

## City Council Meeting Minutes – August 26, 2024

City Council Chambers, City Building, 16 West Scribner Avenue, DuBois, Pennsylvania on Monday, August 26, 2024, at 6 p.m.; Council convened at their regular City Council Meeting with Mayor Pat Reasinger in the Chair. Other Council Members present were James Aughenbaugh, Shane Dietz, Elliot Gelfand, and Jennifer Jackson. Also present were: City Manager, Shawn Arbaugh; City Solicitor Associate, Matthew Gieg; Code Enforcement/Zoning Officer, Zac Lawhead; City Engineer, Mike Haynes; Interim Police Chief, Shawn McCleary; and Administrative Secretary, Korbi Slocum.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Reasinger.

### Executive Session

Council met in Executive Session prior to the meeting to discuss two personnel issues and two lawsuits.

### Public Comments on Agenda Items Only

#### Bev Kurts – Rainbow Drive

“When you talk about the Employee Handbook (Agenda Item #11), would you please address the people that have City cars that take them home at night and what their limitations are for using those.”

#### Deb Mechling – Monroe Street

“I saw one of the things is about property maintenance for high grass (Agenda Item #13). I was curious as to how many citations were issued this year as opposed to last year, and how much money was made on those citations this year as opposed to last year.” This will be discussed when we get to that Agenda item.

### Approval of Minutes

#### City Council Minutes – August 12, 2024

The motion was made by Aughenbaugh and seconded by Jackson that Council approve the City Council Meeting Minutes of August 12, 2024, as presented. Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

### Registry of Invoices

The motion was made by Gelfand and seconded by Dietz to pay the Auto Draft Check Register by Check ID dated August 22, 2024, in the amount of \$74,754.58. Jackson assured the audience that Council members are reviewing the invoices for each meeting and asking questions. “We’re working on cutting costs wherever we can.” Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

The motion was made by Dietz and seconded by Gelfand to pay the General Fund Purchase Order Listing by Vendor Name dated August 22, 2024, in the amount of \$307,437.32. Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

The motion was made by Jackson and seconded by Aughenbaugh to pay the PennVest Purchase Order Listing by Vendor Name dated August 22, 2024, in the amount of \$1,956,277.06. Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

### NEW BUSINESS

#### **Non-Uniformed Minimum Municipal Obligation - \$955,127.00**

This is the amount the City has to pay in to the employees’ pension plan. This is just the non-uniformed. It has to be approved by the governing body before September 30<sup>th</sup> each year, so this will go into the 2025 Budget. It’s a factor of what they think the costs are going to be and what payroll is and what the contributions from employees are. That amount for 2025 is \$955,127.00. The motion was made by Aughenbaugh and seconded by Gelfand to approve the Minimum Municipal Obligation payment of \$955,127.00.

Reasinger opened the floor for questions. Kristin Vida of Chestnut Avenue asked what the payment amount was in 2024. Arbaugh replied, “Around \$600,000.00.” She then asked if this is the expected amount every year. Reasinger replied, “Oh no, it goes up. I had an actuary report done for the next 10 years. The max it hits is about 1.4 million.” Arbaugh added, “It’s based on rate of return too, so if we have good years, we’ll see better dividends.” Reasinger noted, “This MMO is based on us projecting an 8% return on our investment. It should be somewhere around 6.75%.” Michael Clement of South Brady Street asked, “Mr. Mayor, just to clarify, you mean somebody didn’t pay in the correct amounts in the past? How do you explain that to the taxpayers?” Reasinger replied, “It was changed. Each employee would get 1.7% of their pay invested per year. It was changed to 2.5%, so that takes it from 36-37 years of employment, maybe 33. It’s very complicated. It was changed from 50% to 90% for a little bit.” Arbaugh added, “Any employee hired after January 1, 2013, is back to 50% of their salary.” Reasinger added, “They’re still at 2.5 and after 20 years they get half of their salary, which is still a lot. I don’t normally allow questions but it’s a lot of money and I want to make sure you get a handle on it.” Charlie Mechling of Monroe Street asked, “I

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**Non-Uniformed Minimum Municipal Obligation - \$955,127.00 (continued)**  
know a lot of times because fixed pensions, a lot of places aren't doing like they used to. A lot have gone to 401K's. I don't know the particulars of how you'd possibly switch over." Reasinger replied, "We are not allowed to. Third Class City by the state is required to have a defined benefit package. That's how we have to do it."

Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea.  
Motion passed 5-0.

**Healing the Planet Grant Award**  
The City received a \$4,000.00 grant from Giant, the parent company of Martin's, to plant trees. The trees have to be on public land, and they have to be native trees to Pennsylvania. We will be planting 40-50 maple trees on Maple Avenue on the right of way. It was very nice, and we thank them.

**DuBois Area High School – Homecoming Request**  
The school district is requesting that Division Street and Beaver Drive be closed from the high school to Mansell Stadium on Friday, October 4, 2024, starting at 5:45 p.m. for approximately 45 minutes. The Police and Fire departments will assist. The motion was made by Jackson and seconded by Aughenbaugh to approve the school's request to close Division Street and Beaver Drive for the annual homecoming parade. Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea.  
Motion passed 5-0.

**New Payroll Account – Authorize Account and Signatories**  
Due to a check washing incident of 13 checks from our previous account, we are requesting authorization to open a new payroll account with S&T Bank with the four signatories being Lisa LaBraska, David Volpe, Tom Nowak and Shawn Arbaugh. Tom Nowak caught the activity and notified the bank. The City did not lose any money. The motion was made by Jackson and seconded by Dietz to approve opening the new payroll account at S&T Bank. Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

**DuBois City Employee Handbook**  
When we originally passed the first version of the handbook, we did not get the input of both our non-uniform and our uniform union folks. Therefore, we are requesting that we rescind the previous approval of the handbook and wait until we get those comments and incorporate them into a new handbook. The motion was made by Aughenbaugh and seconded by Jackson to rescind the previously approved Employee Handbook. Regarding the request pertaining to City vehicles, Arbaugh stated, "We have one employee with a City vehicle who is on call. He can take it reasonably within 25-50 miles from the City." Reasinger added, "We have two fire chiefs that have City vehicles, also." Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

**Downtown DuBois Request – Grapes and Hops Tour, September 21, 2024**  
Shirley Dahrouge explained, "This is a courtesy to let the City know of our annual Grapes and Hops Tour on September 21, 2024. It has been extended an additional hour, from 4:00-8:00 pm, to allow more time and due to adding more stops on the tour. A shuttle service will be available."

**DuBois City Fee Schedules**  
Tonight is simply for discussion. The following are some fines and registration fees that have not been looked at for a while:

**Vacant Property Registration** – We have the opportunity to hire a third-party company who may have a better success rate in collecting these fees which currently are:

Vacant less than a year	\$ 0.00
Vacant 1 to less than 2 years	\$ 500.00
Vacant 2 to less than 3 years	\$ 1,000.00
Vacant 3 to less than 5 years	\$ 2,000.00
Vacant 5 to less than 10 years	\$ 3,500.00
Vacant 10 years or more is an additional	\$ 500.00

There are about 12 vacant/blighted buildings in the City. Solicitor Associate Geig discussed the legal process of selling these properties beginning with an upset sale. If no bids are received there, it goes to a judicial sale. Raising these fees would serve no purpose. We need to look at how to better collect the existing fees. Follow the ordinance and, if allowable, put a lien on the properties. We will see what kinds of third-party proposals we receive then can award a contract.

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DuBois City Fee Schedules (continued)

Property Maintenance for High Grass – The current fines are:

First offense	\$ 25.00
Second offense	\$ 50.00
Third offense	\$ 100.00
Fourth offense	\$ 300.00

We are looking to raise those fines to \$50.00, \$100.00, \$250.00 and \$500.00. Reasinger added, “We really don’t want the money; we want the grass cut.” The current process for repeat offenders is they receive a ticket on the door. If it is someone who has never been cited, they get a written warning on the door. Lawhead tries to work with people who have special circumstances. If someone doesn’t pay the fine, it becomes a non-traffic citation which is turned over to the magistrate and involves court costs in addition to the fine.

Property Maintenance for Snow on Sidewalks – Basically the same fees and procedure as with high grass. Lawhead gives warning letters. He tries to focus on high-traffic areas like the Boulevard, downtown and high school and Penn State campus. Weather is difficult to control.

Building Permits – We currently have a 30% administrative fee on top of PennSafe’s inspection fee schedule. We recommend raising that to 35%. The process begins with Lawhead explaining the permit process including what permit is required. The completed application is reviewed by PennSafe. It comes back to the City where the permit and checklist are issued. The records are maintained by the City. Some of the work that requires permits include porches over 30”, new or replacement, or covered porches with a roof; additions; pools/hot tubs (also require a fence); sidewalks. Lawhead said, “It is always better to call before you start a project.”

Skill Games – The current fee is \$100.00 per game per year. There are approximately 75 games in the City, including in clubs and bars. The number of locations is 15-20. Bars are regulated by the PUC. The locations of concern do not always have an employee present. According to the state, the City can regulate among other things the hours of operation and number of machines, but there must be an Ordinance. The state legislature has yet to take any action, so the City can take it upon themselves. Without an Ordinance, the only thing we can do is change the fee. The suggested fee per game is \$1,000 per machine per year.

Zoning Permits – The fee is currently \$25.00-\$29.50. We recommend raising it to \$50.00. Regarding advertising yard signs on the right of way, unless you are doing work on the property, they are not allowed. A reminder with the upcoming election, keep political signs behind the sidewalk. Maximum size is six square feet.

Property Maintenance – Enforcement Process

Lawhead already reviewed his process. There is no policy per se, but what he is doing seems to be working. To answer the question asked during Public Comments, Lawhead writes approximately 20-30 notices per month; however, it is difficult to track the dollar amount of fines paid.

Blighted Properties

Currently, the City is working with Keystone CORE, a division of PA Downtown, on reducing the number of blighted properties. They advise the City how to best handle these properties.

Downtown Trees

There are a limited number of places to plant trees in the downtown. Reasinger would like to see 42” square containers in which small trees can be planted with flowers and hanging baskets. These will be paid for by money already allocated in the budget for trees, so it may need to be done in stages over several years.

Appointed and Elected Officials – Inscriptions on Memorials

Several Council members have concerns with the names of employees and appointed/elected officials inscribed on memorials. The concern is that taxpayer dollars are used for these projects. Council is considering drafting a Resolution prohibiting that practice. It could potentially affect existing memorials.

Approval to Advertise for Zoning Hearing Board Members

The City does not have current members on the Zoning Hearing Board. Terms expired and members were not appointed/reappointed. There are two variance cases coming up in the near future for review. The motion was made by Jackson and seconded by Gelfand to approve advertising for Zoning Hearing Board

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### Approval to Advertise for Zoning Hearing Board Members (continued)

members. Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

### Reappointment of Redevelopment Authority Member – John Yargar

The motion as made by Aughenbaugh and seconded by Jackson to approve the reappointment of John Yargar to the Redevelopment Authority for a term to expire 12/31/2025. Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

### Public Comments

#### Deb Mechling – Monroe Street

"I would like to commend you all on the different items that were on the agenda tonight that we've reviewed months ago. It's nice to see an update on them. I also wanted to acknowledge you addressing the blight issue because the appearance of our community is important as a visitor's perception of what our community values are and we're not giving a good impression presently. Also, I hope that there is a discussion sooner rather than later on the personalized items in the park because that's a real point of contention for a lot of our community." Gelfand asked her to clarify the items to which she was referring. "The names on the benches." Mechling then asked, "With the high percentage of elderly in our area, what is the procedure for elderly who can't mow or shovel?" Reasinger replied, "They either need to have a neighbor do it or they pay to have it done. You still need a safe sidewalk." There was discussion as to the availability of agencies or church groups who volunteer their services. Lawhead does not have an active list. Reasinger asked the public to get the contact information to the City.

#### Kristen Vida – Chestnut Avenue

"Pat, at every meeting you have made the comment that you can view the invoices on the website. We must not have a very friendly website because I can never find them. I've never seen them under the Government section or the Department section." Reasinger replied, "I was told they were there." Lawhead explained, "If you're on City Council meetings where the agendas are posted, if you scroll the whole way down, Registry of Invoices is right underneath."

"Regarding the blighted properties, is there a role for the RDA in condemning some of those blighted properties, maybe the ones that are more commercialized?" Reasinger replied, "That's where the Redevelopment Authority comes in. They can do things the City can't. Redevelopment is a wonderful tool." Shirley Dahrouge stated, "Redevelopment Authority is able to do things the municipality cannot do and even myself as the downtown (Downtown DuBois). They can get properties cleared, they can eminent domain." Reasinger explained that the building Hockman Candy is in was taken by eminent domain. "It took a long time, but it was done." Gieg added, "It has to be taken for a public service."

Vida closed by saying, "I commend you all with the conversations with all of us here tonight on all of these items. Thank you."

#### Leo Brooks – Assistant Fire Chief

"We had a fire on Knarr Street about a month and a half ago. I'm going to brag a little bit. From the time we were dispatched to the time the fire was out was less than 20 minutes. To have a fire department that quick and efficient, I think the citizens should be very proud. That's phenomenal. We got awarded a Safer Grant a few months ago. We're doing a recruitment campaign. We do have signage up at the stations and there's a banner at the fire school. So far, we've got two people that filled out a questionnaire. We're still getting new members in, so that program is working very well. We're doing Touch a Truck at WalMart on September 14. At some point, we're doing forceable entry training with the Police Department. Third Ward has a forceable entry simulator door. It's probably one of the most used tools we have. The guys from the fire study were here. They met with Shawn, Chief Federici and Chief Runyon and visited four of the fire stations. That's going well. The fire subcommittee had a meeting with Dave McClure of the 9-1-1 Center and talked about what frequency we would be on. He gave us some recommendations. On September 25, we're going to be at Wasson Elementary School for Career Day. We had ladder testing last week on the big U-shaped ladder. There are a couple of issues with the ladder truck that are being addressed, but overall that went well. We have two gentlemen to acknowledge. Lenny Federici has 50 years volunteering with the department which is a significant accomplishment. Junior Firefighter Jack Roy with the Volunteers got his Eagle Scout. If you see him, congratulate him." Reasinger asked about Community Days. "There is interest in bringing it back, so we're in the reorganizational phase right now. We should have some concrete details in about a month."

Vida inquired about the ISO rating and consolidation. Brooks replied, "We talked to the ISO guy and he said we'll start over as a brand new department. We asked about a split rating, but the ISO has a new parent company and is pretty strict. Insurance companies don't want to pay out."

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Denny Skraba - Musicfest

"This past Thursday was the last concert. We had nine concerts total. We took July 4 off because it fell on a Thursday, and we didn't want to compete with the festivities going on in Brockway. The weather cooperated fantastically. We couldn't have asked for nicer weather. I want to thank the Council and all the City workers that came together to make this all happen. It isn't only me. Korbi helps me out a lot. Elaine Haskins from the Courier makes me look good. The money, I was \$2,705.00 under what was allotted, so that give you money to spend somewhere else. A lot of people in the area look forward to these concerts. I get a lot of good comments. If you want me to do it next year, I'm on board. Dan Wallace from Wallace Sound is also on board. Thank you very much." Council members thanked Skraba for a great job.

Barry Abbott – Sandy Township

"One of the things on fire at our consolidation meeting that people here may have missed is the cooperation between Sandy and the City on communications. I believe it was unanimous and I think it did wonderful for the development of the new fire company moving forward. To the fire departments in both Sandy and the City, I applaud you."

Council Member Comments

Councilwoman Jen Jackson

"Mr. Skraba, I wish you wouldn't have said you didn't spend as much because I was going to recommend that we give you more money next year." Skraba responded, "Depending on what I look into I might be asking you (for more money)." Jackson continued, "Thanks. It was a great meeting and conversation. The fire department, I think it was a good presentation. I, like Barry, was glad to see everyone at the Joint Board meeting come together."

Councilman Elliot Gelfand

"I get asked a lot about the investigations, what's going on, is anything happening? I do want to let people know the investigations are continuing. We had visitors from the AG's office here last week. The City is cooperating fully with the government agencies that have issues with the prior happenings. We'll update you when we have updates."

Councilman Shawn Dietz

"I hope everyone is taking advantage of the beautiful weather we're having."

City Manager Shawn Arbaugh

"We did reach out to the county and 9-1-1 Center on the request to the fire departments. I'm meeting with them next Tuesday as to what that looks like, so I'll provide an update at our next Joint Board meeting. Additionally, I want to let you know we will have a Tire Recycling event. It will be free to residents of the City and the township. I believe we're going to be scheduled for October 2 for the City. Each resident will be able to bring up to four tires. We're working with the Clearfield County Solid Waste Authority, a great partner and we appreciate everything they do."

Adjourn

There being no further business to transact, the motion was made by Gelfand and seconded by Jackson that Council adjourn. Roll call was as follows: Dietz, yea; Aughenbaugh, yea; Jackson, yea; Gelfand, yea; Reasinger, yea. Motion passed 5-0.

ATTEST:

Korbi Slocum

APPROVED:

[Signature]