

SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

HELD:

Thursday, April 21, 2016 at 5:45 p.m.

LOCATION:

Council Chambers

Scranton City Hall

340 North Washington Avenue

Scranton, Pennsylvania

Elizabeth V. Kedrick, RPR - Official Court Reporter

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

CITY OF SCRANTON COUNCIL:

JOSEPH WECHSLER, PRESIDENT

PATRICK ROGAN, VICE-PRESIDENT

WAYNE EVANS

WILLIAM GAUGHAN

TIM PERRY

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

JAMIE MARCIANO, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

AMIL MINORA, SOLICITOR

1 MR. WECHSLER: I'd like to call this  
2 public hearing to order. Roll call, please?

3 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Perry?

4 MR. PERRY: Here.

5 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Rogan?

6 MR. ROGAN: Here.

7 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Evans?

8 MR. EVANS: Here.

9 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Gaughan?

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Here.

11 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Wechsler?

12 MR. WECHSLER: Here. The purpose of  
13 said public hearing is to hear testimony and  
14 discuss the following three ordinances.

15 FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 6, 2016 (AS  
16 AMENDED) –“AMENDING FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO.  
17 57 OF 1996 (AS AMENDED), ENTITLED “DEFINING  
18 AND AUTHORIZING TAX EXEMPTIONS FROM REAL  
19 PROPERTY TAX IN ORDER TO STIMULATE  
20 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN CERTAIN AREAS IN  
21 THE CITY OF SCRANTON, ESTABLISHING AN  
22 EXEMPTION SCHEDULE AND PROCEDURES FOR  
23 OBTAINING EXEMPTIONS, PROVIDING FOR  
24 NON-PERMISSIBLE EXEMPTIONS, AND LIMITING  
25 AMENDMENTS HERETO” BY INCREASING THE

1 ASSESSMENT VALUATION IN SECTION 2 PARAGRAPH  
2 1.B. FROM \$250,000.00 TO \$500,000.00 AND  
3 EXTENDING THE EXEMPTION PERIOD IN SECTION  
4 11. AUTOMATIC TERMINATION TO AN ADDITIONAL  
5 TEN (10) YEARS FROM THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF  
6 THIS ORDINANCE.

7 ALSO, FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 21,  
8 2016 - DEFINING AND AUTHORIZING TAX  
9 EXEMPTIONS FROM REAL PROPERTY TAX IN ORDER  
10 TO IMPROVE DETERIORATING REAL PROPERTY IN  
11 CERTAIN AREAS IN THE CITY OF SCRANTON,  
12 ESTABLISHING AN EXEMPTION SCHEDULE AND  
13 PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING EXEMPTIONS, AND  
14 PROVIDING FOR NON-PERMISSIBLE EXEMPTIONS AND  
15 LIMITING AMENDMENT THERETO.

16 FINALLY, FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 22,  
17 2016 - DEFINING AND AUTHORIZING TAX  
18 EXEMPTIONS FROM REAL PROPERTY TAX IN ORDER  
19 TO STIMULATE RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL AND  
20 OTHER BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN CERTAIN AREAS IN  
21 THE CITY OF SCRANTON, ESTABLISHING AN  
22 EXEMPTION SCHEDULE AND PROCEDURES FOR  
23 OBTAINING EXEMPTIONS, PROVIDING FOR  
24 NON-PERMISSIBLE EXEMPTIONS AND LIMITING  
25 AMENDMENT THERETO.

1                   Is there anyone who would like to  
2                   speak on this matter?

3                   MR. SBARAGLIA: Andy Sbaraglia,  
4                   citizen of Scranton, fellow Scrantonian.  
5                   Who is going to administer this plan when  
6                   it's set up? The Redevelopment Authority or  
7                   the Mayor's Office?

8                   MR. WECHSLER: The City of Scranton.

9                   MR. SBARAGLIA: The City of Scranton  
10                  means a lot of things. Are you talking  
11                  about the Mayor's Office as the City of  
12                  Scranton?

13                  MR. WECHSLER: The City of Scranton  
14                  municipal government.

15                  MR. SBARAGLIA: Okay, that's a  
16                  little different. I just wanted to make  
17                  sure because you know I look at everything  
18                  sort of on the shaky side. I don't know  
19                  why, I guess it's my nature. I know Mr.  
20                  Evans is an honorable man. I'm sure when  
21                  this comes up to vote, he will excuse  
22                  himself being he's in real estate and this  
23                  has a lot to do with real estate. I assume  
24                  he would do that. But the rest of you  
25                  probably are not or are you all involved in

1 real estate in some way or another?

2 MR. ROGAN: I am.

3 MR. SBARAGLIA: Just wondering. As  
4 you know, when you start to give away  
5 freebees like no taxes on your property  
6 because of the development, I'm not sure if  
7 this development--I was explained that it  
8 was a two year project? In other words  
9 somebody gets on this, it's only for two  
10 years tax abatement?

11 MR. GAUGHAN: 3 years.

12 MR. SBARAGLIA: Or is it longer?

13 MR. WECHSLER: 3 years.

14 MR. SBARAGLIA: 3 years tax  
15 abatement. Are they going to be eligible  
16 for grants?

17 MR. EVANS: Well, possibly. But one  
18 doesn't have anything to do with the other.  
19 I don't think, you know.

20 MR. SBARAGLIA: Are they going to be  
21 eligible for grants? I didn't say this or  
22 that or either one or the other.

23 MR. WECHSLER: These are private  
24 homes, so. These are private homes. So if  
25 they're in an eligible area for the

1 improvements for storefronts, they are.

2 MR. SBARAGLIA: You said  
3 development.

4 MR. WECHSLER: It's not--

5 MR. SBARAGLIA: Development means a  
6 lot.

7 MR. WECHSLER: It's--

8 MR. SBARAGLIA: It could be more  
9 than private homes. When you talk about  
10 development, that could be almost anything.  
11 I just wondered if you're going to give them  
12 a tax abatement, they will be eligible for  
13 grants and learner (sic) designation if it's  
14 a big project. In other words, well, let's  
15 take this, I don't know if this man has  
16 anything to do with this one way or the  
17 other. And I don't want to say he does.  
18 But take the Brody's Cigars (sic) up there.  
19 He's in the process of developing that  
20 parcel. Would he be able to come under this  
21 plan?

22 MR. EVANS: Probably not because  
23 what this is for is improvements which is  
24 changing the footprint of an existing  
25 property.

1 MR. SBARAGLIA: Well, you've got to  
2 realize, there's a lot of improvements going  
3 up there.

4 MR. EVANS: It's within the confines  
5 of the existing structure. So if you're  
6 renovating a building, it doesn't actually  
7 come under this plan. We're talking about  
8 new construction.

9 MR. SBARAGLIA: New construction for  
10 three years?

11 MR. EVANS: Right.

12 MR. SBARAGLIA: Well, then, we don't  
13 have to worry because nobody in their right  
14 mind would build in Scranton.

15 MR. WECHSLER: That's why we're  
16 doing it, Mr. Sbaraglia. James McGurl?

17 MR. J. MCGURL: Good evening, my  
18 name is James McGurl. This isn't actually  
19 in particular at all about what was being  
20 discussed. But it's about something that's  
21 not being discussed in the city in general.  
22 Just this past weekend--

23 MR. WECHSLER: Mr. McGurl, this  
24 hearing is for this legislation only. If  
25 you have something else, you can wait till



1 the council meeting that starts at 6:30.

2 MR. J. MCGURL: Oh okay, that starts  
3 at 6:30?

4 MR. WECHSLER: Yes.

5 MR. J. MCGURL: Oh okay, well cool,  
6 sorry about that.

7 MR. WECHSLER: Marie Schumacher?

8 MS. SCHUMACHER: Yes, Marie  
9 Schumacher. Again, now this is only new  
10 construction? I thought it was for major  
11 renovations as well.

12 MR. EVANS: Well, there is some  
13 language, and maybe Attorney Minora can help  
14 with this, on deteriorated properties. But  
15 I don't think it has to do with--

16 MR. MINORA: It's construction that  
17 would require a reassessment. So that would  
18 exclude things like renovations. You put in  
19 new tub in the bathroom, new carpeting, you  
20 painted the interior as opposed to putting  
21 an extension on your home with two stories  
22 and three rooms. That would be an  
23 assessable event. So, that's how it's  
24 written.

25 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay and it's only

1 for owner--only applies to owner occupied  
2 homes? Or can a developer do this as well?

3 MR. EVANS: Well, for example, if a  
4 developer built a house, it would happen  
5 when the developer transferred the deed to  
6 the new homeowner. So it wouldn't be--it  
7 would be taxable while he is building the  
8 house. When he's finished and transferred  
9 to the new owner, it would be tax exempt for  
10 the new owner.

11 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay, so land bank  
12 purchases, this would cover land bank  
13 purchases? And is it the total? Is it the  
14 improvement only or is it the land?

15 MR. EVANS: Only the improvement  
16 side.

17 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay, land bank  
18 purchases if they--

19 MR. EVANS: Well, you mean the land  
20 bank purchasing properties or?

21 MS. SCHUMACHER: Say what? No, I  
22 mean, so properties that would be sold by  
23 the land bank.

24 MR. EVANS: Well, depending on  
25 what--

1 MS. SCHUMACHER: I mean, again, if  
2 two lots are combined obviously and  
3 somebody--it's buildable, that would  
4 qualify?

5 MR. EVANS: Yeah.

6 MS. SCHUMACHER: But not--again, not  
7 just improvements to it?

8 MR. EVANS: Right, well--

9 MS. SCHUMACHER: Or they could tear  
10 it down, demolish it and rebuild something  
11 new.

12 MR. EVANS: Right, build something  
13 new, the new improvement would be tax  
14 exempt, but not the land itself.

15 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay, thank you.

16 MR. EVANS: You're welcome, thank  
17 you.

18 MR. WECHSLER: Jeff Zick?

19 MR. J. MCGURL: He's going to wait  
20 till later as well, sorry.

21 MR. WECHSLER: Okay, is there anyone  
22 else that would like to address council on  
23 this matter? This public hearing is  
24 adjourned.

25 (WHEREUPON, the proceedings concluded.)

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

COUNTY OF LACKAWANNA

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

I, Elizabeth V Kedrick, Notary Public, in and for the County of Wayne, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby certify:

That said testimony was taken pursuant to notice at the time and place as herein set forth; that said testimony was taken down by me and thereafter transcribed into typewriting, and I hereby certify the foregoing testimony is a full, true and correct transcription of my shorthand notes so taken.

I further certify that I am neither counsel for nor related to any party to said action, nor in anyway interested in the outcome thereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my seal this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016.

-----  
Elizabeth V Kedrick,  
Notary Public,  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,  
Honesdale Borough, Wayne County  
My commission expires 11/14/19

(The foregoing certificate of this transcript does not apply to any reproduction of the same by any means unless under the direct control and/or supervision of the certifying reporter.)