

REGULAR MEETING ~ CITY COUNCIL
PRINCETON, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
November 20, 2023

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, November 20, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were Mayor David Graham; Vice Mayor Joseph Allen; Dewey Russell, Marshall Lytton and James Hill; City Manager Michael Webb, City Attorney Paul Cassell and City Clerk Kaitlyn Smith. Absent was Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker and Councilman James Hawkins. A quorum was constituted thereby.

I. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Councilman Marshall Lytton presented the invocation.

Council Member James Hill 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. Resolutions – Proclamations – Presentations

A. Proclamations

- a. Mayor David Graham presented a Proclamation for Christian Heritage Week November 19-25, 2023.

IV. Public Input

There was no public input.

V. Public Hearing

A. USDA Rural Development and Community Facilities Grant Program

At 6:36 p.m., Mayor Graham moved from Regular Session to a Public Hearing on the City of Princeton's USDA Rural Developments and Community Facilities Grant Program. Project Manager Courtney Neese from Region I Planning and Development Council opened up the Public Hearing by saying that this meeting will assist in complying with USDA requirements in providing an opportunity for community members to ask questions about the City's multi-purpose community center project, which is Phase II of a larger citywide project. This phase will bring 3 basketball courts, a concession stand, and a multi-purpose room to the existing City Hall Complex. They are still working on a funding package and construction timeline, but the project will expand the current capabilities of the Rec Center allowing for more community-based activities, such as rec league basketball, indoor soccer and a party rental space.

Ms. Neese opened the meeting up for questions or comments.

Citizen Anthony Miley asked if he could be brought up to speed on the matter.

Ms. Neese replied that this is part of a congressionally directed spending request that the City was awarded this year. It was a \$2.2 million congressionally directed spending award to expand the Rec Center in to the City Hall facility. This facility will be much larger and able to accommodate more people.

Mayor Graham said that this was earmarked by Senator Capito. It occurred about a year ago and the City has been filtering through the paperwork. It has been in the Newspaper and this is part of the process that Region I has to go through to proceed with the project.

Mr. Miley appreciated the explanation.

Ms. Neese finished the Public Hearing by saying once the environmental review is completed, there will be a public meeting to discuss the environmental impact and that will be the last step of the process.

Mayor Graham returned to Regular Session at 6:40 p.m.

VI. Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes of the following Special Meetings:
 - a. March 8, 2023
 - b. July 3, 2023
 - c. July 12, 2023
- B. Minutes of the following Regular Council Meetings:
 - a. July 17, 2023
 - b. September 18, 2023
 - c. October 16, 2023
- C. Minutes of the following Recessed Meetings:
 - a. May 17, 2023
 - b. May 18, 2023
 - c. May 22, 2023
- D. Minutes of the following Committee Meetings:
 - a. September 13, 2023
 - b. October 11, 2023

Mayor Graham explained that the backlog of minutes was due to the transition of former City Clerk Ken Clay to the new City Clerk, Kaitlyn Smith. Council Members have submitted corrections to Miss Smith. Mayor Graham asked that the corrections be made and the minutes be committed to record.

VII. 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 November 15, 2023, with the following to report out to City Council:

Public Works' Monthly Report – Public Works Co-Director Eric Gatchell presented the following progress report for October:

OLD BUSINESS:

- Continued mowing and brush hogging with the tractor and the excavator in several areas in town. Also cleared and fixed the roadway to the shooting range on behalf of the police department.

- Capital Paving has been completed for this year and the streets are paved and are addressing any issues such as raised drains and gravel at driveways as needed.
- They have continued to pick up leaves around the city.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Public Works completed 23 official service requests along with 3 in coordination with Code Enforcement.
- Dredged the ditch line between the hospital and the Rec Center.
- Fixed a drain on 12th Street extension that was falling.
- Repaired 2 metal drainage covers on Mercer Street that went across the sidewalk near North 9th Street that were trip hazards to the public.
- Patched a pipe at the 1300 block of East Main Street.
- Installed a new drain and pipe at the 300 block of South Wickham.
- Fixed several lights at the Library and also in the parking lot next to the Post Office, and are waiting on some new LED lights to fix the ones that don't work over the front entrance way to the Library.
- Installed 2 new speed bumps on Lower Pine at the Earl Muse Park, and painted them yellow and put up the appropriate signage at both ends to warn traffic.
- Installed 3 new Handicap Parking Spots on the 600 Block of Mercer Street.
- Took down and removed a couple large dead trees, 1 at the 500 block of Bluefield Ave, and another looming over the trail and road at the City Park. Another Large tree was removed by a professional service at the 1400 block of North Walker that was endangering power and communication lines.
- Patched the sidewalk along North 2nd Street that had several cracks and holes and trip hazards.
- Are getting their Trucks and Salt Spreaders ready for this winter.
- Have already started putting up this year's Christmas Decorations in preparation of the upcoming Christmas Parade and are nearing completion.

Councilman James Hill said that Public Works has done a great job setting up the Christmas Decorations this year.

Parks and Recreation Department

Councilman Dewey Russell presented the Parks and Recreation Report for October on behalf of Director Amanda McCabe:

OLD BUSINESS

Fall/Winter Programming

The Itty and Bitty Basketball Leagues will be finishing up their seasons this weekend.

Following Itty/Bitty, the department will then transition into the JV and Varsity Indoor Soccer Leagues. There were a total of 179 kids to sign up for these coed leagues. There are 94 JV kids making up 10 teams and 85 Varsity kids making up 9 teams. The leagues are scheduled to begin on Thursday, November 30. Games will run 6 days each week.

Directly following the holidays, the department will enter into its largest program of the year, Boys Little League Basketball for ages 8-12 and Girls Cheerleading for ages 4-12. This program typically averages 250-300 participants. Last winter the program had a total of 330 participants.

City Park Trash Receptacles

The 7 new trash receptacles for the City Park were ordered and just shipped. The projected delivery date is November 20. These commercial grade metal trash receptacles would replace some of the old wooden receptacles in the park. The receptacles will match the 10 new receptacles that were installed in 2022.

Community Foundation of the Virginia's Grant

The Community Foundation Grant award in the amount of \$10,401 was received and deposited by the department 2 weeks ago. The order has been placed for both the 3 additional polycarbonate basketball goal systems, and the Pickle ball net system.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

Railroad Museum

Museum Director Pat Smith reported the following for the month of October:

Numbers for October: 569 in attendance; \$683.68 gift shop sales; \$799 in Donations;

As of October 31st, the Railroad Museum has had 4,277 people at the Museum this year and 216 RVs.

October 6: Princeton Railroad Museum will be celebrated their 17th birthday. The celebration was brought indoors due to weather with 90 people in attendance.

October 21: The PHS Sensational Sixties Reunion was held October 20. Which includes the classes of 1960-1970. The Railroad Museum featured a tour of local museums with several trolley ride tours. There was a catered buffet style meal featuring the new bakery that just opened up, Sweet Babies Bakery. Attendance was 103.

The Railroad Museum received a \$500 Donation from the Sensational Sixties.

The Railroad Museum is looking at obtaining a trolley.

Pat attended an event at Pipestem and handed out 169 brochures.

Princeton Public Library

Library Director Laura Buchanan presented the report for October:

Library Stats

- The Library has made 45 new library cards during the month of October
- And circulated 4,782 items which is an increase over last year as well as last month.

Programs

- The library enjoyed the Halloween season with several events, including Pumpkin painting, Friends of the Library's Booktober Fest, Trick-or-Treat at the library, Straley's trunk or treat, and Ghost Tours.

Upcoming Programs for November - December

- NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writers' Month) is in full swing and we have weekly write-ins scheduled. Please see our calendar of events or call the library to get the dates and times.
- December 9th from 12:30 - 1:30 WV author J.L. Hendricks will be coming to the library to speak about his new book "God, Whisky, and Gold."

- December 16th features their annual Polar Express showing from 11am to 1pm. In addition to the movie, there will be light refreshments and photo opportunities. Participants may come dressed in their pjs for this event, bring a favorite blanket, pillow, and snuggle buddy.
- Saturday, December 2 kicks off the library's Read-a-thon. They are challenging the community to read 1,000 library books before the end of the year. This is library books only, and participants will be entered into a drawing for adult, teen, and children prizes.
- Several holiday crafts will begin the last week of November and carry on through the end of the year including ornament making and painting decorations, again see our calendar of events or stop by the library for more information.

2. Public Safety

Councilman James Hill reported that the Public Safety Committee of Princeton City Council met on November 15, 2023, with the following to report to City Council:

Code Enforcement Department

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

COMPUTATION OF COMPLAINTS

Summary – Property Maintenance

Initial Complaints	285
Cumulative Complaints to date –	48,707

AREA PATROL SUMMARY

Demolition/Renovation Programs Status

Condemnations/Unsafe in Process	2
Demolitions in Appeals Process	0
Demolitions w/Notice to Proceed	1
Total Demolitions to Date	768

Animal Control & Property Maintenance

Complaints this Month	106
Animal Control Cases	18
Impounded (dogs 2; cats 0)	2
Adopted	9
Euthanized	0
Reclaimed	2
Rescued	0
Property Maintenance Cases	88

Building Inspection (Zoning, PM, RC)

Building Permits (Res. 13; Com. 8)	21
Total Inspections	48
Total Project Costs	\$253,482.00
Permit Fees	\$1,956.00

Flood Plain Management & Property Maintenance

Flood Plain Determinations:

Flood Plain Permits Issued	4
Property Maintenance Case Total	88

Zoning Official

Certificate of Occupancy Applications:	2
Certificate of Occupancy Inspections:	2
Zoning Board Cases:	1

Rental Compliance

Revenue in \$775.00; Total to Date:	\$33,507.95
Registered Units: New Units: 2 Houses; RENEWALS:	27
Total:	1,031

Mr. Smith noted that some of these properties have sold, so the total may vary.

Vacant Buildings

Registered Vacant Buildings Registered 1; Total	43.
Vacant Building Fees Collected:	\$200.00

BILLING TOTALS FOR OCTOBER

Demolitions Billed:	\$11,097.50
Payments Collected:	\$340.00
Grass, Trash & Vet Billed:	\$272.61
Payments Received:	\$40.00
9 Invoiced for a total collection of	\$380.00

Councilman James Hill asked if the list of vacant properties would be advertised.

Mr. Smith replied that PEDDA Director Sam Lusk was working on that.

Vice Mayor Joseph Allen asked if the City was in line for demolition money.

Mr. Smith that the City was chosen to receive grant money in the next round, but he does not know the amount yet.

Citizen Anthony Miley asked where the grant money comes from.

Mr. Smith states it was an initiative through the DEP in Charleston that was created through legislature to help remove dilapidated structures.

Fire Department

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

Emergency Calls for the Month: 127

- 2 Fire Calls
- 18 Vehicle Accidents / Rescues
- 92 Emergency Medical Calls
- Total emergency calls for FY 23-24: **474**

Inspections:

- 1 fire inspection
- 2 certificates of occupancy
- 11 burning permits

Training:

- 489 training hours
 1. 7 of 12 are going through EMT recertification.
 2. Fire Extinguisher training provided for students and teachers at McTech.

Vehicle Accident Billing:

- \$515 for the month.

Total for FY2023-24: **\$515**

Other Updates:

- Fire Prevention Week was October 8-14
 1. Fire safety presentations were held for grades K-5 at Princeton Primary, Mercer and Straley Schools.
- A hiring test was held on October 14.
 1. 6 candidates turned out for testing. 3 passed the exam and were added to the eligibility list.
- Completed Annual Fall Maintenance:
 1. General vehicle maintenance
 2. Hydrant testing and inspections
- Required annual fire pump tests for each fire truck were completed.
- FF Kenneth Nunn passed his 2nd year apprenticeship exam.
- All vehicles are in service.
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Upcoming News:

- One candidate was scheduled to interview for the vacant position in November 1st. He will start on November 29th.
- C.A.R.E. Event with Southern Highlands on November 2nd at City Hall was a successful event.
- A 40 hour C.I.T class will be held at the end of November.

Chief Mould wanted to acknowledge and commend Southern Highlands for the C.A.R.E Event and also for everything they do out in the community.

Police Department

Councilman James Hill presented the Police Report on behalf of Police Chief Tim Gray for the month of October:

Call Report:

Offenses: 441

Arrests: 6

Citations: 66

- The Police Department completed training for the 911 Flex system.

- The Department attended the October Cruisin’ Trunk or Treat and also the Boo Bash at the Mathena Center.
- Officer Ford graduated from the Academy after 15 weeks of training
- Lt. Pugh attended a Less than Lethal class in Salem last week.
- Ptlm. Leftwich will attend a class in St. Albans January 16-18.
- Ptlm. Gibson will attend an online grant writing class in January.
- Night Time Qualifying will be completed soon.
- Re-test for Patrolman will be December 2nd at 9:00 a.m.

1. Finance and Administration Committee

Finance Department

October 2023, Financial Report – Finance Director Brian Conner reported that as of the end of October, the fourth month of FY2024, the actual revenues collected stood at 46.01% compared to the budgeted amount of 33.33%, while actual appropriations spent were 39.36%. Total funds available for City operations at the end of October were **\$3,238,892**.

Noteworthy Expenditures for October:

Traveler’s Insurance	\$134,675.48
PEIA	\$74,106.00
KS Statebank	\$41,499.98 (Garbage Truck)
Morgan Stanley	\$39,994.98 (Fire & Police Pension)
American Electric Power . . .	\$22,500.00 (Christmas Light Power Drops)

Chairman Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council the October 2023, Financial Statements and Report **and he so moved**.

Council Member James Hill duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

General Fund Revision #2:

Finance Director Brian Conner stated that General Fund Budget Revision #2 is required to appropriate additional expected revenue and to correct the fund balance for unappropriated funds in the prior year. Furthermore, the additional funds need to be allocated to funds showing an actual deficit in the account records. This revision will increase our estimated revenues by \$276,898. This revision brings the FY2024 General Fund Budget to \$8,450,866.

Expenditure adjustments include the following:

- Increase in EDA and City Clerk funds to appropriate for the leadership training program.
- Allocate monies to the City Manager’s line to facilitate ADA restroom project expenses.
- Appropriate for additional legal expenses.
- Appropriate for under budgeted expenses incurred in bringing on a full-time City Attorney.
- Allocate grant monies received by multiple departments.
- Appropriate for biennial Capital Paving Project.
- Reallocate monies associated with staff changes between Parks and Public Works.

- Appropriate for under-budgeted Storm Water Management expense.
- Increase to Beautification for the Christmas decorations power drop installation.

Total revisions increase the General Fund Expenditures Budget by \$276,898 bringing the total general Fund appropriations for FY2024 to \$8,450,866 thereby creating a balanced budget.

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

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

Annual Report for Firemen’s Pension and Relief Fund

Finance Director Brian Conner presented the annual report for the Firemen’s Pension and Relief Fund:

Beginning Fair Value	\$2,881,188.96
Total Revenue	\$641,186.91
Total Expenditures	\$471,898.98
Net Income (Loss)	\$169,287.93
Ending Fair Value	\$3,050,476.89

Chairman Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Annual Report for Firemen’s Pension and Relief Fund **and he so moved.**

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

Annual Report for Policemen’s Pension and Relief Fund

Finance Director Brian Conner presented the annual report for the Policemen’s Pension and Relief Fund:

Beginning Fair Value	\$4,759,256.96
Total Revenue	\$1,141,648.39
Total Expenditures	\$643,077.67
Net Income	\$498,570.72
Ending Fair Value	\$5,257,827.69

Chairman Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Annual Report for Policemen’s Pension and Relief Fund **and he so moved.**

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

B. & O. Tax Incentives – **ON MOTION**, Councilman Marshall Lytton reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council the following businesses in the City for the 100%, 1 year, B. & O. Tax Incentive for new businesses and **he so moved.**

1. Simple Pix Photography-1201 Stafford Drive-Photography-Jerielyn Fowler;
2. ShineTime Studios-850 Mercer Street-Retail-Shannon Cook;
3. Botany Tropicals-749 Mercer Street-Retail-Steven Jones;
4. Breanne Henley-1127 Mercer Street-Cosmetologist.

Council Member Dewey Russell seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Phase III Municipal Complex Resolution

Councilman Marshall Lytton reported the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council a resolution requesting \$800,000 in matching funds from the office of the West Virginia Governor Jim Justice's Congressional Appropriation Non-Federal Match Fund for Phase III of the Princeton Municipal Complex, and **he so moved**.

Vice Mayor Joseph Allen seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Accounting Firm for Community Center

Councilman Marshall Lytton reported the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council to use Griffith & Associates PLLC as the Accounting Firm for the new Multi-Use Community Center.

Councilman James Hill seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Princeton Day Resolution

Chairman Lytton reported the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council Princeton Day Resolution. This resolution recognizes the founding of the City of Princeton and this would make Princeton Day a day of celebration with an event recognizing the existence of the City. Mr. Lytton made a motion to approve the Princeton Day Resolution.

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

Princeton Economic Development Authority

Chairperson Marshall Lytton reported the following for October on behalf of PEDDA Director Sam Lusk:

Grand Openings/Ribbon Cuttings: 25 in 2023 so far

Most Recent:

- Wild & Wonderful Nutrition, located at 349 Mercer Street, was held Oct. 26 at 11:00 a.m.
- CSC's Candle Bakery, located at 809 Mercer Street, was held Nov. 1 at 11:00 a.m.
- Sweet Babies Bakery, located at 514 Rogers Street, was held Nov. 9 at 11:00 a.m.

Upcoming:

- Big Back's Burgers & Brews, located at 806 Thorn Street, scheduled for Nov. 16 at 11:00 a.m.
- Botany Tropicals, located at 749 Mercer Street, scheduled for Nov. 16 at noon.
- Studio K., Roses Plaza, December 8th, 2023 11:00am
- Barkingham Palace, Roses Plaza, date to be announced soon
- Jimmies Pizza - date to be announced soon
- Valero Gas - date to be announced soon
- Citizens Building Supply - date to be announced soon

Newsletter

The June to December newsletter is in the design process. The newsletter will include similar items as the last one, incorporating letters 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

Continuing to create and send out press releases to all local media outlets.

- Notable releases that we received coverage for this month include PEDAs receiving a grant for mapping project, Veterans Day Parade, and Christmas Parade.

Social Media

Stats for PEDAs and City of Princeton results for last 28 days:

Post Reach: 41,511

Post Engagement: 6,150

New Page Followers: 154

Followers: 6,845

Reactions: 1,419

Shares: 420

Photo Views: 1,504

Further, PEDAs is once again putting on a “Shop Local, Shop Princeton” media campaign. We 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.

PLRA Update

- The PLRA has been deeded six properties and the PLRA is in the process of giving the neighbors opportunity to purchase them for cost; any not purchased will be repurposed for development projects.

Community Improvement Commission

- The CIC will be putting on the Make it Sparkle, Princeton, business Christmas Decoration contest again this year. Businesses will be ranked by selected judges and based on 1st, 2nd, 3rd places as well as a People’s Choice award given to the participating business with the most Social Media likes. Judging will take place on 12/21/23.

Transfer of Property on South Walker to PEDAs

Mr. Lytton continued by reporting the Finance and Administration Committee approved unanimously and recommended to City Council a transfer of 0.08 acres of property to Princeton Economic Development Authority, and **he so moved**.

Councilman Dewy Russell seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

City Attorney Paul Cassell noted that this is a piece of property that is adjacent to the former Police Department and it is currently leased by MCNB Bank.

VIII. City Attorney

City Attorney Paul Cassell presented the following:

First Reading of an Ordinance Amending Section 1799-4 and 1799-9 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Princeton, West Virginia.

This is relating to the Princeton Land Reuse Agency and some administrative items also relating to that.

Vice Mayor Joseph Allen made a motion to approve the first reading amending Ordinance Section 1799-4 and 1799-9 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Princeton.

Councilman Dewey Russell seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Second Reading and Public Hearing of an Ordinance Adding 786.08 WV Build Act Exemption and 767.40 WV Build Act Exemption to the Codified Ordinances of the City of Princeton, West Virginia, regarding the exemptions related to the Build WV Act.

Mayor David Graham left Regular Session and entered in to a Public Hearing at 7:21 p.m. for Ordinance Adding 786.08 WV Build Act Exemption and 767.40 WV Build Act Exemption to the Codified Ordinances of the City of Princeton, West Virginia, regarding the exemptions related to the Build WV Act.

Mayor Graham asked Mr. Cassell if he could elaborate more on the subject.

Mr. Cassell stated that the WV build Act is a provision that encourages the building within a certain designated area and we are designing the entirety of the City of Princeton to encourage building of residential structures in the City.

After hearing no public input, Mayor Graham returned to Regular Session at 7:23 p.m.

With a motion from Councilman Dewey Russell and a second by Councilman James Hill, the motion passed unanimously of Ordinance Adding 786.08 WV Build Act Exemption and 767.40 WV Build Act Exemption to the Codified Ordinances of the City of Princeton, West Virginia, regarding the exemptions related to the Build WV Act.

Councilman James Hill explained that at the First Reading, he abstained. After learning more, the benefits from this are huge.

IX. City Manger

City Manager Mike Webb gave a presentation and update of events and improvements going on in the City for the months of September, October and November of 2023.

Adjournment

Mayor Graham wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. He stated that we have a lot to be thankful for and a big deal going on the community with the Princeton Tigers Football Team advancing to the playoffs. He encouraged everyone to support the Tigers on Friday at Hunnicutt Stadium.

A collective “Go Tigers!” from Council in support of the team.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.