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SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING

HELD:

Thursday, February 19, 2015

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

PATRICK ROGAN, VICE-PRESIDENT

WAYNE EVANS

JOSEPH WECHSLER

WILLIAM GAUGHAN

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

KATHY CARRERA, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

JAMIE MARCIANO, SOLICITOR

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

3 MR. ROGAN: Before me begin,
4 Councilman McGoff asked me to chair the
5 meeting tonight, his voice is a little bit
6 raspy so he asked me to take the reigns for
7 tonight's meeting and I was glad to do so.

8 Council did hold an executive
9 session prior to this meeting regarding a
10 matter of litigation.

11 Dispense with the reading of the
12 minutes.

13 MS. REED: 3-A. AGENDA FOR THE
14 ZONING HEARING BOARD MEETING HELD FEBRUARY
15 11, 2015.

16 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?
17 If not, received and filed. Do any council
18 members have announcements?

19 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes, I have one. The
20 Hill Neighborhood Association will meet on
21 Wednesday, February 25, at 6:30 p.m. at
22 Immaculate Conception Church Hall at Gibson
23 and Taylor Avenue. Thank you.

24 MR. ROGAN: And I apologize for
25 jumping the gun. Roll call, please.

1 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Wechsler.

2 MR. WECHSLER: Here.

3 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

4 MR. ROGAN: Here.

5 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Evans.

6 MR. EVANS: Here.

7 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

8 MR. GAUGHAN: Here.

9 MS. CARRERA: Mr. McGoff.

10 MR. MCGOFF: Here.

11 MR. ROGAN: Thank you, my apologies.

12 Do any other council members have
13 announcements?

14 I have just one, this came from
15 Linda Aebli. It's a press release and I
16 will read it. "The City of Scranton Office
17 of Economic and Community Development
18 recently redesigned the City of Scranton's
19 Homeowner Occupied Housing Rehabilitation
20 Program. This program is funded with
21 federal funding and allows income eligible
22 households within the City of Scranton to
23 have their homes brought to code to enable
24 families to live in safe, decent and
25 sanitary living conditions.

1 In order to be eligible for
2 financial assistance, your total gross
3 household income must not exceed 80 percent
4 of the income limits established by HUD.
5 For example, a household size of 1 person
6 would have an income limit of \$32,600, an
7 income of a household of four people would
8 be \$46,550, and going up to a household of
9 eight people would be \$61,450. All property
10 taxes utilities, garbage fees and mortgages
11 must be paid up-to-date.

12 There is currently a waiting list
13 for this program, however, OECD urges anyone
14 that qualifies to contact OECD for an
15 application at 570-348-4216."

16 And secondly, the City of Scranton
17 -- this an additional press release that did
18 go to the Scranton Times. "The City of
19 Scranton Homebuyer's Program enables
20 families to earn 80 percent less than the
21 medium income to purchase the single family
22 home in the City of Scranton and make the
23 American dream a reality. Since the
24 homebuyer's program is federally funded
25 under the HOME Program since 1992, over 900

1 families have benefited from the program and
2 approximately \$6 million in federal funds
3 have been invested. The homebuyer's program
4 helps qualified buyers to purchase single
5 family homes by providing a subsidy up to
6 one-half of the amount of the down payment,
7 maximum match dollar-for-dollar not to
8 exceed \$7,000 or 10 percent of the purchase
9 price of the home, whichever is less,
10 eligible closing costs up to \$5,000 maximum,
11 and the total amount of this program is up
12 to \$12,000. The qualified homebuyers must
13 be able to obtain a mortgage from a
14 financial institution and they must attend
15 homebuyer counseling classes. This program
16 stimulates the economy by creating jobs,
17 thereby, contributing to wages and enhancing
18 the local tax base.

19 Since this is a federally funded
20 program the federal government sets certain
21 requirements for the program such as a
22 maximum purchase price, income limits, and
23 the list of the regulations goes on quite a
24 bit. The household size income limit is the
25 same as what I read before, for one person

1 it would be \$32,600, for a family of four it
2 would be \$46,500, and for a family of eight
3 it would jump up to \$61,450.

4 Any home in the city may qualify,
5 however, there are two homes that were
6 recently renovated using federal funds one
7 located 229 Garfield Avenue, which I know is
8 on a very nice section of West Side on a
9 corner lot, and 523 Palm Street.

10 If you would like more information
11 on this program please contact the City's
12 Office of Economic and Community Development
13 at 570-348-4216 or log onto
14 www.Scrantonpa.gov and click on the OECD link
15 for the application and download the
16 homebuyers' program application. Thank you.

17 MS. REED: FOURTH ORDER. CITIZENS'
18 PARTICIPATION.

19 MR. ROGAN: Gerard Hetman.

20 MR. HETMAN: Good evening, Council.
21 Gerard Hetman from the Lackawanna County
22 Community Relations Department. To
23 beginning this evening, due to the delay in
24 the sending out of tax bills from the
25 Scranton Single Tax office, the Lackawanna

1 County Commissioners have agreed to extend
2 the deadline for county residents to receive
3 a discount in the filing of the county
4 portion of their property taxes for the 2015
5 tax year. This extension mean that property
6 owners will have until March 17 to receive a
7 2.5 percent discount and pay their county
8 property tax bills. Those paid after March
9 17 but before April 30 will receive a 2
10 percent discount. Property owners have
11 until June 3 to pay their county property
12 taxes without penalty and interest and, of
13 course, this mirrors the extension I believe
14 that has been given by the City of Scranton
15 and also the Scranton School Districts in
16 paying the taxes in those portions of the
17 tax bills that come from the Single Tax
18 Office and the commissioners are happy to
19 partner with the city and the school
20 district in allowing this extension for all
21 city residents and for the rest of the
22 county on the county portion of the tax
23 bills.

24 Second, the City of Scranton is
25 invited to participate in the annual

1 Lackawanna County Department of Arts and
2 Cultural -- Municipal Arts and Culture grant
3 program. This is a long running program.
4 It provides up to \$500 in grant funding for
5 all 40 of our municipal governments in
6 Lackawanna County to conduct arts and
7 cultural programming for citizens of their
8 perspective communities. In the past in the
9 City of Scranton, this grant has been used
10 to help fund the summer concerts series at
11 Nay Aug Park.

12 Now, of course, it is up to the
13 discretion of the city each year whether or
14 not to apply. Of course, I would encourage
15 all 40 municipal governments to apply so
16 that the funds are used. The city, through
17 the discretion of council and the mayor,
18 wish to apply to use it for the concert
19 series or something similar or a different
20 arts and cultural-related projects they
21 would feel free to do so, and I'm available
22 to help assist with the application if
23 necessary and field any questions on that
24 throughout the year.

25 The programming can take place any

1 time in the 2015 calendar year, we just ask
2 that the city apply approximately 30 days
3 before the beginning of the programming
4 which will allow time for the application
5 process and the check to be issued once the
6 application is deemed successful.

7 Third, Lackawanna County's
8 Department of Parks and Recreation has a
9 master schedule of 2015 camps, clinics and
10 sporting leagues available to take place at
11 our county parks and other county facilities
12 during the 2015 calendar year. I will leave
13 a paper copy with Ms. Reed to put up at her
14 discretion, of course, on the bulletin board
15 outside. She has been very generous with
16 those programs and announcements and we
17 thank your office for that, and the schedule
18 is also available in the county website at
19 LackawannaCounty.org, and anyone wishing to
20 learn more about any of these programs can
21 call the Parks and Recreation Department at
22 570-963-6764, and this lists camps and
23 clinics that come up during the year. We,
24 of course, have individual flyers for them
25 and we will bring those to council. They

1 will also be posted on the County website
2 Facebook page and we will distribute them to
3 your office again as they are available.

4 And last, but not least, the Penn
5 State Extension Office in Lackawanna County
6 has their master gardener training program
7 open for enrollment for 2015. The master
8 gardeners are a group of gardening and
9 landscaping enthusiast that focus on
10 networking, education and community service
11 relating to gardening and landscaping.

12 To enroll in the program, which is
13 open until it starts on March 6, you can
14 register by calling 570-963-6842 or e-mail
15 LackawannaMG@PSCU.EDU. And many of you may
16 be familiar, here in downtown Scranton the
17 master gardeners worked in planting flowers
18 in the downtown planters during the warm
19 weather months, and they did planting and
20 then also the cleanup at the end of the
21 year. They're very active in the community
22 and they really enjoy networking in the
23 community service in the areas of gardening
24 and landscaping. And that's all I have for
25 this evening. Are there any questions from

1 council.

2 MR. ROGAN: Thank you very much.

3 MR. HETMAN: Thank you, ladies and
4 gentlemen.

5 MR. ROGAN: Joan Hodowanitz.

6 MS. HODOWANITZ: Joan Hodowanitz,
7 Scranton resident. The 2013 is now 263 days
8 late, is there any status on it? Any
9 movement?

10 MR. ROGAN: No update on that issue,
11 but Councilman McGoff and I were just
12 looking at the request for proposal that was
13 sent down and the request for proposal for a
14 2014 and 2017 --

15 MS. HODOWANITZ: Single Tax Office,
16 I believe. For the Single Tax Office audit?

17 MR. MCGOFF: This is a new proposal.

18 MR. ROGAN: This is a new proposal
19 and I thought that this line would be of
20 interest to you, "If the audit is not
21 completed by October 30 of the subsequent
22 fiscal year, the City of Scranton may assess
23 a 10 percent penalty on the contractual cost
24 for the audit for the fiscal year in
25 question. If minimally a draft audit is not

1 delivered by the October 30 completion
2 date."

3 MS. HODOWANITZ: So you are telling
4 me we have an RFP for 2014?

5 MR. ROGAN: That's what it's
6 stating, yes.

7 MS. HODOWANITZ: Has that been
8 published in the paper yet?

9 MR. ROGAN: I don't believe so.

10 MR. HODOWANITZ: Will that be coming
11 out this week?

12 MR. ROGAN: We received it on
13 February 17 in our mailbox.

14 MS. HODOWANITZ: So that is not the
15 single tax audit.

16 MR. MCGOFF: No.

17 MR. HODOWANITZ: Which was 2013,
18 2014 about two or three weeks ago?

19 MR. ROGAN: No, this is for all city
20 revenues in accordance with the Home Rule
21 Charter.

22 MS. HODOWANITZ: So I assume then in
23 the next week or so we should be seeing the
24 RFP in the paper?

25 MR. ROGAN: I would assume.

1 MS. HODOWANITZ: Okay, but nobody
2 has any idea on the completion, proposed
3 completion of the 2013 audit.

4 Last night I went to the Scranton
5 Parking Authority meeting on their
6 resolutions for monetization of their
7 assets, their financial statements were due
8 on April 15, 2014. That is 310 days ago.
9 Now, I asked them if they knew anything
10 about the financial statements and in
11 essence they told me that that was not their
12 job, that was the receiver's job, but since
13 you as councilmen have a fiduciary
14 responsibility to the citizens of the city,
15 if I were you I would be kicking the door of
16 the mayor for him to bring pressure upon
17 Mr. Washo to get those financial statements
18 in if that's what's holding up the 2013
19 audit, and if memory servers Rossi's 5
20 February report there were only two items
21 outstanding, one was the GASBE 45 or 47
22 calculations, and the other one was the
23 Scranton Parking Authority financial
24 statements. Those are the only two
25 outstanding items and I have been trying to

1 get Mr. Washo, but every time I go to his
2 office he is never there. I leave my name
3 and phone number, he does not call me. I
4 would hope that the Mayor of Scranton would
5 have more success getting ahold of him. I
6 just don't see how you can conduct financial
7 affairs if you don't know what you have and
8 what you owe. Just goes above my head, but
9 then I'm just an ordinary citizen.

10 With regard to the modified recovery
11 plan, is there a milestone for bringing that
12 in front of the public in terms of a caucus
13 or putting it on the website or whatever you
14 are going to do so that we can be clued in?

15 MR. ROGAN: I think we are still
16 waiting for revisions to the draft.

17 MS. HODOWANITZ: Okay. With the
18 regard to the issue of possible pension
19 overpayments, does the council have any
20 intent to either conduct a public caucus, a
21 public hearing, or to utilize it's
22 investigative powers of subpoena, where do
23 you stand on this issue?

24 MR. ROGAN: Well, that's something
25 that we will certainly be exploring as a

1 body I'm sure as you've seen in the article,
2 at this point we are going to see what the
3 Pension Board investigations yield and then
4 at that point council will take appropriate
5 action if we are not satisfied with the
6 answers that are provided.

7 MS. HODOWANITZ: Okay. I would hope
8 that the public attends the next Pension
9 Board meetings which are scheduled for next
10 Wednesday. I think they start at 9 or 10
11 o'clock and the Composite Board is it 11
12 a.m. here in council chambers. I'm usually
13 the only member of the public that attends,
14 but I think people should be worried about
15 this whole issue of pensions.

16 With regard to the 2015 operating
17 budget, are any of the amendments
18 forthcoming to get that thing into balance?

19 MR. ROGAN: I think we are still
20 looking a few different options on that
21 item.

22 MS. HODOWANITZ: Has Mr. Bulzoni
23 been working with the council?

24 MR. ROGAN: Yes, and there has been
25 a some ideas batted around on how to correct

1 that.

2 MS. HODOWANITZ: If and when
3 amendments are made I hope it comes up
4 before council for a vote and goes on the
5 website. Thank you.

6 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Is there
7 anyone else who would like to address
8 council?

9 MR. SBARAGLIA: Andy Sbaraglia.
10 Citizen of Scranton. Fellow Scrantonians,
11 the newspaper couldn't tell us of some of
12 your -- I guess your what could be fined and
13 what can't be fined for these two citation
14 officers, are you planning to mark anything
15 on the fire hydrants 15 feet one way or 15
16 feet the other way to help the motorists
17 tell the distance they are away from the
18 fire hydrant or from any anything that's on
19 this list? Or is this you have to carry
20 your own tape measure with you and a camera
21 to take pictures? Is this what it is?
22 Otherwise, you won't know. I don't know
23 where 15 feet is from the fire hydrant
24 without measuring it. I assume if you are
25 going to fine people you should mark that

1 distance off so they can tell if they are
2 violating the law or within the law, but I
3 know you are not interested in that, you're
4 only interested in fines. This whole thing
5 is just nothing but fines. I'm surprised
6 you don't have them people wear black and
7 tan uniforms so we can tell where they are.

8 I don't know what's wrong with you
9 people, all you do is try to oppress the
10 people more, more and more. You don't try
11 to help them. What's happened to the
12 Democratic party? Is so bad that they
13 turned their backs on the people? We can't
14 help the pension plan. The people that were
15 in that plan ruined that plan. I don't
16 blame the citizens of Scranton, I blame the
17 firemen for their problems, the policemen
18 for their problems and non-uniform workers
19 for their problems. They abused it and
20 there is no question about that, but yet you
21 are having all of these. Fine, you got
22 about 73,000 people I think are still in
23 Scranton, there may be less, and you got
24 1,000 people on the pension plans, and that
25 1,000 people are holding 72,000 people in

1 bondage. There is no question about it.
2 How you can sit up there and claim you are
3 Scrantonians are beyond me. You are not
4 Scrantonians, you're oppressors. For a long
5 time we been coming before you and saying
6 you are oppressing the people too much, you
7 got to do something different. You don't go
8 after the nonprofits. You just don't do it.
9 You sit there and said, "Well, they will
10 give it to us if they feel like giving it to
11 us, if they don't feel like giving it to us
12 well and good."

13 After all, there is a lot of
14 benefits from the nonprofits, so you say,
15 but to the average taxpayer there is no
16 benefit. We are being forced out of the
17 city. I'm just glad I don't still work.
18 That is the greatest thing I can say. I'm
19 glad I'm not working because I couldn't
20 afford to live in the city if I was working,
21 too, there is no question about it.

22 You have raised taxes up 100
23 percent. You are going after everything you
24 can go after, even the sign you got another
25 thing for signs going out there now after

1 these people that have the little sign in
2 the window, now you want them to be
3 inspected, put somebody else on. You have
4 no idea what you are doing. True, you need
5 safety on some things, but not a lot of
6 these others, and increasing the fees. I
7 have never forgave you for taking the poor
8 handicap people and charging them \$10 for
9 that sign. That to me was something that
10 the smallest think you can do.

11 In people's eyes you people are the
12 lowest there is, and that's the sad part
13 about it, you should be held to the highest
14 esteem. When people say you are on city
15 council they should look up to you with
16 respect, now they looking at you in contempt
17 and what am I going to say. Are we going to
18 say you are doing a good job? No. I can
19 say that a long time, for a long time I have
20 been telling you this is going to happen
21 that you are going to get to the point where
22 you are really, really oppressive and you
23 have reached that point. People can't
24 afford the taxes, social security went up I
25 think 1 1/2 percent, you doubled the taxes.

1 Where are they going to get the difference
2 to pay that, give up their medical, food or
3 a little pleasure they may have just to pay
4 taxes for people who abused the system?

5 And you are abusing the system, too.
6 You should do everything you can, check
7 everybody's laws across the whole
8 Pennsylvania and see how you can tax the
9 nonprofits, but that's me and not you.

10 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Is there
11 anyone else who would like to address
12 council?

13 MR. ELLMAN: Thank you, Council.
14 You know, a whole year you have just been
15 wasting up there. You don't have nothing
16 positive about to tell the people of this
17 city. Anybody got something positive to
18 tell me that you have done in a year? The
19 contracts sure aren't positive, they put you
20 people to sleep, and I could go on and on
21 and I'm not going to fight with you.

22 Your allegiance should be to us, the
23 people of this city. You know, four of you
24 have allegiance to Bulzoni. This is just
25 senseless employment. What you have done

1 you have told the people of this city
2 there's 60, 70 thousand people there is no
3 one in this city capable of this position
4 man or woman. That's what you have told us.

5 You know, the people of this
6 country, the state, this county, the city,
7 all of these taxpayers they sent a man to
8 the moon and back and you go to tell these
9 people there isn't one capable of person
10 that lives in this city for this position.
11 There is something wrong. I can imagine
12 what an exhausting search you must you have
13 had for this position. Let's just assume
14 that this was the best man for the job, you
15 know, it could be, then Joan and I wouldn't
16 have no reason to be jumping up and down
17 like we do. Let's just assume that this is
18 the best man why couldn't he simply, since
19 he is not going to be here in town, he knew
20 it when he started out he wasn't going to
21 move here for -- sell a house for maybe four
22 year's position, why couldn't he just take
23 some paperwork or something like that to the
24 Single Tax Office and see what his property
25 would be taxed approximately here in town

1 and subject the school taxes and the city
2 taxes from his -- this overpaid prima dona's
3 excessive salary. It sure would have been
4 better than all of this rigmarole like last
5 weeks vote and he is going to fire if he
6 doesn't stay, that would have been so easy
7 to do and I wouldn't be up here fighting
8 with you week after week. What an epitome
9 of cronyism this turned out to be. The
10 whole city ridicules you people for that.

11 You know, this man in yesterday's
12 paper he has asked for a consultant. There,
13 yesterday's paper, a year in office he needs
14 a consultant already. You have really
15 picked a winner.

16 And I just got one other thing for
17 Mr. Evans if you will talk to me, in this,
18 you know the houses for sale that come out
19 every week, here's a house it says, "Low
20 taxes \$775 a year." I have talked to people
21 that got some of the worst looking houses
22 off of Luzerne Street and Jackson Street
23 they are telling me 1,000, 1,500 hundred
24 dollar taxes, I'd like to know how a house
25 with our doubling taxes the past few years

1 can be 775.

2 MR. EVANS: Where is it?

3 MR. ELLMAN: Let me just give you
4 this.

5 MR. EVANS: Is it in Scranton? Wow.

6 MR. ELLMAN: My taxes have gone up
7 more than that.

8 MR. EVANS: It's a good deal for
9 somebody.

10 MR. ELLMAN: Pardon?

11 MR. EVANS: That's a good deal for
12 somebody, but it's very rare right now.
13 That's why we need reassessment.

14 MR. ELLMAN: Well, I just noticed it
15 when I was looking for some of my neighbor's
16 houses in there.

17 MR. EVANS: Cash.

18 MR. ELLMAN: What if I want a waiver
19 on my house taxes what do I have to do?

20 MR. EVANS: Well, you can't get a
21 waiver, but you can get -- every April you
22 can get your property --

23 MR. ELLMAN: You are going to give
24 one -- why can't I have one? Why can't
25 these people out here have one? You have

1 set a precedent. What if one of the firemen
2 wants to leave town and keep his job, what
3 are you going to do with that? Or somebody
4 applying for a job, a firemen or so forth in
5 a year or two, they won't live here, we had
6 a whole bunch of applications that didn't
7 live in town in the past how are you going
8 to handle now? You have allowed one person
9 to just absolutely ruin the pattern that
10 took years and years to get conformed.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. ROGAN: Thank you, Mr. Ellman.

13 MR. DOBRZYN: Good evening, Dave
14 Dobrzyn, resident. Okay, last week I spoke
15 and I am going to speak a little more on
16 this, council before last they never
17 questioned anything the mayor seemed to
18 want. The next council, the Evans council,
19 the controversial council, it's all your
20 fault, Pat, but when they tried to do
21 something that the mayor didn't want to do
22 or the mayor wanted to do something he just
23 ignored them and that's where, I mean, these
24 pensions come in. Jack Loscombe, oh, we
25 picked up on that right away. Oh, he got

1 shocked with 440 volts, got some toes burned
2 off, got his heart shot to hell and his
3 pancreas, he had diabetic problems I think
4 he mentioned to me several times and, oh, we
5 caught up with that real fast, you know?
6 And it's not even questionable, I don't know
7 where some of these people get their law
8 degrees from, but they must be from the
9 Department of Ideology or something,
10 Ministry of Love out of 1984.

11 Now, once again the 2013 audit, I'd
12 just like as a little humor, has anybody
13 checked the shredder for the missing files?
14 Maybe you can piece tape them altogether,
15 but that's what it sounds like and shame on
16 the people that were responsible for the
17 accounting in 2013.

18 And on the parking garages, it was
19 probably six years ago my friend Andy
20 Sbaraglia there had a complaint that the
21 Hilton was handed \$275,000 a year
22 approximately in free parking spaces, and
23 I'm wondering if those freebees are still
24 going on to this very day because I don't
25 think the Hilton needs my tax subsidies to

1 go into their operation. I mean, you know,
2 that's all there is to it. They're a lot
3 richer than I am and after that, guess what,
4 I don't care. I don't hand them my money.

5 Now, really last week I would also
6 like to mention that the recycling was
7 picked up on Saturday and I was very happy
8 to see that and I'd like to thank the DPW
9 for the extra time. It must be pretty tough
10 being out there in this kind of weather
11 picking up trash because it's not the kind
12 of job I'd really want to have in the
13 foreseeable future, but hopefully they got
14 paid adequately for it.

15 But on these pensions, I don't know,
16 I would support you having some type of a
17 caucus on this and we have to get to the
18 bottom of it, I don't know if the money to
19 be taken back that's already been paid. I
20 don't know if even know if it's morale, but
21 therein again, it shouldn't be handed out
22 indefinitely forever. It's not right.

23 And finally, once again, on the
24 trade packs, Transpacific trade pack, about
25 three years ago we signed onto the Korean

1 trade pack and Panama and Columbia were
2 involved, two narco states, by the way,
3 which allowed banking and stuff for drug
4 money, but we are getting about four cents
5 on the dollar reciprocation and if people
6 don't realize, I mean, Wayne, you lived in
7 South Side all your life, you know, people
8 used to walk over the hill, they would go to
9 work at Goldstar Manufacturing, they'd go up
10 to Herb Jones, there was a printery where
11 the, what's you call it, the Salvation Army
12 is now, the store, and all of these places
13 just disappeared and they continue to
14 disappear, and the fact is we have lost
15 50,000 factories since 2002 and it goes
16 without saying that without money in the
17 people's lands and without decent jobs then
18 it's all going to just keep falling apart.
19 So, please, once again, contact all of your
20 county, state, federal and tell them BS, we
21 want to see an end to this. We just want to
22 keep what we have left and try and re build
23 from there. Thank you and have a good
24 night. And don't let them tell you
25 otherwise about the jobs they create because

1 all they do is quote the jobs that will be
2 created, not the jobs that are lost, and the
3 sum total will be 90 to 1, 90 to 10, you
4 know? Thank you and have a good night.

5 MR. ROGAN: Thank you.

6 MS. SCHUMACHER: Good evening,
7 Council. Marie Schumacher, citizen and
8 taxpayer. I was hoping the lack of seeing
9 the audit status in the Third Order meant we
10 had one in hand, but I guess that's still
11 not true, and as to what Mr. Rogan read
12 tonight I disagree with that. You give
13 somebody a contract to perform something on
14 the basis that the at this is going to
15 comply with the schedule that they set up I
16 don't think they should be penalized, what
17 good does money do us? It's the information
18 that's in that audit report that we need,
19 not another couple of dimes in the tiller,
20 we really need to know that information, and
21 the ones that should be penalized are the
22 people who are not responding in the timely
23 manner to the schedule that's been set up.
24 And I think that before that's publicized I
25 think that's what you need to do. I don't

1 see how you can even attempt to punish
2 somebody for something they have no control
3 over. Maybe the business -- they all really
4 report to the business administrator though
5 maybe that's where the action needs to be
6 taken, I don't know, but I don't like what I
7 heard tonight.

8 Now, part of the Home Rule Charter
9 says that, "The Business Administrator shall
10 have the power to authorize the transfer of
11 any unexpended balance of any appropriation
12 item or any portion thereof within a
13 department, but if it is between departments
14 then the Business Administrator shall make
15 such transfer with the approval of council."

16 That is Chapter 6 of the
17 Administrative Code. Now, the Controller's
18 report for the month ending October 2014
19 noted that items discovered had been
20 reportable conditions, expense accounts were
21 overdrawn, and there were excessive
22 transfers between accounts. When are these
23 transfers going to come before council or
24 are we to believe that either we can ignore
25 or continue ignoring the Home Rule Charter

1 or that none of these were between
2 departments? I personally find that hard to
3 believe that they were not between
4 departments and if you are doing your job
5 under the Home Rule Charter those should
6 still come here even though it's 2014. I'm
7 really anxious to see that 2014 audit, that
8 is going to be a best seller with all that
9 went on last year.

10 MS. HODOWANITZ: You won't live that
11 long.

12 MS. SCHUMACHER: And moving onto the
13 revised recovery plan, how many years will
14 that cover or does it cover, you all have
15 had copies, right, how many years does it
16 cover?

17 MR. MCGOFF: We -- sorry?

18 MS. SCHUMACHER: That's okay, I
19 understand.

20 MR. MCGOFF: All we have was a draft
21 proposal, but the revised recovery plan
22 should go -- there will be a review in
23 August of '16 and a proposal made by PEL as
24 to what should occur after that.

25 MS. SCHUMACHER: I understand their

1 obligation, but I thought maybe they would
2 have a three or five-year window, something
3 I have advocated multi-year budgeting
4 because one year at a time isn't getting us
5 any place.

6 MR. MCGOFF: Mr. Evans, am I wrong
7 on that?

8 MR. EVANS: No, you are correct, but
9 I also know what you are saying is that what
10 is -- what's the time period that it's
11 actually covered and I think it is going out
12 to 2018, if I'm not mistaken as far as the
13 plan document is concerned, but what
14 President McGoff is true that August 2016 is
15 when they'll review where we are at that
16 point and determine if we are going to move
17 forward until extending this or not.

18 MS. SCHUMACHER: Yeah, I know,
19 that's why I objected to the MOU's
20 because --

21 MR. EVANS: Right, it went beyond
22 that.

23 MS. SCHUMACHER: Yeah. And then
24 moving on to the devil being in the details,
25 we now find out that the expanded parking

1 enforcement will be performed not on code
2 violations but on a case-by-case basis.
3 From the Times-Tribune article on Monday it
4 appears that people who have been repeatedly
5 not paying attention to the ordinances will
6 be grandfathered in and enforcement will be
7 dependent on upon the inconvenience to the
8 city vehicles. What a joke. What about the
9 residents? It either should be per code or
10 throw it o ut the window because doing it on
11 a case-by-case basis just doesn't have a
12 very good smell. I'll see you next week
13 good Lord willing. Thank you.

14 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Is there
15 anyone else who cares to address council?

16 MS. REED: FIFTH ORDER. 5-A.
17 MOTIONS.

18 MR. ROGAN: Councilman Wechsler, do
19 you have any motions or comments?

20 MR. WECHSLER: Thank you, Mr. Rogan.
21 In regards to the parking ordinance, parking
22 is one of the biggest complaints that we get
23 when we go out to neighborhood meetings.
24 Every meeting has some complaints in it, and
25 in terms of this ordinance it's in this

1 infancy stage to begin with. In terms of
2 the rules, you know, the state code is the
3 rules for parking. When you take your
4 deliver's license test you learn where you
5 should park and where you shouldn't park and
6 I don't see the city going out and marking
7 distances from curbs and fire hydrants.
8 But, like I said, this parking issue is a
9 man or concern of everyone in the
10 neighborhoods and it has to be to start to
11 be enforced.

12 The only other comment I have
13 tonight is that I'm disappointed that the
14 Comcast office is closing in the Steamtown
15 Mall. I don't know, I know I go down there
16 and it's probably the busiest place in the
17 mall and to say there is not a need for it
18 there is obviously I think incorrect. I
19 think that the city with the most customers
20 should have a local office, so I'm going to
21 look into it, and ask my colleagues and the
22 administration, to contact Comcast just to
23 keep the office open, and I think any future
24 contract for cable there should be a
25 requirement that they do have to maintain a

1 local office. We have a lot of people who
2 can't get out to Dickson City if that's
3 where the new cable office is going to be so
4 I would like to see that that city office be
5 kept open. And that's all I have tonight.

6 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Just a few
7 comments for tonight regarding the pension
8 issue. On February 1 the following letter
9 was sent to City Controller Rosanne
10 Novembrino. "At the meeting of Scranton
11 City Council held February 12, 2015,
12 Councilman Pat Rogan requested a letter be
13 sent to your attention regarding the double
14 pensions given to employees who retired
15 December 31, 2002, and who did not meet the
16 criteria to collect the pension. Councilman
17 Rogan is requesting a report on how this
18 occurred and what, if any, corrective
19 measures are in place to ensure this does
20 not happen again."

21 Mrs. Novembrino did reply to this
22 letter as follows: "Dear Mr. Rogan, this is
23 in response to your letter of February 13,
24 2015, regarding the double pensions. This
25 matter is under review and all questions

1 should be addressed to Attorney Larry
2 Durkin."

3 Regarding the pension issue, I am
4 hopeful that the Pension Board through their
5 own investigation will provide all of the
6 answers that myself, I know my colleagues
7 and the public are looking for. These are
8 some of the concerns that I have: First and
9 foremost, is who authorized the doubling of
10 these pension payments for some pensioners?
11 It didn't happen out of the blue that these
12 checks just doubled out of nowhere.

13 Somebody somewhere, whether it be through
14 the city or through the company actually
15 writing the checks, doubled those payments.
16 I think that is the first and foremost
17 question we need to find out was who did it.

18 The second question is why did they
19 authorize the doubling of these pensions?
20 Did they believe that there was law in place
21 to that these pensions should have been
22 doubled? Was it a clerical error or was it
23 something else? I think that's something we
24 need to look into, an answer that we need
25 from the Pension Board as well.

1 Next, I would like to know if the
2 recipients of the double pensions if they
3 were notified that their pensions were
4 increasing or not, and I think this issue or
5 at least for me it makes a big difference on
6 whether I believe the money should be paid
7 back to the pension fund or not. If
8 somebody receiving a pension received an
9 official notification from the city that
10 they're entitlement has changed and that
11 pension doubled I don't believe we could in
12 good conscience ask those people to pay the
13 city back because they were under the
14 assumption that's what they were entitled to
15 from the city.

16 On the other hand, if the pensions
17 doubled out of nowhere and no documentation
18 or notification was sent from the city, I do
19 believe that those funds should be paid
20 back. As somebody who is a salaried
21 employee, if one month my check doubled out
22 of the blue it's my responsibility to ask a
23 question why my salary doubled. It's not
24 something that should be filed away and say,
25 "Well, I hope it's not caught."

1 So that for me is the deciding
2 factor on whether the funds should be paid
3 back to the pension fund or whether it truly
4 was an error of the city and in this case
5 you cannot blame somebody who believed they
6 were entitled to that benefit to pay it
7 back.

8 I would specifically like to know
9 the role of the city controller and former
10 Mayor Doherty in regard to doubling the
11 pensions and why it took so long to catch
12 this error, and I think one of the speakers
13 made a pretty good point tonight, when
14 Councilman Loscombe was appointed to city
15 council it took a matter of weeks for it to
16 come out that he wasn't -- that he was no
17 longer entitled to his pension. The process
18 played out in a timely and efficient manner.
19 In this scenario, however, many, many years
20 went by before this came out and I normally
21 am not one to thank the media, but I do
22 think that the Scranton Times did do a great
23 job investing these issues and bringing
24 these issues to light.

25 Finally, I would like to know what

1 actions the city controller the Pension
2 Board and the current administration will be
3 taking to make sure that there are
4 safeguards in place that this never happens
5 again. Our city pensions are in bad enough
6 shape on their own without individuals
7 receiving double the compensation that they
8 deserve.

9 So these are the issues that I think
10 need to be addressed by the Pension Board.
11 If they are not, I do believe council should
12 move forward with investing this on our own,
13 but I'm hopeful that the Pension Board will
14 do a thorough investigation and bring all of
15 these questions that I have and I know my
16 colleagues have and the public has to light.
17 And that is all tonight.

18 Councilman Evans, do you have any
19 motions or comments?

20 MR. EVANS: Yes, thank you. On the
21 news of the latest pension fiasco, I concur
22 with Council President McGoff let's see if
23 the Pension Board can get out in front of
24 this. It is my understanding they have been
25 holding hearings relating to these issues

1 and we need to give the Pension Board an
2 opportunity to do their job, to get to the
3 bottom of this, and report their findings.
4 The public and our taxpayers deserve to know
5 that those entrusted with those types of
6 decisions did not misplace that trust.

7 On a totally different subject, I
8 know some members of council may have the
9 answer to this, this is a problem that's
10 been ongoing for decades without clear
11 understanding of whose responsibility it is,
12 but can anyone tell me who is ultimately
13 responsible for removing the snow from the
14 sidewalks of the bridges all over Scranton?
15 Have we have ever figured this situation
16 out?

17 I know this comes up almost every
18 year and it's constant back and forth
19 between the city and PennDOT, and it's
20 almost sophomoric how it is handled and I
21 don't know to this day who is responsible
22 for the sidewalks especially, you know, it's
23 hazardous for pedestrians who go to the
24 downtown from the West Side and South Side.
25 You know, these are our citizens trying to

1 traverse over snow and ice every single day,
2 forced to walk onto a highway, on busy roads
3 or expressway because the sidewalks of these
4 bridges are not cleared, it's simply not
5 right. Many of these citizens are elderly,
6 a lot of them are parents with children and,
7 quite frankly, it's disgraceful. Somehow, I
8 don't know when, we determined that
9 pedestrians are just not that important
10 anymore.

11 The one personal observation is the
12 sidewalks from leading from Pittston Avenue
13 to South Side to downtown on Spruce Street,
14 it's almost ironic that there is a portion
15 of the sidewalk about 50 feet wide that
16 fronts the University of Scranton soccer
17 field. It's always shoveled and always
18 clear of snow and ice while the rest of the
19 sidewalks on the bridge go unshoveled,
20 untreated and uncared for. So I thank you
21 the University for that part of it, but,
22 however, it really would be great I think if
23 the University would become an even better
24 neighbor and do something many of our
25 citizens would appreciate. So maybe they

1 could step up, use their resources and clear
2 and maintain all of the sidewalks on this
3 expressway, not just the 50 feet of their
4 sidewalk. I know the hundreds of
5 Scrantonians that walk back and forth along
6 that route every single day would appreciate
7 a kind gesture just like that. That's all I
8 have for now.

9 MR. ROGAN: Thank you, Councilman
10 Evans. Councilman Gaughan, do you have any
11 motions or comments?

12 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes, thank you. I
13 have been inundated with complaints about
14 Lewis Avenue in North Scranton and the
15 condition it's in with potholes and
16 everything else, it is on the paving list
17 for this spring, and council did receive a
18 few weeks ago a list of the streets that
19 will be paved by the city with a loan from
20 the city that we will pay back with our
21 liquid fuels allocation. So, like I said, I
22 have been inundated with not complaints
23 about that street, but many other streets
24 across the city and help is on the way
25 hopefully this spring.

1 I was encouraged to see that a new
2 business will be moving downtown at 322 Penn
3 Avenue, Boston Seafood Direct is opening a
4 new store and restaurant next to Tequila's
5 Mexican Bar and Grill. The restaurant and
6 bar portion is expected to be open this
7 April, and I thank them for their investment
8 in the downtown and I wish them the best of
9 luck with their business.

10 I am extremely concerned and
11 disturbed regarding the recent discovery
12 that city employees may have improperly
13 received pension benefits. It seems so far
14 as if everyone involved doesn't either
15 remember anything or is saying that it
16 wasn't their fault. Pleading ignorance is
17 unacceptable. We must hold people
18 accountable for their actions. I agree with
19 my colleagues that a public hearing is
20 definitely warranted and I believe that
21 there are two serious questions that must be
22 addressed: First, what recourse does the
23 city have to cease payments and or recover
24 improper payments from the recipients? That
25 question will be raised next Wednesday when

1 the Pension Board votes to appoint a hearing
2 examiner who will determine if the excess
3 payments should stop and/or if the retiree
4 will be required to pay back any money. The
5 Board will then decide how to proceed based
6 on the findings of the examiner.

7 Second, what are the proper
8 protocols and procedures for vetting and
9 approving pension payments, including
10 payments tied to retirement incentives? Who
11 was responsible for making these decisions?
12 Were there failures to follow procedure?
13 And how do we ensure that this kind of the
14 costly oversight is not repeated in the
15 future?

16 And I believe that these questions
17 would be best addressed at a public hearing.
18 Getting some clarity on the role of the
19 Pension Board will help us understand this
20 particular case and may yield some
21 additional insight into other recent pension
22 related issues, specifically, the approval
23 of disability claims and how best to manage
24 the retirement incentives offered in the
25 revised police and fire collective

1 bargaining agreements. It's clear that
2 there was a major failure to properly vet
3 these pension deals. The failure has cost
4 us financially and called into question the
5 integrity of this whole process and I
6 believe that we must make sure that this
7 never happens again. Thank you.

8 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Councilman
9 McGoff, any motions or comments?

10 MR. MCGOFF: No.

11 MR. ROGAN: Thank you.

12 MS. REED: 5-B. FOR INTRODUCTION -
13 AN ORDINANCE - AMENDING FILE OF THE COUNCIL
14 NO. 51, 1977 AN ORDINANCE, AMENDING FILE OF
15 THE COUNCIL NO. 44, 1926, ENTITLED "AN
16 ORDINANCE REGULATING THE CONSTRUCTION AND
17 MAINTENANCE OF ADVERTISING SIGNS AND SIMILAR
18 STRUCTURES: PROVIDING FOR THE INSPECTION
19 THEREOF, PRESCRIBING LICENSE FEES IN
20 REFERENCE THERETO AND PROVIDING PENALTIES
21 FOR VIOLATIONS," AMENDED BY FILE OF THE
22 COUNCIL NO. 5, 1963 TO PROVIDE FOR THE
23 INCREASE IN FEES, AS AMENDED BY FILE OF THE
24 COUNCIL NO. 83, 1976 BY DEFINING THE SIGNED
25 AREA AS THE BASIS FOR CHARGE BY UPDATING AND

1 INCREASING THE ANNUAL SIGN FEES.

2 MR. ROGAN: At this time I'll
3 entertain a motion that Item 5-B be
4 introduced into its proper committee.

5 MR. WECHSLER: So moved.

6 MR. ROGAN: Is there a second?

7 MR. GAUGHAN: Second.

8 MR. ROGAN: On the question?

9 MR. EVANS: On the question, while
10 this appears to be a long overdue increase
11 in sign fees, it is the constant pattern of
12 50 increases followed by 100 percent
13 increases followed by in this case a 300
14 percent increase of fees that I find
15 troublesome. Why we are continually sending
16 the same mixed message to the business
17 community, yes, we will be -- what could be
18 a lip service when we talk about wanting
19 business to come to Scranton, we want to
20 encourage existing businesses to flourish
21 and grow, yet our actions continue to send a
22 message that we are not user or business
23 friendly, that we are not encouraging the
24 business to grow, that we are only
25 interested in taxing and charging higher and

1 higher fees which in turn stunts the
2 opportunity and growth of those same small
3 businesses.

4 Small businesses are the primary
5 vehicle for job growth throughout the
6 country. We need to recognize that and act
7 accordingly. I'm not sure what the answer
8 is at this point, but constantly increasing
9 fees on the same people is not. I will vote
10 yes tonight to move this along, but we need
11 to begin to have real dialogue with the
12 business community. We used to be known as
13 the friendly city. Maybe it's time to find
14 out how we can be the business friendly city
15 and, therefore, the jobs friendly city.
16 That's all I have for now.

17 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Anyone else
18 on the question? All those in favor of
19 introduction signify by saying aye.

20 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

21 MR. ROGAN: Aye.

22 MR. EVANS: Aye.

23 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

24 MS. MCGOFF: Aye.

25 MR. ROGAN: Opposed? The ayes have

1 it and so moved.

2 MS. REED: 5-C. FOR INTRODUCTION -
3 A RESOLUTION - AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND
4 OTHER APPROPRIATE CITY OFFICIALS TO EXECUTE
5 AND ENTER INTO A DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
6 INSPECTION SERVICES CONTRACT WITH REILLY
7 ASSOCIATES TO PROVIDE DESIGN AND
8 CONSTRUCTION INSPECTION SERVICES FOR THE
9 CONSTRUCTION WORK FOR THE PROJECT ENTITLED:
10 "RE-CONSTRUCTION OF CITY STREETS TO INCLUDE
11 HANDICAPPED CURB CUTS."

12 MR. ROGAN: At this time I'll
13 entertain a motion that Item 5-C be
14 introduced into its proper committee.

15 MR. WECHSLER: So moved.

16 MR. EVANS: Second.

17 MR. ROGAN: On the question? All
18 those in favor of introduction signify by
19 saying aye.

20 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

21 MR. ROGAN: Aye.

22 MR. EVANS: Aye.

23 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

24 MS. MCGOFF: Aye.

25 MR. ROGAN: Opposed? The ayes have

1 it and so moved.

2 MS. REED: SIXTH ORDER. 6-A. NO
3 BUSINESS AT THIS TIME.

4 SEVENTH ORDER. 7-A. FOR
5 CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC
6 WORKS - FOR ADOPTION FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO.
7 82, 2015 - AUTHORIZING THE REMOVAL OF THE
8 EXISTING "NO PARKING" SIGNS LOCATED IN THE
9 500 AND 600 BLOCKS OF ADAMS AVENUE
10 (S.R.3023) AND REPLACING THOSE SIGNS WITH
11 NEW R7-302 NO PARKING SYMBOL/ARROW SIGNS AT
12 ADEQUATE INTERVALS ALONG THE WESTERLY SIDE
13 AND EASTERLY SIDE OF THE 500 AND 600 BLOCKS
14 OF ADAMS AVENUE (S.R.3023) FROM THE
15 INTERSECTION AT VINE STREET TO THE
16 INTERSECTIONS WITH NORTH WASHINGTON AVENUE.

17 MR. ROGAN: What is the
18 recommendation of the Chair for the
19 Committee on Public Works?

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

23 MR. WECHSLER: Second.

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

1 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Wechsler.

2 MR. WECHSLER: Yes.

3 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

4 MR. ROGAN: Yes.

5 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Evans.

6 MR. EVANS: Yes.

7 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

8 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes.

9 MS. CARRERA: Mr. McGoff.

10 MR. MCGOFF: Yes.

11 MR. ROGAN: I hereby declare Item
12 7-A legally and lawfully adopted.

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

15 MR. WECHSLER: Motion to adjourn.

16 MR. ROGAN: This meeting is
17 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
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER