

**CITY OF MCKEESPORT**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**MONDAY**

**7:01 P.M.**

**FEBRUARY 2, 2022**

The regular meeting of Council was called to order on the above-stated date at the above-stated time after the Pledge of Allegiance by President Dellapenna and a Moment of Silence.

Reverend Marty Smith was present to lead everyone in prayer.

The following Members of Council were present:

**RC-1           PRESENT:   RICHARD DELLAPENNA, TIMOTHY BROWN,  
LUETHEL NESBIT, BRIAN EVANS, JILL LAPE, KEITH SOLES, JIM BARRY**

Solicitor Elash announced at this time the next order of business is the election of the President of Council and asked for any nominations.

Mr. Soles nominated Richard Dellapenna for President of Council and it was seconded by Mr. Evans. Solicitor Elash asked for any further nominations for President of Council. There being no further nominations Solicitor Elash asked for a roll call vote.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

President Dellapenna asked for a Motion to Approve the Minutes of the regular meeting of December 4, 2021.

**MOTION:   Mr. Evans moved, seconded by Mr. Soles, “to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 3, 2022.”**

**RC-2           YEAS: DELLAPENNA, BROWN, NESBIT, EVANS, LAPE,  
SOLES, BARRY (7)**

**NAYS: NONE (0)**

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Secretary James reported that we received the Fire Report for the month of January 2022.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:**

President Dellapenna asked for the Mayor's Report.

Mayor Cherepko said thank you Mr. President. I will be fairly brief.

First off, many of us heard of the passing of Dee Connor. Dee was someone who truly loved this City and was involved with the City for a very, very long time, probably long before I was even around. She served on many Boards, from Zoning Board to the Planning Commission, the Senior Center, Redevelopment Authority, she wasn't on Planning she was on Zoning. She was on Redevelopment Authority and all, the task force, she was in charge of the Hill Task Force. She was part of really putting together the McKeesport Joint Task Force that brought all of the task forces together and it's very unfortunate that we lost Dee and she will most certainly be missed.

In addition to Dee, another person who was part of the community for a long time with the funeral home, also served on the Housing Authority for probably 20 some years, Bill Craig, former owner of Craig's Funeral Home. He said on the Housing Authority Board for a very long time as well and many take it for granted but I can tell you the one thing about sitting here in my seat as Mayor is seeing the time, energy and exhaustive efforts that so many people put forth just to try to have their part in making McKeesport a better place to live, a better place to work, and those types of things. So, those are two individuals that served on Boards, of course we lose people every day that love the City. I am not looking to miss anyone but I mention those two, just so everyone is clear, because they served on Boards here for a very long time. But I always say that's something unique about McKeesport is the people that truly just love the City and have so much pride in the City. You can describe it to people from the outside as much as you want but they truly don't get a

grasp of just what it means. But those two will be missed for sure. May they rest in peace.

Just to go through a few things here. The March Council meeting we will be coming to Council with a few different, we are hoping to have a few different contracts for demolition. I am hoping to at least come to Council with roughly, on this first round, let's say between March and April, at least getting probably about 150 houses. If we can get them put out to contractors in March's meeting or April's meeting, the target is March, we are looking to hit every ward in the City. Once again, I talk about the strategy of the demolition. Of course, we take complaints, always come into play, but the strategy is a very complicated one. You are taking limited resources and you are trying to select homes that are going to make the greatest impact on the City as a whole. It's not an easy task. I could tell you hundreds and hundreds of hours. I mean that. I am not exaggerating when I say hundreds and hundreds of hours. Hundreds and hundreds of hours go into the planning of demolition. It's not something that this administration takes lightly. We are going to be coming forward next month and like I said the goal is to at least have 300 on contracts, hopefully by June or July's meeting at the latest. It would be nice to have all 300 out to bid, condemned. The process is a little more difficult now because of asbestos and those types of things and all the hoops we have to jump through. It's not only a little more complicated and takes a little longer but it's also more expensive. These are things we will continue to work through to ultimately try to eliminate that blight. A lot of people say well you know I think most of us in the City understand what it means to be near blight. It's hard to attract new residents, it's hard to keep residents, the morale in neighborhoods goes down when you have blighted houses up and down streets. It's amazing what happens when you tear down a blighted home or two on a block and all the sudden you see other people starting to take a little more pride in their place. If that's what it takes, that's what it takes. Regardless, it

helps when you are bringing in businesses. You will see plenty of demolition in downtown going on right now. We are basically going to have just about every vacant building on Fifth Avenue that will be pretty much gone within the next couple months. A lot of that was through funding and we are very grateful for our relationships we have with our State officials, Senator Brewster, Representative Davis, and their help that they work with us each and every day. It's without question one of the biggest obstacles you have but we want this City to be as appealing as you possibly can. Especially when you have a facility that is going to be going from 200 jobs to 1,000 jobs over the next couple of years. What better way than when someone gets a chance to work at Trueleaf and they come in and say you know what, McKeesport is not what you see on Channel 2, 4 and 11, we have a lot more to offer. We can get houses here that aren't nearly as expensive what they are somewhere else and I can drive five minutes to work, things like that. We want to continue to do that to continue to market our City in every capacity as possible.

Paving – did I mention paving? We are going to have a paving contract as well we are hoping by March. You also have two contracts that were awarded last year that were not down. Those will be getting done as soon as the weather breaks. So, we will have those going on, Versailles Avenue main thoroughfare down to Huey Street down through Shaw. But, at this point we will have everything on Versailles done except from Evans through Union which is where the bi-duct is so there's no use worrying about fixing that now for obvious reasons that I am going to address here in just a few minutes.

Obviously, another storm is on the way, Mother Nature has not been very kind to us. I will say the Public Works Department, in my opinion, I know there's a lot of room for improvement, but they are doing a pretty darn good job. I say that, keeping in mind, a lot of

people may not be aware the amount of people that have retired, experienced drivers that have retired over the last year or two. We have a lot younger employees, younger and inexperienced, even though some might be different ages, but I can tell you firsthand until you get behind a plow truck on some of these hills that aren't very steep when you are driving up and down, you don't think how steep they are until they are a sheet of ice. I had the lovely experience of going out not this past Christmas but the Christmas Eve before we were short on drivers and I went out plowing snow for ten hours. Let me tell you it's unbelievable. I was in trucks with drivers before, I always take time to ride around with my Public Works crew but I never personally went out and plowed. I ended up doing that three or four times last year because we were so short but I could tell you it's a real awakening and it's not as easy as you think it is by any means. But they are doing what they can. We try to get to every street. Obviously, if it's a 12-16 hour snow, you have to understand, 24 hours, you have to keep the main streets clean. When we get to the secondary, we will get to them. The idea is to keep the main streets clean, get the hills on the secondary streets, and hopefully no matter where you are at you can get at least from your home to at least a street that is clean. If you can't get from your home which is typically only a block or two to a street that is clean, you probably shouldn't be leaving the house. With this snow that is coming up, you are dealing with ice, freezing rain and that's a whole other monster if that takes place. It's one of those where give me snow any day because if you get into freezing rain and you get ice, you are talking quarter inch of ice, half inch of ice, you are talking power outages, then you are talking cold temperatures on Friday the day after and things are a sheet of ice. I will tell you in the last storm I rode around. I rode up and down I had a complaint from one particular street, well lots of streets I should say, but one particular we had a plow truck go and up and down the street three times and it looked like the plow truck never even went up because at that

point it was just so frozen and there's only so much you can do if you don't have traffic and the salt working. But I will tell you, we've probably put out, I know we've put out more salt already this year than we did all of last year and probably into the year before a little bit. But our men will be out there. They will be working. I will tell you, some places, not that we are Pittsburgh and I don't try to be Pittsburgh, and all I care about is McKeesport, but there are cities like Pittsburgh where they will tell you if you live on a secondary street, you might not see a plow truck for 72 hours. That typically never happens here, unless it snows for three straight days and you might have that problem. But if it's a day snow we are usually at least getting to the secondary streets by that second day. You call in, you get a complaint, yes, it's once again, a lot of times the squeaky wheel gets the grease cause I make it a point to address the concerns. We have our plan, we are out and hitting the streets, but when a complaint comes in, we address them. But, you know, the unrealistic part is some people believe they should come out because they pay taxes and the street should be just wet. I respect the fact that we pay taxes; I respect the fact that they are working, but all I am asking is for some people to have a little bit of patience. You live in Pittsburgh, you are getting snow, you are not always going to come out and have your street totally wet but we will get to them as quickly as we can and as safely as we can.

We do have the roof program. We talked to Action Housing. Part of our American Rescue Plan money. So, if anyone is getting weatherization done, they will be able to apply through LuEthel and through the many hats she wears with Action Housing and also apply for a roof. We did have a person contact our office about a roof and we are also setting up we are going to allocate some funds from that to Rebuilding Together and then they will not have to use the funds they already have. So, if they don't need weatherization, they just need a roof there is no need to use LuEthel and we are going to try to

accommodate someone and they just have to go through the process and have to income qualify.

Of course, once the weather breaks, we will have the sidewalk program offered. Still have to figure out exactly how that is going to go but we are definitely going to have money available for individuals that have sidewalks in front of their homes that need repaired.

The VPRC program I talked a little bit about before. Many of the houses in VPRC are still occupied houses. We monitor them, make sure they are getting them fixed up as quickly as they can. It's keeping houses on the tax rolls which is also a good thing and not having us to have to spend money to tear down homes. The average home now, for the most part, if you are dealing with asbestos and things, it's probably around \$10,000. Some can go as high as, if you are dealing with asbestos, \$20,000 or \$30,000, but we are probably around that \$10,000 mark whereas years ago we were getting houses torn down for \$6,000 or \$6,500.

You might see down by GetGo I ask people to just be patient, down on East Fifth Avenue, they are going to be adding a whole other lane and getting that intersection set up for GetGo to open up in the next couple months. It's one of those things where it's a short-term inconvenience for a long-term reward. I know it's already traffic issues down there. We are trying to secure funding to really open up all the way through. I've said this numerous times at Council meetings as well but it's a shame that you go from Route 30 all the way to the Mansfield Bridge four lanes except for those 500 yards from Hartman to Lincoln Way. It comes and it just bottle-necks. So, our goal is whether we have to take property, whatever the case may be to really try to open that up all the way through but that's a later project. The project now is they will be opening up and having another turning lane going into the GetGo facility.

The other thing, two more and that's it. I know Council always holds their breathe when I say I will be brief.

You've seen the horrible accident or whatever you may call it when the bridge collapsed in Pittsburgh. It's truly a blessing that no one was killed. We have our concerns with bridges here in McKeesport. For those that are aware of the Versailles bi-duct bridge. We have had that down to one lane now for a couple months. We will continue to have that bridge inspected and continue to follow any recommendations the engineers have. The last inspection was like October 29 or 30<sup>th</sup>, the beginning of November. We got the report in November so it was just a couple months ago. We are getting ready to get another inspection done we are not even going to wait. There's another one due in six months but we are going to get on it again. In the meantime, we have been in communication with Congressman Doyle and his office. We obviously work with our State officials as well to try to secure funding. Early estimates, and this is why you probably have so many bridges that are bad throughout Allegheny County, is municipalities and these entities just need funding. Early estimates for this bridge can cost 8-10 million dollars. We are now going to get out a detailed estimate and to get it pretty much ready to go out to bid and we will have a closer look of what we are looking at. I think Congressman Doyle's office said the closer we are to shovel ready, so to say, to begin the project, the better off we are. We don't want to get funding and say ok now we need a report, we need bid specs and those types of things. So, we are going to get that going immediately. We were in contact with an engineer the other day and that process is going to be moving forward. The same thing goes with a couple of the other things that came up, Ramp 2 and that's not no restrictions at this point according to the last inspections, but those are on our watch as well.

I think everyone in this room and on this City Council, as well as many of you believe too, have the utmost respect and we support our

Police Officers here in town. In my mind, we have a Police Department that is absolutely second to none. I think there's many reasons for that. A lot of it starts with leadership at the top, Chief Alfer, Assistant Chief Steele, have really done an incredible job following up Chief Washowich. He did well when he was in here as well. You know, it's important for us to continue to strive to improve because as good as I think we are we are still far from perfect. But I think we have men and women, and you talk about things that we don't think about in this day and age, that literally start their tour and all they are planning to do is to serve this City, protect the City and return home safely from their tour to their family. We take it for granted that the family that sits at home just dreading that call that may come some day and what comes with that. When you take today's world and how they are operating it's even ten times more difficult because now you are operating and you are working under a microscope. You are out in the public's eye and in many cases, people are just waiting to try to make you the next You-Tube sensation. Yet, they have all this on their shoulders and they continue to serve this public. They serve McKeesport incredibly well. I am extremely proud. The relationships we have, I also say this, residency I believe is a large part of why you don't see issues that are happening around the world in McKeesport. From our Chief on down we have people that live here, raise their families here, Chief Alfer has coached wrestling at the high school for over 20 years now. Former Chief was a Coach. Eastman and Bostick coach football and baseball and the list goes on, whether it's coaching or whether its little kids coaching, showing up at school events with your kids and people being able to see you and talk to you, whatever the case may be, it's all part of community policing. Chief Alfer does a very good job of hiring part-timers. You are in a time right now where finding police is very difficult and understandably so with everything that I said. Not everyone wants to be a Police Officer. With that being said we are still very picky on who we bring into McKeesport because we

want to make sure that we are going to bring men and women into the City of McKeesport that have the right mentality, that have the right work ethic, that have the respect to demonstrate each and every day and the effort to put forth and to be here and to serve this community. The biggest fear especially in today's day and age is when we have part-timers and we lose them to other Police Departments for full-time opportunities and things like that. We have had the opportunity, we met in the back room with Council and I will say people talk about some of the money, American Rescue Plan money, part of the money is to replenish work force that was lost during COVID, whether it's through retirements or whatever the case may be. So, with the three officers that we hired, one was hired two weeks ago, the other two were officially hired tonight, we will be able to pay their salaries, benefits, everything up until 2024 with American Rescue Plan money. So, I know a lot of people ask. I get asked often what are the types of things that you are doing and I don't know everything up front what we are going to do but when opportunities come, we keep searching for different ways to utilize the funds and this is one way to do it. I am extremely excited to announce and to introduce to the public today, Council had the opportunity to meet them in the back, the three officers that have done extremely well here in the City and in our Police Department. They are already assets to this Police Department and as they continue to train and get the experience and get to know our City and become part of our City, they are just going to grow into absolutely extremely incredible assets to this City Police Department and I want to make sure everyone gets to match the face with them and I commend Chief Alfer for what you do, going through the part-time selection and I can say through the years you have been there. We have only had a couple part-timers that just didn't work out and that's the thing with part-timers if they don't work out and they don't fit, we don't want to have problems like you have in other places so we bring in officers that are going to be a good fit and you

have done extremely an incredible job at that. That being said I have three gentlemen here that might want to come up, we have newly hired Officer Lou Dunlevey, Officer James Foster, and Officer Anthony Ladonne. We are hoping they are here in this Department for a very long time.

With that being said, I do think, the only other thing I want to say, it has nothing to do with us, but it might for the community, I do believe McKeesport announced a virtual day tomorrow, which is probably a good decision not knowing what the weather is. So, the students in McKeesport School District will be virtual tomorrow.

Other than that Mr. President, I know I ran over my time a little bit, but that concludes my Report.

President Dellapenna said thank you Mayor.

#### **CITIZENS IN THE AUDIENCE:**

President Dellapenna announced that no one signed up from the audience to speak.

President Dellapenna then asked for New Business from Secretary James.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2022-003 – Bill #3** - Introduced by Brian Evans – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Approving a Reverse Subdivision Request of from Frank Ruccio to Combine 463-K-134 and Part of Parcel 463-K-123. The Property Exists in a R-1 Zoning District.

**MOTION: Mr. Barry moved, seconded by Mrs. Lape “to approve Bill #3.”**

President Dellapenna asked for questions or comments and there were none.

**RC-3**            **YEAS:** DELLAPENNA, BROWN, NESBIT, EVANS, LAPE, SOLES, BARRY (7)

**NAYS:** NONE (0)

**RESOLUTION NO. 2022-004 - Bill #4** – Introduced by LuEthel Nesbit – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Declaring Certain Properties to be Blighted, Public Nuisances Pursuant to Ordinance #2253, Series 1962, Section 5. Said Properties were Discussed at a Public Hearing held January 26, 2022.

**MOTION: Mr. Soles moved, seconded by Mr. Brown “to approve Bill #4.”**

President Dellapenna asked for questions or comments and there were none.

**RC-4**            **YEAS:** DELLAPENNA, BROWN, NESBIT, EVANS, LAPE, SOLES, BARRY (7)

**NAYS:** NONE (0)

**RESOLUTION NO. 2022-005 - Bill #5** – Introduced by Timothy Brown – A Resolution of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Amending the Physical Year 2019 CDBG Program.

**MOTION: Mr. Soles moved, seconded by Mrs. Lape “to approve Bill #5.”**

President Dellapenna asked for questions or comments and there were none.

**RC-5**            **YEAS:** DELLAPENNA, BROWN, NESBIT, EVANS, LAPE, SOLES (6)

**ABSTAIN:** BARRY (1)

Solicitor Elash said Mr. Barry is abstaining because he is affiliated with LaRosa Youth Foundation.

**ORDINANCE NO. 22-001 - Bill #6** – Introduced by Jill Lape – An Ordinance of the City of McKeesport, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Approving the Editing and Inclusion of Certain Ordinances as Parts of the Various Component Codes of the Codified Ordinances of McKeesport, Pennsylvania.

**MOTION: Mr. Barry moved, seconded by Mr. Evans “to approve Bill #6.”**

President Dellapenna asked for questions or comments to Bill #6 and there were none.

**RC-6            YEAS:** DELLAPENNA, BROWN, NESBIT, EVANS, LAPE, SOLES, BARRY (7)

**NAYS:** NONE (0)

**ADJOURNMENT:**

President Dellapenna said I would like to thank everybody for attending the Council meeting and also, I would like to Congratulate the new officers to the Department and wish them well. Thank you all for coming.

The meeting then adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette James  
City Clerk and Clerk of Council

APPROVED:

Richard Dellapenna  
President of Council

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