

REGULAR MEETING ~ CITY COUNCIL
PRINCETON, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
January 16, 2024

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 Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were Mayor David Graham; Vice Mayor Joseph Allen; Council Members James Hawkins, Dewey Russell, Marshall Lytton and James Hill; City Manager Michael Webb and City Attorney Paul Cassell. Absent were Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker and City Clerk Kaitlyn Smith. A quorum was constituted thereby.

I. Call to Order

Mayor David Graham called the meeting to order.

II. Resolutions – Proclamations – Presentations

III. Public Input

There was no public input.

IV. Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes of the December 18, 2023 Council Meeting
- B. Minutes of the January 3, 2024 Special Meeting

With corrections noted, Mayor Graham asked that the minutes of the December 18, 2023 Council Meeting and the January 3, 2024 Special Meeting be committed to record.

V. Policy Agenda

A. Committee Reports

1. Public Works and Recreation

Public Works

Councilman Dewey Russell reported that the Public Works and Recreation Committee of Princeton City Council met on January 10, 2024, with the following to report out to City Council:

Public Works' Monthly Report – Mr. Russell presented the following progress report for December:

OLD BUSINESS:

- They have finished picking up leaves around the city, if any are left they will try to make time to collect them.
- They have all plow trucks and spreaders ready to go and operational.
- They are working on the plans for installing the new ADA bathrooms at the City Park.
- They have fixed several streetlights and will work on more as time and weather allows and also work with AEP to get others fixed.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Public Works completed 14 official service requests for the month of December along with 2 in coordination with Code Enforcement.
- They have been working diligently to maintain the roads during the recent snow and cold. They have 50 more tons of salt arriving soon to get them through this season.
- They have fixed several traffic lights and street signs. The newer LED style traffic lights are much more expensive but last longer than the traditional halogen bulbs. They currently have a mix in town with some of them still using the older halogen style and some using the newer LED style. In the future they will all be LED.
- They have graveled several alleys that quickly get rutted-out this time of year due to ground saturation and all-around wet weather.
- They removed a dead tree in the alley along the 100 block of South McNutt Street.
- They cut the brush out of the ditch line between the Rescue Squad and the Towers property. They will be working on a grate to cover the front of the large pipe culvert there and getting a contractor to add additional rip rap and spray with grout.
- They dug out the ditch line along South 2nd Street.
- They fixed the head wall and pipe at the 700 block of Washington Avenue.
- They have started to remove and take down the Christmas decorations for this year.
- The New Year celebration went well. Cleanup efforts were somewhat hampered by vendors and celebrators being slow getting off the street.

Parks and Recreation Department

City Manager Mike Webb presented the Parks & Recreation report for December on behalf of Recreation Director Amanda McCabe:

OLD BUSINESS:

Winter Programming -The Recreation Department is entering into its largest program of the year; Boys Little League Basketball for ages 8-12 and Girls Cheerleading for ages 4-12. The department's staff just completed skills evaluations and drafts for the basketball leagues. There are a total of 108 JV boys making up 12 teams and 105 Varsity boys making up 12 more teams. There are also 128 cheerleaders registered that will be divided into 10 squads. The program has 341 total participants compared to 330 in 2023. Practices will begin next week. Games will begin in approximately 3 weeks and will run 5 days each week.

Basketball Goals: Community Playgrounds - Chris Pierce, owner of ECCO (Empire Construction Company), confirmed this week that they intend to begin installation of the new polycarbonate basketball goals around the end of March. The entire project (all 12 goals at the 5 playgrounds) is anticipated to be completed within a 2 week time frame.

NEW BUSINESS:

Spring Leagues - The department just began registration for its 3 spring leagues: JV and Varsity Girls Little League Basketball for ages 8-12 and Boys Middle School Basketball for ages 11-14. Registration will be accepted through February 15.

RAILROAD MUSEUM

Committee Member Dewey Russell reported the following in absence of Railroad Museum Director Pat Smith for the months of November and December:

November

Guests: 284

Sales: \$242.75

Donations: \$293.00

December

Guests: 273

Sales: \$106.70

Donations: \$212.00

LIBRARY REPORT

- They made 50 new library cards during the month of December
- And circulated 4,295 items
- The library hosted 20 programs with 498 in participation for the month of December. All of the programs met with good turnout from the community. As fitting for December, the themes were focused on the holidays and winter fun.
- They hosted the annual Polar Express event for the preschoolers. This has become a tradition for some families and a magical afternoon for all who attend. They had 17 come out for a “ride” aboard the Polar Express.
- During the month of December, they hosted a Read-a-Thon. Every library book that was returned between December 1st and December 31st were tallied up for helping to achieve the community reading goal of 1,000 library books read. They surpassed this goal with a collective 1,899 library books read. Those who participated were entered into a raffle for an age appropriate book bundle. They had 35 participate in the raffle and all 6 prizes were awarded.
- They collaborated with Daydream Games, The Hatter Bookshop, and RiffRaff to bring about the first Early Bird Countdown on December 31st. This event was Dan Crutchfield’s idea and he sought out the support of the Library as the hub of the event. It was targeted toward younger children and took place between 6-8pm allowing for adults to still have time to participate in the Downtown Countdown or other celebrations should they wish.
 - The Library, The Hatter’s, and Daydream Games each provided crafts for the children to make that would be affixed to the 42 inch piñata that Mrs. Crutchfield constructed.
 - Terry Blankenship worked with Dan Crutchfield to construct the rigging that would allow the piñata to be hoisted up in the library parking lot. They had 4 of the Princeton Tigers football team come out to be the official Piñata poppers.
 - Public Works also closed off the road at the library, allowing the children to move safely from one side of the street to the other without fear of oncoming traffic.

- All those who attended left with 12+ items that ranged from candy to noise makers to matchbox cars to Pokémon cards and coupons to the supporting businesses. There was also dancing with a live DJ inside the Library and a photo station to capture the moment.

2. Public Safety

Councilman James Hill reported that the Public Safety Committee of Princeton City Council met on January 10, 2024, with the following to report to City Council:

Code Enforcement Department

Monthly Report for December 2023- Code Enforcement Director Ty Smith presented the following monthly report for December:

COMPUTATION OF COMPLAINTS

Summary – Property Maintenance

Initial Complaints	157
Cumulative Complaints to date –	49,082

AREA PATROL SUMMARY

Demolition/Renovation Programs Status

Condemnations/Unsafe in Process	8
Demolitions in Appeals Process	0
Demolitions w/Notice to Proceed	0
Total Demolitions to Date	769

Animal Control & Property Maintenance

Complaints this Month	56
Animal Control Cases	11
Impounded (dogs 0; cats 0)	0
Adopted	0
Euthanized	0
Reclaimed	0
Rescued	0
Property Maintenance Cases	68

Building Inspection (Zoning, PM, RC)

Building Permits (res. 7; Com. 3)	10
Total Inspections	21
Total Project Costs	\$818,168.00
Permit Fees	\$2,693.00

Flood Plain Management & Property Maintenance

Flood Plain Determinations:	
Flood Plain Permits Issued	1
Property Maintenance Case Total	10

Zoning Official

Certificate of Occupancy Applications:	4
Certificate of Occupancy Inspections:	4

Zoning Board Cases: 0

Rental Compliance

Revenue in Dec. \$350.00; Total to Date: \$34,445.45

Registered Units: New Units: 1 House 20 Apts.; RENEWALS: 6

Cumulative Total: Houses 391; Apts. 589; Other 83; Total 1,063

Vacant Buildings

Registered Vacant Buildings Registered 2; Total 45

Vacant Building Fees Collected: \$400.00

BILLING TOTALS:

Demolitions Billed: \$10,617.50

Payments Collected: \$190.00

Grass, Trash & Vet Billed: \$35.00

Payments Received: \$0.00

7 Invoiced for a total collection of \$190.00

Fire Department

Fire Chief Matt Mould presented the following report for December 2023:

Emergency Calls for the Month: 120

- 4 Fire Calls
 - 2 building fires
- 25 Vehicle Accidents / Rescues
- 73 Emergency Medical Calls
- Total emergency calls for FY 23-24: **711**

Inspections:

- 2 fire inspections
- 3 certificate of occupancy inspections

Training:

- 455 training hours
- Lt. Beeman attended a C.I.T. conference with Southern Highlands in Fort Myers, Florida.

Vehicle Accident Billing:

- \$0 for the month
- Total for FY 23-24: **\$2274**

V. Other Updates:

- FF J. Shafer completed his 3 year apprenticeship on December 9th.
- The Fire Department received notification from FEMA that the Assistance to Firefighters Grant application was turned down.
- The Fire Department received a grant of \$4,000 from Delegate Joe Ellington's discretionary fund to purchase new Hazmat chemical protective suits.
- Fire Department members participated in the New Year's Eve ball-drop.
- All vehicles are in service.

VI. Upcoming News:

- Country Roads Fire Conference in Buckhannon, WV is January 12-14
- ESCAPE Fire/EMS training conference at Pipestem is February 20-25.
- A C.I.T. class will be held February 26 – March 1.

Police Department

Police Chief Tim Gray presented the Police Report for the month of December:

November:

Calls: 443
 Arrests: 20
 Citations: 191

December:

Calls: 399
 Arrests: 20
 Citations: 39

- The new Flex system is working well for the Police Department. They are looking at getting body cams that work with the Flex system.
- Lt. Halsey has an appointment with a representative from Frontier to look into a higher speed internet for the Police Department.

3. Finance and Administration Committee

Councilman Marshall Lytton reported that the Finance and Administration Committee of Princeton City Council met on January 10, 2024, with the following to report to City Council:

Finance Department

December 2023, Financial Report – Finance Director Brian Conner reported that as of the end of December, the sixth month of FY2024, the actual revenues collected stood at 51.60% compared to the budgeted amount of 50.00%, while actual appropriations spent were 53.58%. Total funds available for City operations at the end of November were **\$2,478,958.**

Noteworthy Expenditures for December:

PEIA \$73,349.30
 Morgan Stanley \$39,994.98 (Fire & Police Pension)
 Waveband Communications. . . . \$11,591.76 (8 Com Sets for PD)

Chairman Lytton reported the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council December 2023 Financial Statements, **and he so moved.**

Councilman James Hawkins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

B&O Tax Incentives

1. Dollar Tree, 154 Athens Road Suite 2, Miracle Weatherspoon, Retail;

2. Jamaica Wi Hungry, 957 Mercer Street, Carolyn Tennant; Restaurant.

Chairman Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council the above mentioned B&O Tax Incentives, **and he so moved.**

Councilman Dewey Russell seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Appointment of Office

Councilman Lytton reported the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council to re-appoint the following individuals to their respective commission/board, **and he so moved:**

1. David Johnston, Building Commission
2. Steve Jessee, General Board of Appeals
3. Chris Canterbury, General Board of Appeals
4. Robert Lohr, Planning Commission

Vice Mayor Joseph Allen seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Agreement for Administrative Services (Region 1)

Chairman Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council the Agreement between the City of Princeton and Region 1 for Region 1 to administer \$1.8 million received from the State and \$2.2 million received from the Federal Government, **and he so moved.**

With a second by Vice Mayor Joseph Allen, the motion carried unanimously.

PEDA REPORT

Grand Openings/Ribbon Cuttings: 31 in 2023

Most Recent:

- **Visit Mercer County/Mercer County Convention & Visitors Bureau** (New Princeton Office), located at 215 South Walker Street, December 14

Upcoming:

- **Barkingham Palace**
- **Jimmies Pizza**
- **Studio K**
- **Valero Gas**
- **Jamacia Wi Hungry**
- **Linkous Esthetics**
- **Dollar Tree**
- **Hammer & Stain** (new owners)

Newsletter

The newsletter will include similar items as the last one such as Grand Openings, Ribbon Cuttings, and Business Spotlights. It will also again highlight the Beautification Grant, Princeton Business Works Grant, and the One-Year Business and Occupancy Tax Forgiveness.

Press Releases

29 press releases were sent out in 2023.

76 news stories originated by these press releases.

Social Media

Sites for PEDA and City of Princeton results for 2023:

New Page Followers: 3,273

Followers: 7,835

Total Posts: 463

Shared posts to help promote a Princeton business or local event: 47 different groups or businesses
(library, music in the park, fire department, police department, chamber, etc.)

Post Reach: 1,060,070

Post Engagement: 188,503

Reactions: 35,828

Shares: 8,956

Photo Views: 55,199

Media Campaign

Further, PEDA is once again putting on a “Shop Local, Shop Princeton” media campaign. They have paid for advertising through Facebook Advertising, Star 95, First Media Services, WVNS, and WVVA. This campaign is to encourage our community to purchase their holiday gifts within Princeton instead of businesses elsewhere.

This campaign concluded on December 31.

Facebook “Shop Local, Shop Princeton” video:

Post engagements: 32,419

3-second video plays: 31,368

Post reactions: 796

Follows and likes: 544

Post shares: 176

Audience: Princeton +19 miles

Days: 55

STAR 95 FM

300 (30) Second Commercials

FIRST MEDIA SERVICES

J104 100 (30) Second Commercials

KICKS COUNTRY & WHIS 300 30 Second Commercials

WVVA

366 (30) Second Commercials on WVVA, METV, and the CW

WVNS

100 (30) Second Commercials on 59 News
 Production of New (30) second PEDDA Advertising Video to be used all year- still in the making

Community Improvement Commission

The CIC put on the “Make it Sparkle, Princeton!” business storefront holiday decorating contest again this year. Winners were announced on December 21. The People’s Choice award was given to the business with the most social media likes. There were a total of 1,552 votes cast for the 13 businesses that participated. CSC’s Candle Bakery was awarded the People’s Choice Winner (\$125). Judges visited the businesses in person and judged their storefront displays. The winners were: First Place- Myra’s Flower Shop (\$500); Second Place- Denim and Lace (\$250); Third Place- CSC’s Candle Bakery (\$125).

Business Works Grant awarded in 2023

Q4 2022 – Snook’s Wings & Things
 Q1 2023 – Day Dreams Games
 Q2 2023 – E.B. Fungi
 Q3 2023 – CSC’s Candle Bakery

Beautification/Façade Grant awarded in 2023

ACE Hardware
 Midtown Auto/Muffler Man
 The Cat’s Meow
 Carl Pennington Insurance
 Bombshell Studio
 CSC’s Candle Bakery
 Bargain Binz -N-More
 The Oasis Beauty Bar & Boutique
 Evan's Sweets
 Wood Pool Service
~~BeYOUtiful Things~~
 Prime Care 12 Priority Health
 Big Bite
 Thompson & Litton
 Lively Associates

Resolution to the Office of Representative Carol Miller (Police Department)

PEDA Director Sam Lusk provided Council with three resolutions for Representative Carol Miller’s Office, Senator Shelley Moore Capito’s Office and Senator Joe Manchin III’s Office regarding a request for 55% Grant for the build out for the Police Department. This would include administrative offices, investigative facilities and a multijurisdictional law enforcement training center. These resolutions would give the City Manager and the PEDDA Director authorization to apply for this appropriation.

Chair Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Resolution to the Office of Representative Carol Miller for the USDA Congressional Direct Spending 2025 Request for the Princeton Police Department, **and he so moved.**

Councilman James Hill seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolution to the Office of Senator Shelley Moore Capito (Police Department)

Chair Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Resolution to the Office of Senator Shelley Moore Capito for the USDA Congressional Direct Spending 2025 Request for the Princeton Police Department, **and he so moved.**

Vice Mayor Joseph Allen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolution to the Office of Senator Joe Machin III (Police Department)

Chair Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Resolution to the Office of Senator Joe Manchin III for the USDA Congressional Direct Spending 2025 Request for the Princeton Police Department, **and he so moved.**

Councilman James Hawkins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolution to the Office of Representative Carol Miller (Outdoor Recreation)

PEDA Director Sam Lusk provided Council with three resolutions for Representative Carol Miller's Office, Senator Shelley Moore Capito's Office and Senator Joe Manchin III's Office regarding a request for 55% Grant for the build out for the Outdoor Recreational Area. This would include the wave pool, splash pad, locker rooms and concession stand. These resolutions would give the City Manager and the PEDA Director authorization to apply for the appropriation.

Chair Lytton reported the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Resolution to the Office of Representative Carol Miller for the USDA Congressional Direct Spending 2025 Request for the Princeton Police Department, **and he so moved.**

Vice Mayor Joseph Allen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolution to the Office of Senator Shelley Moore Capito (Outdoor Recreation)

Chair Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Resolution to the Office of Senator Shelley Moore Capito for the USDA Congressional Direct Spending 2025 Request for the Princeton Police Department, **and he so moved.**

Councilman James Hawkins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolution to the Office of Senator Joe Machin III (Outdoor Recreation)

Chair Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Resolution to the Office of Senator Joe Manchin III for the USDA Congressional Direct Spending 2025 Request for the Princeton Police Department, **and he so moved.**

Councilman Dewey Russell seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolutions: Authorize Signatories Municipal Complex

This resolution will allow the City Manager and the PEDDA Director to execute the necessary documents in regards to the Princeton City Hall Project, including the Wave Pool Project, the Police Department and the Fire Department.

Mr. Lytton reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council a Resolution to authorize the City Manager and the Princeton Economic Development Authority Director to execute the necessary paperwork for the Princeton Municipal Complex, **and he so moved.**

Councilman James Hill seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolutions: Land and Water Conservation Fund

This resolution is to authorize an application to the United States Department of Interior National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund. This would be for 50% of the cost of the outdoor recreational facilities including the wave pool, splash pad, locker rooms and concession stand.

Councilman Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council a Resolution to authorize an application to the United States Department of Interior National Park Service Land and Conservation Fund, **and he so moved.**

Vice Mayor Joseph Allen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

VI. City Attorney

City Attorney Paul Cassell presented the following:

First Reading of an Ordinance Amending Article 1900 “Personnel Guidelines and Procedures” (4.15 Benefits-Health and Fitness), of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Princeton, West Virginia.

This is to update the ordinance to extend the Health and Fitness Center membership to all employees.

Vice Mayor Joseph Allen made a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance Amending Article 1900 “Personnel Guidelines and Procedures” (4.15 Benefits-Health and Fitness), of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Princeton, West Virginia.

Councilman Dewy Russell seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

VII. City Manger

City Manager Mike Webb informed Council that the paperwork for the sidewalk projects has been sent out to Charleston and we will be waiting on construction to start later this spring.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.