

COUNCIL CHAMBERS
April 24, 2024

**MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHESTER**

A regular meeting of the Council of the City of Chester was held on the above date at 10:02 AM with Mayor Stefan Roots presiding. A prayer by Rev. Sylvia J. Diggs, First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Sharon Hill was said followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The roll was called and the following were present:

Tameka Gibson
Fred Green
Portia West
Shy'Quan Davis
Stefan Roots

Approval of Minutes

Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

Old Business

Councilman Green said, the community town hall meeting held on April 18, 2024 was a success. He said, questions were asked and answered. He said, the residents left happy. Councilman Green asked that everyone pray for the city clerk Candice Newsome who was in a car accident on the way to work. He said, there was an Autism Walk on Saturday, April 20, 2024. Councilman Green thanked the Parks and Recreation Department for their help. Councilman Green recognized Council President Calvin Bernard from Chester Township.

Councilwoman Gibson said, there was an event held in City Hall on Saturday with the Chester Exchange where they provided math resources for families.

Councilwoman West said, the Boys and Girls Club had their annual banquet on Saturday, April 20, 2024. She asked the community to continue to support the Boys and Girls Club; maybe sponsor a child. Councilwoman West said, the Public Works committee had their first committee meeting on Monday, April 22, 2024; topic of discussion was fees for handicap parking and installations. She said, she was pleased with the first meeting. She said, another meeting will be scheduled in about 3 weeks.

Councilman Davis said, Mayor Roots, Stephanie Hall, Justine Feliciano and himself had conversation with the Nile Swim Club in Yeadon. They are looking to bring safety instruction and swimming recreation for the youth in the community.

Mayor Roots said, some of the state road paving is underway beginning on Edgmont Avenue; it will terminate at 9th St. He said, biddy basketball had a successful banquet this

weekend celebrating the season. Mayor Roots, said, there was a tree planting in William Penn Park in celebration of Earth Day. He said, Delaware County sustainability group helped to sponsor that event; 50 trees were planted. He said, there are some updates in happening city hall. Mayor Roots said, committee meetings are live streamed and the agendas are put on the city website. He welcomed Shawn Draughn back to work. Mayor Roots welcomed the new HR Director Gerald Mack.

RESOLUTION

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHESTER DOES RESOLVE:

That it does hereby approve the Service Agreement submitted by Premium Parking Service, LLC, to provide temporary parking management services and develop a comprehensive parking plan for the City of Chester.

FURTHER, that it does ratify the execution of the Service Agreement by the Mayor, for and on behalf of the City of Chester.

FURTHER, said agreement is contingent upon the final approval of the City Solicitor.

On motion of Councilor West, seconded by Councilor Green, the above Resolution was adopted. The following vote was taken: Yeas: Gibson, Green, West, Davis, Mayor Roots. Nays: 0

RESOLUTION

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHESTER DOES RESOLVE;

That it does hereby appoint Bonita E. Taylor, as a member of the Chester Economic Development Authority, term to expire December 31, 2028.

On motion of Councilor West, seconded by Councilor Green the above Resolution was adopted. The following vote was taken: Yeas: Gibson, Green, West, Davis, Mayor Roots. Nays: 0.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Chester hired Gerald Mack for the full-time Director of Human Resources, effective April 22, 2024, for 37.5 hours per week, with no benefits and a sixty (60) day probationary period; and

WHEREAS, said employment is contingent upon said individual successfully completing a sixty (60) day probation from the date of hire; and

WHEREAS, the City is required by law to offer said employee medical benefits after sixty (60) consecutive days of employment, which is completed on June 21, 2024; and

NOW THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHESTER DOES RESOLVE;

FURTHER, if said employee fails to meet the job expectations within the sixty (60) day probation, said employee will no longer be eligible for the position and will be subject to termination from said position.

On motion of Councilor, West seconded by Councilor Green, the above Resolution was adopted. The following vote was taken: Yeas: Gibson, Green, West, Davis, Mayor Roots
Nays:0

Committee Report

Chairman Davis said, the budget and finance committee met on Monday, April 22, 2024, regarding the fee ordinance they are trying to pass; which includes all the fees that are associated with all city departments. He said, it was tabled again until May 20, 2024. He said, he would like to give all the departments the opportunity to thoroughly analyze the fees they are charging to come up with a comprehensive plan for the city as a whole. Chairman Davis said, the tax abatement Ordinance that is dated December 31, 1989 was tabled due to the need to look at those numbers to see what the abatement percentages need to be in 2024.

Chair West said, she had forgot to mention, that there was an overview of the ARPA and non-ARPA projects. She said, there are several projects that are near completion. She said, Ty gave a good report on those projects that are near completion. She said, the projects are moving forward.

Chair Gibson, Community and Economic Chair, said, the committee have not met yet, but will be meeting soon after further conversation with Chief Lightner.

Chair Green, Parks and Recreation said, nothing to report yet, but he has sat on the Public Works Committee meeting. He said, it is extremely important that the residents come out to the committee meetings to add their input as the committee go through the Ordinances and update the fees throughout the city. He said, he has requested that all the public meetings be live streamed. He gave credit to Chief Lightner, the team and the department heads for working hard to make improvements to change the way city government operates.

Chairman Roots said, he is the chair of 3 committees and they have not met yet.

Joy Taylor, Controller gave her quarterly 1 report. Compliance Audit - Officers and Employees pension plan, Compliance Audit – Police Pension Plan, Compliance Audit – Fireman’s Pension Plan **Attachment # 1**

Councilman Green asked, for this year, will we meet the minimum MMO (Minimal Municipal Obligation) payment requirements for police and fire?

Controller Taylor said, there are past MMO payments that have not been fulfilled yet. She said, past MMO payments should be met first before paying present payments.

Chief of Staff Quarterly Report (Power Point Presentation) Attachment #2

Chief Lightner thanked the Council and staff for their support in working hard and doing a good job. Chief Lightner gave a summary of various departments for the first quarter (January-March): Health Department, Finance Department, Fire Department, Safety Committee, Human Resources, License and Inspections, Public Works, Police Department, Planning and Zoning and IT.

Councilman Green asked, what are the current completed projects for ARPA? He said, on the expenditure list there is a fund for special events, what is this fund used for?

Chief Lightner said, he will give Councilman Green the list of completed projects. He said, the special events fund is to pay for Council's use i.e. fireworks, Mother's Day event. He said, he will be looking to define what the fund can be used for.

Controller Taylor said, special events came out of the Mayor's office i.e. Ramble/Chester Fest., Scholars Award Dinner and the Fourth of July was funded from that fund.

Councilwoman West asked Chief Lightner if Council will be able to get a copy of his quarter report.

Chief Lightner said, yes and it will be posted on the website and it will be in her inbox by the end of the council meeting. He said, Council will also start to get a monthly finance report as well. He said, you will receive the first budget finance report in May. Chief Lightner said, he would like to take a little time to refine the budget finance report.

Mayor Roots said, Chief Lightner reported that 10% represents 7 million dollars of our overall budget is past due in regards to revenue. He said, we are 7 million dollars behind in what we should be taking in. Mayor Roots said, the safety committee is working to make sure that our employees are receiving the best care and advice to save on sick time. He said, a healthy workforce saves us on insurance cost. He said, the number of Chester residents registering property is less than people who own property outside of the city. Mayor Roots said, he was pleased with the presentation overall.

Councilman Green commended Commissioner Shirley and Commissioner Gretskey for all the hard work that they do.

Mayor Roots welcomed Receiver Michael Dowery and Chief of Staff, Vijay Kapoor to the meeting.

Public Comment

Vijay Kapoor, Chief of Staff to the Receiver, spoke about the Receiver directing to have the fire department run at its contractual mandated 12 firefighters. He said, the concern is the spike in overtime in which the city cannot afford. He said, the city runs into a fiscal cliff next year; the concern is potential layoffs and service cuts. He said, the city cannot afford to spend money that it doesn't have. He said, the city is in Chapter 9 bankruptcy which is moving painfully slowly.

Kathryn Flagg- Justice asked if Council would hold a cyrets before developers come into the city to develop it.

Adelaide Evans had 5 questions regarding the work that has started in Memorial park Were the city officials notified? Why weren't the residents in that area notified? What is the actual process for notifying the residents in that area? Is there a completion time line and what are their work hours?

Edward Reilly spoke as a resident about the cutting of manning for the fire department on the West end. It was cut from 13 to 12. He said, it shuts down engine 83 which was put in place to protect the West End of the city. He said, there are life saving decisions that are being made by people who don't live in the city.

Tyra Starr thanked Commissioner Gretsky on behalf of the downtown businesses. She said, he has attended several meetings and listened to their concerns. The business community honored him with a gift card.

Commissioner Gretsky thanked the business owners for their generosity. He shouted out officer Savion who has been working the detail in Ethel Waters Park. He said, he will continue to do his best to give the city what it needs; the proper police service.

Bernadette Raymond thanked Council and Ms. Rothwell for there support of Beverly Lane.

She said, they are having a concern with loose dogs.

Edward Nelson said, he was interested in providing entertainment for the 4th of July and could work within the budget. He announced the fundraiser for Chester High School basketball team May 10, 2024 at Harrah's Casino.

Inez Williams said, she had requested a meeting with the landlords. She said, there was meeting scheduled for April 23, 2024 which was election day.

Mayor Roots said, there will be a new date set up for the meeting.

Jamiel Cottman said, he was informed that his organization would not be partnering with the city to do an anti-violence event. He said, he was told that they have to pay \$400.00 to use the park. He asked if the fee could be waived since the event is in support of the city. He said, Team Strive will be doing a clean up in Sun Village this Saturday, April 27, 2024 at 10:00am.

Leanna Jones asked about residential registration. She asked, why is Allentown paying \$75.00 for registration and you're asking for \$200 per year in Chester. Carol White said, the grass on Concord where the monument is located looks nice. She said, she would like to continue to see it looking nice.

Christopher Dorsey thanked whoever picked up the tires behind his house. He asked, how did the Stormwater Authority get their contract. He said, he noticed the roof on a building in Chester Park falling down.

Councilwoman West asked Mayor Roots, when did he find out about the decision that the Receiver and his team made about the shutting down of engine 83? She said, they were blindsided and didn't know that the decision was made. She said, the community was asking questions and concerned for the safety of the Westend.

Mayor Roots said, he received an email from the Receiver on April 22nd. Mayor Roots said, the decision was made on Monday to take manpower down to 12 according to the collective bargaining agreement.

Councilman Green asked, Mayor Roots if he supported the decision?

Mayor Roots said, he didn't think it was his decision to support or not to support. He said, the decision was made by the Receiver.

Councilman Davis said, the level of transparency wasn't there when the decision was made. He said, there are conversations that need to be had with other municipalities regarding garnering support of other fire departments in the area to help the City of Chester.

Councilwoman Gibson said, public safety is very important and she supports our fire and police departments. She said, we as a city have to do better with communication. Councilwoman Gibson shouted out to the residents who are keeping their community clean. She said, the fencing along Highland Avenue and Concord Road is completed. She said, she is still asking about the fencing on 7th Street. Councilwoman Gibson said, there is a peace walk on June 8, 2024 and volunteers are needed.

Councilman Green said, he does not support the decision to layoff an engine. He said, manpower needs to be increased not decreased. He said, he stands with the fire department. Councilman Green said, it is his hope that they can figure out how to keep that engine up and running. Councilman Green encouraged the community to go to the Stormwater Authority board meetings and office if anyone have any questions regarding the Authority.

Mayor Roots said, he agrees that there needs to be ongoing discussion with the Receiver regarding the decision that was made about Fire Station #83. He said, he respects the fire department members and what they do.

Mayor Roots Comments/Responses

Having charette meetings with developers before developers come: Mayor Roots said, He would encourage the community to check the website for scheduled Planning and Zoning meetings; that is the opportunity for the public to make comments.

The project going on in Memorial Park: Mayor Roots said, he was surprised by the activity in the park. He said, many people aren't happy about the project.

Mayor Roots thanked Tyra Starr for her recognition of Commissioner Gretsky for his support in the downtown business area. He said, public safety is very important especially in the downtown.

Animal Control: Mayor Roots said, there is a need for the city to hire animal control personnel. He asked the community to please not let their dogs run freely throughout the parks or the neighborhoods. Mayor Roots said, please lease your dogs and clean up after them.

Entertainment: Mayor Roots said, the Receiver said special funds are just for fireworks with no mention to entertainment.

Landlords Meeting: He encouraged her to work with Ms. Judy Richards to get a new date.

The monument on Concord Road: Mayor Roots thanked Ms. White for her comment. He said, the land that the monument is on is not city land; it's land that belongs to PA Department of Transportation but we have been cutting it. Mayor Roots thanked Ms. White for putting flowers up there.

Stormwater Authority: Mayor Roots said, the stormwater authority is an authority not a contract; established by the City of Chester.

Permits: Mayor Roots said, there is a permit fee to use city parks, playgrounds and community room. He said, if there is an event and you would like to partner with the city, that would have to be done with the city. Mayor Roots said, those fees pay for the cost of personnel and cutting grass.

Mayor Roots said, on Sunday around 3pm Covanta had an incinerator shut down. He said, he went down yesterday to see what progress was being made; what the issue was. Mayor Roots said, they are bringing the facility back up in phases. He said, they have electricity; the pollution controls are back on and 3 of the 6 boilers are back on. He said, Covanta will determine if there are any other problems. He said, they are receiving truck traffic again. Mayor Roots said, he requested that they give him an update by 3:00 every day.

This Council Meeting has been recorded.

There being no other business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 12:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Neal, Acting City Clerk