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SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL.

PUBLIC HEARING

IN RE: FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 116 2017 APPROVING
AND ACCEPTING THE CITY OF SCRANTON CAPITAL BUDGET FOR
THE 2018 PURSUANT TO SECTION 904 OF THE CITY'S HOME
RULE CHARTER.

HELD:

Thursday, September 21, 2017

LOCATION:

Council Chambers
Scranton City Hall
340 North Washington Avenue
Scranton, Pennsylvania

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

3 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Perry.

4 MR. PERRY: 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. Wechsler.

12 MR. WECHSLER: Here.

13 MS. REED: The purpose of said public
14 hearing is to hear testimony and discuss the
15 following: FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 116 2017
16 APPROVING AND ACCEPTING THE CITY OF SCRANTON
17 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR THE 2018 PURSUANT TO
18 SECTION 904 OF THE CITY'S HOME RULE CHARTER.

19 MR. WECHSLER: We have a sign-in
20 sheet this evening, so far we have two names
21 on the sheet. Marie Schumacher.

22 MS. SCHUMACHER: Yes, I am here to
23 speak on the property at the Linden and
24 Wyoming. Taking a property, a property with
25 a land assessment of \$60,000 off the tax

1 rolls will further shrink our tax base. It
2 appears this out of the blue item may be a
3 way of settling the breach of contract
4 lawsuit again the city filed by the owner.
5 After purchasing the property for \$595,000,
6 spending about \$70,000 on the environment
7 remediation of the property and --

8 MR. PERRY: Mrs. Schumacher, I don't
9 want to interrupt, I'm sorry, but it was
10 hard for me to hear. The microphone just
11 needs to be a little closer, I'm sorry.

12 MS. SCHUMACHER: I didn't even know
13 they were on. Okay, I'm sorry. So where
14 was I? Yeah, and per the lawsuit looking
15 forward to spending several hundred
16 thousands dollars to complete the
17 environment remediation. As I found nothing
18 in the lawsuit to dispute the remediation
19 estimation completion, I truly don't believe
20 we taxpayers should have to take on such a
21 hefty environmental liability, that the
22 lawsuit is scheduled for certificate of
23 readiness for trial on October 25th of 2017,
24 and the appearance of this property and the
25 capital budget and onto tonight's agenda for

1 approval it execute the deed is more than
2 mere coincidence.

3 Back in 2008, the president of White
4 Hurt Realty and Kimball and Associates state
5 -- note, "There is a lot of people that want
6 to live downtown and there is nothing
7 available. The success that our local
8 investors and others have experienced here
9 is being communicated well and attracting
10 more investors said Austin Burke of the
11 Chamber of Commerce. There are other
12 outside investigators currently looking at
13 the projects in the city as well. You can't
14 get a deal anywhere in downtown Mr. Hibble
15 said. I have never seen this much energy
16 and much excitement focused on downtown."

17 As recently as late last December,
18 the county and Scranton was awarded a
19 \$500,000 federal grant to inventory and
20 conduct environmental assessments on dormant
21 brown field sites. Mr. Kelly of the
22 County's Economic Development Department
23 said he intended to use remediation plans to
24 get more funding from the EPA to solve the
25 contamination problems at the site. The

1 property in question was selected as one of
2 the first two, first of two properties for
3 the first phase of the assessment. Brenda
4 Sacco at that time, who was deputy director
5 of operations of finance for the Lackawanna
6 County Department of Planning and Economic
7 Development, had this to say about the
8 property. "That's a prime location. If you
9 look at Penn Avenue now, you have all of
10 those restaurants that are moving in, it
11 shows that people are moving back from just
12 the central location of the courthouse
13 square."

14 In conclusion, we should not be
15 buying this property. I don't know if you
16 vetted it, if you have talked to DEP on the
17 validation of what needs to be done at this
18 that site yet, but we should not be buying
19 this property for a green space one block
20 away from the one square block of county
21 courthouse building and green space and
22 taking it off the tax rolls. Thank you.

23 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you.

24 MR. WECHSLER: Joan Hodowanitz.

25 MS. HODOWANITZ: Joan Hodowanitz,

1 Scranton. I want to talk about the same
2 issue and I'll start out by saying I am
3 thoroughly confused. The capital budget
4 refers to land acquisition of green space on
5 the corner of Linden Street and Wyoming
6 Avenue for a figure of \$450,000; correct?

7 MR. WECHSLER: That's how it's
8 listed, yes.

9 MS. HODOWANITZ: Does that have
10 anything to do with tonight's Agenda 5-D, an
11 ordinance authorizing the mayor and other
12 appropriate city officials to execute the
13 deed conveying title from RSM Properties,
14 LLC, a property located at 248-256 Wyoming
15 Avenue, Scranton, PA to the City of Scranton
16 as more fully described in Exhibit A
17 attached hereto and made a part hereof and
18 the figure for that is \$375,000, so is this
19 the same property?

20 MR. WECHSLER: Yeah, this is your
21 comment period, Mrs. Hodowanitz.

22 MS. HODOWANITZ: Okay. If this is
23 the same property you need to step back and
24 reconcile these two issues. How can you
25 have a capital budget where you're acquiring

1 it for \$450,000 and then a separate
2 ordinance you are starting tonight where you
3 are transferring the deed for \$375,000? I'm
4 thoroughly confused. If it is, indeed, the
5 same property, and I believe it is, I don't
6 think you should be moving forward until you
7 can answer those questions.

8 And I agree with Marie, we need more
9 green space a block away from county
10 courthouse like we need a hole in the head.
11 Before you spend a penny on downtown green
12 space, look at the higher priorities that
13 the city has. Signage, for one. Thank you.

14 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you.

15 MR. WECHSLER: Anyone else? If
16 there is no one else, I'll adjourn this
17 public hearing.

18 (Public hearing adjourned.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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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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