

SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING

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HELD:

Monday, April 29, 2019

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:

PATRICK ROGAN, PRESIDENT

TIM PERRY, VICE PRESIDENT

WAYNE EVANS

WILLIAM GAUGHAN

KYLE DONAHUE

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

KATHY CARRERA, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

AMIL MINORA, ESQUIRE - SOLICITOR

1 (Pledge of Allegiance recited and  
2 moment of reflection observed.)

3 MR. ROGAN: Roll call, please.

4 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Perry.

5 MR. PERRY: Here.

6 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Donahue.

7 MR. DONAHUE: Here.

8 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Evans.

9 MR. EVANS: Here.

10 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: Here.

12 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

13 MR. ROGAN: Here. Please dispense  
14 with the reading of the minutes.

15 MS. REED: 3-A. AGENDA FOR THE  
16 BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS MEETING TO BE HELD  
17 MAY 8, 2019.

18 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?  
19 If not, received and filed.

20 MS. REED: 3-B. TAX ASSESSOR'S  
21 REPORT FOR HEARING DATE TO BE HELD MAY 8,  
22 2019.

23 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?  
24 If not, received and filed.

25 MS. REED: 3-C. AGENDA FOR THE CITY

1 PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING TO BE  
2 HELD MAY 1, 2019.

3 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?  
4 If not, received and filed.

5 Do any council members have  
6 announcements at this time? I have one  
7 announcement. Next Monday, May 6, at 5:15  
8 p.m. we will have a public caucus with  
9 members of NDC regarding the city's parking  
10 system. They will present their quarterly  
11 update to council. Anyone else?

12 MS. REED: FOURTH ORDER. CITIZENS'  
13 PARTICIPATION.

14 (The following speakers offered  
15 public comment as follows: Les Spindler  
16 spoke on city business. Joan Hodowanitz  
17 spoke on city business. Fay Franus spoke on  
18 city business. Marie Schumacher spoke on  
19 city business. John Foley spoke on city  
20 business. Lee Morgan spoke on city business  
21 and matters of general concern. Dave  
22 Dobrzyn spoke on matters of general concern.  
23 Kathleen Mazden spoke on city business.  
24 Chrissy Manuel spoke on city business. Barb  
25 O'Malley spoke on city business. Kara

1           Seitzinger spoke on city business.)

2                   MS. REED: FIFTH ORDER. 5-A.

3           MOTIONS.

4                   MR. ROGAN: Mr. Perry, any motions  
5           or comments?

6                   MR. PERRY: Yeah, just a couple  
7           comments. Mrs. Reed, if we could just send  
8           a follow-up on Dorothy Street to see if  
9           there was any movement on that or if they  
10          were able to at least check the situation.  
11          Maybe they got onsite but they just haven't  
12          made any repairs yet.

13                   Also, the 3200 block of Pittston  
14          Avenue there has been several requests for  
15          speed enforcement there so if we could maybe  
16          get the speed indicator put on a list to get  
17          moved into that block of Pittston Avenue  
18          that would be most helpful to see if there  
19          is actually an issue there or what time of  
20          day it's happening.

21                   We talked a little bit about --  
22          mostly about the multi-units and the garbage  
23          fees, something that I don't know if we  
24          talked about and maybe, Solicitor, Minora,  
25          you can kind of help me with and if you guys

1 are in agreement if we can maybe make an  
2 amendment to our rental registration that we  
3 are doing right now with multi-units or even  
4 any rental, because rental is a business in  
5 the City of Scranton, that's what it is, and  
6 I think, you know, we need to hold our  
7 businesses accountable first within the City  
8 of Scranton and we need to do it  
9 consistently and fairly not just who decides  
10 they want to pay and who decides they're not  
11 going to.

12 You know, and I spoke on this point  
13 before, we are in two -- we are fighting two  
14 battles right now with the past due garbage  
15 fees. How are we going to collect what we  
16 already lost and what are we going to do  
17 going forward to make sure we don't get  
18 ourselves back in the same sand trap and we  
19 are swinging the sandwich to get out again  
20 because we don't want to do that.

21 Some of what -- you know, we have  
22 been through this topic quite a few many  
23 times and I know something that right now  
24 I'm doing right now is right now I'm on the  
25 fence of the side of going to magistrate for

1 a little quicker result. I'm not there yet  
2 where I would like to leave garbage on the  
3 street, I'm just not comfortable with doing  
4 that, but I definitely don't think the liens  
5 that are posed on those properties are doing  
6 absolutely anything for us and we need to do  
7 more.

8 As far as going forward, I know we  
9 did talk about embedding this into the tax  
10 structure of the city which absolutely makes  
11 sense. You know, it needs to be done, it  
12 needs to happen. We are taxed. We do pay a  
13 good chunk of our hard earned money into  
14 city taxes and it needs to be made easy for  
15 us and it doesn't need to come in a separate  
16 bill and it should be absorbed in our  
17 property taxes and that's something that the  
18 city is responsible to make sure happens.

19 Getting back to the multi-units  
20 that's something what we can move quicker  
21 on. They shouldn't be able to operate a  
22 business if they are not paying their  
23 garbage fees. If just should not be because  
24 we know what happens, and we have all been  
25 in the city and for quite some time, and we

1 have many people that own property  
2 properties and one or two or three  
3 properties and what happens, you know, I  
4 think someone made the point of, you know,  
5 robbing Peter to pay Paul. They will take  
6 whatever assets they have in one piece of  
7 property, they will take whatever they could  
8 from there and they will move onto purchase  
9 another property and they just kind of keep  
10 going and going and whatever asset has the  
11 most -- whatever is the most liquid they  
12 could pull more money out of they use that  
13 to balance it and just kind of grow their  
14 landlording empire and it then it falls down  
15 and it's awful and most times they're  
16 out-of-state people, they don't live here  
17 and so they are not invested in our  
18 community, they are not invested in our  
19 city. They are saying, "I'm just going to  
20 collect my rents and live where I live and  
21 whatever you have to look out at every did  
22 or put up with every day is okay."

23 And I think we need to say that's  
24 not okay and we need to not let them operate  
25 the business of renting property in the City



1 of Scranton if that's how they are going to  
2 operate, and one of the things we can do  
3 right now is holding them accountable for  
4 their past due garbage fees and if we need  
5 to go back and make an amendment to rental  
6 registration then I say that's what we do  
7 and we do that as soon as possible and we  
8 also need to make sure that that -- and  
9 again, Mr. Minora, you can correct me if I'm  
10 wrong, but past due fees also triggers  
11 inspections and inspections will lead to  
12 safer places and that's what it's about.  
13 About it's having a safe place, a good  
14 neighbor, a good -- and somebody good in  
15 your community, not the blight of the  
16 community and too many places and too many  
17 parts of our neighborhoods these multi-unit  
18 out-of-town landlords aren't a good  
19 neighbor. Some are, but for the most part  
20 they generate most of the blight and it's  
21 just not fair for all of us and so I think  
22 that's something we need to do.

23 On a lighter note, I just want to  
24 say thank you to Minooka Lions. They put on  
25 a great autism awareness, you can see I'm

1 wearing my pin for autism awareness month.  
2 Every last weekend of the month they just  
3 put on one of the best benefits that  
4 benefits autism and that's something that's  
5 close to my family and, you know, it was  
6 very nice seeing the community get together  
7 and just seeing everybody for such a great  
8 event. All of the volunteers they just work  
9 tirelessly for weeks and weeks and weeks to  
10 plan this and it was a success and they are  
11 already planning next year so I just want to  
12 say thank you and they did a great job, and  
13 that's all I have for today. Thank you.

14 MR. ROGAN: Mr. Donahue, any motions  
15 or comments?

16 MR. DONAHUE: Yes. First I'd like  
17 to just start, I've had some complaints on  
18 the road conditions if we could send these  
19 along to DPW, especially East Mountain Road  
20 which wasn't paved too long ago. Also,  
21 Linwood and Florida Avenue on East Mountain  
22 as well as the 1800 and 1900 blocks of South  
23 Webster Avenue. The hill mostly on the 1800  
24 block is especially bad to the point where  
25 it shouldn't even be considered a road.

1 I've also been getting some  
2 complaints regarding storm water issues with  
3 all of the rain we have been getting and it  
4 seems like a lot of the issues that stem  
5 from area where storm drains are either  
6 inadequate or they just don't exist at all.  
7 Cray Street in Minora is one of the examples  
8 that I had brought up this week where at the  
9 bottom there just isn't any storm drains so  
10 the water just flows down the sidewalks and  
11 into the river, and also the Pennwood  
12 section doesn't have many storm drains  
13 either.

14 Also, the flooding issue, the  
15 residents in the area of Pittston Avenue and  
16 Kane Street that it's been incurring over  
17 and over again, but I believe DPW is  
18 supposed to go out and fix a broken pipe on  
19 Kane Street that would alleviate the  
20 problem. So, Mrs. Reed, would you also be  
21 able to send a letter to DPW to see when  
22 they would be begin work to fix that pipe on  
23 Kane Street?

24 Now, onto to PSN Realty and Ken  
25 Bond. First, I'd like to thank Chris Kelly

1 for his outstanding reporting to bring this  
2 particular slumlord to light and also to all  
3 of the member of the South Side Neighborhood  
4 Association for passing along all of that  
5 information, I'm going to pass it along to  
6 my colleagues on council and also to the  
7 administration.

8 But in terms of what we can do to  
9 begin to address these issues, I'd like to  
10 first request from the -- send a request to  
11 the administration for an immediate  
12 emergency declaration for the demolition of  
13 the structures located at 1616 Cedar Avenue  
14 and also 1620 and 622 Pine Street. Both  
15 properties have had fires in recent years.  
16 Because of the damage caused by each fire  
17 the structural integrity of these properties  
18 could pose a threat to public safety and I  
19 believe immediate action is needed. Such an  
20 emergency declaration is used at least twice  
21 last year, once for a property that caught  
22 fire on the corner of Hickory and South  
23 Webster Avenue and also another on the 500  
24 of Palm Street.

25 I'd like to also request Licensing

1 and Inspection and the city engineer assess  
2 and complete a written report to council on  
3 all other condemned PNS properties by next  
4 Monday's meeting. In addition, I'm  
5 requesting that Licensing and Inspections  
6 inspect and report on all other PSN  
7 properties and to please provide photos,  
8 inspection reports, citations and/or notices  
9 of violation on PSN properties. The city's  
10 Law Department can also begin to take action  
11 so I'm requesting that they perform what's  
12 called as a bring down or title search  
13 consisting of deeds, mortgages, liens taxes  
14 of every property owned by PSN.

15 In addition to that, I also think  
16 the Law Department needs to send a letter to  
17 the New York Bar Association reporting  
18 Mr. Bond operating as PSN realty for his  
19 consistent failure to pay taxes and/or fees,  
20 failure to properly receive notice and  
21 failure to maintain his properties.

22 And then, finally, I'd like to touch  
23 on the settlement of a lawsuit brought  
24 against Mr. Hinton alleging bias and  
25 selective enforcement. I'd like to know

1 from the city's Law Department why the  
2 city's insurance did not cover the  
3 settlement and if the city must also cover  
4 any attorney's fees as part of that  
5 settlement. I'd also like to know if there  
6 are any other current lawsuits concerning  
7 Mr. Hinton the city is also engaged in. So,  
8 Mrs. Reed, would you be able to send those  
9 requests along to the administration?

10 And just over a year as a councilman  
11 the number one complaint I consistently get  
12 over and over again are complaints  
13 concerning Licensing and Inspection. The  
14 ineffective leadership in that office has  
15 not only forced contractors to refuse to  
16 work in the city, it has also contributed to  
17 the deterioration of the quality of life in  
18 our neighborhoods and is now costing  
19 taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.  
20 People are absolutely fed up with this  
21 nonsense and they want to know when will  
22 enough be enough. I have had countless  
23 people tell me since Saturday that they  
24 think that Mr. Hinton should be forced to  
25 resign for his incompetent.



1 passed, in fact, this council wrote, the  
2 following sections exist, Section 373-9  
3 Violation and Penalties, Subsection C, "Any  
4 landlord or owner with outstanding fines  
5 resulting from violation of municipal  
6 ordinances as well as delinquent taxes  
7 and/or garbage fees shall be eligible to  
8 obtain a license to rent residential real  
9 estate in the municipality of Scranton  
10 unless such fines, taxes and fees are paid  
11 in full."

12 So according to the newspaper  
13 article as noted, the LIPS Department said  
14 that none of PSN's properties are even  
15 registered with the city. Yet, several are  
16 operating as rental units and apparently PSN  
17 is collecting rent. So under Section  
18 373-10, Rental Escrow Program, "In addition  
19 to all other penalty and enforcement  
20 remedies established by this chapter or by  
21 any other Scranton ordinance including, but  
22 not limited to, the property maintenance  
23 code owners/landlords of residential rental  
24 units within the municipality of Scranton  
25 shall be subject to the municipality of



1 Scranton Rental Escrow Program which is  
2 hereby established by this chapter."

3 I'm going to read a few chapters. I  
4 know it's a little dry but we have to get  
5 through it. "Subsection A. Owner/landlords  
6 of residential rental units that have not  
7 been registered by April 1 of the licensed  
8 year pursuant to this chapter shall be sent  
9 written notice of non-compliance by  
10 registered or certified mail addressed to  
11 the record of the such property on the tax  
12 records of the County of Lackawanna County.  
13 Failure to receive said notice shall  
14 involvement effectiveness of the transmittal  
15 of said notice."

16 "Subsection B. Effective with the  
17 next monthly rental period following  
18 transmittal of said notice, the  
19 owner/landlord is prohibited from receiving  
20 rents from the unregistered residential  
21 property."

22 "Subsection C. Effective with the  
23 next multi-rental period following  
24 transmittal of said notices, the Scranton  
25 Code Enforcement Officer is to inspect the

1           unregistered unit for the purpose of  
2           determining if a tenant or tenants are  
3           residing in an unregistered unit."

4                        "Subsection D. Should tenant be  
5           found to be residing in an unregistered  
6           unit, the tenant or tenants shall be  
7           provided a copy of this chapter together  
8           with a written notice or directive from the  
9           Code Enforcement officer that rent for the  
10          first calendar month following the  
11          inspection and for the ensuing calendar  
12          months is to have to be paid to the  
13          municipality of Scranton for deposit into  
14          the Scranton Rental Escrow account unless  
15          otherwise directed."

16                        There are several over sections in  
17          the escrow program but that's the basis of  
18          what can be done so I would like to ask our  
19          LIPS Department, again, to begin the process  
20          of enforcing Section 7373-10 in it's  
21          entirety by sending letters to all of the  
22          properties owned by PSN realty and then  
23          enforcing the balance of this action to the  
24          point where any occupied units and their  
25          tenants are giving the rent check to the

1 City of Scranton while all PSN realty taxes,  
2 garbage liens, etcetera, are still unpaid.

3 It is disgraceful that we are  
4 allowing this landlord, the worst of the  
5 worst in what he owes to the City of  
6 Scranton, almost a quarter of a million  
7 dollars, to operate and collect rents in  
8 some of his buildings when we have an  
9 ordinance, we have a law that specifically  
10 addresses and forbids this situation to ever  
11 occur. It's unbelievable.

12 So we can do it. We have the law on  
13 our side, we have the rules on our side, it  
14 just has to be enforced, along with the  
15 suggestion made by Councilman Donahue, there  
16 are tools in our tool belt to stop this kind  
17 of egregious activity by absentee landlords  
18 that have permeated our city for far too  
19 long.

20 And, finally, on a totally different  
21 subject, I didn't do this last week so I was  
22 called out from a friend of mine but as I do  
23 every week my final words are every day is  
24 your chance to make the city a little  
25 better. Thank you.

1 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Mr. Gaughan,  
2 any motions or comments?

3 MR. GAUGHAN: Yeah, you know what I  
4 don't even really know where to begin at  
5 this point. First of all, let me just say  
6 this, because I was thinking of it as the --  
7 after the news article and then listening to  
8 some of my colleagues speak, I'm sure there  
9 is other Mr. Bonds out there. I mean, this  
10 is just one case, maybe not as egregious at  
11 \$250,000 but I'm sure there are others -- in  
12 fact, I know there are others just from  
13 going to the neighborhood meetings that owe  
14 these different fees and don't keep their  
15 properties up.

16 And, you know, I applaud Chris Kelly  
17 and the Scranton Times, but it is a -- you  
18 know, as an elected official it's a little  
19 sad and embarrassing that a reporter from  
20 the Times has to uncover this and, quite  
21 frankly, we all should be take a bit of  
22 responsibility in this and accept some  
23 blame. You know, we are elected officials  
24 and this has happened under our watch even  
25 though we don't have as much control as the

1 administration does, but, I mean, just from  
2 myself I think we should accept some sort of  
3 responsibility because it is -- there is  
4 only one word for this and it's  
5 embarrassing.

6 You know, listening to the different  
7 fixes and I agree with what Mrs. Schumacher  
8 said about two or three weeks ago, I hope  
9 this doesn't happen, but I have seen it  
10 happen over the last five years, this is a  
11 hot button issue, it's a hot topic and then  
12 it will eventually peter out and it will die  
13 out. People will either forget about it and  
14 we'll be back here again in five years and  
15 the reason that I think for that, and I want  
16 to be careful that it does not seem like  
17 I'm, you know, blaming anyone but there is  
18 no coherent vision to deal with this problem  
19 and a lot of other problems that occur in  
20 this city, especially with blight, and I'll  
21 give you one example and Councilman Evans  
22 can back me up on this because he was there.  
23 The county had a Blight Task Force. There  
24 was -- every municipality in Lackawanna was  
25 invited to it. Councilman Evans went as our

1 representative on council. Councilman  
2 Evans, was there anyone from the  
3 administration there present?

4 MR. EVANS: No, there wasn't.

5 MR. GAUGHAN: No. Again, part and  
6 parcel of the problem. Now, I have talked  
7 about what Mrs. O'Malley talked about for  
8 the last five years and, again, I don't want  
9 to drone on because I have said this before  
10 there is no leadership. Zero. Zero. What  
11 happens in this city over the last five  
12 years is there is a fire, we put it out.  
13 There is a condemned building and we  
14 respond. There is no coherent vision.  
15 There is no forethought. That's the  
16 problem. So Mr. Bond is just a morsel of  
17 the bigger issue and, you know, I blame  
18 Mayor Courtright, but you can blame mayors  
19 going back 150 years. It's the same  
20 problem. We will sit up here, we will talk  
21 about it, we'll have Mrs. Madsen and other  
22 come from the neighborhood groups and I can  
23 almost guarantee, although and I hope not,  
24 we will be right back here in five years  
25 unless for once city officials come up with

1 a coherent vision. You have people from the  
2 administration that actually attend a task  
3 force that people put together that from  
4 what I understand was pretty well done.  
5 There was all different things that came out  
6 of that meeting, but then there is never any  
7 follow-up. Again, I think we should all  
8 take a little bit of blame for that.

9 There is a major disconnect between  
10 this council and the administration I don't  
11 care what anybody says. I have seen it over  
12 the last five years. We waste ink on paper.  
13 I sent a letter asking for information, I'm  
14 not asking for anything that's not relevant,  
15 just like Councilman Donahue, Councilman  
16 Perry, Councilman Rogan and Councilman  
17 Evans, yet it either goes unanswered or we  
18 get some kind of bizarre answer. I mean, I  
19 can go through example after example, and we  
20 are on the front lines here every Monday and  
21 sometimes we sit up here and look like  
22 doofuses and maybe sometimes we are, but we  
23 don't have answers because we can't get them  
24 from the mayor and the administration.

25 Take Mayor Courtright out of the

1 picture, Mayor Smith, Mayor Jones, when you  
2 are you the mayor you need to step up and  
3 let people know what the plan is, what the  
4 vision is. We could sit up here all day and  
5 talk about different things, and we are  
6 going to send Councilman Donahue's letter  
7 which I think he was right on every point he  
8 made, but it makes no difference if you  
9 don't have the leader of the city standing  
10 behind.

11 The question is how did Mr. Bond get  
12 to this point? How was he able to buy up  
13 all of these properties and go scot-free?  
14 Didn't pay any rental registration fee or  
15 nothing. Now, I'm sure we'll send another  
16 letter to Mr. Hinton and it will go  
17 unanswered. And, again, take Pat Hinton out  
18 the equation. Bill Jones, Bill Smith, Bob  
19 Jones it doesn't matter. It does not  
20 matter.

21 The fact of the matter is Councilman  
22 Donahue brought up Mr. Hinton, the mayor,  
23 the mayor allowed this to go on over the  
24 last five years. We just had to pay out,  
25 you are going to have to pay out \$245,000 to



1 Mr. Brunell. The city's insurance policy  
2 won't cover it and there is another one from  
3 I think his brother and my guess is we are  
4 going to have to pay on that so we could be  
5 looking at close to half a million dollars  
6 who knows. All the while, Mr. Hinton is  
7 worried apparently about a coffee shop at  
8 Nay Aug Park which for the love of God it's  
9 the most -- it's the most ridiculous thing.

10 And, again, take Mr. Hinton out of  
11 it because I have nothing against him, I  
12 know him personally, I think he is a fine  
13 person. Put in anybody else, Bob Jones, Bob  
14 Smith and what -- in whose right mind would  
15 you let a city employee open up a -- or even  
16 bid on it and open up a coffee shop at Nay  
17 Aug Park? And he said in the newspaper he  
18 has got to get contractors to come up there.  
19 He is the head of Licensing and Inspections.  
20 I mean, you've got to be kidding me. And  
21 this is allowed to go on.

22 And, again, this is part and parcel  
23 of the problem and I'm blaming people but  
24 I'm taking responsibility for it as well  
25 because we are all to blame. Every elected

1 official that's come here and every elected  
2 official that's come before us.

3 So my plea is to the mayor and the  
4 administration that they will take our  
5 suggestions and do the things Councilman  
6 Donahue had recommended but don't stop  
7 there. Come up with a coherent vision. All  
8 five of us live here, we are willing to work  
9 with the mayor and the administration.  
10 That's why two weeks ago I had requested  
11 that just like other cities do, it's not  
12 brain surgery, they would come at least  
13 quarterly. I would even take twice a year  
14 and sit before the council and answer  
15 questions. Nobody is going to bite, you  
16 know, we are going to be respectful, but we  
17 need better communication because we sit up  
18 here every Monday and it's -- it drives me  
19 nuts. We have been -- I've been doing this  
20 for five years. I just talked to my mother  
21 the other day. I said, "I don't even know  
22 what I'm doing this for anymore."

23 We go through the same thing and  
24 there is never any real action so maybe  
25 Mr. Bond, maybe finally, you know, maybe

1           some day we are thank him because maybe this  
2           is the point in the city that people start  
3           taking this stuff seriously, and the 75  
4           percent of the people that actually that do  
5           pay and the good people that do take care of  
6           their civic responsibilities can finally be  
7           relieved that they know the city is actually  
8           going to do something serious for once. And  
9           I had other things but that's it for  
10          tonight. Thanks.

11                   MR. ROGAN: Thank you. I guess I'll  
12           address the PSN Realty issue as well. I did  
13           a little research as well on this and  
14           specifically the property at 616 Cedar just  
15           to give some background for those who are  
16           watching and may not understand the real  
17           estate business or landlord business, so  
18           this purchase was purchased in February of  
19           2004 for \$85,000 by Mr. Bond through an LLC.  
20           It's a seven-unit property.

21                   Now, when it was purchased the rents  
22           were certainly much lower in 2004 than they  
23           are now, but just taking an extremely low  
24           rent of 500 per unit on those seven units in  
25           one month this property is generating over

1           \$3,000 income for the landlord when it was  
2           operational so you could see how short of a  
3           time it is for a landlord to recoup their  
4           money with a rental property.

5                         Unfortunately, what Mr. Bond has  
6           done, and I know Councilman Gaughan  
7           mentioned it, he is not the only one and  
8           I'll give the newspaper credit for giving --  
9           putting a platform out there for this  
10          issues, but there are many, many other  
11          landlords that are doing it, maybe not as  
12          egregious but are doing the same thing.  
13          They primarily out-of-town landlords that  
14          purchase the property for a very low price,  
15          which was the case with this property for  
16          seven units. They rent it, don't repair a  
17          thing and just extract every penny they can  
18          out of the property. Don't pay the taxes,  
19          don't pay the garbage fee. When it goes up  
20          for a sheriffs sale or a judicial sale they  
21          make a payment arrangement, make a minimum  
22          payment, it goes away until the next year  
23          and continue to string this out as long as  
24          they can and at the end they just say, well,  
25          I got my money out of the property and

1           abandon it. That's what's happened in this  
2           situation and there are other landlords that  
3           have done the same thing through the years,  
4           maybe on not as large as a scale as this  
5           case here, and it's one thing if a landlord  
6           has a property and they fall on hard times  
7           and they can't, you know, can't keep it up  
8           or can't manage it and they lose it to tax  
9           sale or something but there is no question  
10          that this individual knew exactly what he  
11          was doing.

12                    He is not behind he didn't do a good  
13           job managing rentals or, you know, things  
14           didn't go well for him, that was his whole  
15           strategy was to get as much cash out of the  
16           property at possible, pay as little taxes  
17           and fees as possible and then at the end  
18           just wash his hands of it and say, "I'm  
19           done."

20                    It's not a good business model  
21           long-term, but in the short-term I'm sure he  
22           extracted just from this 1616 Cedar property  
23           well in excess of \$300,000 over the 14, 15  
24           years that he has owned this property. I  
25           would like to go back and see exactly which

1 years all of these taxes are owed for,  
2 what's been paid on each other year on all  
3 of these properties. Not to punish him and,  
4 obviously he is a huge offender, but so the  
5 city could reforms into place so people  
6 cannot take advantage of the system in this  
7 way.

8 The reason why the city and the  
9 county is typically lenient on people who  
10 are behind on their taxes with setting up a  
11 payment arrangement and allowing them to  
12 make payments is because the last thing any  
13 governmental body wants to do is take away a  
14 home from a homeowner who is struggling.  
15 This is not that scenario. What this  
16 individual did is took the system that was  
17 put in place, and it's a lenient system as  
18 far as paying your fees and your taxes for  
19 the homeowner, and for homeowners I believe  
20 there should be some grace period. Somebody  
21 loses their job, somebody has health issues,  
22 they should be able to go on a payment plan.  
23 A rental property that's bringing in 30, 40  
24 thousand dollars a year in cash flow  
25 shouldn't be given that same leniency that

1           one individual in a single family home is  
2           given, so I think there needs to be a change  
3           on how the tax sales are done.

4                     If this property was up for tax sale  
5           after a year or two we wouldn't have gotten  
6           to this point, and I understand he played  
7           the game, he's a lawyer. Instead of  
8           focusing on having a good rental business he  
9           decided to do it the other way and try to  
10          pay as little as possible during the years.

11                    I agree with the recommendations  
12          that Councilmen Perry and Evans made  
13          regarding using the rental registration as a  
14          tool to try to crack down on landlords, but  
15          I do think, especially with the first one,  
16          and it's going to wind up in Court and it's  
17          going to take some time, but I think we need  
18          to take and all the above approach, but I  
19          truly believe that the biggest way to deter  
20          this from happening in the future is to have  
21          a different set of rules for those who fall  
22          behind on investment properties versus  
23          people who fall behind on a single family  
24          home, and as I said before, there should be  
25          some leniency when you are talking about

1           somebody's home. When you are talking about  
2           a rental property if somebody fell behind  
3           and they are not doing a good job as a  
4           landlord, which is a business, as Mr. Perry  
5           mentioned, they should lose the property and  
6           it's plain and simple as far as I'm  
7           concerned. That's all I have to say on that  
8           issue, I'm sure we will talking about it  
9           much more.

10                    Just two citizens' requests to add  
11           to the letter that Councilman Donahue  
12           mentioned, on East Mountain Road I was  
13           contacted from a resident on Seymour and the  
14           curbing is all eroded away. I know the ones  
15           you mentioned also had pretty much the same  
16           issues. If we could add that to that letter  
17           as well.

18                    And then also another property that  
19           -- and I know e-mailed about this earlier in  
20           the week, I don't know if anyone remembers  
21           about a year or so ago a boiler exploded in  
22           the basement of a property on the 600 block  
23           of North Bromley Avenue in West Scranton.  
24           That home has been condemned. It was  
25           basically partially blown off the foundation



1 from this explosion and if we can also, and  
2 I know we went sent it earlier in the week,  
3 just follow up on that because if it really  
4 is a dangerous situation that part of West  
5 Side the houses are very closes to one  
6 another and with the foundation issue the  
7 neighbors are concerned that one of these  
8 storms that we have or just over time that  
9 he house is going to collapse on one of  
10 neighbors around it. And that is all I  
11 have.

12 MR. EVANS: Councilman Rogan, if you  
13 don't mind I rarely interrupt, but I have  
14 one more comment on PSN, if I might, and  
15 your math sort of got me thinking about  
16 this, the properties that I mentioned, even  
17 if they are only two families and all of  
18 them are occupied and they all average about  
19 \$600 a month in rent, which is probably a  
20 modest amount, we are looking at  
21 approximately \$100,000 a year in rental that  
22 is now being put in that -- that landlord's  
23 pocket while he is not paying anything else  
24 so just keep that in mind. \$100,000 in  
25 potential income that he is earning on his

1 properties so we'll know more as hopefully  
2 LIPS goes out and does some investigation  
3 but I just want to get that point across.

4 MR. ROGAN: Excellent point. Thank  
5 you.

6 MS. REED: 5-B. FOR INTRODUCTION -  
7 A RESOLUTION - AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND  
8 OTHER APPROPRIATE CITY OFFICIALS TO APPLY  
9 FOR AND EXECUTE A GRANT FOR THE  
10 REDEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE CAPITAL PROGRAM  
11 (RACP) THROUGH THE COMMONWEALTH OF  
12 PENNSYLVANIA'S OFFICE OF THE BUDGET IN THE  
13 AMOUNT OF ONE MILLION (\$1,000,000.00)  
14 DOLLARS; ACCEPTING AND DISBURSING THE GRANT  
15 IF THE APPLICATION IS SUCCESSFUL; AND  
16 COORDINATE THE USE OF THE GRANT FUNDS WITH  
17 "MIMI EQUITIES", FOR THE PROJECT TO BE NAMED  
18 THE "WYOMING AVENUE DEVELOPMENT".

19 MR. ROGAN: At this time, I'll  
20 entertain a motion that Item 5-B be  
21 introduced into its proper committee.

22 MR. PERRY: So moved.

23 MR. EVANS: Second.

24 MR. ROGAN: On the question? All  
25 those in favor of introduction signify by

1 saying aye.

2 MR. PERRY: Aye.

3 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

4 MR. EVANS: Aye.

5 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

6 MR. ROGAN: Aye. Opposed? The ayes  
7 have it and so moved.

8 MS. REED: SIXTH ORDER. 6-A. NO  
9 BUSINESS AT THIS TIME.

10 SEVENTH ORDER. 7-A. FOR  
11 CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES -  
12 FOR ADOPTION - RESOLUTION NO. 112, 2019 -  
13 AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND OTHER APPROPRIATE  
14 CITY OFFICIALS TO EXECUTE AND ENTER INTO A  
15 CONTRACT WITH KOHANSKI & COMPANY, PC TO  
16 PROVIDE THE CITY OF SCRANTON INDEPENDENT  
17 POST AUDIT FOR FISCAL YEARS ENDING DECEMBER  
18 31, 2018, DECEMBER 31, 2019, DECEMBER 31,  
19 2020 AND DECEMBER 31, 2021.

20 MR. ROGAN: As Chairperson for the  
21 Committee on Rules, I recommend final  
22 passage of Item 7-A.

23 MR. EVANS: Second.

24 MR. ROGAN: On the question? Roll  
25 call, please?

1 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Perry.

2 MR. PERRY: Yes.

3 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Donahue.

4 MR. DONAHUE: Yes.

5 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Evans.

6 MR. EVANS: Yes.

7 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

8 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes.

9 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

10 MR. ROGAN: Yes. I hereby declare  
11 Item 7-A legally and lawfully adopted.

12 MS. REED: 7-B. FOR CONSIDERATION  
13 BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES – FOR ADOPTION –  
14 RESOLUTION NO. 113, 2019 - APPROVING THE  
15 FINANCING BY THE SCRANTON-LACKAWANNA HEALTH  
16 AND WELFARE AUTHORITY OF CERTAIN CAPITAL  
17 PROJECTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF MARYWOOD  
18 UNIVERSITY, A PENNSYLVANIA NOT-FOR-PROFIT  
19 CORPORATION; DECLARING THAT IT IS DESIRABLE  
20 FOR THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE OF THE  
21 PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF SCRANTON, LACKAWANNA  
22 COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, AND THE AREA SERVED BY  
23 MARYWOOD UNIVERSITY TO HAVE THE PROJECT  
24 PROVIDED BY AND FINANCED THROUGH THE  
25 AUTHORITY; DESIGNATING THE MAYOR OF THE

1 CITY, OR, IN THE MAYOR'S ABSENCE, THE  
2 PRESIDENT OR VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CITY  
3 COUNCIL, AS THE PERSON TO ACT ON BEHALF OF  
4 THE CITY COUNCIL AS THE "APPLICABLE ELECTED  
5 REPRESENTATIVE" WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE  
6 INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986, AS AMENDED;  
7 AUTHORIZING SUCH MAYOR OF THE CITY OR THE  
8 PRESIDENT OR VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CITY  
9 COUNCIL OF THE CITY TO TAKE CERTAIN ACTIONS  
10 ON BEHALF OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY AS  
11 SUCH "APPLICABLE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE";  
12 AND AUTHORIZING OTHER NECESSARY AND  
13 APPROPRIATE ACTION.

14 MR. ROGAN: As Chairperson for the  
15 Committee on Rules, I recommend final  
16 passage of Item 7-B.

17 MR. PERRY: Second.

18 MR. ROGAN: On the question? Roll  
19 call, please?

20 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Perry.

21 MR. PERRY: Yes.

22 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Donahue.

23 MR. DONAHUE: Yes.

24 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Evans.

25 MR. EVANS: Yes.

1 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes.

3 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

4 MR. ROGAN: Yes. I hereby declare  
5 Item 7-B legally and lawfully adopted.

6 If there is no further business,  
7 I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

8 MR. PERRY: Motion to adjourn.

9 MR. ROGAN: Meeting 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.

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CATHENE S. NARDOZZI, RPR  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER