

SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL

PUBLIC HEARING

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IN RE:

FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 50, 2016,

AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND OTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS
OF THE CITY OF SCRANTON TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY ACTIONS
TO IMPLEMENT THE CONSOLIDATED SUBMISSION FOR COMMUNITY
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO BE FUNDED UNDER
THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM,
HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (HOME) PROGRAM AND
EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANTS (ESG) PROGRAM FOR THE PERIOD
BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2017.

HELD:

Thursday, September 22, 2016

LOCATION:

Council Chambers

Scranton City Hall

340 North Washington Avenue

Scranton, Pennsylvania

CATHENE S. NARDOZZI, RPR - OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER

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CITY OF SCRANTON COUNCIL:

JOSEPH WECHSLER, PRESIDENT

PATRICK ROGAN, VICE-PRESIDENT

WAYNE EVANS

WILLIAM GAUGHAN

TIM PERRY

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

KATHY CARRERA, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

AMIL MINORA, SOLICITOR

1 MR. WECHSLER: Call this public
2 hearing to order. Roll call, please.

3 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Perry. Mr. Rogan.

4 MR. ROGAN: Here.

5 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Evans. Mr.
6 Gaughan.

7 MR. GAUGHAN: Here.

8 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Wechsler.

9 MR. WECHSLER: Here.

10 MS. REED: The purpose of said
11 public hearing is to hear testimony and
12 discuss the following: AUTHORIZING THE
13 MAYOR AND OTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS OF THE
14 CITY OF SCRANTON TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY
15 ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE CONSOLIDATED
16 SUBMISSION FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING AND
17 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO BE FUNDED UNDER THE
18 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)
19 PROGRAM, HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (HOME)
20 PROGRAM AND EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANTS (ESG)
21 PROGRAM FOR THE PERIOD BEGINNING JANUARY 1,
22 2017.

23 MR. WECHSLER: Joining us this
24 evening are members of OECD to speak on the
25 2017 Action Plan. I want to thank them all

1 for coming, especially thanking Ms. Aebli
2 for attending.

3 Ms. Aebli, would you like to make
4 any comments at this time?

5 (Mr. Perry joins the meeting.)

6 MS. AEBLI: Thank you. On September
7 16, I put a public notice in the paper
8 listing August of the activities and the
9 applications. Under Community Development
10 Block Grant we received over \$5.4 and we are
11 estimating that we will probably get maybe
12 \$2.5 million.

13 MR. HICKEY: 5.4 application.

14 MS. ABELI: 5.4 application, and we
15 had probably get \$2.5 million in allocation.

16 Under the HOME program, we received
17 \$810,000 worth of applications and we'll
18 probably get around \$400,000 in allocation.

19 And the ESG is right on target
20 around \$250,000. We.

21 We graded them on the need of the
22 application. The applicant had to
23 demonstrate the significance to help low to
24 moderate income families, the feasibility
25 and the readiness of the project, is it

1 shovel ready. The capacity of the
2 applicant, what kind of experience the
3 applicant organization has, and the
4 financing. HUD is always looking for we
5 encourage leveraging, are they putting any
6 of their own money in so that's how we
7 scored the applications. I believe you have
8 all of the activities in front of you, if
9 you have any question I'll be more than
10 happy to answer them.

11 MR. WECHSLER: Does anyone have any
12 questions from Ms. Aebli?

13 MR. GAUGHAN: Yeah, a few, thank
14 you. Can you just take us through how the
15 scoring system works? In other words, when
16 you get application in your office can you
17 take me through the process of how it gets
18 scored?

19 MS. AEBLI: Yes. Like I just said,
20 there is four things we look at. The need,
21 everyone on the staff takes maybe two or
22 three applications and two people on the
23 staff look at each application and they
24 score them together and, again, it's the
25 need, the feasibility, the capacity, and the

1 financing and that's how we look at what we
2 fund.

3 MR. HICKEY: Each one is weighted.

4 MS. AEBLI: Oh, yeah. The need is
5 like is 30 points, feasibility is 25 points,
6 capacity is 25 points and the financing is
7 20 points.

8 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. One of the
9 things that stood out to me when I looked at
10 all of these projects, and maybe you can
11 explain this a little bit, one of the
12 projects that was for the application that
13 was submitted for the demolition of
14 hazardous structures through the Licensing,
15 Inspections and Permits Department, and I
16 noticed that that particular allocation
17 received a 51 percent score yet they were
18 funded at \$200,000. Can you us explain how
19 that project received such a low score when
20 the department is located in city hall?

21 (Mr. Evans joins the meeting.)

22 MS. AEBLI: I'd have to look at the
23 application. I can let you know.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: I think they were
25 looking at the one point -- it was over a

1 million dollars, wasn't it?

2 MR. HICKEY: \$800,000.

3 MR. GAUGHAN: \$800,000.

4 MS. AEBLI: \$800,000? Yeah, so we
5 gave them 200. I will get back to you on
6 that.

7 MR. GAUGHAN: And the reason that I
8 ask that is because when I look at the way
9 these things are scored I'm just confused
10 because that project is getting \$200,000 yet
11 they only received a score of 51 percent and
12 a project like the McLane Park renovation
13 project received 100 percent score and they
14 are only getting funded for 90,0000 so it
15 doesn't seem like the scoring system matches
16 the amount of funding.

17 MS. AEBLI: I can answer that about
18 McLane Park. Their application had too
19 many -- they are all over the place and we
20 told them to concentrate on one area that
21 you want to fixed, not five or six items.
22 That's why they got 90,000. Let them
23 concentrate on one item they want in the
24 park done. And I believe, if I'm not
25 mistaken, there were things that were

1 maintenance and we cannot fund maintenance.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: What specifically, do
3 you remember?

4 MS. ABELI: No, I can look.

5 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, if you could get
6 back to me with that. Can you explain what
7 the priorities of your office are in order
8 of importance and how you fund the various
9 projects? In other words, I see that you
10 are putting \$200,000 in economic development
11 so what are the priorities as it relates to
12 economic development?

13 MS. AEBLI: Well, lately we have
14 been receiving a lot of applications for
15 economic development and we felt like I
16 believe -- what was it, 200 last year?

17 MR. PREAMBO: Correct.

18 MS. AEBLI: We thought we should
19 fund at least another \$200,000 because we
20 are receiving more economic development
21 application that we have.

22 MR. GAUGHAN: And I don't know if
23 you will have in information on you tonight,
24 but if available can you provide me any
25 unused remaining balance of HUD funds from

1 2015 and '16 for the following projects as
2 of today's date: Demolition of hazardous
3 structures, paving and curb cuts in low mod
4 areas, economic development projects, and
5 housing rehabilitation program. I just
6 would like to know if there is any unused
7 remaining balance from those specific
8 projects.

9 MR. HICKEY: Mr. Gaughan, could you
10 just follow up with something just to make
11 sure we've got everything?

12 MS. GAUGHAN: Sure. I'll have
13 Mrs. Reed send a letter down to your office.

14 MR. HICKEY: It doesn't have to be a
15 letter, just a list of the projects you are
16 looking for.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. And that's all
18 I have. Thank you.

19 MR. WECHSLER: Anyone else?

20 MR. PERRY: Yeah, I just have one
21 question, there is about 22 very worthy
22 causes here and, you know, much needed
23 funding, I'm sure, how many applications do
24 you have that you had to deny altogether
25 that didn't get any funding?

1 MS. AEBLI: They're all on the list.
2 Every application we received they are all
3 listed.

4 MR. PERRY: The total was about 22,
5 25 total applicants for this year?

6 MS. AEBLI: Correct. Everyone on
7 your list is an application we received.

8 MR. PERRY: Okay.

9 MR. GAUGHAN: I have one additional
10 question, and maybe you already answered it
11 but I'm still trying figure it out, how did
12 you determine as the department director
13 exactly how much amount of funding each
14 specific projects gets? In other words, I
15 see, for instance, the sidewalk and street
16 scape improvements got 70,336. How do you
17 come to that exact figure?

18 MS. AEBLI: Well, it takes a lot of
19 wiggling the numbers and I take past -- what
20 we have given some recipients in the past
21 what -- if they have any funding left from
22 the year before, if he are not using the
23 funding fast enough they may not get that
24 amount this year, so I take everything into
25 consideration. You want to fund everybody,

1 but there was a couple of projects on here
2 that were asking for large amounts, but they
3 would not be able to complete the project if
4 we just gave them say \$50,000.

5 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, and who is
6 involved in this process, just you or your
7 whole department?

8 MS. AEBLI: No, the whole staff.

9 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you.

10 MS. AEBLI: You're welcome.

11 MR. EVANS: A couple of questions,
12 and you may have answered this already, but
13 on the paving and the curb cuts in low mod
14 areas was applied for and the applicant
15 actually was the City of Scranton or OECD is
16 the applicant for the curb cuts; right?

17 MS. AEBLI: Correct.

18 MR. EVANS: So \$400,000 is going to
19 be allocated, how did that come about? Is
20 there a problem with identifying enough
21 streets or is just a budgetary thing where
22 we just -- -

23 MS. AEBLI: Just a budgetary.
24 Although we changed the census map two years
25 ago, we eliminated -- some of the streets

1 were eliminated but we picked up a lot of
2 new streets and we have been putting a lot
3 of money in. In the spring we just did a
4 substantial amendment for 400?

5 MR. PREAMBO: Yes.

6 MS. AEBLI: 400,000. So we figured
7 400,000 is a safe --

8 MR. EVANS: It's not because we are
9 running out of streets to pave, we certainly
10 don't have that problem.

11 MS. AEBLI: No.

12 MR. EVANS: On the economic
13 development question, you said last year it
14 was a pretty successful year we had 400,000
15 in the budget and have we spent that money
16 or have we had a lot of applications, are we
17 able to spend that money?

18 MS. AEBLI: I have three
19 applications pending.

20 MR. EVANS: Okay. Good.

21 MS. AEBLI: That have not come
22 before city council yet.

23 MR. EVANS: That would pretty much
24 finish the \$200,000 --

25 MS. AEBLI: It will be over 200,000.

1 MR. EVANS: Okay, so that will roll
2 over into this funding cycle then.

3 MS. AEBLI: Yes.

4 MR. EVANS: And the First Time
5 Homebuyers Program, on the issue, I know we
6 put the money back in the last year?

7 MS. AEBLI: We did probably six or
8 seven this year.

9 MR. EVANS: That's an improvement.
10 It looks like an uptick, right, from the
11 previous year?

12 MS. AEBLI: Yeah.

13 MR. EVANS: Okay. All right, that's
14 all I have.

15 MR. ROGAN: Just a couple of
16 comments, I don't have any questions because
17 over the last month or is so I have been in
18 contact times about this proposal and also
19 on the economic development front since it's
20 been brought up a couple of times myself and
21 Mr. Preambo have been in constant
22 discussion, there are some very nice
23 economic development projects that should be
24 coming in front of council very shortly, a
25 couple of them are coming sooner than others

1 and some others need HUD approvals, but
2 there is a lot in the works on that front,
3 and just in general regarding the entire
4 block grant program we wish we were getting
5 the \$5 million from the federal government
6 to fund everyone in this projects, that
7 would be the full amount. Obviously, we
8 would love to get \$1.6 million in paving
9 instead of \$400,000 in paving, and the same
10 for everyone of these projects in all
11 sections of the city, so I will make a plea
12 to the residents of in Scranton to call
13 their Congressmen and their Senators and
14 urge them to support increased funding for
15 the CDBG program.

16 Over the last 20 years, this program
17 has been cut many, many times. I'm sure you
18 can attest to the amount of money we were
19 receiving maybe a decade ago to today but,
20 unfortunately, Washington makes cuts and
21 they are effecting us here in the City of
22 Scranton. So that's -- the CDBG program is
23 vital to the city and I hope our
24 representatives will support it.

25 MS. AEBLI: One thing I'd like to

1 add was I was down HUD yesterday to a
2 meeting and seven new entitlement
3 communities came on board to get CDBG so
4 when that happens everybody across the
5 country may get cut.

6 MR. ROGAN: The pie will be split
7 even smaller.

8 MS. ABELI: Yeah.

9 MR. WECHSLER: Just to follow up on
10 what Mr. Rogan said, it's 2016 already and
11 the next opportunity for us to gather the
12 data for our census map will be coming up I
13 guess in about four years, so is there any
14 outreach or plans, and I know it's kind of
15 -- in the future is there any outreach plans
16 to try to develop an action plan to get
17 better responses to the census and better
18 information tracking to our eligible
19 neighborhoods? Any type of plans or any
20 type -- even on a national level, anything
21 to encourage the development of the census
22 for funding sources?

23 MS. ABELI: I received something in
24 the mail not too long ago that the US Census
25 is beginning to look for office in the

1 United States to open up their offices to do
2 the legwork, that's all I know right now.

3 MR. WECHSLER: Because I think we
4 could miss out and a lot of funding because
5 we don't have accurate data in our
6 neighborhoods. Not, through any fault of
7 anyone, it's just the population is changing
8 and aren't really receptive to answering
9 government surveys so as we move forward and
10 closer I think we all need to plan to make
11 the census more comprehensive and effective.

12 We do have a sign-in list here of
13 people who wish to speak tonight. The first
14 is Kathleen Quinn.

15 MR. QUINN: Hi. My name is Kathy
16 Quinn, and I am copresident of the North
17 Scranton Neighborhood Association Watch and
18 the reason I'm here is because my
19 organization submitted an application for a
20 grant through OECD for renovations of McLane
21 Park which is located on Rockwell Avenue in
22 North Scranton.

23 I know it might seem like we are all
24 over the place, but we did look at the
25 playground as a whole and we actually have

1 not had any money in this playground since
2 1992 so, of course, there are many things
3 that need to be done and I'll just touch on
4 them.

5 The first one was replacement of the
6 equipment the climber. The climber is
7 literally it's falling apart, the wood is
8 decayed, some pieces are missing, some had
9 to be taken off for safety purposes and
10 others have just fallen off, so that is a
11 big part of the project.

12 The other is the swing sets. The
13 swing sets, the toddler swings are made of
14 that plastic material and they are cracking,
15 they are literally cracking, like, they can
16 cut children's fingers.

17 And then we have the basketball
18 Court which needs to be resurfaced. It is
19 such a slant that the guys have to dribble
20 up a hill and then when it rains they are
21 playing in half of a court of water.

22 And, let's see, we have the softball
23 field. Well, the fencing around the
24 softball field is coming apart. The bars at
25 the top of the mesh they are not connected

1 to each other, they are -- one is this way,
2 one is that way. There is holes in the
3 netting. It's literally falling apart and I
4 don't feel that that is safe, and we have
5 neighbors that live on Gilbert Street, when
6 the softballs, when they hit a home run the
7 softballs literally they hit their houses
8 and their cars. Actually one of my
9 neighbors had a softball hit his window on
10 Sunday. I have complaints as to what
11 happens when a child gets hit with softball
12 and they are seriously injured, who takes
13 liability? Who is responsible? So we need
14 a netting. We have a proposal for a
15 20-foot netting on that side to stop that.

16 And we also sidewalks. The
17 sidewalks going through the park they are
18 separating, they are uneven, they are not
19 safe to walk on let alone if you had to
20 maneuver a wheelchair through that park so,
21 I mean, I feel like all of these factors are
22 very important and I know it's one park, and
23 keep in mind it's almost 25 years since any
24 money has been put in this park and it's
25 used by thousands of people. The families

1 at Bangor Heights use it, there are adults
2 that use it, the kids play basketball there
3 from morning until night, never any
4 problems, and the softball field is used all
5 of the time.

6 So it's -- I really feel that it's a
7 worthy cause that is in need of a lot of
8 TLC, which \$90,000, although it is a
9 substantial amount, and we are very
10 appreciative, I would ask respectfully to
11 consider giving us a little more funding for
12 that project. Thank you.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you very much.
14 Appreciate it.

15 MR. WECHSLER: John O'Hearn.

16 MR. O'HEARN: My name is John
17 O'Hearn and I'm the other copresident of the
18 North Scranton Neighborhood Association. I
19 appreciate you guys coming here early
20 tonight to listen to us.

21 Since I have been involved with our
22 neighborhood association, one of the things
23 that I have learned from Chief Graziano is
24 he always stressed neighborhoods that are
25 active is a big deterrent to crime, and we

1 really have been putting a lot of effort
2 into that. Throughout the year we have
3 parties for the kids at Easter, during the
4 summer with North Scranton Rotary. We have
5 a Halloween party in the fall and Christmas
6 time we have a big party down on Providence
7 square with the businesses down there, and
8 being active like that what he stresses is,
9 you know, it's a deterrent where criminals
10 or drug dealers come in and they see things
11 like this and they would rather go the other
12 way.

13 And my own personal opinions like
14 our parks, where Gerrity park is now is
15 where I went to grammar school, and it just
16 used to be an empty lot, it was all
17 overgrown and now I don't know if you guys
18 have all have seen it, I'm some of you, but
19 it's really a cut little park and it's such
20 a positive thing and that park has been
21 getting most of the attention in North
22 Scranton since I have been involved.

23 And Weston Park is also a beautiful
24 park and that's gotten some money for the
25 baseball field and we have been doing things

1 to fix up the building itself, and just
2 seems like McLane park has gotten kind of on
3 back burner, like Kathy said, you know, it's
4 been a number of years and I'm not going to
5 echo everything she said, you know, I think
6 she made it clear, but I know not to be too
7 dramatic the chain link fence we had a clean
8 up over there earlier this summer, we had a
9 couple of guys go around with weed whackers
10 and at the time of the bar should be that
11 chain link it's dangerous, and when I was a
12 kid that Benjamin Rush from Gerrity park is
13 now a friend of the mine, once went to climb
14 over, it was a higher fence, to get a ball
15 and he fell and it went right through his
16 arm and, you know, it was really a nasty
17 thing and it affected him for his whole life
18 and he didn't have use of that. So, I mean,
19 things could happen with kids, you know? So
20 I just wanted to bring that up.

21 And anything you guys could do for
22 us because I think, you know, talking about
23 criminals nothing looks worse than a park
24 that is run down with graffiti, I'm not
25 saying that McLane is like that but, you

1 know, you are either going forward or
2 backward and it does get a lot of use, it's
3 not just sitting there, like Kathy said, a
4 lot of ball, baseball, basketball so I
5 really think it's a positive thing that
6 would not only be great for North Scranton,
7 but I think for the city overall.

8 And I have a letter here that a
9 resident asked me to read who couldn't be
10 here tonight. He lives up on Rockwell
11 Avenue, so if you guys would permit me.
12 This is from Eric Myers, he lives at 2145
13 Rockwell Avenue and he says, "Good evening.
14 I apologize for not attending and speaking
15 on my own behalf. I am the scout master of
16 Boy Scout Troop 57 a Mary Mother of God
17 Parish. We meet on the same night and this
18 particular meeting is it exceedingly
19 important or I would have rescheduled.
20 Please accept in letter in lieu of my
21 presence.

22 This letter is intended to show my
23 complete support for improvements to the
24 park. The children's play area is over 25
25 years old and is showing it's age. Termites

1 have taken their toll as have vandals. The
2 mulch is long gone and the benches were
3 destroyed. Sections of the structure have
4 rotted away and had to be removed earlier
5 this year.

6 While I fear this last bit posts no
7 immediate threat to the safety of the
8 children, attention is definitely needed.
9 The last improvements to this park were made
10 in 2009 by my son JP Meyers. He did his
11 Eagle Scout project making those
12 improvements. He spread mulch, repaired
13 things, removed graffiti, planted a tree,
14 painted and repaired benches. During that
15 project he was surprised to see how many
16 neighbors came out to help him. He planned
17 to his fellow scouts there but the neighbors
18 didn't know of the plan. Once they saw the
19 troops there they volunteered and were a
20 great help. I tell you these story to show
21 an example of how strong the neighborhood
22 is, a neighborhood where people have lived
23 long term. We have raised our children
24 together, we talk to one another, this is a
25 place where you hear laughing from adults

1 and joke with each other while walking by,
2 an old neighborhood to be sure but as each
3 house gets updated you can see a
4 neighborhood that will last well into the
5 future. You can feel it.

6 My wife Cindy and I have lived here
7 22 years. We watched dozens of kids grow up
8 playing at the park. The stories our kids
9 told make us laugh, they make memories here.
10 Are kids are now grown and have moved.
11 There is a new generation of kids now.
12 These kids should also benefit from having a
13 safe playground to grow up with. Sincerely,
14 Eric Meyers."

15 So thank you guys for hearing this
16 and I really appreciate anything you can do
17 to support us.

18 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you.

19 MR. WECHSLER: Thank you very much.
20 John O'Keita.

21 MR. O'KEITA: John O'Keita, North
22 Scranton resident. Rockwell Park has been
23 in my front yard for 25 years, I seen the
24 good and the bad. It started off s a mule
25 farm for the mines and used to keep the

1 mules there. In the 70's and 80's it still
2 looked like a mule farm and I'm told they
3 did get a new park. It's a pleasant day,
4 all of the structures are still there. They
5 used pressure treated lumber, 25 years of
6 wood and dirt never going to work. Today's
7 parks are made of better material, I was the
8 second one on the volunteer list at the Bill
9 Gerrity Park, I helped with the park with a
10 bunch of members from the community, we had
11 a great time. The park is used every day,
12 it's beautiful there. Maybe we can get some
13 of the equipment over our place. Definitely
14 needs to be resurfaced and, you know, you
15 can't really walk around without tripping
16 over roots and stuff.

17 Fencing for the ball players, I seen
18 a couple of guys this year running to the
19 fences and they were taken away in
20 ambulances. I mean, it's that bad. You
21 spear yourself. Neighbors get hit by balls.
22 Wouldn't be so bad to have a little bit
23 higher fence in a field. These people are
24 in constant fear of the property damage. A
25 friend of mine works at a body shop, he

1 knows what it costs to have a car fixed, a
2 windshield. I work on houses, repairs are
3 not cheap.

4 Fencing, the park, I mean, the kids
5 use the park every day. There hasn't been
6 any real vandals in there since I have been
7 there. I really haven't seen nothing done
8 there. There is nobody here anymore. There
9 is some parents with their children, you
10 don't see any kids plying there. It's
11 always baseball guys, they are there
12 constantly which is great, they keep the
13 park alive. They are there every day, every
14 night and there's a ball player here now, I
15 see him down here every day, you know, and
16 the park itself is in good shape we just
17 need a little more attention, you know. I
18 mean, it's community park, everybody is --
19 there's a bunch of people here, I have known
20 them since I was 12 and we just love the
21 place and I'd like to see it done over and
22 that's it. Thank you.

23 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you very much.

24 MR. WECHSLER: Fran Watnoski.

25 MS. WATNOSKI: It's Watnoski.

1 MR. WECHSLER: If you can get that
2 out of this signature I'll agree with you.

3 MS. WATNOSKI: Frank Watnoski,
4 resident of North Scranton. I'm the
5 president and founder of a men's softball
6 league that place at Rockwell field on
7 Sundays and I was also a deputy commissioner
8 with the ASA for 25 years. I have been
9 involved in softball leagues, mostly men,
10 for over 30 years and figuring it out I have
11 probably brought in the City of Scranton at
12 least maybe more \$90,000 on my own because I
13 have used South Side, Weston field, and of
14 course Rockwell.

15 Now, the only league I have right
16 now is I'm using Rockwell field. I feel
17 very badly because I have spoken to people
18 who live across the street from Rockwell
19 field. I have tried, I'm up there now 17
20 years running a softball league. I go to
21 every single game. I'm there from morning,
22 the first game is at 9:30, I'm there for the
23 last game at 5 p.m. I don't have any games
24 any later than that. I don't want to
25 disturb the neighbors. I try to be good

1 with them.

2 I was explaining to one of the
3 neighbors their home was hit on Sunday,
4 which I didn't even realize this, I feel
5 very body about it, but the thing is, like I
6 said to them, it's not the ball it's the
7 bats. You can't ask the ballplayers of
8 today to use wooden bats. They use aluminum
9 bats, which I'm saying aluminum, but they
10 have got many types of alloys in them that
11 makes the ball fly. Usually on a hot day
12 the ball would die, it doesn't anymore. On
13 a cold day it flies.

14 As far as people getting hurt up
15 there, yes, there have been people hurt up
16 there and it's not necessarily because of
17 the fencing, but it's the field itself.
18 There has been this year dirt put on the
19 field but it wasn't graded, it just put on
20 the first time in 17 years.

21 Also, the fencing is horrendous.
22 Ballplayers do get hurt. The fences are
23 very low all around, they are full of holes.
24 There is wires that stick up just like this.
25 The pipes aren't hooked together. When a

1 ballplayer reaches over the fence to get a
2 ball he will rip his own arm open. I have
3 seen Wayne Beck, who is the treasurer for
4 the city, who used to play in my softball
5 league go over a fence at South Side
6 complex, get caught by the seat of his
7 pants. You know, I can laugh about it today
8 and Wayne probably would laugh, too, you
9 know, but now it's dangerous. It's so
10 dangerous up there.

11 For eight years I was up there we
12 didn't even have a job johnny. We had no
13 where -- no facilities whatsoever. I used
14 to go to Robert Scopoletin's office, he
15 hated to see me coming because I would be
16 there, "Bob, we need a job johnny."

17 Well, we fought so often that I
18 finally threatened to bring a recycling can
19 full of urine to his office on Monday and I
20 finally got the job johnny, but I did -- he
21 never told me that it wasn't going to be
22 cleaned either, so most of the children in
23 the neighborhood would tip it over and
24 that's how it got cleaned. Now, the last
25 four or five years I will say we do have a

1 job johnny, it is cleaned.

2 Many, many people use the park.

3 There would be a lot more softball leagues
4 there, too, but it's a terrible place.

5 First base I had a ballplayer put up what I
6 call a chicken fence, it cost him \$40.

7 There was no -- there is no, like, a very
8 low fence there and there is no gate. A
9 woman was sitting there, she got hit in the
10 side of the face she broke her teeth and
11 part of her face. This is going back a
12 couple of years. You know, she could have
13 sued the city, she didn't. And umpire was
14 hurt this year. A ball took a bad bounce on
15 the lip that's on the field itself and hit
16 him in the face. I sent him to the
17 hospital. I said, "Please check and see,"
18 because he was bleeding from the nose,
19 luckily his nose wasn't broken. There was a
20 ballplayer taken away in an ambulance. The
21 ball hit and bounced and went up at the
22 third base, hit him in the eye. I mean,
23 this is a constant thing, so that's just
24 part of the ball field that needs to be
25 fixed.

1 There is, not recently but there was
2 a lot of the vandalism at the ball field at
3 one time and I had to bribe the children
4 that would come there and I'd go to the
5 store and buy them chips and that at the
6 Dollar Store and said to them kind of,
7 "Watch the field and I'll give you chips
8 every week."

9 You know, so the vandalism kind of
10 stopped in that way. As far as the
11 playground, it's in desperate need up there.
12 A little girl brought me a syringe one day.
13 A syringe. She was only about five years
14 old, she found it at the playground. The
15 bolts stick out, I mean, it's really, really
16 bad. When you said that they went here and
17 there and here and there asking for this and
18 that and the grants they need everything up
19 there. That field is over 85 years old I
20 believe nothing has been done in 85 years.
21 Thank you for your time.

22 MR. WECHSLER: Just a question about
23 I was up there the other day, the left field
24 fence how big do you think it would have to
25 be?

1 MS. WATNOSKI: Well, let me just --
2 if you don't mind me speaking another
3 minute, approximately two years ago there
4 was a ballplayer that worked for, I won't
5 mention the company, it was on Keyser
6 Avenue, it's a fencing company. I asked him
7 to get his supervisor hooked up with a
8 Recreation Department because they said they
9 could probably donate or at least give us a
10 cheaper price for fencing and maybe put up a
11 netting. Well, I don't know what
12 transpired, I was just the middleman, I
13 don't know what transpired between the two
14 of them but it never occurred. Then I went
15 to Coal Street in Wilkes-Barre, which is
16 near Sherman Hills project, it was an awful
17 looking field. Well, you should see it now,
18 it's beautiful. It's almost like our ball
19 field the way street is there, except there
20 is no homes. The project goes up the hill.
21 They have all high netting, and what you
22 need to do is you need to put polls up and
23 then put the netting, and it's mostly to the
24 left center and left side, that's where
25 their homes are.

1 And, like I said, I feel really bad
2 and I wish that we could do something. I
3 hate to see us have to leave the area, you
4 know, and I don't know what else we could
5 do, but whatever you could do for us,
6 whatever money you could give us for that
7 place really nothing has been done up there
8 at least in the time that I have been up
9 there. Thank you.

10 MR. WECHSLER: Thank you for all
11 your work with the softball league. I was
12 privileged to play for 20 years in the
13 Friday night league and then I got too old,
14 but I never saw the outfield fence.

15 MS. WATNOSKI: Before the South Side
16 Complex closed I was the last one to run the
17 Friday night softball league there and it
18 was a lot of fun. Thank you.

19 MR. ROGAN: I will say I have only
20 played at that field a few times and,
21 unfortunately, I'm not good enough to hit a
22 home run so I didn't hit any of he houses,
23 but I will say there needs to be a larger
24 fence because some of the guys that are
25 better could hit home runs to your houses

1 basically at will. If they want to hit
2 there they could hit it there. Another
3 field in Taylor that I have played at has
4 the higher fence and there is not even
5 houses back there, it's just woods and they
6 do have the higher fence, so something
7 definitely needs to be done to protect the
8 houses and players, too. I have seen it
9 firsthand. I haven't played in a few years,
10 this is a few years just playing pick up
11 games, you know, it's in bad shape the
12 fencing.

13 MR. WECHSLER: Peg Ruddy.

14 MS. RUDDY: Good evening. Thank you
15 for your time. I'm Peg Ruddy, I'm the
16 executive director of Women's Resource
17 Center. The center next year is going to
18 celebrate it's 40 anniversary of service to
19 our community. Ms. Aebli spoke about the
20 scoring process and so I'd like to tie my
21 advocacy efforts into those standards.

22 Need. We last year served over 700
23 woman and children from Scranton and alone.
24 Woman who were battered, who were not safe
25 in their own homes. Woman who were sexually

1 abused or the children and that represents
2 the majority of our program participants.
3 We are the only game in town, the only place
4 for victims of domestic violence and sexual
5 assault, teen dating violence and stalking
6 to turn to and we have been great stewards
7 of federal dollars.

8 I have been with the agency for 32
9 years, the request that we have into CDBG
10 tonight is for \$42,000. We want to do some
11 security upgrades in our building which are
12 essential to keeping our clients safe. If
13 you drive by our building in a lower Hill
14 section, you can see that our parking lot is
15 in terrible shape but we don't anybody to
16 fall and we would like to get that done. We
17 had it done five years ago and,
18 unfortunately, the quality of the work of
19 the person that -- you know, some of us get
20 poor quality work so we really just want to
21 get that replaced.

22 We need a lot of lighting so that as
23 clients are coming in and out of support
24 group in the evening, especially during the
25 winter months we want them and their

1 children to feel safe, and we also want to
2 do some renovations inside of the house.

3 Capacity, we have had that building
4 since 1986 and it's actually over 125 years
5 old and it used to be Governor Scranton's
6 maternal grandmother's home. We have kept
7 the house in fine shape and we want to offer
8 a really nice place. You know, picking up
9 the paper any day I'm sure you do there is
10 not one day and a week that goes by that
11 there is not an article in the Scranton
12 Times about one of our fellow residents
13 being beat up or sexually abused and we are
14 the go-to team and we really rely on CDBG
15 and Linda's team to help us keep the
16 building nice and to keep our services
17 relevant.

18 And financial, I have got a fiscal
19 director that's been in the agency 33 years
20 and continually looks to upgrade our
21 financial records. We always have a clean
22 audit. And again, I total budget is \$2
23 million and we are very good stewards of the
24 federal, state and local dollars.

25 The other thing I want to talk about

1 is about leverage that we are using. We are
2 in process of actually when it's done I'd
3 love to show you around, we have a carriage
4 house on our campus in the Hill section and
5 we are in the process of remodeling the
6 carriage house and so to date I have
7 \$100,000 of this local share money, I have
8 \$75,000 from the Moffat Foundation, we have
9 \$25,000 through Kathleen's Crusade and we
10 are going to add this \$42,000 so it will be
11 one big package, so we are able to, you
12 know, leverage additional dollars so I hope
13 that you see our project as being worthy of
14 your support and I thank you for your time.

15 MR. WECHSLER: Thank you.

16 MR. GAUGHAN: Just relating to that
17 project if I could jump in for a second, and
18 this goes back to the scoring, and maybe I'm
19 missing something, but that specific project
20 received a score of 100 percent so that
21 doesn't that have any bearing on what
22 project gets funded? In other words, like
23 what I said before for the demolition of
24 hazardous structures only got at 51 percent
25 and they got 200,000 so how does the scoring

1 fit in there? I mean, if you just threw
2 that out the window would it just be a
3 discretionary figure?

4 MS. AEBLI: No, we looked at the
5 funding that they received in the past for
6 renovations, you know, it was just who gets
7 what.

8 MR. GAUGHAN: So it's not based on
9 the score then?

10 MS. AEBLI: It is. There is lot of
11 100's here, but we are received -- they have
12 received rehab in the past.

13 MS. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. WECHSLER: That completes the --

15 MR. ROGAN: I have one more
16 follow-up and, Mr. Hickey, forgive me I did
17 say that I would not bring up the Boscov's
18 issue, but in light of some of the
19 discussion --

20 MR. HICKEY: We actually just spoke
21 of that.

22 MR. ROGAN: Just one question
23 regarding that, I do see there is \$201,000
24 in here for payment of the Section 108 loan.
25 If that had not been in default by the Mall

1 Partners would that funding be available for
2 North Scranton group and all of these --

3 MR. HICKEY: The answer is yes.
4 What I just spoke to Ms. Aebli about is I
5 think that should be the outcry from the
6 City to Mr. Boscov to make good on that
7 promise that if it's a 108 guarantee,
8 forgetting the rest of the funding for a
9 second, but I believe the promise was made
10 in the past that if they were 108 funds
11 those funds would be returned and paid back
12 to the city.

13 This is an ongoing issue. This is
14 it not the first year that that payment is
15 included in there. There have been payments
16 for several years now on that particular
17 default so that money would be available.

18 MR. ROGAN: And on that issue, city
19 council did send a letter, and I have a
20 large stack of other letters here requesting
21 that Mr. Boscov make good on his obligations
22 to the city and in terms of the donation
23 that he claimed -- he promised that he would
24 make when council had a caucus. If that
25 money does come in, I would hope that we

1 would allocate it to some of the groups that
2 weren't funded fully through the proposal
3 and weren't funded at all.

4 MR. HICKEY: And we are going to
5 follow up on that as well.

6 MR. ROGAN: Great.

7 MR. WECHSLER: We have completed the
8 sign-in sheet, is there anyone else who
9 would like to address us at the meeting?

10 MR. SQUITZ: Good evening. I wasn't
11 prepared to speak tonight but my name is Ken
12 Squitz and I live on Gilman Street. I'm the
13 one who had the house hit by the ball. This
14 isn't the first time our siding has been
15 hit. There has been dents in the siding.
16 The window was hit with a ball, thank God it
17 didn't break. Right now I'm driving a
18 Toyota Rave 4 but my car before that was a
19 Toyota Camry. My Camry was hit and I had
20 the perfect outline of a baseball and it
21 happened on a Sunday morning and,
22 unfortunately, whoever did it was pretty
23 strong.

24 We need to have a fence. We avoided
25 a very, very serious problem about maybe

1 two, three years ago during the summer. A
2 ball was hit, a gentleman who lives on the
3 other side of me was standing with his
4 daughter, who was a child. She had her back
5 to the ball field, the ball was coming, he
6 happened to see it, he shoved her out of the
7 way and where the ball hit it would have
8 probably struck her directly in the back of
9 the head. That could been a catastrophe.

10 We need to have a netting to protect
11 our property, protect other kids, our
12 grandchildren. I have an eight-year-old
13 granddaughter, I don't like her out in the
14 front yard when they are playing ball. I
15 don't like it. It's dangerous. I'm not
16 trying to sound like a doomsday, but God
17 forbid one of our kids, even a child going
18 on their bicycle down the street and every
19 day, every day in the summer there is
20 bicycles, there is children and those balls
21 come flying out of there, God help us if one
22 of those kids ever get killed. I
23 couldn't live with myself without coming up
24 here and saying anything. I wasn't going to
25 speak tonight, but I just had to for our

1 kids. Thank you.

2 MR. WECHSLER: Thank you. Anyone
3 else?

4 MS. SCHUMACHER: Marie Schumacher.
5 I just want to thank Linda and her staff,
6 they are always responsive, they take their
7 jobs very seriously and to paraphrase the
8 good Lord the needy will always be with us,
9 so there is always going to be more needs
10 than money and they're tough decisions that
11 they have to recommend and that you guys
12 have to do and I hope Mr. Hickey is going to
13 continue with his pursuit of nonpayers and
14 maybe get some more back in the coffers that
15 way and maybe we could do more things, but I
16 would like to thank both their
17 responsiveness and the dedication that they
18 have to their jobs --

19 MS. AEBLI: Thank you.

20 MS. SCHUMACHER: -- and the citizens.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. WECHSLER: Anyone else?
23 Anything from council?

24 MR. PERRY: Yeah, before we wrap up
25 it's, you know, it's such a great thing

1 having these funds. Obviously, it would be
2 better if we had more. As Ms. Schumacher
3 said, the need definitely outweighs the
4 money that we have and, I mean, no one has
5 played more softball than me except for that
6 guy, he probably beat me 100 time in my
7 career and I have played softball over and,
8 you know, there is nothing more prideful
9 than, you know, a team on a really, really
10 good field and that's not even counting the
11 safety factor of it and the surrounding
12 neighbors whether it's property damage or,
13 you know, children obviously.

14 You know, but unfortunately the
15 money that we have is the money that we have
16 and us as a community are going to have to
17 use that as wisely as possible. No one is
18 going to be thrilled with the overall
19 outcome. Some people are going to get less
20 than they wanted, some people might not get
21 any, it's a very tough job. I don't envy
22 you guys for what dividing up that pie, but,
23 you know, we are going to do the best we
24 could and we are at the point now it's time
25 to prioritize jobs within our scope, our

1 community, what do we want to accomplish
2 first and sometimes we have to prioritize
3 what actually we are willing to do this year
4 because there is always next year that we
5 can reapply for esthetic things, but the
6 safety is first, whether it's ballplayers or
7 the children on the playground or the
8 children on their bikes on the sidewalk and
9 the streets, and once this comes out and is
10 made official, you know, I don't want you
11 guys to think that that's where council's
12 jobs end. I'd be happy personally, I'm not
13 going to speak for my councilmen, they can
14 do as they want to, but my door is always
15 open, my phone is always on, you know, for
16 whether we need to get netting there and
17 then let's make it happen, make a
18 collaborative effort, can we find someone
19 willing to donate, can we find somebody to
20 give it cheap? I saw a flagpole that you
21 want, maybe we can do something with the
22 Veteran's Committee and do something to help
23 raise that flagpole and have a ceremony thee
24 with the and defray the costs. You know,
25 I'm a firm believer if there is a will there

1 is a way so, you know, this isn't the end,
2 it's the beginning of our project, so let's
3 not lose sight of that even though we might
4 have to reshuffle or reprioritize, and
5 that's what we do we reprioritize and move
6 forward and we keep the fight going for our
7 communities, which all you guys do an
8 absolutely fantastic job.

9 MR. GAUGHAN: And I'd like to add to
10 that, a lot of these people in the audience
11 tonight are my neighbors so it's great to
12 see them come out tonight, and they spoke to
13 this park and this park is important to me
14 and all of these people because if you live
15 up in this neighborhood you know that this
16 is the literally the heart -- it's the
17 heartbeat of North Scranton.

18 Now, keep in mind what these people
19 have had to deal with the last few years
20 with the bridge that has been out, they've
21 had to deal with that whole issue, and they
22 have had to deal with a park that is not up
23 to standards. It's not up to ADA standards,
24 it's not up to any kind of safety standards
25 if you walk through that place, and on top

1 of that you have a major housing development
2 Bangor Heights with hundreds of children
3 that play there each and every day, and I
4 see it. My own child plays there, take him
5 over there almost every day so I think when
6 we talk about priorities we need to find a
7 way to possibly fund this a little bit more
8 so that this project can see the light and
9 we can see some of the things that were in
10 that proposal come to light and help these
11 neighbors out, because like I said and as
12 Mr. O'Hearn said neighborhood parks are the
13 life of the neighborhood and when you have a
14 park that is well kept and the neighbors
15 obviously take pride in it you don't see as
16 much crime, so I think that we need to shift
17 some of our priorities here and find more
18 funding for that. Thank you.

19 MR. EVANS: If I could make a brief
20 comment, it's sort of ashame that we have to
21 fund parks this way. You know, at some
22 point in the future I hope we get to the
23 point where we actually have a capital
24 budget and Parks and Rec would actually have
25 a budget that we'd have an ongoing

1 maintenance program, ongoing improvement
2 program so that the parks are taken care of
3 the way they should be taken care of and not
4 waiting 25 years for you guys to come to us
5 and say, "We need everything again because
6 nothing was done in the last 25 years."

7 We are buying fire trucks though
8 OECD and taking care of parks, I'm not sure
9 that's how we are supposed to do things
10 around here, but hopefully sometime in the
11 future we will get our financial act in
12 order and start planning things that we are
13 supposed to plan things and we won't have to
14 have this discussion, but in the meantime
15 you are doing the right thing so we are
16 going to try to do the best we can. Thank
17 you.

18 MR. WECHSLER: Thank you. If no one
19 has anything else, this hearing is
20 adjourned.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes of testimony taken by me at the hearing of the above-captioned matter and that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the same to the best of my ability.

CATHENE S. NARDOZZI, RPR
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