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SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL

PUBLIC HEARING

IN RE: FILE OF COUNCIL NO. 118 2015, AUTHORIZING THE
MAYOR AND THE OTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS OF THE CITY
OF SCRANTON TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT
THE CONSOLIDATED SUBMISSIONS UNDER THE COMMUNITY
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO BE FUNDED UNDER
THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT CDBG PROGRAM, HOME
INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (HOME) PROGRAM AND EMERGENCY
SOLUTIONS GRANTS, (ESG) PROGRAM FOR THE PERIOD
BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2016.

HELD:

Thursday, September 17, 2014

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:

ROBERT MCGOFF, PRESIDENT
(Not present)

PATRICK ROGAN, VICE-PRESIDENT

WAYNE EVANS

JOSEPH WECHSLER

WILLIAM GAUGHAN

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

KATHY CARRERA, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

AMIL MINORA, SOLICITOR

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

3 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Wechsler.

4 MR. WECHSLER: Here.

5 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

6 MR. ROGAN: Here.

7 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Evans.

8 MR. EVANS: Here.

9 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Here.

11 MS. CARRERA: Mr. McGoff.

12 MR. ROGAN: The purpose of said
13 public hearing is to hear testimony and
14 discuss the following: FILE OF COUNCIL NO.
15 118 2015, AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND THE
16 OTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OF
17 SCRANTON TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY ACTIONS TO
18 IMPLEMENT THE CONSOLIDATED SUBMISSIONS UNDER
19 THE COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
20 PROGRAMS TO BE FUNDED UNDER THE COMMUNITY
21 DEVELOPMENT GRANT CDBG PROGRAM, HOME
22 INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (HOME) PROGRAM AND
23 EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANTS, (ESG) PROGRAM
24 FOR THE PERIOD BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2016.

25 We do have with us Linda Aebli,

1 Executive Director for OECD, as well as
2 Solicitor Attorney Hickey from OECD, would
3 you like to make some comments to open up to
4 the public?

5 MR. HICKEY: Not at this time.

6 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. The first
7 speaker on the list is Peg Ruddy.

8 MS. RUDDY: Good evening. I
9 appreciate this opportunity, city council,
10 to talk about the Women's Resource Center
11 work, specifically as it relates to these
12 two grants. The Women's Resource Center is
13 the sole agency in Scranton and all of
14 Lackawanna County to provide emergency life
15 saving services to victims of domestic
16 violence, sexual abuse, teen date violence
17 and stalking. Pick up the newspaper any day
18 and you will see that it's a huge problem
19 here in our community.

20 We have submitted a grant to the
21 Emergency Solutions Grant Program where we
22 are requesting \$27,763 to assist 100 victims
23 of domestic violence and their children
24 through our safe housing program. Again, we
25 are the sole provider of that type of

1 service in this community. Those funds will
2 pay for safe housing, case management,
3 utilities, household supplies and, you know,
4 the opportunity to provide safety.

5 In addition, under the Emergency
6 Solutions Grant we are looking for \$1,500 to
7 put towards homeless prevention. Many times
8 what happens with battered woman is perhaps,
9 you know, through no fault of her own the
10 batterer gets arrested and goes to jail, is
11 unable to work, she can't pay the rent, and
12 we use this money to assist her in
13 sheltering a place so that we can prevent
14 her from homeless for a short time so that
15 she can get back on her feet and with that
16 money we would be able to assist six adults
17 victims of domestic violence.

18 And, lastly, we are looking for
19 rapid rehousing dollars. It's an incredibly
20 successful program here. We have modeled
21 ourselves from other parts of the country
22 where they have recognized if you can get
23 victims of domestic violence into housing
24 right away you can solve a lot of their
25 other problems, and so we are looking for

1 \$16,755 to assist ten adults and five
2 children over the course of the year to pay
3 longer term rental assistance, again, while
4 they get on their feet. So the total
5 allocation that we requested from the
6 Emergency Shelter Grant program is \$46,018.

7 We also did submit a grant, I
8 noticed it wasn't on the list, but I just
9 want to put a word in for our community
10 development block grant. The Women's
11 Resource Center occupies 130-year-old
12 building in the City of Scranton that we,
13 you know, took off of the blight list many,
14 many years ago. We continue to make updates
15 and right now we are looking for just a
16 little bit of money to, you know, do some
17 repairs outside and as well as to increase
18 our safety, so I know it didn't make it on
19 the list but if there is any chance that,
20 you know, we may be able to get some of that
21 funding for some of those upgrades I would
22 really appreciate it. Thank you.

23 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Is there
24 anyone else who would like to address
25 council regarding this issue specifically

1 for the CDGB allotments, the action plan.

2 MS. SCHUMACHER: Good evening,
3 Council, Marie Schumacher. I have a couple
4 of questions. First of all, will the
5 administrative costs cover placing the Caper
6 on-line? It's been a number of years since
7 Mr. Mitchell's report said it would on-line
8 the following year.

9 MS. AEBLI: Are you talking about the
10 Caper or the five-year consolidated plan?
11 The Caper?

12 MS. SCHUMACHER: Yeah.

13 MS. AEBLI: I could put that
14 on-line, yeah, no problem.

15 MS. SCHUMACHER: The hazardous
16 structures, how many hazardous structures
17 are on the list and what is the average
18 demolition cost and how many would this
19 demolish? 800,000.

20 MS. AEBLI: It averages about
21 \$10,000 a unit -- I mean, a structure so we
22 do have about 20 homes, between 18 and 20.

23 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay, so you
24 obviously believe that's going to be hit.
25 Now, I have a question for council, I was

1 again flabbergasted, two weeks ago it was
2 the business privilege tax that nobody seems
3 to want to pay and we had at that point
4 hadn't even talked to anybody, this week it
5 is yesterday's headline story in the
6 Times-Tribune wanting to redistrict some
7 properties that are not in the low to
8 moderate income group into the low to
9 moderate income group, I don't see why.

10 Well, two things, first of all, I
11 would say that if one section of the city or
12 two sections of the city are, in fact,
13 miscalculated it's probably I would think
14 due to people not filling out the paperwork,
15 but then I would think the whole city would
16 be reviewed if that is the case, if two
17 districts are I would think perhaps all of
18 them are miscalculated, but for the purposes
19 of OECD, which seem to be that article, you
20 know, here we are with a CDBG request of 6.9
21 roughly million dollars and for 2015 we got
22 2.5 million so obviously some of these have
23 to be paid, we owe it to the federal
24 government, but you have got to make a lot
25 of cuts so I don't understand why you are

1 not paying for more applicants when we can't
2 afford -- we can't afford what we have
3 already got so I would like to know an
4 explanation on that.

5 MR. EVANS: Well, I think part of it
6 is to have more opportunities throughout the
7 entire city and I think everybody agrees on
8 council, I know that OECD agrees as well,
9 there is something wrong with the map. The
10 data that was put in there doesn't seem to
11 be right. The question is I guess what
12 could we do about it because what we want to
13 be able to do is pave more streets or have
14 more streets be eligible to be paved, have
15 police patrols be -- have their beats in
16 more areas throughout the city or extend
17 their beats, that doesn't cost anymore, that
18 just allows them to walk from this street to
19 the next street. So that's the opportunity
20 and I think we have to live with that map
21 for quite awhile so the questions is, again,
22 we all want to is it possible to do, I guess
23 is the question.

24 MS. SCHUMACHER: For the entire city
25 or just for South Scranton and the --

1 MR. EVANS: I think that the entire
2 map needs to be looked at. I'm not looking
3 at specific areas I'm looking at the entire
4 map.

5 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay, and is it
6 your plan to delete projects in totality?

7 MR. EVANS: No.

8 MS. SCHUMACHER: Or are you going to
9 cut everybody back? Are you going to cut
10 everybody something?

11 MR. EVANS: No, it has nothing to do
12 with the 2016 applications, I think it's
13 more about the future, it's more about
14 future opportunities.

15 MS. SCHUMACHER: No, but I mean with
16 respect to the 2016 request here that was
17 published in the paper and that is, you
18 know, again 6.9 million requested and this
19 year 2.5, who knows, I don't know, do we
20 have any idea what we are going to get for
21 2016 up or down?

22 MS. AEBLI: I was pretty on the mark
23 last year, I put in for 2.5 and we got 2.517
24 so hopefully --

25 MS. SCHUMACHER: So, again --

1 MR. EVANS: It should be consistent,
2 I guess, for next year. Obviously the money
3 is reduced every year because of budgetary
4 restrictions.

5 MR. ROGAN: It's the same every year
6 we have more applicants than money.

7 MS. SCHUMACHER: Yeah, I know, but
8 what is your intent with respect to
9 whittling these down to meet that say it's
10 2.5 just for arguments purposes, or even 3,
11 is it to give everybody a little bit or is
12 to cut --

13 MR. EVANS: No, I think with the
14 amount of budget the applications --

15 MR. HICKEY: There is out of that
16 6.9 million total of funding that was
17 requested there is roughly about 2.5 million
18 that the mayor has submitted to council to
19 fund which would be within the limit that we
20 actually receive from the federal
21 government.

22 MS. SCHUMACHER: So could you --

23 MR. HICKEY: You have total requests
24 that you are looking at.

25 MS. SCHUMACHER: Well, could you

1 tell me which -- just read them off quickly
2 --

3 MS. AEBLI: I'll give you the sheet.

4 MS. SCHUMACHER: -- so I can check
5 off which ones got deleted.

6 MS. AEBLI: These are the ones that
7 they requested and this is what we
8 determined we were going to fund. Okay?

9 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay. Thank you.
10 Can I keep this for a minute?

11 MS. AEBLI: You can keep those.

12 MR. ROGAN: Is there anyone else who
13 would like to address council? Mr. Morgan,
14 I know you just walked in, this is
15 specifically regarding the OECD action plan.

16 MR. MORGAN: Block grant money;
17 right?

18 MR. ROGAN: Right.

19 MR. MORGAN: I wish I would have
20 brought the article from the Scranton Times
21 to explain where all that money was going so
22 I could be more pinpoint on my opinions on
23 this, but I was running a little behind
24 schedule, but I think the money really in a
25 lot of instances has to be redirected from

1 where it's going. I'm seriously opposed to
2 the money going to the Novembrino pool,
3 okay, very seriously so because the
4 Novembrino pool was built with federal
5 money, too, and look it, the city really
6 needs to take look at this block grant money
7 and, you know, I don't care what politicians
8 think because they have taken the city to
9 where it is now and the people passing this
10 fund down to the city for a long time
11 haven't paid enough have attention to where
12 that money was going and with a nation in
13 the shape we are in, as Mr. Casey was
14 talking about, now these block grants in the
15 future are going to be very, very seriously
16 cut.

17 I really think a lot of the block
18 grant money has to be spread out in
19 neighborhoods to help with sidewalks, curbs,
20 housing, redevelopment, blighted properties,
21 and I think that the city had an obligation
22 to make sure that it maintained all of the
23 complexes that were built with federal
24 funds. As you know, the South Side Sports
25 Complex was built with federal funds,

1 Section 70 funds, and it was illegal sell
2 yet it was still sold and, you know, there
3 is a lot or other people receiving money and
4 grants that I read in the newspaper and,
5 look it, I mean, the days of pay and play
6 politics, if you want to call it that, some
7 of these people are worth it, there is no
8 doubt, but I think we really have to
9 reexamine where that money is going.

10 When you talk to average
11 Scrantonians that are losing their houses to
12 sheriff's sales and we look at a city that's
13 so mismanaged that, I mean, I don't want to
14 throw everything in together, but look at
15 what we are doing with our assets and here
16 we are wondering about how we are going to
17 spread grant block money and look where it's
18 going, and I asked the councilmen to take a
19 good, hard look at where their money is
20 going and to change the plan, to change the
21 plan so that it benefits as many
22 Scrantonians as possible.

23 You know, the Scranton Times did an
24 article, and it may be a little off topic,
25 but the Scranton Times did an article

1 recently about the firemen grant, we are
2 going to high and we can't pay in the
3 future, we have done that before, I just
4 think it's time to pick a new direction for
5 the city and start moving that way.

6 And if you are paying attention to
7 what's going on in this country the
8 Democratic and Republican parties are just
9 about out because they have determined that
10 they are probably not going to back Hillary
11 and they are probably not going to back any
12 of the major Republican candidate that have
13 tons of special interest money. So, you
14 know, you might say well, what does that
15 have to do with block grant money because
16 it's all political money and you know the
17 average person can't find a decent job,
18 doesn't have training, doesn't have a ton of
19 things, the neighborhoods are rolled back,
20 we have multiple pages of sheriff's lists,
21 sales on homes.

22 Look it, I know that you can put
23 your heads together, everybody here, and
24 find a more worthy conduit for that money,
25 and the Novembrino project has no merit,

1 absolutely none. The money earmarked for
2 that project is a waste of money, it's a
3 waste of federal money, okay, it's a waste
4 of any money that's put in there. You need
5 to reclaim that complex from what it is now
6 and the city needs to either come up with
7 the money to do that or leave the complex
8 the way it is abandoned because this isn't
9 free money, this is blood money. This is
10 tax that was taken from other people
11 throughout the country and it was hoped that
12 worthy projects were done with it, and some
13 of the projects are worthy, and that's why
14 you are here because you have to make that
15 determination. You are going to determine
16 what's politics and what isn't, and if this
17 plan goes forward as it is, you might as
18 well just blindfold yourself to every vote
19 you take and just keep going the way you are
20 because the city is a corpse, and not only
21 that but the country is tired of it, too.
22 Thank you.

23 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Is there
24 anyone else who would like to address
25 council? Mrs. Aebli, anything, any final

1 comments?

2 MS. AEBLI: Not at this time. Thank
3 you.

4 MR. ROGAN: All right. I'm sorry,
5 Councilman Evans has a question.

6 MR. EVANS: I just wanted to
7 clarify, it was in the paper, and I think we
8 need to talk about it a little about, about
9 the manning, is there anything at all that
10 we can do on a going forward basis to change
11 some of the locations and the maps that we
12 know are incorrect?

13 MR. HICKEY: Yeah, we are looking at
14 the process, I know you received the regs on
15 it from Ms. Aebli.

16 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and I totally
17 understand the difficulty of dealing with
18 HUD and regulations.

19 MR. HICKEY: Yeah, just so everybody
20 is aware, the regulations that require the
21 surveys is a, in my opinion, a Herculean
22 task given the staffing level of the
23 department now, so what we are going to do
24 is take a look at it, see what the
25 requirements are, look at it from the

1 perspective of man hours, whether it be paid
2 staff, volunteers, wherever it might be, and
3 determine if there is something that can be
4 done, I mean, but just so council
5 understands the requirements are very
6 specific and very strict and, you know, at
7 this point we are just not sure whether or
8 not we are equipped to do that survey
9 process, whether it be individually by
10 canvassing neighborhoods, mail, whatever it
11 might be, there is a different process
12 involved for each type of survey that you
13 try to accomplish and there is pros and cons
14 to all of it, so it's something that we are
15 looking at, we will be happy to get back to
16 council.

17 MS. EVANS: And if we come to the
18 conclusion that maybe there is outside help
19 that needs to be done with this and
20 something we can help with, professional
21 services or an RFP let us know because I
22 think it's a worthwhile endeavor if we can
23 find a way to do it. All right. Thank you.

24 MS. AEBLI: Thank you.

25 MR. EVANS: Thank you very much.

1 MR. GAUGHAN: I have one quick
2 question. Thank you. Can you just briefly
3 explain the scoring process for the CDBG
4 applications and how that works?

5 MS. AEBLI: Yes, several years ago,
6 I don't have one in front of me to tell you,
7 but I could send you one exactly how we did
8 it. Maybe I have one here, hold on. I
9 don't think I have one in here, Mr. Gaughan.
10 I will provide city council, there is a
11 scoring system that we use.

12 MR. HICKEY: With criteria.

13 MS. AEBLI: The criteria, yeah, of
14 how we do it.

15 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you.

16 MR. ROGAN: Anything else?

17 (Hearing 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
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER