

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BECKLEY CONVENED AT 6:30 PM ON OCTOBER 24, 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, and Cody Reedy. The following City employees were present: Director of IT Bill Kelly, Anthony Martin (IT), Chief Ed Wills of BFD, Board of Public Works employee Walter Peplowski, Chief Code Enforcement Officer Donald Morgan, Chief of BPD Dean Bailey, Director of Beckley Events Jill Moorefield, and Director of Parks & Recreation Leslie Baker.

ABSENT: Councilwoman Hunter.

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 October 10, 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 Councilwoman Dunlap.

Next, Recorder-Treasurer Billie Trump said the bid for paving and milling of Russell Street and Garfield Street will need to be advertised for rebidding. The City did not receive any bids.

Next, the Mayor and Chief Ed Wills presented two members of the Beckley Police Department with Life Saving Awards. Officer Hunter Redden and Officer Ryan Cuevas were presented with Life Saving Award Certificates and will receive a commendation bar for their heroic services.

The Mayor recommended that the City support the Salvation Army with a one-time fifteen-thousand-dollar contribution and evaluate, going forward, whether the needs of this program dictate, and the City's ability to meet the need signify, continued annual financial support from the City. Councilman Price asked if this contribution would be a line item in the City's budget. The Mayor said no. He hopes both private and public entities will help this wonderful program on a regular basis. It should be re-evaluated next year. Council unanimously approved the one-time contribution of fifteen thousand dollars to the Salvation Army on a motion made by Councilman Reedy and seconded by Councilman Price.

Next, the Mayor said the IT Director Bill Kelly applied for a federal grant to help provide broadband for downtown Beckley. The Mayor explained that a resolution is required as part of the application process regarding the City's compliance with the Civil Rights Compliance Act. City Attorney Mr. File summarized the resolution and read paragraph number three of the resolution. Mr. File explained that once this resolution is adopted it will be kept on file. The resolution was unanimously approved by Council on a motion by Councilman Price and seconded by Councilman Sopher.

The resolution is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Councilman Dunlap asked if the City has received any indication as to when Frontier may equip all of downtown with broadband. Mr. Kelly said the City isn't privy to Frontier's internal plans regarding this project. However, the City's plan is to run a fiber loop throughout downtown Beckley and saturate it with broadband Wi-Fi. Mr. Kelly said this will help with public safety, events in the City, and the possibility of security cameras. Mr. Kelly said the City hopes to provide free Wi-Fi and hopefully some of the areas of concern to Councilman Dunlap will be included. Councilman Dunlap offered the space on the rooftop at property he owns located at 345 Prince Street for IT to install equipment needed to provide Wi-Fi coverage for the downtown area.

OLD BUSINESS: The Mayor said the City has had good attendance at the Maniac Mines for Halloween at the Exhibition Coal Mine. He said the Fall Festival is this weekend. Leslie Baker, Director of Parks & Rec., said the Historic Black Knight will host a celebration of life for Dr. Tom Jarrett Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. The Mayor apologized for not being able to attend. He will be on vacation. He said Dr. Jarrett was a huge supporter of really good things in the City and will be missed. The Mayor said a Workshop will soon be scheduled regarding Pinecrest Industrial Park, which is owned by the City. The Mayor said the City has had to take care of some deferred maintenance that came with that gift. The City has worked with the Veteran's Administration (VA) regarding an exchange of property to allow the VA to construct a nursing facility in that area. Thrasher is assisting in the project. The Mayor said the City has the opportunity to work with NRGRDA to construct two buildings in this area. Both buildings would be on a lease revenue bond basis meaning the City would retire the bonds through the lease payments that the NRGRDA and the City's tenants would pay. With the lease revenue bond, the City intends to build those two buildings, and work on the infrastructure for the remainder of Pinecrest Industrial Park. The City is receiving revenue from the buildings the City has already acquired that should provide the revenue to support the bond until the City gets tenants in the new buildings.

Councilman Dunlap asked Mr. File for an update on the ordinance converting the City to a City Manager Form of Government (CMFG). Councilman Dunlap also inquired about resolutions to change the speed limit on Larew Avenue and Hull Street. Mr. File said the City has a working draft of the City Manager ordinance which the Mayor will review once he returns from vacation. The ordinance for the CMFG will be presented to Council prior to the second Council meeting in November. Regarding the speed limit on Larew Avenue, the Mayor said Mr. Trump reached out to the Department of Highways (DOH) and the DOH performed a traffic count and speed count on Larew Avenue. The study indicated the average speed on Larew is twenty-four mph, and twenty-four mph was exceeded between the hours of midnight and 2:00 a.m. This represented one percent of the traffic on Larew Avenue. Mr. Trump said he has the extensive report and is glad to share copies with anyone interested. The study indicates that less than one percent of the vehicles traveling on Larew exceed fifty-five mph. Mr. Trump said he would like to collate that with emergency vehicles. Mr. Trump said eighty-five percent of the vehicles were clocked at twenty-nine mph or less. The other fifteen percent were driving between twenty-nine and fifty-five mph. Five thousand, thirty-seven vehicles traveled on Larew Avenue within a twenty-four-hour period. This study was unannounced prior to it taking place so the numbers could not be skewed. Mr. Trump said the numbers are compelling and the drivers are complying with the twenty-five-mph speed limit. Councilman Dunlap asked if it is the City's intent to reduce the speed on Larew Avenue to fifteen mph. He said the question still remains if twenty-five mph is excessive for that street especially based on the sharp curve going up the hill. Mr. Trump said he informally spoke with representatives with the Department of Transportation (DOT) who said they think the speed limit of twenty-five mph there is correct. Mr. Trump said with the volume of vehicles

utilizing Larew Avenue, if the speed limit is reduced, it may cause traffic to be bottle necked there. The Mayor said he contacted the Board of Education (BOE) inquiring about school bus traffic on Larew Avenue. There are two buses that make a round trip daily on Larew Avenue. The BOE has fourteen vehicles that are not buses that use that route also.

Regarding Hull Street, the Mayor said the general consensus is that due to the hills and curves there decreasing the speed limit to fifteen mph would be acceptable. The Mayor said it's one thing to adjust the Traffic Control Ordinance but its another to enforce it. Mr. File said he has prepared a draft of an ordinance to change the speed limit from twenty-five mph on Hull Street to fifteen mph. He said the ordinance will be presented to Council in the near future. Mr. File said Larew Avenue is an important connector between S. Kanawha Street and Eisenhower Drive. It is also an important connector to get to the interstate. Hull Street does not serve as a connector to any major streets in Beckley. Mr. File said that unless Chief Bailey has determined that Larew Avenue is not safe at twenty-five mph, studies show that it would not be prudent to decrease the speed limit on Larew Avenue. Chief Bailey said he has extensive records on radar patrol on Larew Avenue. He does not think the speed limit needs decreased based off of the radar patrols. Councilwoman Bullock said as you drive Larew Avenue and approach the curve turning into Larew Avenue, that is where the temptation to speed occurs. Mr. Trump said the speed study is broken down into different sections of Larew Avenue and on that part of the street the average speed is thirty mph. Councilman Dunlap thanked Mr. Trump for reaching out to the DOH. Councilman Sopher said the City has a lot of streets that he receives complaints about drivers speeding such as Vance Drive, Ewart Avenue, Pikeview Drive, Holiday Drive, and Pinewood Drive.

NEW BUSINESS: There was no new business.

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 complained about drivers speeding on Larew Avenue and trees that need cut down and removed. Mr. Tom Mosley thanked the City and Council members for agreeing to reduce the speed limit to 15 mph on Hull Street and hopes to see it decreased before the upcoming holidays.

With there being no further comments, Council unanimously approved adjourning the meeting on a motion by Councilwoman Bullock and seconded by Councilman Dunlap. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

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Mayor

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Recorder-Treasurer