

REGULAR MEETING ~ CITY COUNCIL
PRINCETON, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
September 14, 2020

A Regular Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia has held by teleconference due to the Covid-19 Pandemic on Monday, September 14, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were Mayor David Graham; Vice Mayor James Harvey; Council Members Marshall Lytton, James Hill, Jacqueline Rucker, Dewey Russell and Joseph Allen; 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 James Harvey prayed for the families of the senior citizens who had lost their lives during the Covid-19 Pandemic and petitioned the Heavenly Father to provide a cure for the disease. Mr. Harvey then invoked divine guidance for the conduct of the Council meeting.

Councilman Joe Allen 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

Proclamation: Constitution Week – Mayor Graham issued and read a proclamation designating the week of September 17th through 23rd, 2020, as “Constitution Week” in the City of Princeton and urged all citizens to reaffirm the ideals of 1787 by vigilantly protecting the freedoms guaranteed to us by this guardian of our liberties.

IV. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Without correction, Mayor Graham committed the Consent Agenda to the record as follows:

Minutes of the August 10, 2020, 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 met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on Wednesday, September 9, 2020,

with the following items to report to City Council:

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Public Works' Monthly Report for August – Mrs. Rucker reported that Assistant Public Works Director Eric Gatchell had presented the following report to the Committee:

- Crews completed 21 service requests for special trash pickups in August;
- Crews completed paving patchwork at Ealy Drive and Butler Streets, as well as the Presbyterian Church and some large potholes off N. Wickham Avenue and the top of Church Street;
- Public Works will need to address a pothole forming on Kee Street and a sink hole forming on Hale Avenue at Henry Street. The 811 number has been called for utility assessments regarding both sites;
- The collapsing storm drains at 7th and Harrison Streets have been restored;
- Three of the nuisance trees identified last month have been removed: One at the Earl Muse Playground, one at the back of Rock Street and one at 721 High Street. The remaining large walnut tree at the back of Rock Street will be left in place following concerns expressed over shade. The remaining tree is not a major hazard to structures or vehicles at the present.
- The control box for the traffic light at Center and N. Walker Streets has been removed; and
- The need remains to address storm drainage issues along Upper Pine and Church Streets. Public Works Director Jackie Phillips and Assistant Eric Gatchell have inspected the site to determine the materials required to address the issue.

Equipment – As requested, the Public Works Department will provide an updated list to City Council of capital equipment on hand to enable the assessment of the Department's future needs while planning the next City Budget.

Resolution Approving the West Main Street Sidewalk Agreement – On the information and recommendation of the City Manager, the Public Works and Recreation Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mrs. Rucker so moved,** the adoption of the following resolution authorizing City Manager Michael Webb to execute an agreement with the WV Division of Highways for the construction of a sidewalk along West Main Street in the City:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Princeton, West Virginia has applied to the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways, for a Transportation Enhancement Grant to construct a sidewalk along West Main Street; and

WHEREAS, the West Virginia Department of Transportation has tentatively approved the grant contingent upon the City of Princeton executing the Agreement hereto attached and made a part of this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Princeton City Council is of the opinion that it is in the best interests of the citizens of the community for the project to be undertaken and the Agreement to be executed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED:

That the Common Council of the City of Princeton, this the 14th day of September, 2020, authorizes Michael Webb, as City Manager, to execute the Agreement hereto attached.

David E. Graham, Mayor

James Hill duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Recreation Director Amanda McCabe had submitted the following report:

Washington Avenue Playground – As a result of the drainage remediation work at the Washington Avenue Playground by the Public Works Department and the addition of the replacement parts to the slide, the Washington Avenue Playground-Park is much improved.

Recreation Center Update – The Recreation Center continues closed except Monday and Thursday evenings, from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., for a karate class and to process the numerous shelter rental requests. The Park Board met on August 20th and decided to keep the Recreation Center closed and not conduct registration for any fall programs with an eye to what happens in the school system. Also, Mrs. McCabe reported the Recreation Center would lose one seasonal employee at the end of the current week.

Refunds – With regard to refunds being issued for the spring basketball leagues that were cancelled, \$1,100 in refunds have been issued to date with more expected to come.

Appointment of Ex-Officio Member to the Park Board – The Public Works and Recreation Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mrs. Rucker so moved**, the appointment of Council Member Joseph Allen to the Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners as an ex-officio, non-voting member.

Dewey Russell duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

RAILROAD MUSEUM

The Railroad Museum remains closed at this time.

2. PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Chairman James Hill reported the Public Safety Committee met after the Public Works and Recreation Committee on Wednesday, September 9, 2020, with the following items to report out to City Council:

CODE ENFORCEMENT DEPARTMENT

Monthly Report for August 2020 – Code Enforcement Director Ty Smith presented the following report for August 2020:

COMPUTATION OF COMPLAINTS

Summary – Property Maintenance

Initial Complaints	195
Cumulative Complaints to date	38,602

Demolition/Renovation Program Status

Condemnations/Unsafe in Process	20
Demolitions in Process (out to bid)	0
Renovations in Process	0
Demolitions w/Notice to Proceed	1
Total Demolitions to Date	682

Animal Control

Complaints this Month	93
Impounded (dogs 8; cats 10)	18
Adopted	0
Euthanized	0
Reclaimed	2
Rescued	0

Building Inspection

Building Permits (Res. 25; Com. 5)	30
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Total Inspections	12
Total Project Costs	\$388,866.43
Permit Fees	\$ 2,100.00

Flood Plain Management

Flood Plain Determinations	30
Flood Plain Permits Issues	0

- Map revisions are being compiled and the resulting new maps will be made available to citizens.
- The Flood Plain Manager is conducting research on Elevation Certificates' for all City properties and urging property owners to obtain permits.

Zoning Official

Certificate of Occupancy Applications	2
Zoning Board Cases	1

Vacant Buildings

Registered Vacant Buildings Aug. 1; Total 14.

General Board of Appeals – Sign Permit Revocation at 301 Mahood Avenue was upheld by the General Board of Appeals.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Monthly Report for August – Fire Chief Chad Bailey reported that during the month of August the Fire Department responded to 74 EMS calls and 54 fire calls; conducted 16 inspections and issued 16 fire lane citations.

Grants – The Fire Chief reported receiving the following grants;

- \$1,000 grant from WV American Water that was used to purchase 3 EMS bags, which have been delivered; and
- \$10,000 from the Governor's Office in support of the Department's volunteers.

Hiring Interviews – Chief Bailey reported that three individuals were being interviewed currently for possible hiring by the Fire Department. However, another round of applications will be received in September and October to obtain additional, qualified candidates to satisfy the requirements for an active civil service hiring register.

Firefighter Apprenticeships – Fire Chief Bailey reported that two Princeton Firefighters, Aaron Beeman and Cory Vest had completed intensive Apprenticeship testing requirements that involved 3,000 classroom hours and 6,000 OJT hours over the

past three years.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Monthly Report for August – Police Chief Tim Gray reported that during the month of August, Princeton Police Officers responded to 524 calls for assistance, made 34 arrests and issued 116 citations.

Princeton Officer Mobilized – Chief Gray advised that Captain Woodard, a member of the Army Reserve, had received mobilization orders for up to 400 days of active duty beginning September 22, 2020.

Also, Chief Gray reported that he would be considering personnel to replace Officer Wyatt, who had resigned from the Police Department, as well as Captain Woodard while he is on active military duty.

SB690 ATV Law – Committee Chairman, James Hill, reported that the Public Safety Committee had conducted a thorough discussion with members of the business community, private citizens, members of the Princeton Police Department and the City's administrative staff regarding the State's new ATV Law enacted as SB690 during the 2020 Legislative Session. The new law permits the operation of "street legal special purpose vehicles," more commonly known as All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's), on highways in the State, except controlled access systems or in counties and municipalities that have ordinances prohibiting the operation of special purpose vehicles within their boundaries. The City of Princeton enacted such an ordinance in 2003.

Mr. Hill continued by explaining that the Public Safety Committee directed the City Manager, City Attorney and Police Chief to form an Ad Hoc Committee to research the issue, including the gathering of public input, and submit a recommendation based on the findings to the Committee and City Council.

Mr. Hill concluded by remarking that he wanted to let everyone know the City is working on the issue.

3. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Chairman Marshall Lytton reported the Finance and Administration Committee met after the Public Safety Committee on Wednesday, September 9, 2020, with the following items to report out to City Council and called on Finance Director Brian Blankenship to present his report.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

August 2020, Financial Statements – Finance Director Brian Blankenship reported that as of the end of August, the seconded month of FY2021, the actual revenues collected stood at 37% of the budgeted amount, while actual appropriations were expended at a

rate of 20%, as compared to the budget projections of 16.66% forecast for the end of August. Total funds available for City operations at the end of August were **\$1,637,683**.

Mr. Blankenship next reviewed the noteworthy expenditures in the month of August:

Phase II Contractor Costs	\$25,211
Fire & Police Pensions	\$30,573
Park & Recreation Appropriation	\$12,708
Travelers	\$106,747

Chairman Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended the August, 2020 Financial Statements to City Council, **and he so moved.**

James Harvey duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

FY2021 General Fund Budget Revision #2 – The Finance Director next presented and recommended Budget Revision #2 to the FY2021 General Fund to appropriate additional expected revenue to the General account. Also, an appropriation is required for expenses that were not budgeted when setting the FY2021 budget forecast and to reallocate for upcoming projects that will occur this fiscal year. This revision will increase the estimated revenues by **\$950,000** and bring the FY2021 Budget to **\$8,458,266**.

Expenditure adjustments include the following:

- Appropriate for Economic Development projects.
- Appropriate for transferring funds back to the Rainy Day Fund that had been expended previously.
- Appropriate for anticipated expenses across several departments.
- To store excess funds in Contingency for any other expenses not known at this time.

Total revisions also increase the General Fund Expenditures Budget by **\$950,000**, bringing the total General Fund appropriations to **\$8,458,266** thereby creating a balanced budget.

Mr. Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended FY2021 General Fund Budget Revision #2 to City Council, **and he so moved.**

Jacqueline Rucker duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

COLA for City Employees – Chairman Lytton continued by reporting, on the recommendation of the City Manager and Finance Director, that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mr. Lytton so moved**, the implementation of an across the board, 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) City employees, retroactive to July 1, 2020, if permitted by law.

Jacqueline Rucker duly seconded the motion.

Councilman James Hill asked if the retroactive provision is permitted.

City Manager Mike Webb replied that City officials would look into the retroactive provision, but would enact the raise from the present going forward.

On voting, the motion carried unanimously.

Resolution Authorizing USDA Grant Applications – On the recommendation and information of the City Manager, the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mr. Lytton so moved**, a resolution authorizing the City Manager to submit grant applications to the USDA for funding to assist in the purchase of emergency equipment for the Fire Department and an excavator or the Public Works Department, as follows;

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the City of Princeton wishes to submit a U. S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Authority Grant application to seek funding for the purchase of equipment to meet the needs of all City departments; and

WHEREAS, the addition of this essential equipment will enable the City of Princeton to maintain the high level of services required to provide for the overall health, safety and general welfare of the City; and

WHEREAS, the City must give assurances that the USDA Rural Development Authority Grant Program Regulations related to grant administration, civil rights, and other applicable State and Federal laws will be followed; and

WHEREAS, the City of Princeton must designate an official representative to act in connection with the application and execute all necessary program documents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Common Council of the City of Princeton hereby authorizes the submission of a grant application to the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Authority, for the purpose of purchasing new equipment for the City's departments.
2. The City of Princeton will comply with all laws and regulations pertaining to the program.
3. Michael Webb, City Manager for the City of Princeton, is designated as the authorized official to act in connection with the application and the City's department directors are hereby authorized to provide any additional information or clarification along with supporting documentation as may be required.

David E. Graham, Mayor

James Hill duly seconded the motion.

Mr. Hill expressed appreciation for Mr. Webb's work on this project, as well as his efforts in obtaining a grant for the City's new street sweeper.

Mr. Webb explained that the equipment targeted for purchase under this project could cost from \$40,000 to \$80,000 each, with the City's matching payments being up to \$40,000 on either or both or both articles.

On voting, the motion carried unanimously.

B. & O. Tax Incentives – On the information of the City Clerk, the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council, **and Mr. Lytton so moved**, granting the one-year, B. & O. Tax Incentive for the following businesses under the conditions cited:

1. Princeton Psychological – 321 Rogers Street, Mary Jo Cecil, Owner;
2. Liberty Counseling Services – 109 Thorn Street, Kimberly Thomason, Owner; and
3. **Conditional Approval** of the Lady Project Boutique, 1101 Mercer Street, Cynthia Justice, Owner, pending the submission of a more legible application that includes the projected annual income for the business.

James Harvey duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Date for October Council Meeting – Mr. Lytton explained, due to a conflict with the

Columbus Day Holiday on Monday, October 12th, that the City Administration had recommended the date for the Council Meeting be moved to Tuesday, October 13th, **and he so moved.**

Dewey Russell duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

PRINCETON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Committee Chairman Marshall Lytton presented the Library's report on behalf of Director Sheena Johnson, as follows:

Programming – The Princeton Public Library continues offering full curbside service from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday while the Library looks tentatively at opening on a partial basis, but there will be more updates to come. Also, the Library has started making copies, faxes and scans for patrons who come to the door.

The Library has begun providing sketchbooks for its new project, the “Mercer Grassroots Sketchbook Project,” which allows for community members to pick up sketchbooks for free, complete their own unique art and return them to the Library for cataloging in their own sketchbook collection. This program is for all ages and those interested are encouraged to call the Library at 304-487-5045 to pick one up.

For the month of September, the Library will be offering programs like Lab Squad Scientists, Virtual Lego, Virtual Drop in Tech Time, Life Lessons Book Club, a Comic Book Coasters Tutorial, an Edible Playdoh Tutorial, Writer's Workshop, and the regularly scheduled Story Times on Thursdays and Fridays, which are available through Facebook Live.

The Library also has The Three Little Pigs puppet show coming up on September 30th on Facebook Live!

Everyone is encouraged to check the Library's Facebook and Instagram pages to keep up with the latest programming at the Library.

Community Foundation of the Virginias' Grant – The Library has been awarded an \$8,000 grant by the Community Foundation of the Virginias that will go toward funding new fixtures to house the visual media collection and help expand the collection in the future.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

Mr. Lytton also presented the following Community Improvement Commission Report on Mrs. Johnson's behalf:

**Community Improvement Commission
Meeting of September 14, 2020**

Mr. Tracy Cutlip has donated a tree to the Princeton Public Library that will act as a poetry tree inside the Library and eventually will be planted outside the Library.

The Riff Raff Arts Collective facilitated the project for the flowers and the boxes on Mercer Street and the Hunnicutt Foundation paid for the boxes, which were provided by Tracy Cutlip, who went above and beyond by donating the flowers that are in the boxes free of cost.

The Lonnie Gunter Center for Culture and History, located in the Historic District, is ready to move forward. The CIC asks everyone to stay tuned for more updates on the project.

There has been an influx of businesses moving to downtown Princeton and a lot of interest continues to exist regarding the shop spaces on Mercer Street.

The CIC continues working to facilitate the project to place flowers on Stafford Drive and Rogers Street.

The CIC members discussed how pleased they were to see the new Little Free Library erected at the Earl Muse Memorial Park and how they would like to place more things in that area of the City.

B. CITY ATTORNEY

The City Attorney had nothing to report to City Council.

C. CITY MANAGER

City Manager Mike Webb thanked those in attendance for participating in the Council meeting via telephone.

Mr. Webb continued by acknowledging the County Commission for the distribution of \$10,000 in Covid-19 funds, from the Governor's Office, to the municipalities as reimbursement for the purchase of Covid related expenses such as gloves, masks and personal protective equipment.

D. CITY CLERK

The City Clerk had nothing to report to City Council.

E. HUMAN RESOURCES

Flu Shots Available at City Hall – Human Resources Director Wanda Donahue reported
CC-09/14/20

that the Health Department would be at City Hall to provide seasonal flu shots for employees from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 on September 22nd. She added that masks and social distancing would be required to participate. Mrs. Donahue also explained that she had provided this information to all City departments regarding this optional service to City employees. Twenty-seven persons had participated last year, she noted.

Service Line Warranties – Mrs. Donahue reported that the utility line insurance company, Service Line Warranties, would be conducting its Council sanctioned, fall campaign mailer to inform City residents of its optional coverage for exterior water lines at a cost of \$3.90 per month.

VII. COUNCIL ROUNDTABLE

Mayor David Graham informed that City Council would be dispensing with its Roundtable for the duration of these remote meetings being held in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion, the City Council meeting of September 14, 2020, adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

David E. Graham, Mayor

ATTEST:

Kenneth E. Clay, City Clerk