chief's and the Beckley Police Department's recommendations regarding speed limits.

With there being no further comments, Council unanimously approved adjourning the meeting on a motion by Councilman Price and seconded by Councilwoman Hunter. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Mayor
Recorder-Treasurer