

REGULAR MEETING ~ CITY COUNCIL
PRINCETON, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
December 9, 2019

A Regular Meeting of the Common Council for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia was held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 800 Bee Street, on Monday, December 9, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were Mayor David Graham; Vice Mayor Tim Ealy; Council Members Marshall Lytton, Dewey Russell, Jacqueline Rucker, James Harvey and James Hill; City Manager Michael Webb, City Attorney Paul Cassell and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. A quorum was constituted thereby.

I. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Mayor Tim Ealy invoked divine guidance for the conduct of the meeting. Council Member Dewey Russell led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

II. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor David Graham called the meeting to order.

III. PROCLAMATIONS ~ PRESENTATIONS

A. Proclamation: General Hugh Mercer Month – Mayor David Graham read a proclamation declaring the month of January 2020, as General Hugh Mercer Month in the City of Princeton and encouraged all citizens to observe this month in a manner that brings to mind the memory of General Hugh Mercer.

Mr. David Bellamy of the Sons of the American Revolution, Hugh Mercer Chapter, accepted the proclamation on behalf of the Sons of the American Revolution and thanked Mayor Graham for the proclamation.

B. Resolution Supporting Appalachian League Baseball – Mayor David Graham read the following resolution into the record:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Appalachian League of Professional Baseball is a Rookie Developmental Minor League that was first established in 1911 as a Class “D” League; and

WHEREAS, the Appalachian League became a Rookie League in 1963, with teams in the Appalachian regions of the states of Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia and Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, currently ten teams, divided into two, five-team divisions play baseball almost daily during the summer months of late June through late August, providing an exciting brand of baseball to the entire region and grooming young draftees

for the Major Leagues; and

WHEREAS, the agreement between Major League Baseball and Minor League Baseball is set to expire at the end of the 2020 season prompting discussions between the two parties that could realign the minor leagues and result in the elimination of the Appalachian League; and

WHEREAS, the teams in Bluefield and Princeton, West Virginia contribute substantially to the local economies and the overall economic development of Mercer County through baseball fans who attend the games and visit local businesses, as well as businesses that supply goods and services to the teams.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Common Council of the City of Princeton wholeheartedly and forthrightly expresses its support for the Appalachian League and urges the Major League representatives to preserve this major fabric of the culture of Appalachia by permitting the command of “Play Ball” to continue ringing out over the region for many years to come.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I, David E. Graham, with the power vest in me as Mayor of the City of Princeton, have hereunto set my hand and caused the great seal of the City of Princeton to be affixed this 9th day of December, 2019.

David E. Graham, Mayor

Accepting the resolution on behalf of the Princeton Baseball Association were its President, Councilman Dewey Russell, and Baseball Association member, Councilman Marshall Lytton.

In accepting the Resolution, Mr. Russell referred to the headlines in the morning papers regarding the impending negotiations between the respective Major and Minor League representatives and commented that the proposal to realign the Minor Leagues is all about money, not the communities where the teams are located.

Mr. Russell continued by explaining that Appalachian League baseball is an inexpensive form of entertainment for our residents, but the quality of the play is evidenced by the considerable number of players now active in the Major Leagues. He added that local baseball fans need to come out in substantial numbers to watch the games in 2020, and support the Rays, a farm team of the Tampa Bay Rays’ organization, which was named the outstanding organization in baseball in 2019.

IV. PUBLIC INPUT – None.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

With corrections to pages six and seven duly noted by the Clerk, Mayor David Graham committed the Consent Agenda to the record, as follows:

Minutes of the November 12, 2019, Regular City Council Meeting.

VI. POLICY AGENDA

A. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. PUBLIC WORKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

Chairperson Jacqueline Rucker reported the Public Works and Recreation Committee of Princeton City Council met on December 4, 2019, with the following to report out to Council for action or as information:

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Public Works' Monthly Report for November – Public Works Director Jackie Phillips had reported to the Committee that crews responded to 14 requests for service during November and that Kephart Alley was paved at a cost of \$3,000, which corresponds to the cost reflected in the latest quote provided by the paving contractor for the City's 2019 Paving Project.

In addition, Mr. Phillips reported that the Public Works Department is ready to plow snow, even though one truck is being repaired currently.

Trent Street Drainage Ditch – Assistant Public Works Director Eric Gatchell had reported to the Committee that the Trent Street drainage ditch at the intersection of Stafford Drive remains open while City officials await the completion and delivery of piping designed by the engineer in charge.

Mr. Gatchell also reported that the project to replace the sidewalk at the corner of Bee Street and Stafford Drive is set to go out to bid within the week.

PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Chairperson Jacqueline Rucker presented the following report on behalf of Recreation Director Amanda McCabe:

Indoor Soccer Leagues – The Recreation Department ended up registering seven middle school indoor soccer teams (Glenwood; Bluefield, Virginia; Pike View; and four Princeton teams). They have been in league play for approximately three weeks. Our Department has received a lot of positive feedback from our patrons about the program. The staff has been very enthusiastic about starting the new program, creating a new source of revenue to assist the Department financially, as well as offering the community an opportunity to participate in a new, fun, fast-paced and organized sport.

Boys' Little League Basketball/Girls' Cheerleading – Registration is getting ready to

wrap up for the Department's winter programming. There currently are 128 boys signed up for JV and Varsity basketball, and 74 girls signed up for cheerleading. The three programs will kick off the season next week.

RAILROAD MUSEUM

Mrs. Rucker presented the following report on behalf of Railroad Museum Director Pat Smith:

Arts and Crafts Show – The Railroad Museum will host an Arts and Crafts Show on Saturday, December 7th, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. featuring local artisans and craftsmen, free hot chocolate, cookies, Christmas carols by local artists and performances by Bluegrass Artist, Brandon Farley.

Visitors to the Museum in November numbered 352, with the total thus far in 2019 at 4,081, which already exceeds last year's total of 3,499.

Harvest Host RV Club – Pat Smith also reported she had registered the Museum as an official member of the Harvest Host RV Club to provide RV parking for travelers in spaces available adjacent to the Railroad Museum.

Outreach – Mrs. Smith further reported she had begun an Outreach Campaign to the neighboring counties' Boards of Education to encourage teachers and students to visit the Museum. She further reported the effort had paid off already with 30 school children from McDowell visiting the Museum recently.

2. PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Chairman Tim Ealy reported the Public Safety Committee of Princeton City Council met on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, with the following to report out to Council for action or as information and called on Code Enforcement Deputy Director Ty Smith to present his Department's monthly report.

CODE ENFORCEMENT DEPARTMENT

Monthly Report for November – Code Enforcement Deputy Director Ty Smith presented the following report:

Complaint Summary

Initial Complaints	127
Cumulative Complaints to Date	3,234

Demolition/Renovation Program Status

Condemnations/Unsafe in Process	23
Demolitions in Process	21
Renovations in Process	2
Demolitions w/Notice to Proceed	0

Total Demolitions to Date 671

Animal Control

Complaints this Month	24
Impounded: (dogs 1; cats 5; other 2)	8
Adopted	2
Euthanized	3
Reclaimed	0
Rescued	0

Building Inspection

Building Permits (Res. 25; Com. 17)	42
Total Inspections	46
Total Project Costs	\$1,257,620.00
Permit Fees	\$ 4,273.00

Flood Plain Management

Flood Plain Determinations	42
Flood Plain Permits Issued	0

Deputy Director Ty Smith here reported that the Code Enforcement Department was making preparations for a FEMA visit in January – February, 2020, and explained the City uses Flood Plain mapping to enforce FEMA regulations regarding construction in the flood zones of the City. He further advised that 67 houses in Princeton currently face the potential for flooding.

Councilman Dewey Russell asked Mr. Smith if the flood control maps are up-to-date and noted that they had not been in the past.

Ty Smith replied that the maps are current and available from FEMA on-line.

Mr. Russell inquired as to the requirements.

Mr. Smith replied that any new construction in the City must be elevated above the flood level as indicated on the mapping.

Councilman James Hill offered that the flood zone is not limited to Stafford Drive, but also runs up into the residential sections of the City.

Rental Compliance

Revenue in Nov.: \$20; Total to Date: \$11,426.00
Registered Units Nov.: Houses 1; Apts. 1; Other 0; Total Units 2
Cumulative Total 17 Months: Houses 277; Apts. 480; Other 35; Total 792

Zoning Official

Zoning Board of Appeals Cases in November 0

Lastly, Mr. Smith reported that the transfer to the City of the condemned property at 514 Washington Avenue was pending a title search by the City Attorney.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Statistical Report for November – Fire Chief Chad Bailey reported that during the month of November, the Fire Department responded to 81 EMS calls, 56 Fire calls; conducted 14 inspections, issued two Certificates of Occupancy and issued 13 Fire Lane citations.

Additional Duties in November – The Fire Chief also reported the following inspection and maintenance duties were completed by the Fire Department in November: (1) hydrant checks throughout the City; (2) fire truck maintenance with good results, but with one gas tank requiring replacement and the apparatus out of service pending said repairs; (3) all ladders were inspected and passed after bolts were tightened on the tower; and (4) all pumps were tested and passed inspection.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Statistical Report for November – Police Chief Tim Gray reported that during the month of November, the Police Department responded to 635 calls for assistance, made 62 arrests and issued 217 citations. By way of comparison, the numbers for October reflected 612 calls for assistance, 62 arrests and 124 citations issued.

Hat Drive for Christmas with a COP – Chief Gray reported that Princeton officers conducted a Hat Drive on Stafford Drive Thursday, December 5th, to benefit the Police Department's Christmas with a COP that will be hosting 71 children for a Christmas party at the Coal Kountry Restaurant on Mercer Street. The Chief also advised that officers will be going shopping for the party at Walmart tomorrow morning at 9:00.

The Chief explained that the goal of the party is to create a friendly home-like atmosphere for the children, coupled with a good, home-cooked meal.

3. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Chairman Marshall Lytton reported the Finance and Administration Committee of Princeton City Council met on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, with the following items to report out to Council for action or as information and called on Finance Director Brian Blankenship to present his report.

November 2019, Financial Statements – Finance Director Brian Blankenship reported that as of the end of November, the fifth month of FY2020, the actual revenues collected stood at 57.07% of the budgeted amount, while actual appropriations were expended at a rate of 54%, as compared to the budget projections of 41.65% forecast for the end of

November. Total funds available for City operations at the end of November were **\$1,323,897.**

Mr. Blankenship continued by reporting the following noteworthy expenditures for November:

PEIA \$ 50,666
Building Commission Expenses \$125,302

Chairman Lytton reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended the November 2019, Financial Report to City Council, **and he so moved.**

James Hill duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Authorization to Use Rainy Day Funds – Mr. Lytton reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and he so moved**, authorization for the Finance Director to use Rainy Day Funds in December, if necessary, to meet the City’s financial obligations, with the stipulation that said funds be replaced when available.

James Hill duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Employee Retention Incentive – Mr. Lytton continued by reporting that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and he so moved**, approval of a Retention Incentive for City employees in the amount of \$200 for full-time employees and \$100 for part-time employees.

Jacqueline Rucker duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve Holidays – The Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mr. Lytton so moved**, that the remaining half-days of Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve be granted to City employees as holidays.

Jacqueline Rucker duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Appointments to City Boards and Commissions – The Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mr. Lytton so moved**, reappointment of the following individuals to their respective City Board or Commission:

1. Kenneth Crowe – General Board of Appeals, 3-year term ending 12/10/22;
2. Patricia Anderson – Planning Commission – 3-year term ending 12/31/22;
3. Kim Hickman – Zoning Bd. of Appeals – 3-year term ending 01/01/23; and
4. Todd Boggess – Zoning Bd. of Appeals – 3-year term ending 01/01/23.

Dewey Russell duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution Supporting the Appalachian League of Professional Baseball – The Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mr. Lytton so moved**, a resolution supporting the Appalachian League of professional baseball and urging the Major League’s negotiating representatives to preserve this significant part of our Appalachian culture and region’s economy.

Jacqueline Rucker duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Ratifying an Appointment to Princeton Health Care Center’s Board of Directors – On the recommendation of the Board of Directors for the Princeton Health Care Center, the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mr. Lytton so moved**, ratification of the appointment of Rae Ann Osborne to the Princeton Health Care Center’s Board of Directors.

James Hill duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

PRINCETON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Marshall Lytton presented the following report on behalf of Library Director Sheena Johnson:

November 21st – Presentation on “How the Railroad Built Princeton,” had 23 in attendance.

November 22nd – “Fun with the Hound: An Evening with Trax,” had 34 in attendance.

December 4 – Madrigal Singers had 31 in attendance.

Upcoming, Featured Programs for December

- Friends of the Library's December Book Sale will be Monday, December 9th, from 9 am to 5 pm at the Fred Gilbert Center
- Food for Fines runs from December 3 – 13. Each item of non-perishable food will clear \$1.00 off a patron's account, with a \$5.00 limit on each account.
- Appalachian Beekeeping Collective is providing Intro to Beekeeping at 3:00 pm on December 4th
- Annual Cookie Swap is December 14th at 12:00 p.m. Participants will bring in their best cookies and participate in a cookie tasting contest where your peers vote for the best cookie.
- It's a Wrap! Gift Wrap Party is December 17, at 4:00 p.m. Come enjoy holiday music and wrap your last minute gifts at our holiday wrapping stations.
- The Princeton Public Library will have movie favorites playing throughout the month of December. Come join us for classics like "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" and the "Nightmare before Christmas," or try something new with our showing of "Where'd You Go, Bernadette?"
- As a part of Downtown Countdown the Library will provide a Jr. New Year's Even Ball Drop & Dance Party from 11:00 to 12:00. This is a free event intended for children 2 – 10 years. Snacks and New Years appropriate souvenirs will be provided to those that attend.
- Join the Writers Workshop led by New River Instructor Dianna Putorek and share your work with others in the community. Spend the hour trying our different writing techniques and practices and sharing your own work of prose or poetry.
- Remember that Drop in Tech Time is the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of every month. Remember to bring your tech questions to Jeremy during these times and he can surely answer them.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

Mr. Lytton also presented the following December report on behalf of the Community Improvement Commission:

The CIC discussed the possibility of Lori McKinney making a presentation to Council at this year's Budget Retreat.

Also, the placement of several other Christmas decorations around the City was discussed, as well as the durability of the tree located near the fountain.

The CIC decided to strive to set aside funds every year for Christmas ornaments in order to build up a collection. The decision is to purchase discounted decorations after Christmas.

The proposal to plant trees on Rogers and Stafford was discussed. It was agreed to wait until the first of the year to determine the appropriate direction to go with this.

More time is needed to determine what is feasible and appropriate to add to those areas. It has been agreed to talk with Tracy Cutlip before the store owners are approached about this project.

It has been determined that, in the future, it may be necessary to add vendor placards on the sidewalk/pavement as opposed to using spray paint downtown for marking vendor spaces for festivals. Lori McKinney will research the matter in an effort to identify an appropriate and permanent solution.

It has been agreed that the CIC will strive to work towards a Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony at the fountain with a musical performance and in conjunction with the parade for Christmas 2020. This will be a goal for this year, as well as working out how to encourage groups to recycle or adopt a certain area of the streets to keep Princeton as clean as possible.

B. CITY ATTORNEY

Ordinance Creating a Farmers' Market Committee - City Attorney Paul Cassell presented for a first reading, by title, AN ORDINANCE TO CREATE A FARMERS' MARKET TAILGATE COMMITTEE FOR THE CITY OF PRINCETON, WEST VIRGINIA.

MOTION: James Hill moved City Council accept the ordinance on first reading.

James Harvey duly seconded the motion.

James Hill asked the City Attorney to explain how this Committee will work in conjunction with the Farmers' Market.

In response, the City Attorney explained that the Farmers' Market Tailgate Committee will serve as an advisory committee for the new Farmers' Market by providing the guidance necessary to assure its success.

City Manager Michael Webb informed that the Farmer's Market will be located at 5th and Mercer Streets.

On voting, the motion carried unanimously.

C. CITY MANAGER

City Manager Michael Webb thanked everyone for attending the meeting and cautioned them when exiting the grounds through the construction zone. He added that the work should be completed within the next month or so.

Mr. Webb also thanked the Appalachian League for its contribution to the economies of
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all the host cities and expressed a desire that the Appy League will continue to exist in its current form to entertain its 40 Million fans across Appalachia.

D. CITY CLERK

City Clerk Ken Clay wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and thanked City Council for the retention incentive and the additional holiday time on Christmas Eve and New Years' Eve.

E. HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

Human Resources Director Wanda Donahue reported that the Hometown Hero Banners had been taken down to make room for Christmas decorations and stored at the former City Hall building. The banners will be erected once again after Memorial Day and remain until just after Veterans' Day.

However, Ms. Donahue advised that some of the Hometown Hero Banners were worn to the point they cannot continue in use. Still, she explained the respective sponsors, who will be contacted, may choose to replace the discarded banners at a cost of \$65 each.

Lastly, Ms. Donahue thanked City Council for the retention incentive to full and part-time employees, as well as the additional holiday time for Christmas Eve and New Years' Eve.

VII. COUNCIL ROUNDTABLE

Jacqueline Rucker – Mrs. Rucker wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and thanked those in attendance for coming out to the Council meeting. She acknowledged the excellent jobs performed by all City department heads and expressed appreciation for Wanda Donahue and Jeff Harvey.

Marshall Lytton – Mr. Lytton also thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting and wished all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Mr. Lytton then thanked the City employees for the excellent work they perform throughout the year.

James Harvey – Mr. Harvey acknowledged the traditional newspaper story, “Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus,” and thanked Mr. Ealy and Congresswoman Miller for their efforts in obtaining approval for a traffic light at Locust and Rogers Street.

Dewey Russell – Mr. Russell wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and remarked that he appreciated the comments this evening regarding the Appalachian League, the Princeton Rays Team and their contributions to Princeton and Mercer County.

Mr. Russell continued by acknowledging and thanking the City's employees for their excellent and consistent hard work on behalf of our citizens and informed that he had
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witnessed Public Works Director Jackie Phillips crawling out of a manhole cover today at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Russell recognized Mr. Jim Owens, Jr. who was in the audience and welcomed him to the meeting.

Mr. Owens expressed that he had moved back to Princeton that same day from Texas.

Mr. Russell remarked that it was good to have Mr. Owens back in his home town.

James Hill – Mr. Hill expressed that it was time for his annual Christmas Wish List for the City, as follows:

- Start work on the fields as soon as possible because it's important to have them ready when the time comes for their development;
- With 671 houses demolished in the City over the years, Mr. Hill stated he would like to see a public-private partnership to rebuild housing on those lots;
- Emphasizing engineering, economic and infrastructure development, especially for Ward I, to rebuild and repopulate the City;
- Equipment for the Police Officers, which is available through SWAT grants, would supply the best protection for the officers. Also recommended were video training equipment that features different scenarios the officers are likely to face on the job; and
- To remember the elderly during the holidays, especially check on them often in the winter months.

Mayor David Graham – Mayor Graham thanked everyone for attending the Council meeting and apologized for any inconvenience related to parking arrangement and access to the building caused by the ongoing construction, which should be straightened out within a month.

The Mayor next thanked those who had attended the Christmas Parade, as well as those who had participated and assisted with the logistics.

Mayor Graham acknowledged that the lot on Mercer Street that will house the planned Farmer's Market was cleared by the contractor in two days and added that the property will make a nice site for the Market.

The Mayor explained that he also had some Christmas wishes for the City and specifically mentioned the public pool in City Park, which is the only one in Mercer County, and expressed that he would like it opened for use again this coming May.

The Mayor also expressed his approval for the construction work thus far on the New City Hall Complex and added that he was pleased the City had not had to borrow any
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money until this point in the project.

Lastly, the Mayor wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2020.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion, the December 9, 2019, meeting of the Princeton City Council adjourned at 7:18 p.m.