

COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF SCRANTON

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HELD:

Saturday, March 21st, 2020

LOCATION:

VIA ZOOM

Maria McCool, RPR  
Official Court Reporter

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C O U N C I L M E M B E R S :

WILLIAM GAUGHAN, PRESIDENT

KYLE DONAHUE, VICE PRESIDENT

MARK MCANDREW

JESSICA ROTHCHILD

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

KEVIN HAYES, COUNCIL SOLICITOR

1 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, welcome  
2 everyone. Today is Saturday, March 21st, 2020.  
3 The purpose of this meeting is to interview  
4 candidates for the seat that was vacated by  
5 former Councilman Pat Rogan.

6 So first order of business is if  
7 everyone would please stand for the Pledge of  
8 Allegiance.

9  
10 (Pledge of Allegiance and a moment  
11 of silent reflection observed.)

12  
13 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. Mrs. Reed,  
14 roll call.

15 MS. REED: Mr. McAndrew.

16 MR MCANDREW: Present.

17 MS. REED: Dr. Rothchild.

18 DR. ROTHCHILD: Here.

19 MS. REED: Mr. Donahue.

20 MR. DONAHUE: Here.

21 MS. REED: Mr. Gaughan.

22 MR. GAUGHAN: Here. Thank you. As  
23 I mentioned at the beginning of the meeting,  
24 the purpose of the special meeting today,  
25 ladies and gentlemen, is to conduct interviews

1 for the City Council seat that was vacated when  
2 Councilman Pat Rogan resigned effective March  
3 9th, 2020. We did receive six applications of  
4 resumes and letters of interest.

5 We are going to interview candidates  
6 based on the order that they submitted their  
7 letters of interest and their resumes. So our  
8 first candidate is Mike DeAntona who I will  
9 invite into the meeting in a second. I am  
10 recording this meeting currently. So the plan  
11 is to get this to ECTV. And so hopefully that  
12 will be broadcasted. So just waiting on some  
13 more information on that.

14 We are going to have the  
15 candidates -- we're going to give them five  
16 minutes for an opening statement which I will  
17 be timing. And then each Council person has a  
18 question or two for the candidates, okay?

19 All right. Mr. DeAntona, can you  
20 hear me?

21 MR. DEANTONA: Can you hear me?

22 MR. GAUGHAN: Hi, Mr. DeAntona. How  
23 are you? So this is Councilman Bill Gaughan.  
24 We have on the line with us our City Clerk,  
25 Lori Reed. We have our City Solicitor -- or

1           our Council Solicitor rather, Kevin Hayes. We  
2           have Dr. Jessica Rothchild, Councilwoman. We  
3           have Councilman Mark McAndrew and Councilman  
4           Kyle Donahue. And then we also have several  
5           members of the public who are listening in.

6                   MR. DEANTONA: Very good.

7                   MR. GAUGHAN: Okay? So, Mr.

8           DeAntona, the first -- the way we're going to  
9           run this is, I'll give you five minutes for an  
10          opening statement. Just tell us a little bit  
11          about yourself, you know, why you are  
12          interested in the position, anything that you  
13          think is relevant.

14                   I'll be running kind of a stopwatch.  
15          So I'll let you know when we get towards the  
16          end of the five minutes. And then we will go  
17          through questions from the Council members,  
18          okay?

19                   MR. DEANTONA: Very good.

20                   MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. The floor is  
21          yours, Mr. DeAntona.

22                   MR. DEANTONA: Okay. Thank you very  
23          much. I first want to take the opportunity to  
24          thank you all for giving me an opportunity to  
25          speak before you for the vacant seat left open

1 by Pat Rogan.

2 My name is Michael DeAntona. I'm 53  
3 years of age. I'm a lifelong resident of  
4 Scranton, Pennsylvania. I think I bring a lot  
5 of unique abilities to the table for Council.  
6 I have been a part of the public sector and the  
7 private sector within my career.

8 I'm married to Rosie DeAntona.  
9 She's my wife. She owns four businesses, three  
10 of which are in the City of Scranton, two hair  
11 salons, one on Penn Avenue, one on South Main  
12 Avenue and Bronze Tanning Salon on Green Ridge  
13 Street in Scranton. And she also owns a hair  
14 salon in Clarks Summit.

15 So I'm very familiar with the  
16 private sector and the small business and the  
17 unique opportunities and also difficulties  
18 sometimes that small businesses face within the  
19 community.

20 Myself, I'm a 28-year career veteran  
21 of the public school system. I teach  
22 mathematics. I was the head football coach at  
23 West Scranton High School. I also spent 22  
24 years as a coach overall, 14 of those years as  
25 an assistant coach. So I think I bring a

1 unique ability to the table from the standpoint  
2 of working with people that are in the private  
3 community or private sector and the public  
4 sector building a championship football team to  
5 where West Scranton won their first (inaudible)  
6 championships under my guidance with the  
7 ability to communicate and bring people  
8 together as an organization whether it be  
9 private or public. I think the main thing that  
10 we need to do is be able to communicate and sit  
11 down and listen to other people's needs and  
12 ideas and put them together so that we can do  
13 the best for all.

14 I dealt with a lot of parents,  
15 administrators, school board members within my  
16 career. And this was an opportunity to get  
17 involved in the City that I love. We also own  
18 four properties in the City of Scranton. My  
19 current residence at 12 Overbrook Circle in  
20 Scranton; 1134 West Gibson Street, 1328  
21 Dartmouth Street and 924 South Main Avenue.

22 So my wife and I and my family are  
23 committed and invested and want the best for  
24 the City of Scranton. I have a stepdaughter  
25 Gabriel who's in her second year of premed at

1 Temple University. She's 20 years of age.

2 My dad and my mom are still current  
3 residents of the City of Scranton. My dad is a  
4 retired school teacher and football coach. My  
5 mom is a retired nurse that worked at Regional  
6 Hospital for 30 years. I have three brothers.  
7 My oldest brother is Joe who is a retired U.S.  
8 Army full-bird colonel, spent 30 years in the  
9 Army and is currently living in New Hampshire  
10 and working for (inaudible) corporation.

11 My younger brothers, Mark who works  
12 for the Scranton Housing Authority and also  
13 lives in the City of Scranton and Craig who  
14 works for the Scranton School District, a  
15 special education teacher who also lives in the  
16 City of Scranton.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Great. Thank  
18 you so much, Mr. DeAntona. So I'll turn it  
19 over now to Councilman Mark McAndrew who will  
20 ask the first question in the interview. Thank  
21 you. Go ahead, Mr. McAndrew.

22 MR. MCANDREW: Good morning, Mr.  
23 DeAntona. First of all, I want to thank you  
24 very much for stepping up and seeking to serve  
25 our community. My question, if appointed to

1 Council, what would be one ordinance or policy  
2 that you want to see changed immediately and  
3 why?

4 MR. DEANTONA: Well, I -- a policy  
5 to be changed, I don't know about policy to be  
6 changed. I certainly have to dig into them  
7 deeper. I think, you know, my purpose of  
8 getting on Council or trying to get on Council  
9 is to learn and be a part of a team.

10 I'm not looking to be part of a  
11 majority or a minority. I'm looking to be part  
12 of a team and to do what's best for the City of  
13 Scranton. And if that means changing policy  
14 then changing policy or ordinance. But I  
15 wouldn't be looking to do anything myself  
16 personally. I would be looking to do it with  
17 the other Council members and see what's best  
18 for the overall (inaudible) of Scranton.

19 MR. MCANDREW: Okay. Thank you.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you very  
21 much. Okay, I'll turn it over now,  
22 Mr. DeAntona, to Councilwoman Rothchild who has  
23 a question or two for you. Thank you.

24 DR. ROTHCHILD: Hi, Mr. DeAntona.

25 MR. DEANTONA: Good morning.

1 DR. ROTHCHILD: Thank you for  
2 applying for the vacancy. One of my questions  
3 is what specific skills or background do you  
4 possess that would be useful if appointed to  
5 this position?

6 MR. DEANTONA: Well, I think I  
7 bring many skills to the table. I believe that  
8 I'm -- I have the ability to bring people  
9 together, to manage people and to manage  
10 finances. I think it's credit, you know, my  
11 background within the teaching, teaching  
12 minority and diversity and seeing how things  
13 have developed and grown over the years.

14 I'm 28 years into this. And when I  
15 first got into teaching -- I guess, you know,  
16 obviously I'm showing my age. But there was no  
17 internet or e-mail or anything of that sort.  
18 And I think I've been able to grow with the  
19 times. And I think that my ability to lead  
20 people and to communicate and to sit down and  
21 listen to ideas that other people have and to  
22 try to come up with a plan to implement them so  
23 it's the best for everyone involved.

24 And like I said earlier in my  
25 statement, you know, I think I have a

1 uniqueness about me in that I understand the  
2 working of the private sector and the workings  
3 of the public sector which are obviously two  
4 different sectors and come with two different  
5 complications sometimes. So I think I bring a  
6 lot of different unique aspects to Council.

7 DR. ROTHCHILD: Just a quick  
8 followup on something that you said, what do  
9 you mean by your experience in the private  
10 sector?

11 MR. DEANTONA: Well, my wife --

12 DR. ROTHCHILD: With your  
13 businesses?

14 MR. DEANTONA: With our business,  
15 yes.

16 DR. ROTHCHILD: Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. DEANTONA: You're welcome.

18 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you, Dr.  
19 Rothchild. And we have Councilman Kyle Donahue  
20 here Mr. DeAntona who will now ask you a  
21 question or two.

22 MR. DEANTONA: Sure.

23 MR. DONAHUE: Mr. DeAntona, thank  
24 you for taking the time out of your day and  
25 applying for this. In your opinion, I mean,

1           aside from everything else that's happening,  
2           what is the biggest challenge facing City  
3           Government and what could you bring to Council  
4           to help us address that challenge?

5                       MR. DEANTONA: Yes, you know, I  
6           think the best biggest challenge is working  
7           together. You know, one of the reasons why  
8           I've decided to throw my name into the arena as  
9           you will, is, you know, I've seen -- I follow  
10          government. And I've seen good things happen  
11          within the last election cycle between Council  
12          and the school board and the Mayor.

13                      And I think everybody is now working  
14          together to try to bring Scranton into, you  
15          know, the best ability that we can. You know,  
16          it's a tough matter here. I've been here for  
17          my whole life. And I've seen the ups and downs  
18          of Scranton.

19                      And, you know, I want to be part of  
20          the -- I want to be part of the solution. And  
21          I feel like the current administration that we  
22          have and our local government are ready to work  
23          together and change what has been past  
24          practice. And I think that we're starting to  
25          develop a sense of pride within our community.

1                   And I think our citizens are  
2 starting to now starting to trust local  
3 government rather than mistrust local  
4 government. I think that's one of my aspects  
5 that I bring to the table.

6                   You know, I'm not politically  
7 connected in any way. I have no strings  
8 attached to me. And I owe no one any favors.  
9 And I'm not looking for any favors. I've seen  
10 the ups and the downs of Scranton over the past  
11 years. And I want to be part of bringing  
12 Scranton back to what it was years ago.

13                   MR. DONAHUE: Okay, thank you.

14                   MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Councilman  
15 Donahue. Okay, Mr. DeAntona, I have a question  
16 or two for you --

17                   MR. DEANTONA: Sure.

18                   MR. GAUGHAN: -- then we'll wrap up  
19 the interview. Again, as the other Council  
20 people mentioned, I want to thank you for  
21 putting your name in and thank you for your,  
22 you know, commitment to service and, you know,  
23 I appreciate you being here. What specifically  
24 do you want to accomplish in a two-year term on  
25 Council?

1 MR. DEANTONA: Specifically I would  
2 like to work with Council and the Mayor in  
3 order to get our economy back and get jobs in  
4 the area, more jobs. I think one of the things  
5 that I would like to look into and work on if I  
6 become a Council member is, I think we need to  
7 think outside of the box when it comes to jobs.

8 I think we need to work with our  
9 resources that we have within the City of  
10 Scranton, particularly our educational system  
11 with the University of Scranton and Marywood  
12 and our junior colleges. And, you know, the  
13 days of the factories and things of that are  
14 long past.

15 And I think we need to start going  
16 out and looking at ways to get technology into  
17 business back in the City of Scranton. You  
18 know, I've done some research on some other  
19 small towns across America, Asheville, North  
20 Carolina, you probably never heard of that.

21 But, you know, they're one of the  
22 leading small towns in the United States in  
23 technology today, in bringing technology jobs  
24 back to their small community. I never heard  
25 of Asheville, North Carolina before. And I'm

1           sure many people listening have not.

2                     And I think we need to reach out and  
3           think outside the box and, you know,  
4           communicate even with other communities that  
5           have seen success in today's day and age when,  
6           you know, they relied on one industry and that  
7           industry has, you know, long been shut down or  
8           it's just, you know, times have changed and  
9           now, you know, we have to look into technology  
10          and them jobs.

11                    That's where the future is going,  
12          you know, science, technology, engineering and  
13          mathematics. And I think we have a great town  
14          and we have a lot to offer in the arts and  
15          restaurants and things of that nature.

16                    You know, we're two hours from New  
17          York City. We're two hours from Philadelphia.  
18          So I think we have a lot to offer. I think we  
19          have to sell our City.

20                    MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Well, thank you  
21          so much for interviewing for this vacant seat.  
22          Council is going to deliberate on the  
23          candidates on Tuesday in our caucus which will  
24          be open to the public. So we will be in touch  
25          with you either way. So again, we appreciate

1 it and we thank you for your time.

2 MR. DEANTONA: Thank you very much.  
3 I appreciate the opportunity speaking to you  
4 all.

5 MR. MCANDREW: Thank you.

6 MR. DONAHUE: Thank you.

7 DR. ROTHCHILD: Thank you, Mr.  
8 DeAntona.

9 MR. DEANTONA: Thank you.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Lori, I think  
11 the next person up is Gary Colvin, correct?

12 MS. REED: That is correct. And I  
13 just hung up with Mr. Colvin. He's dialing in.

14 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay.

15

16 (MR. GARY COLVIN)

17

18 MR. GAUGHAN: Hi, Mr. Colvin?

19 MR. COLVIN: Yes, sir.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Hi. How are you?  
21 This is Bill Gaughan. How are you today?

22 MR. COLVIN: I'm good, Mr. Gaughan.  
23 How are you doing?

24 MR. GAUGHAN: Good, not too bad. So  
25 just to give you a rundown on how this is going

1 to work, so right now, Mr. Colvin, we have  
2 Council -- all of Council here. We have Lori  
3 Reed our City Clerk who you just spoke to. We  
4 have Kevin Hayes, our Council Solicitor. We  
5 have myself; Councilman Mark McAndrew;  
6 Councilwoman Rothchild and Councilman Kyle  
7 Donahue.

8 So we are going to first open the  
9 floor to you and give you five minutes for an  
10 opening statement and then we will go around  
11 the room here to our Council people and then  
12 we'll have questions for you, okay?

13 MR. COLVIN: Sounds great. Thank  
14 you.

15 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, so if you just  
16 want to tell us a little bit about yourself why  
17 you applied for the position and anything else  
18 that you think is relevant.

19 MR. COLVIN: Okay. Thanks very  
20 much. Hi. Good morning. My name is Gary  
21 Colvin. I've lived in Scranton for the past 38  
22 years. My wife and I raised our children here.  
23 We are not a political family. Seldom did we  
24 miss a vote. We've humbled and grumbled about  
25 the same old same old on the school board, on

1 Council, in the Mayor's office, complained  
2 mightily about taxes, bad streets, and the odor  
3 of malfeasance that seemed to surround our  
4 officials.

5 It was tough to change government  
6 because the choices at the polls always seemed  
7 to be the same. Never ever did we consider  
8 leaving Scranton. This is where we chose to  
9 live. And this is where we stayed. Our faith  
10 has been rewarded. Times are changing. People  
11 are changing.

12 There is renewed hope. I would like  
13 to be a part of that renewal. Again, I'm not a  
14 politician. My part in the political process  
15 has been to vote my conscience. I've expressed  
16 my displeasure in letters to the editor and  
17 that's about it. I have no political agenda  
18 say what's good for Scranton.

19 If chosen today I will listen,  
20 study, and learn. My votes will be of  
21 conscience. I have an open mind and will  
22 listen to others. I have a history at an  
23 executive level of representing over 40,000 to  
24 an international organization.

25 I spoke their collective mind with

1 the caveat that if more and better information  
2 became available I would change our original  
3 opinion. I would bring the same attitude to  
4 Council.

5 I would hope Council sees the wisdom  
6 in selecting a political neophyte today. There  
7 has been rapid turnover in both Council and the  
8 school board. New voices have been added to  
9 the mix at the school board. City Hall has a  
10 new voice. Council too is experiencing new  
11 sounds.

12 Today's group of perspective members  
13 afford Council the opportunity to continue that  
14 trend. Some of us today you will determine to  
15 be good. If you can add new voice to that  
16 determination, then the good will not get in  
17 the way of the best. Thank you.

18 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Mr. Colvin.  
19 And thank you for applying for the position.  
20 And the first question we have here is from  
21 Councilman Mark McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew?

22 MR. MCANDREW: Yes. Good morning,  
23 Mr. Colvin.

24 MR. COLVIN: Good morning, Mr.  
25 McAndrew.

1 MR. MCANDREW: Thank you very much  
2 for stepping up and seeking to serve our  
3 community. My question, if appointed to  
4 Council, what would be one ordinance or policy  
5 that you would want to see changed immediately  
6 and why?

7 MR. COLVIN: Okay. I'm not sure how  
8 Council feels towards things such as  
9 reassessment or -- which I think is a county  
10 thing. But if there would be some sort of an  
11 ordinance of change made, I think I would like  
12 to have Council get involved in putting some  
13 sort of a unified stance on reassessment and  
14 presenting that to the county.

15 As an old person, I've been around  
16 for a few years. As an old person, I do not  
17 subscribe to the theory that seems to be  
18 prevalent that a reassessment will provide an  
19 undue burden on people of my age. I don't  
20 accept that theory at all.

21 What I do accept is the need to  
22 update our tax base and do it as soon as  
23 possible. And I think I would like to see  
24 Council in some way express that to the county.

25 MR. MCANDREW: Thank you.

1 MR. COLVIN: You're welcome.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you,  
3 Mr. Colvin. Our next Council person up is Dr.  
4 Rothchild who has a few questions for you.

5 MR. COLVIN: Okay.

6 DR. ROTHCHILD: Mr. Colvin, what  
7 specific skills or background do you possess  
8 that would be useful if appointed to our  
9 Council?

10 MR. COLVIN: Well, as I alluded to  
11 in the presentation that I began with, I have  
12 been a member of an executive council for a  
13 fairly large organization (inaudible) problems  
14 and policies, thoughts to our executive council  
15 meeting and I carried that to a global wide  
16 meeting in New York City.

17 And then I had to respond to those  
18 people in an individual meeting or sometimes  
19 group meetings throughout the eastern part of  
20 Pennsylvania. So I do have the ability to  
21 listen. I have the ability to gather new  
22 thoughts and change my mind if I need to.

23 I have a willingness to let others  
24 continue their thoughts without interrupting.  
25 I have been a part of management groups like

1           this before. And in my present day job where  
2           I'm a dispatcher at a trucking company so I  
3           constantly have to deal with the customer  
4           who -- getting our freight, the customer who  
5           (inaudible) and, of course, the gentleman who's  
6           driving the truck.

7                       And all of these things require a  
8           little finesse and a little willingness to give  
9           and take with the people involved.

10                      DR. ROTHCHILD: Okay. Thank you  
11           very much.

12                      MR. COLVIN: You're welcome.

13                      MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, thank you, Dr.  
14           Rothchild. Now we have, Mr. Colvin, Councilman  
15           Kyle Donahue who has a question for you.

16                      MR. COLVIN: Okay.

17                      MR. DONAHUE: Thank you, Mr. Colvin,  
18           for, you know, applying and showing interest in  
19           serving the community. In your opinion aside  
20           from everything that's going on currently, what  
21           is the biggest challenge facing City Government  
22           and what could you bring to Council to help us  
23           address that challenge?

24                      MR. COLVIN: I think the biggest  
25           challenge to City Government for a lot of

1 reasons is a lack of trust to the people that  
2 you represent. Today, what we're doing today,  
3 we're replacing a Councilman who's left for a  
4 different position. And if you look back over  
5 the last few months, there's been a lot of  
6 Councilmen or a lot of school board people, in  
7 the Mayor's office, everything is changing.

8 People could not look to City Hall  
9 and say, gee, there's our guys. Look at the  
10 job they're doing for us because it seems the  
11 cast of the characters change on a regular  
12 basis.

13 I would like to see some stability  
14 and in Council and that would demonstrate to  
15 the people that we five are the ones that are  
16 here for you. We're doing what you're asking  
17 us to do and going to ask us to do. You know  
18 if you know anything about sports, sports teams  
19 tell you that stability and coaching in the  
20 front office is their greatest guide to  
21 success. That doesn't change when we're  
22 talking about political entities such as City  
23 Council.

24 MR. DONAHUE: Thank you.

25 MR. COLVIN: You're welcome.

1 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, Mr. Colvin, this  
2 is Bill Gaughan again. I just want to wrap up  
3 the interview by asking you this question. So  
4 what specifically would you want to accomplish  
5 in the two-year term on Council if you were  
6 appointed?

7 MR. COLVIN: I think the first thing  
8 I'd like to accomplish, Mr. Gaughan, is to find  
9 out what's going on. What is the things that  
10 we don't hear about in the paper or the things  
11 that people don't talk about, to bring myself  
12 as quickly as I can up-to-date so I could be a  
13 viable member of the team.

14 Once I accomplish that, then I'll  
15 have a better idea as to which way I want to  
16 see Council go addressing whichever problems  
17 are more prevalent at the point and to do as  
18 good a job as I can in cooperation with the  
19 others.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you so  
21 much. I appreciate your willingness again to  
22 serve the community. Council is going to  
23 deliberate on, you know, who we feel is the  
24 best candidate on Tuesday at our regular -- at  
25 our caucus before our regular meeting which

1 would be at 5:45 and will be open to the  
2 public.

3 And then the plan right now is to  
4 appoint a candidate to the position on Tuesday  
5 at our regular Council meeting? Okay, so --

6 MR. COLVIN: Sounds good. Yes, sir.

7 MR. GAUGHAN: Yep. We will be in  
8 touch with you either way. And again,  
9 appreciate you coming in today and interviewing  
10 for this position and good luck and good  
11 health.

12 MR. COLVIN: Thanks very much. I  
13 appreciate the opportunity.

14 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay.

15 MR. COLVIN: Bye-bye.

16 MR. DONAHUE: Thank you.

17 MR. MCANDREW: Thank you.

18 MS. REED: Councilman Gaughan?

19 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes.

20 MS. REED: Mr. Ferguson is dialling  
21 in now.

22 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay.

23 MS. REED: Thank you.

24

25 (TIMOTHY D. FERGUSON)

1 MR. GAUGHAN: Mr. Ferguson?

2 MR. FERGUSON: Mr. Gaughan, how are  
3 you?

4 MR. GAUGHAN: Good. How are you  
5 doing?

6 MR. FERGUSON: Not too bad. I'm  
7 trying to figure out how to get this on a  
8 picture, I guess.

9 MR. GAUGHAN: That's okay. As long  
10 as we could hear your voice. You're fine.

11 MR. FERGUSON: That sounds good.  
12 All right. Well, thanks a lot. Thank you for  
13 the opportunity this morning.

14 MR. GAUGHAN: Yeah, so I just wanted  
15 to thank you for, you know, putting your name  
16 in and willing to serve the public. So the way  
17 that the interview is going to work is I'll  
18 turn it over to you. And you'll have the  
19 opportunity to for a five-minute opening  
20 statement.

21 Just tell us about yourself and your  
22 background and anything else that you want to  
23 add. And then we will go from Councilperson to  
24 Councilperson who will each have a question for  
25 you and then we'll wrap it up, okay?

1 MR. FERGUSON: Sounds good. Thank  
2 you very much.

3 MR. GAUGHAN: So I'll turn it over  
4 to you and just tell us a little bit about  
5 yourself and anything that you feel is relevant  
6 to the position.

7 MR. FERGUSON: Sounds good,  
8 Mr. Gaughan. Thank you so much everyone. Good  
9 morning. And thank you for the opportunity  
10 for this interview for the position of City  
11 Council in the City of Scranton. My name is  
12 Timothy Ferguson. I'm a lifelong resident of  
13 the City of Scranton.

14 Currently I am married. I have one  
15 daughter. As you could see from my resume --  
16 unfortunately, the only ones that have it are  
17 the Council members. I am a former law  
18 enforcement official with just about 20 years  
19 experience and three years in education as a  
20 teacher as well as an administrator.

21 To me, always in my life, public  
22 office has been a lifelong development which is  
23 often times cultivated by a person's  
24 (inaudible) and their reputation within the  
25 community. Sometimes television and our social

1 media tend to glorify these positions and  
2 politics as a whole.

3 However, having worked in government  
4 for almost 20 years, I could say without  
5 hesitation that the call to public service is  
6 one that demands unwavering dedication to the  
7 people, demands empathy and a strong moral  
8 code.

9 Furthermore, I've seen first hand  
10 that the call to public service is one that  
11 demands passion, self-sacrifice and courage,  
12 especially in these untrying times. It is  
13 truly a call.

14 My relationship with the people of  
15 the City of Scranton will be very important to  
16 me. I would work tirelessly to create an  
17 environment in which citizens can openly share  
18 their opinion and their questions and concerns.

19 I would strive to be more than just  
20 a Councilman. I would do what I could and hope  
21 to be an inspiration to others. Many of the  
22 duties of the City Council would be to -- many  
23 of the certain duties of a City Councilman  
24 would be to implement policy that would promote  
25 a better life dialog and reflection on the

1 concepts and morals that are essential to  
2 building upon a city in this the 21st century.

3 Politics is an experience-centered  
4 discipline. My education and experience would  
5 greatly come to assist with the problems in  
6 today's society. My experience with the  
7 community at large in working with individuals  
8 within different ethnic backgrounds would give  
9 the people of the City of Scranton a  
10 representative of not a person who sees anyone  
11 of color but people of individual character.

12 Intolerant comments, disrespect,  
13 insults and divisiveness would have no place in  
14 City Council and within our community. We are  
15 better people than that. And we will overcome  
16 those who wish to divide us more.

17 In our world today we are faced with  
18 very serious issues, life threatening problems.  
19 Now is a time to come together as a people and  
20 unite not just to beat the issues but to be  
21 better people. If I was fortunate enough to  
22 become the next City Councilman, I would work  
23 to build upon the great City of Scranton and  
24 help these exceptional people.

25 Remembering, of course, that we the

1 people is tantamount to sustaining a community  
2 in which we can all thrive. For me, my faith,  
3 family and education has assisted me greatly  
4 in through my life. I have been inspired,  
5 humbled, and reminded time and time again and  
6 strived not to be just a remembered person but  
7 to simply be a good man.

8 With that, Mr. Gaughan, I ask anyone  
9 that has any questions at this time.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Sure. Thank you so  
11 much for your opening statements. The first  
12 Councilperson who is going to ask you a  
13 question will be Mark McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew?

14 MR. MCANDREW: Yes, good morning,  
15 Mr. Ferguson. And first of all, thank you very  
16 much for stepping up and seeking to serve our  
17 community. My question is, if appointed to  
18 Council, what would be one ordinance or policy  
19 you would want to see changed immediately and  
20 why?

21 MR. FERGUSON: One of the things I  
22 would hope to work on -- first of all, I'd have  
23 to get acclimated to the situation to see what  
24 policies are out there that are most affecting  
25 the people of the City of Scranton. The one

1           that I always thought about most was always our  
2           wage tax, the 3.4 percent.

3                       I notice that hampers a lot of  
4           people and certainly something everyone looks  
5           at their paychecks every other Friday or every  
6           Friday depending on your pay period. But it is  
7           something that I think that as a people we can  
8           sit down and look at and hopefully try to at  
9           least lower so that individuals could see  
10          themselves bringing home more money every other  
11          Friday.

12                   MR. MCANDREW: Thank you.

13                   MR. FERGUSON: You're welcome.

14                   MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you so  
15          much. Now we have Dr. Jessica Rothchild to ask  
16          our next question of you, Mr. Ferguson.

17                   DR. ROTHCHILD: Hi, Mr. Ferguson.

18                   MR. FERGUSON: Good morning, Doctor.

19                   DR. ROTHCHILD: How are you? What  
20          motivated you to apply for this position? Why  
21          would you like to serve on Council?

22                   MR. FERGUSON: The call to public  
23          service is always something that I thought  
24          about for quite a long time. Ever since the  
25          coronavirus came to -- come center stage, I

1           just feel now is the time for those who have  
2           skill, knowledge, and abilities to step up and  
3           do what they can for their fellow person.

4                        I don't think right now is a time  
5           for anyone to sit on the sideline. It's too  
6           serious of a time. And I think that I could  
7           help out so much more by being thrust right  
8           into the midst of politics and helping out the  
9           people of Scranton.

10                      And basically I am someone with a  
11           compromised immune system. So I'm a little  
12           more concerned about this issue today than say  
13           I would have been 20 years ago. But for the  
14           most part, I did feel as though today's issues  
15           are just very serious and I don't want to sit  
16           on the sides and watch others when I know I  
17           could help as well.

18                      DR. ROTHCHILD: Thank you. I  
19           appreciate your response.

20                      MR. FERGUSON: You're welcome.

21                      MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you,  
22           Mr. Ferguson. And the next Councilperson is  
23           Kyle Donahue who has a question for you.

24                      MR. DONAHUE: Thank you,  
25           Mr. Ferguson, for applying for this position

1 and taking the time out to interview with us  
2 today. Aside from everything that's going on  
3 now, in your opinion, what is the biggest  
4 challenge facing City Government and what could  
5 you bring to Council to help us address that  
6 challenge?

7 MR. FERGUSON: Well, as I said  
8 earlier, I would like to see all the issues  
9 that are playing out right now. Let's say, for  
10 instance, that one of the major issues playing  
11 out right now is just this coronavirus and how  
12 to go about best defeating.

13 City Council -- and what I would  
14 hope to bring would be organizational skills  
15 and strategic planning that would help  
16 politicians and, of course, healthcare workers  
17 best try to defeat this. If we were able to  
18 allocate funds that would assist healthcare  
19 workers in caring for people, then that would  
20 be the thing we would need to do immediately.

21 I don't think personally right now  
22 is the time for politicians. I believe we  
23 should be acting in -- as a strategic planning.  
24 That's about it. Right now is the time for  
25 doctors, healthcare workers to be in the

1           forefront and to give people the advice and the  
2           information they need to weather this storm.

3                     MR. DONAHUE: Thank you.

4                     MR. FERGUSON: You're welcome.

5                     MR. GAUGHAN: And finally,  
6           Mr. Ferguson, this is Councilman Gaughan again.  
7           Specifically, what do you wish to accomplish in  
8           a two-year term on Council? As you probably  
9           know, two years goes by very quickly. So if  
10          you had to, you know, prioritize things that  
11          you would like to get done legislatively, what  
12          would those things be?

13                    MR. FERGUSON: Well, earlier as I  
14          told I believe it was Mr. McAndrew, I would  
15          like to see the wage tax brought down to a  
16          level that, you know, a little easier for  
17          people to deal with.

18                    I'd also like to look at the  
19          Mercantile Tax. I mean, right now if I'm not  
20          mistaken, businesses -- taxes are based upon  
21          gross receipts for a year. I don't see that as  
22          being a terribly even -- fairly even playing  
23          field.

24                    I would like to look at that more  
25          and see if businesses could be given some

1 relief so they can stretch their dollar --  
2 their working dollar as best they possibly can  
3 as well.

4 Thankfully, we have one of the best  
5 police departments in the Commonwealth, one of  
6 the finest fire departments and a very devoted  
7 Department of Public Works. If there is  
8 anything that could be done to help those three  
9 departments better serve the people, I would  
10 do everything I possibly could to see to it  
11 that they have those means.

12 But for right now, the two major  
13 sticking points for me would be the wage tax of  
14 the City of Scranton as well as the Mercantile  
15 Tax.

16 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you so  
17 much. That concludes our interview today,  
18 Mr. Ferguson. We as a Council will deliberate  
19 over who we feel is the best candidate on  
20 Tuesday at our caucus before our regular  
21 meeting.

22 The caucus starts at 5:45. And it's  
23 open to the public. And then we will --  
24 hopefully the plan is to appoint someone next  
25 Tuesday at our regular meeting. We will

1 obviously in be in touch with you and let you  
2 know either way. And the Council appreciates  
3 you coming in today and interviewing for this  
4 vacant position.

5 MR. FERGUSON: Thank you everyone.  
6 I appreciate the opportunity.

7 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thanks. Have a  
8 nice day. Stay safe.

9 MR. FERGUSON: Take care. You too,  
10 pal. Thank you. Bye-bye.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: All right. Mrs. Reed?

12 MS. REED: Yes.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: I have Amber Viola  
14 who's the next candidate. She is in the  
15 waiting room here.

16 MRS. REED: Yes.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: So I'm going to let  
18 her in right now, okay? Hi, Miss Viola. Can  
19 you hear us? She's in here but it doesn't  
20 show that she has a microphone. So I'm not  
21 sure. So I see that you're in here, Miss  
22 Viola, but I don't see that you have a  
23 microphone or a way to speak to us. So I don't  
24 know if that is something on your end or --

25 MS. REED: Councilman Gaughan, I

1 just spoke with Miss Viola on her cell phone.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Oh, here she goes.

3 Okay, Miss Viola?

4 MS. VIOLA: Yes.

5 MR. GAUGHAN: There you are. Now I  
6 can hear you. My name is Bill Gaughan. I'm a  
7 City Councilman. We're conducting the  
8 interview as you know today for the vacancy on  
9 City Council. So thank you for applying and  
10 for being here this morning.

11 I just want to give you a rundown  
12 very briefly on how the interview is going to  
13 work. So I will turn it over to you in a  
14 second. And you'll have five minutes for an  
15 opening statement just to tell us a little bit  
16 about yourself, why you feel you're the best  
17 for the position and anything else you feel is  
18 relevant.

19 And then we have our City Council  
20 here; City Councilman Mark McAndrew, City  
21 Councilman Kyle Donahue, and City Councilwoman  
22 Dr. Jessica Rothchild here. And we'll go  
23 through -- and then we'll have a question or  
24 two for you as well, okay?

25 MS. VIOLA: Yeah.

1 MR. GAUGHAN: So we'll start. I'll  
2 turn it over to you and you'll have five  
3 minutes to start your opening statement.

4 MS. VIOLA: Okay. Should I go now?

5 MR. GAUGHAN: Yeah, you're up.

6 MS. VIOLA: Okay. Good morning.

7 First and foremost I'd really like to say thank  
8 you for this opportunity. Thank you,  
9 Councilman Gaughan, Donahue, Rothchild and  
10 McAndrew. I really appreciate it.

11 So my name is Amber Viola. I am 34  
12 years old. I have a beautiful daughter,  
13 Jacqueline. She's three. That is my dog  
14 barking. I apologize. I'm sorry.

15 MR. GAUGHAN: That's okay.

16 MS. VIOLA: So I have been back in  
17 Scranton now for the past three years. I went  
18 to North Pocono High School. And I grew up in  
19 Goulsboro. My first kind of foray into  
20 Scranton was going to the U. I ended up only  
21 staying a semester and I left. And I went to  
22 the Navy.

23 I did eight years in the Navy where  
24 I was a gunner's mate. I did two deployments  
25 and then I became a DOD victim advocate.

1           That's kind of how I got into the people  
2           service industry as I like to call it where I  
3           really found my calling for just helping  
4           people, especially those who have been  
5           marginalized and really underprivileged and  
6           really underrepresented.

7                         So after leaving the Navy I wanted  
8           to come back home because this area has always  
9           been home for me. And I decided to live in  
10          Scranton because I was going to Marywood  
11          University. So I started school the day I  
12          moved up here. I live in North Scranton off of  
13          Green Ridge.

14                        I love the area. It was kind of  
15          like coming home with almost rediscovering the  
16          area because it was so different. It went  
17          through such a transformation in the last ten  
18          years. And it just seemed so new and so  
19          vibrant and I honestly, I love it.

20                        After starting Marywood. I started  
21          working with a lot of local veterans'  
22          organizations. I'm a part of the Student  
23          Veterans Alliance at Marywood. And that kind  
24          of helped me get into a lot of the local  
25          organizations and just found out there's a lot

1 of needs here that aren't being met for women,  
2 for female veterans.

3 We have a huge veteran population  
4 here. We have a really big minority population  
5 here. This is such a diverse area. But I feel  
6 like when you look at kind of like the  
7 political side of Scranton, you don't really  
8 see that diversity mirrored back to the people.

9 And I really feel like I'm qualified  
10 because I'm really hardworking. I love working  
11 with people. I love being out there. I love  
12 getting down and dirty. I actually believe  
13 that anybody who wants to be a leader or any  
14 type of public servant has to first learn how  
15 to serve and be down -- I could never ask  
16 anybody to get down and do something that I  
17 would never do.

18 So for me, I really want to make  
19 sure that I'm a great example to my daughter  
20 and to the people around me and show them, you  
21 know, the hope that I feel like Scranton really  
22 has. And I want to see it turn into like a  
23 younger, more vibrant city. And I really want  
24 people to see it the way that I see it. That's  
25 about me.

1 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you so  
2 much. I will turn it over now to Councilman  
3 Mark McAndrew, Miss Viola, to ask our first  
4 question.

5 MS. VIOLA: Okay.

6 MR. MCANDREW: Good morning, Miss  
7 Viola.

8 MS. VIOLA: Good morning.

9 MR. MCANDREW: Thank you very much  
10 for stepping up and seeking to serve our  
11 community. My question is if appointed to  
12 Council, what would be one ordinance or policy  
13 you would want to see changed immediately and  
14 why?

15 MS. VIOLA: I think for me I used to  
16 work downtown. So I know how the parking  
17 situation is when you work there, especially if  
18 you work, like, at the mall or something where  
19 you don't really have a lot of money coming in.  
20 I think it would be some type of way to make it  
21 just more efficient and cheaper for the people  
22 that work there and easier access to parking.

23 Either easier access for like -- I  
24 love now how, you know, there's a policy where  
25 you could run in and grab stuff because of the

1 coronavirus and you don't have to pay for it.  
2 Maybe keep something like that in the future.

3 MR. MCANDREW: Thank you.

4 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you.

5 Miss Viola, our next question will come from  
6 Dr. Jessica Rothchild.

7 DR. ROTHCHILD: Hi, Miss Viola. I  
8 wanted to ask you what specific skills or  
9 background do you possess that would be useful  
10 if you were appointed to Council?

11 MS. VIOLA: My last duty assignment  
12 when I was in the military was an instructor.  
13 So I was over millions dollars' worth of  
14 equipment and building. And I had over 500 or  
15 so people under me. But the team that I worked  
16 with, there was only five of us. And we all  
17 worked 24 hour shifts.

18 So we didn't even really get to see  
19 each other that much. We normally had a staff  
20 meeting about once a week. But most of our  
21 communication through the week was, you know,  
22 text, e-mail, things like that. But it really  
23 just taught me how to not just work on my own  
24 but also work within a team of people and make  
25 sure that I have good communication with

1 people.

2 It also taught me that you're not  
3 always going to agree on things, and that's  
4 honestly okay as long as you're making sure  
5 that everybody is coming together really trying  
6 to really make something happen.

7 And I feel like that is something  
8 that I learned and I could really bring to the  
9 City Council.

10 DR. ROTHCHILD: Okay. Thank you  
11 very much.

12 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Miss Viola.  
13 So the next person asking a question is  
14 Councilman Kyle Donahue.

15 MR. DONAHUE: Miss Viola, thank you  
16 very much for taking the time out of your day  
17 and showing interest in serving your community.  
18 Aside from, you know, everything going on with  
19 the coronavirus, in your opinion, what is the  
20 biggest challenge facing City Government and  
21 what could you bring to Council to help us  
22 address that challenge?

23 MS. VIOLA: Thank you so much. I  
24 feel like in this area a big challenge is just  
25 jobs and bringing more permanent jobs in, jobs

1           that aren't just temporary, jobs that aren't  
2           just part time and also just the wages in the  
3           area, you know, for people to be able to  
4           actually, you know, work, live, and eat in  
5           Scranton and not have to have four or five  
6           different jobs.

7                         We have a really older population  
8           here. So just making sure that we're having a  
9           healthy population as people age helping people  
10          be able to age in place, helping people be able  
11          to age with dignity. There's really high  
12          loneliness factors when it comes to the ageing  
13          population.

14                        So I think that's something that's  
15          really important here to kind of like focus on.  
16          And I think that would really help boost like  
17          morale in the area and help boost the economy  
18          in the area too.

19                        MR. DONAHUE: Thank you very much.

20                        MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, Miss Viola, I  
21          have a question for you. This is Councilman  
22          Gaughan. What specifically do you wish to  
23          accomplish in a two-year term on Council from a  
24          legislative perspective? So what type of  
25          legislation would you want passed? What type

1 of things would you want to accomplish  
2 specifically in a two-year term if you were  
3 appointed to Council?

4 MS. VIOLA: So something that's  
5 really close to my heart with the City as I  
6 kind of mentioned in my introduction was the  
7 need for more services for women. There's no  
8 homeless shelter here, like, specifically for  
9 women and kids.

10 So I would really try to push a way  
11 to kind of make that happen. We have a whole  
12 population here that isn't -- their needs  
13 aren't being met. And that's something that I  
14 would honestly really like to focus on. I  
15 volunteered at CIC. And I was an intern there.  
16 And I can't tell you how many calls I received  
17 on daily basis from women calling with kids and  
18 crying over the phone saying they had nowhere  
19 to stay.

20 And there's no shelters in the area  
21 that if you have, you know, kids under 18 that  
22 you could can just walk into and, you know, be  
23 able to -- so that is something I would really  
24 want to focus on. And I think that two years  
25 is a short time. But it's also a long time.

1           So I think that a lot of things could be done.

2                         And I would really love to see the  
3           minority population in Scranton get a lot more  
4           involved with a lot of the local events that go  
5           on here, local politics that go on here. I  
6           would love to go to things and feel like, you  
7           know, it's reflective of what the actual  
8           community here looks like.

9                         MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you so  
10          much. Well, that concludes our interview, Miss  
11          Viola. Again, I want to thank you for coming  
12          in today and showing interest in this position.  
13          Thank you for your service to the country that  
14          you described in the beginning of your remarks.

15                         And just so you know how we'll work  
16          now moving forward, we're going to  
17          deliberate -- Council will deliberate Tuesday  
18          during our caucus at 5:45. And then the plan  
19          is to make a choice and make an appointment at  
20          our regular meeting on Tuesday.

21                         So we will be in touch with you  
22          either way to let you know. And again, I want  
23          to thank you so much for coming in today and  
24          showing interest in the position.

25                         MS. VIOLA: Thank you so much. I

1 really appreciate this opportunity and I  
2 really -- you guys stay safe and have a great  
3 day.

4 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, you too. Thank  
5 you so much. Bye-bye. Okay, Mrs. Reed, we  
6 have next person is Andy Chomko.

7 MRS. REED: Correct.

8 MR. GAUGHAN: We're just waiting for  
9 him to call in.

10 MR. CHOMKO: Hi. Can you guys hear  
11 me? Hello? Mr. Gaughan --

12 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes. Yep. Hi, Andy.  
13 How are you?

14 MR. CHOMKO: Not too bad,  
15 Mr. President, how are you?

16 MR. GAUGHAN: We're all hanging in  
17 there. Just to give you an idea, Mr. Chomko,  
18 how the interview process is going to work  
19 today, first of all, thank you for submitting  
20 your name and showing interest in the vacant  
21 position.

22 I'm going to turn it over to you in  
23 a second. You'll have five minutes for an  
24 opening statement. And then I will go around  
25 the room to each Councilperson and they will

1 ask you one or two questions, okay?

2 MR. CHOMKO: All right. I

3 appreciate that. Thank you.

4 MR. GAUGHAN: Yep, so if you could  
5 just on your opening statement in five minutes  
6 if you could just tell us a little bit about  
7 yourself, your background, you know, anything  
8 that you think is relevant for this position.

9 MR. CHOMKO: All right. Thank you.  
10 I understand. Hello, Council. I appreciate  
11 the opportunity and thank you for staying in  
12 tune with our community to try to help us get  
13 through this craziness.

14 I hope that when we're talking about  
15 this appointment to the newly position -- the  
16 newly vacant seat on City Council you guys ask  
17 yourselves a few things. Who among the  
18 applicants have continuously helped our  
19 citizens? I could answer that by saying I have  
20 continually met with concerned citizens who  
21 contacted me for help when they had nowhere to  
22 go.

23 I could answer by saying I recently  
24 cleaned out veterans' homes that were in  
25 deplorable condition and they were going to get

1 condemned if something wasn't done about it and  
2 they had nowhere to turn. They turned to a  
3 nonprofit that I'm involved with and a  
4 cofounder to get it done. We're able to help  
5 people that way, specifically veterans.

6 I could answer that by saying that I  
7 continue to moderate the West Side neighborhood  
8 meetings that we have on a monthly basis. We  
9 help concerned citizens navigate through  
10 validated concerns and point them in the right  
11 direction where to go to see things through.

12 I could answer that by saying that  
13 regardless of where this virtual meeting goes,  
14 I'm committed to helping people. And that's  
15 exactly why a platform such as City Council  
16 will allow me to expand the work I've already  
17 been involved with.

18 My entire adult life is about  
19 service, service to others. We're all here  
20 together, one community, different  
21 neighborhoods and we're all here to serve  
22 others. I believe that we're able to help  
23 bring together -- I believe I would be able to  
24 bring together a local legislative body of  
25 government that has been broken down over the

1 past few years, whereas moving forward thanks  
2 to new leadership and the guidance of the new  
3 Council and the new Mayor.

4 I genuinely want to see everyone  
5 within the City work toward common goals,  
6 enforce standards, have order and have general  
7 rules of conduct, whether you choose to appoint  
8 me or not I will continue to serve the citizens  
9 of Scranton in a different capacity.

10 Those of my supporters who have been  
11 with me from the beginning know what I stand  
12 for. They know that I will take on more than  
13 what is required of me, know that I will not  
14 tolerate morally and ethically wrong traits,  
15 actions and/or deeds.

16 When I say from the beginning, I  
17 think you guys need to understand this. I mean  
18 all the way back when Jack Loscombe's seat was  
19 up for appointment in 2014. That was the first  
20 time I openly and actively started trying to  
21 help our community in a more official capacity.

22 At that time I prepared a letter and  
23 resume but never submitted it. Coincidentally  
24 that has led me here today. Most of you know  
25 my background. However, many of you may not

1 know my approach of getting things done.

2 If not, here are a few examples. I  
3 was 16. I saw 911 happen. I joined the  
4 military. Not only did I join the military but  
5 I volunteered. I volunteered to go into the  
6 infantry. I volunteered to jump out of  
7 airplanes and then to hunt the actual men who  
8 did this to our country on 911.

9 It was part of a military  
10 brotherhood that was -- they're known as the  
11 tip of the spear, special operations. I was a  
12 team leader there. When I returned to Scranton  
13 I saw the amount of veterans who were in need  
14 and I did something about that.

15 I started a nonprofit to help local  
16 veterans. I saw the quality of life in our  
17 neighborhoods in question, got a group together  
18 in West Scranton for people to come together  
19 and talk about their problems and how we can  
20 move forward. I did something about issues.

21 It's more than just doing something  
22 about a wrong or trying to make something  
23 right. It's about being involved and truly  
24 caring about people, making a difference in the  
25 lives around us. As Mayor Evans has said,

1 every day is your chance to make this City a  
2 little bit better.

3 As I said in the beginning, you as  
4 Council members obviously need to ask yourself  
5 questions about who you're going to appoint,  
6 what does each applicant exemplify in their  
7 prior work history, knowledge, and past  
8 experiences that will work towards the common  
9 goal of moving the City forward.

10 I can answer that by saying I have a  
11 clear reason to want to help. I'm part of a  
12 family business that faces a tax burden that  
13 runs other small businesses out of town, I've  
14 experience -- I have experience in managing  
15 finances and keep our small business profitable  
16 despite tough times in the past 19 -- sorry, 13  
17 years.

18 It is my understanding that former  
19 Councilman Rogan headed the Finance Committee,  
20 which makes me confident in my ability to lead  
21 through by attending pertinent finance  
22 discussions outside of Council meetings in  
23 order to move the City's finances in a positive  
24 direction.

25 I could be a conduit by briefing

1 Council, meaning you guys, on updates, ideas,  
2 and action items. In my profession as a  
3 funeral director, I've also seen the side  
4 effects of the opioid epidemic. And I believe  
5 we could do more.

6 Additionally, I'm a veteran who not  
7 only wants to help veterans but also to  
8 marginalize the population of our City. I seen  
9 firsthand, the amount of veterans that are in  
10 need through my nonprofit and the finite  
11 sources that the government has to offer.

12 Lastly, as a licensed funeral  
13 director, taxpayer, business person in the City  
14 and property owner, I know the struggles of  
15 many citizens from all different walks of life.  
16 It is my intention to represent them all.

17 When making your decision, please  
18 ask yourself who exemplifies their commitment  
19 to this City on a daily basis. Thank you.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Mr. Chomko.  
21 Our first question will come from Councilman  
22 Mark McAndrew. Mr. McAndrew?

23 MR. MCANDREW: Yes. Good morning,  
24 Mr. Chomko. First of all, thank you very much  
25 for stepping up and seeking to serve our

1 community. My question is, if appointed to  
2 Council what would be one ordinance or policy  
3 you would want to see changed immediately and  
4 why?

5 MR. CHOMKO: Thank you, Councilman  
6 McAndrew. I appreciate the question. I  
7 couldn't narrow it down to one. But there's a  
8 multitude of things. I would love to implement  
9 some sort of standard of conduct for ourselves,  
10 for those that would be coming to Council  
11 meetings or employees of the City.

12 Other things I would like to change  
13 and possibly have a conversation about, the  
14 garbage fees. Another thing I would like to  
15 bring to light, the citizens of our City  
16 already voted to eliminate the Mercantile Tax.  
17 I want to explore why this hasn't happened yet.

18 In changing things, I would like to  
19 get rid of some dated and antiquated ordinances  
20 that need to be removed and put some new things  
21 in place to replace the old stuff. I hope that  
22 answered your question, Councilman.

23 MR. MCANDREW: Thank you.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you. Our  
25 next question will come from Dr. Rothchild.

1 DR. ROTHCHILD: Hi, Mr. Chomko.  
2 Thank you for applying for the appointment. I  
3 appreciate your interest. I'd like to know a  
4 little bit more about what specific skills you  
5 feel like you possess that would be useful if  
6 appointed to this position.

7 MR. CHOMKO: Thank you for the  
8 question, Doctor. Well, there's a saying in  
9 the Army Rangers. Rangers lead the way. And  
10 that's exactly what I intend on doing. When it  
11 comes to how I could lead and how I could bring  
12 things to the table, you guys have my resume.

13 I'm sure it's public knowledge at  
14 this point. But being in special operations  
15 and being part of a group that was in  
16 unchartered waters when it came to the global  
17 war on terrorism, there's certain things that I  
18 did during my deployments that I got  
19 recognition for.

20 I have a couple of awards. And I  
21 would be happy to show them to you. But I  
22 implemented SOPs, standard operating procedures  
23 for duties and tasks that were required of me.  
24 That is one reason that I could help bring some  
25 leadership to Council.

1 I mean, others, I'm a licensed  
2 funeral director in the state. And although  
3 funerals to the outsiders' eye might be a  
4 cookie cutter type deal, it is not. Every  
5 family that we serve is a unique case. There  
6 are different things that need to be done. And  
7 we need to be intuitive. We need to be  
8 innovative to meet the needs of our families,  
9 of our client families. I hope that answers  
10 your question.

11 DR. ROTHCHILD: Yes. Thank you very  
12 much. I appreciate your time.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. And  
14 Councilman Donahue has a question for you now.

15 MR. DONAHUE: Mr. Chomko, first off,  
16 thank you for, you know, taking your time out  
17 of the day and showing interest in serving  
18 your community.

19 Aside from everything going on, you  
20 know, with the health pandemic we're dealing  
21 with right now, but aside from that; what do  
22 you feel is the biggest challenge facing City  
23 Government and what could you bring to Council  
24 to help us address that challenge?

25 MR. CHOMKO: Biggest challenge in my

1 opinion -- thanks for the question, Councilman.  
2 The biggest challenge in my opinion is getting  
3 the public to believe in our local government  
4 again. I remember when I was a kid, you know,  
5 always listening to the older adults in the  
6 room or just listening to them.

7 They talked about our City and how  
8 it was. And how it was good, how it was bad,  
9 how it was indifferent. I mean, my  
10 generation -- our generation -- and I'm sure  
11 you guys hear it too. People are kind of  
12 ticked off. They want -- they want more out of  
13 our City Government.

14 And we should give that to them.  
15 What we could do -- the challenge is getting  
16 people to believe. How do we get them to  
17 believe? Getting them to believe in my opinion  
18 to enact standards of conduct for our  
19 employees.

20 Have you guys ever listened to the  
21 actual air waives that are going on with our  
22 city services? I hope you have. And if you  
23 haven't, I recommend that you do because the  
24 radio etiquette of our people that are driving  
25 our City vehicles is disgusting. And that

1 would be one way.

2 I received several phone calls over  
3 the past couple months of, hey, are you  
4 listening to these guys on the radio? I'm not  
5 talking about our policeman. I'm not talking  
6 about our firefighters.

7 But radio etiquette, there needs to  
8 be standards of conduct for our people and for  
9 our City employees. I hope that answers your  
10 question, sir.

11 MR. DONAHUE: Thank you, Mr. Chomko.  
12 I appreciate it.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. And this  
14 is Councilman Gaughan. I have one final  
15 question for you. What do you wish to  
16 accomplish legislatively in a two-year term on  
17 Council? And please try to be as specific as  
18 possible.

19 MR. CHOMKO: Thank you for your  
20 question, Councilman. With everything going on  
21 now, I'm sure you guys know. It is very  
22 fluid -- fluid time right now, especially for  
23 you guys. I'm sure in the normal Council  
24 chambers there's fluid situations and what you  
25 intend on doing isn't what you might

1 necessarily do.

2 With that being said, the remainder  
3 of this term is less than two years. I would  
4 be willing to bet that the coronavirus,  
5 Covid-19 outbreak is going to be around for at  
6 least that long.

7 I believe if we could enact specific  
8 legislation to better prepare our population,  
9 our city, our taxpayers, our citizens, to have  
10 a better response from our government. If  
11 there's any way that we could implement  
12 standard operation procedures, standards of  
13 conduct, standards of living for our citizens  
14 we would all be better off. And I would love  
15 to dive into that and to get that specifically  
16 done for our people.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you so  
18 much, Mr. Chomko. That concludes our interview  
19 for today. We want to thank you for coming in.  
20 Thank you for your service to our country. We  
21 will deliberate about the candidate and the  
22 position on Tuesday at our caucus, which is  
23 open to the public.

24 And then we will make a decision  
25 there and then we will hopefully appoint

1           someone at our regular meeting on Tuesday. So  
2           we'll be in touch with you either way. And  
3           again, I want to thank you for coming in and  
4           stay safe. Stay healthy. And we will see you  
5           soon. Thank you.

6                     MR. CHOMKO: Thank you, everyone.  
7           Stay safe. God bless.

8                     MR. GAUGHAN: Bye-bye. Okay, now we  
9           are waiting for Mr. Schuster, Tom Schuster.  
10          He's our last person. He's calling in right  
11          now, Lori?

12                    MS. REED: Yes, he is.

13                    MR. GAUGHAN: And he's 335.

14                    MS. REED: Correct.

15                    MR. GAUGHAN: Mr. Schuster.

16                    MR. SCHUSTER: Hello.

17                    MR. GAUGHAN: How are you? How's  
18          everything?

19                    MR. SCHUSTER: All right. How are  
20          you? I heard twenty participants. Is that how  
21          many we have on the line?

22                    MR. GAUGHAN: There are 24 total.  
23          So several members of the public are here, Mr.  
24          Schuster. Myself -- we have Councilman  
25          Donahue, Councilman McAndrew, Councilwoman

1 Rothchild. We have our City Clerk, Lori Reed.  
2 And we have our Council Solicitor, Kevin Hayes  
3 is here as well.

4 So I just want to take a second and  
5 give you a rundown on how the interview process  
6 will work today. I will turn it over to you in  
7 a second. And you will have five minutes for  
8 an opening statement just to tell us a little  
9 bit about yourself, your background and  
10 anything you feel is relevant to the position.

11 And then we will go around the room  
12 and each Councilperson will have a question or  
13 two for you, okay?

14 MR. SCHUSTER: All right. Sounds  
15 good.

16 MR. GAUGHAN: All right. So I will  
17 turn it over to you. You have five minutes for  
18 an opening statement.

19 MR. SCHUSTER: All right. First of  
20 all, I'd like to thank the members of the  
21 public that came out with the situation that  
22 we're in right now. It's good to see some  
23 people came out to hear what's going on in the  
24 interviews today.

25 My name is Tom Schuster. I'm a

1           lifelong resident of Scranton, Pennsylvania. I  
2           earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and  
3           business from Penn State University. I earned  
4           a Master's Degree in Behavioral Analysis from  
5           St. Joseph's University. I started my board  
6           experience here in the City of Scranton on the  
7           Planning Commission, which I got about I'd say  
8           about a year and a half or so experience on  
9           that board doing projects such as the Popeye's  
10          in South Side, Hildebrandt Learning Center,  
11          things such as that before I became a member of  
12          the Scranton School Board.

13                        So I've been on the Scranton School  
14          Board for the last four years. And in that  
15          time there I have been the Chairman of the  
16          Budget and Finance Committee. I've been the  
17          Chairman of Labor Relations, Special Education  
18          and purchasing and also personnel.

19                        With my time on the board I've  
20          strived to improve the process for hiring for  
21          bidding by pushing other colleagues to get a  
22          bid schedule. And I have been pushing for more  
23          efficient government as well on that board.

24                        I feel coming into this position my  
25          board experience could be a continuation on my

1 public service and another way to serve the  
2 City of Scranton while on Council. So at this  
3 point in time I've helped to get the board --  
4 the Scranton School Board into a much better  
5 place than when I started. This year we passed  
6 a balanced budget without borrowing which has  
7 taken four years of my time on that board.

8 We have changed the board makeup  
9 through elections. And by that I mean that  
10 currently there are many members of that board  
11 are committed to change. They're committed to  
12 open and transparent government. And I think  
13 the Scranton School Board is in pretty good  
14 hands at this point in time.

15 We also passed a district recovery  
16 plan which will get the district solvent within  
17 five years. We set up a bid schedule for  
18 district services. And me and several other  
19 colleagues also pushed for an investigation  
20 with the Attorney General to look into district  
21 corruption which is occurring on -- I mean,  
22 it's ongoing right now.

23 So my goal getting onto the Scranton  
24 School Board was to balance the budget to get  
25 the district solvent, which we're on our way to

1           that. And I ran several elections which I  
2           strode for open -- transparency on the board,  
3           financial responsibility and also working for  
4           student achievement.

5                        I think that's my opening statement  
6           if there's any questions from the members of  
7           Council.

8                        MR. GAUGHAN: Sure. Thank you,  
9           Mr. Schuster. I will turn it over first to  
10          Councilman Mark McAndrew who has a question for  
11          you. Thank you.

12                      MR. SCHUSTER: All right. Before we  
13          continue, can you guys hear me clear?  
14          Everything's coming through fine?

15                      MR. GAUGHAN: Yeah, we could hear  
16          you good. Thank you.

17                      MR. SCHUSTER: Okay. All right.  
18          Thank you.

19                      MR. MCANDREW: Good morning, Mr.  
20          Schuster.

21                      MR. SCHUSTER: Good morning.

22                      MR. MCANDREW: First of all, thank  
23          you very much for stepping up and seeking to  
24          serve our community. My question is, if  
25          appointed to Council, what would be one

1 ordinance or policy you would want to see  
2 changed immediately and why?

3 MR. SCHUSTER: Okay. So thinking  
4 about City ordinances and policies, I think  
5 first of all two come to mind. I think the  
6 garbage fee being one and the quality of life.  
7 What I'm thinking about the quality of life  
8 ordinances, I kind of feel that maybe fell by  
9 the wayside.

10 I don't know, really don't know  
11 what's currently going on within the LIPS  
12 Department. But I feel like that might be  
13 something we need to reevaluate. But getting  
14 back to the garbage fee. This fee and what my  
15 understanding was it was supposed to be profit  
16 neutral, meaning what we took in was supposed  
17 to cover our cost of it.

18 So at this point in time I'm not  
19 sure where the money's going and how much it's  
20 covering. But I think we may need to look into  
21 that. Maybe not so much on a policy but with  
22 some of the services the City is in contract  
23 with, Northeast Revenue, are we -- just to ask  
24 the Council right now. Are we currently out of  
25 contract with Northeast Revenue?

1 MR. GAUGHAN: No. We are still  
2 under contract with them as far as the  
3 administration has informed Council.

4 MR. SCHUSTER: Okay, so I think  
5 possibly moving away from that. I know there  
6 is talk to moving that collection to the  
7 county, which I think would save some money.  
8 So I think that pretty much sums up -- I mean,  
9 the things that come to mind with that  
10 question.

11 MR. MCANDREW: Thank you.

12 MR. SCHUSTER: Thank you.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. Dr.  
14 Rothchild has a question for you as well,  
15 Mr. Schuster.

16 DR. ROTHCHILD: Hi, Mr. Schuster.  
17 Thank you for applying for this appointment. I  
18 do have a question for you. So what motivated  
19 you to apply for this position and why would  
20 you like to serve on Council?

21 MR. SCHUSTER: Okay, so with this  
22 particular position here I think -- so  
23 historically for me, many of my supporters and  
24 people that have worked for my campaign have  
25 always wanted me to focus on City Council.

1                   But thinking about and getting into  
2                   City Government I always felt that the school  
3                   district was most in need was how I saw that.  
4                   So going against some of the judgment of some  
5                   of my supporters, I focused on the Scranton  
6                   School Board.

7                   But since the resignation of Mr.  
8                   Rogan, I've gotten many calls pushing me to put  
9                   in for this position. And I think those phone  
10                  calls are what prompted me to get into  
11                  actually putting my resume in for this. Also  
12                  with this position or this vacancy in  
13                  particular, my experience with the school board  
14                  recently was that we put out an advertisement  
15                  for a board vacancy and it didn't really get  
16                  too much coverage.

17                  And we didn't have a lot of  
18                  applicants for the seat. And we had to go back  
19                  and readvertise and try to get some more  
20                  coverage for that. So with this particular  
21                  vacancy, I didn't really see a lot of coverage  
22                  in the newspaper. And I think I had some fear  
23                  that Council wasn't going to get too many  
24                  applicants.

25                  And I just wanted to be -- to get my

1 name in there to help with that process. And  
2 then, like I said, with the situation the  
3 school district got itself into, was that we  
4 didn't have many applicants to choose from.

5 But now going back into a historical  
6 motivation, I've always planned on serving the  
7 City. And after finishing college, after  
8 moving out of my parent's home and getting  
9 married to my wife, it was something that I let  
10 her know that if we're going to be living in  
11 the City, I'm probably going to be running for  
12 office.

13 So serving the City is something I  
14 planned to do even prior to buying a home in  
15 Scranton. And then recently I sold my home and  
16 I moved. And I feel with the taxes in the  
17 City, I've doubled down. I've gone from a home  
18 that I paid around 3,000 in taxes to a home  
19 that pays about 6,000 in taxes. So I've felt  
20 like I've doubled down. I've dug in. And I'm  
21 staying with this City. And I'm going to  
22 support the City in that way as well.

23 DR. ROTHCHILD: Okay. Well, thank  
24 you for your response. And thank you for your  
25 service to the board as well.

1 MR. SCHUSTER: Thank you very much.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. And,  
3 Mr. Schuster, now we have Councilman Kyle  
4 Donahue with a question for you.

5 MR. DONAHUE: Mr. Schuster, thank  
6 you very much for taking the time out to, you  
7 know, show your interest in this and serving  
8 your community. Aside from everything that's  
9 going on with this virus right now, in your  
10 opinion, what is the biggest challenge facing  
11 City Government and what could you bring to  
12 Council to help us address that challenge?

13 MR. SCHUSTER: I'm going to say so  
14 with that one I would probably would say the  
15 current pandemic. But I think right now the  
16 exit of Act 47. And what could I bring to the  
17 table with that was recently with the table of  
18 tax conversion, I've been in some discussion  
19 with members of Council, with members of the  
20 City, with Mr. Blake and some other  
21 representatives as well as a recent phone call  
22 with the Mayor of Pittsburgh navigating the  
23 exit recommendations, I guess, of the City.

24 So I think what I could bring to  
25 that is that I have been part of the

1           conversations with that and helping the City  
2           exit Act 47 status.

3                     MR. DONAHUE: Thank you.

4                     MR. SCHUSTER: That was a quick  
5           answer.

6                     MR. DONAHUE: That's all right.

7                     MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Mr.  
8           Donahue. Mr. Schuster, it's Councilman Gaughan  
9           again. So what do you wish to accomplish if  
10          you were appointed to the two-year term on  
11          Council legislatively? What would be some  
12          specific things that you would like to see done  
13          or you would like to see passed?

14                    MR. SCHUSTER: With that question,  
15          that's also something that has been in the  
16          works. We started a Shared Services Committee  
17          on the school board going back I would say at  
18          least two years ago and with some of the past  
19          administrations in both the district and in the  
20          City.

21                    That kind of -- the growth of that  
22          committee kind of got stunted. But recently  
23          we've been working together and cooperating  
24          with the district as well with City and the  
25          county which is nice to see. I think within

1           that short two-year period we could get some  
2           major accomplishments in shared services. But  
3           I think a lot of money could be saved in that  
4           area.

5                         Immediately, the district right now  
6           is looking into garbage pickup and garbage  
7           collection. And I think administration of the  
8           district is looking to go into a private  
9           pickup, which I don't particularly like the  
10          idea.

11                        I think it's something that we can  
12          immediately get into with the City to see how  
13          the City, whether it be hybrid, whether it be a  
14          sole pickup, but I think the garbage pickup the  
15          City helping the school district with that  
16          pickup could be something that could be done  
17          immediately.

18                        And I also think with purchasing and  
19          procurement in some of the conversations we've  
20          had, I think a lot of money could be saved with  
21          group purchasing, having a higher purchasing  
22          power going in with -- as a larger group with  
23          larger purchases cooperating with the City, the  
24          county and the school district.

25                        I know initial conversations were

1 purchasing of rock salt, IT, and cleaning and  
2 painting supplies. So if we're doing group  
3 purchasing, I think a lot of money could be  
4 saved with that. So to say a quick immediate  
5 accomplishment I think continuing to work with  
6 shared services and keeping that bond together  
7 with the school district and continuing to  
8 work through what we've just recently started  
9 since December.

10 So that's a new process. And I  
11 think there's a lot of growth there in that  
12 area.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you very  
14 much. Mr. Schuster, that concludes our  
15 interview for today. So we want to thank you  
16 for coming in. We are going to deliberate  
17 about the appointment on -- at our caucus on  
18 Tuesday, March 24th. So we will do that at  
19 that public setting.

20 And then hopefully we will appoint  
21 someone at our regular meeting. So we will be  
22 in touch with you and let you know either way.  
23 Okay, so again, I want to thank you for coming  
24 in.

25 MR. SCHUSTER: All right. Thank you

1 very much. You guys have a good day.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. You too.

3 DR. ROTHCHILD. Thank you.

4 MR. SCHUSTER: Thank you.

5 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay, ladies and  
6 gentlemen, so that concludes all of our  
7 interviews for today. We had six applicants.  
8 Again, I want to thank each of them for coming  
9 in and, you know, showing commitment towards  
10 the City and interest in this vacant position.

11 We'll conclude the meeting here in a  
12 second. But before we do that, I just want to  
13 remind everyone that, you know, during these  
14 difficult times with the coronavirus pandemic,  
15 Council is still going to meet regularly as  
16 long as we have legislation on our agenda,  
17 which we do.

18 So the plan is to meet this Tuesday,  
19 March 24th at 5:45 in our regular caucus. We  
20 are going to meet in a Zoom room just like  
21 this. The information was in the newspaper.  
22 I think there will be an article in tomorrow or  
23 Monday with more information on that.

24 The information is also on our City  
25 website under the Council page. So we will

1 meet in the regular caucus at 5:45. Our  
2 regular meeting will start at 6:30. We're  
3 going to run the meeting just like we would if  
4 we were in Council Chambers, except it will be  
5 virtual, similar to what we're doing here.

6 Okay, so if there's no further  
7 business, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

8 DR. ROTHCHILD: Motion.

9 MR. GAUGHAN: This meeting is  
10 adjourned. Thank you so much. Bye-bye.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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2  
3 I hereby certify that the proceedings and  
4 evidence are contained fully and accurately in the  
5 notes taken by me of the above-cause and that this copy  
6 is a correct transcript of the same to the best of my  
7 ability.

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10 \_\_\_\_\_  
11 Maria McCool, RPR  
12 Official Court Reporter  
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22 (The foregoing certificate of this transcript does not  
23 apply to any reproduction of the same by any means  
24 unless under the direct control and/or supervision of  
25 the certifying reporter.)