

Mayor Eisaman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. City Administrator, Susan Trout, took roll call with the following members present: Councilman DePasquale, Councilman Tridico, Councilman Finfrock and Mayor Eisaman. City Solicitor, Timothy McCormick and City Treasurer/Fiscal Director, Mary Perez were also present. Councilman Peterinelli was absent.

*****PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE***** Mayor Eisaman

*****COMMENTS/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR*****

John Vanderhoff, 12 Brattleboro Drive, Greensburg, PA. Mr. Vanderhoff, "The issue is the tax increase."

Mayor Eisaman, "Yes, we received your e-mail."

Mr. Vanderhoff, "I appreciated the response and the conversations. I moved here four years ago and you fellows had a great record of holding taxes down, lowering taxes. I was impressed. Now I think you raised taxes approximately 7% last year and now another 18% approximately this year, which is a total of 25% or something approaching that in a two-year period. I couldn't believe it. Though I'm not a political activist I felt like I had to come and speak to you. I realize I'm not naïve; you've already made your minds up on what you're going to do. I have to tell you that I respect the fact that you have a difficult decision to make. These are tough times; you're going to hurt somebody if you make cuts in services or cut people and staffing in the Police Department, what have you. You're going to have unhappy people there. On the other hand you're going to have unhappy people like myself with increased taxes. I respect that but you have lived here and loved Greensburg I'm sure more than I do with me being the newcomer, but I have to tell you this type of tax increase hurts Greensburg in the long haul. You read this headline and I would not have considered moving inside the City limits of Greensburg today as I did 4 ½ years ago. I think that's going to be true for businesses and I think it's going to affect businesses. I think it's going to affect landowners in this time when bankruptcies and what have you are on the edge and then you push. You may say 'well, it's only a five dollar increase a month' but the fact is my tax is going to go up more now. I can afford it; it's not going to make a difference to me, but it does make a difference to a lot of people. In the long-term increased taxes do not ever make a City stronger in my opinion. I see my property value is going down; I see the likelihood of this City progressing diminishing with this type of tax increase. If you feel you have to make that kind of tax increase now, I'd like to see you say 'hey, we're going to make it for one year only and force ourselves to look hard next year at reconsidering this'. You can say 'well, yes we'll reconsider it next year as we have before and we cut taxes', well, reconsidering it next year without having to re-vote on it next year doesn't force you to make the hard decisions of should we cut back on services, should we cut back on staffing, what can we do?"

Mayor Eisaman, "I'm not disagreeing with you, Mr. Vanderhoff, but when we introduced the Bill some of my comments were that we realize in 2009 we're going to have to make some very difficult decisions to evaluate departments, services and properties as well as look for additional revenue sources to offset this increase in the future. I think all of us here have pride in what we've tried to do over the years as far as maintaining our budget. This is not an easy situation, I don't believe, for any of us here. We have a lot of pride in

what we've been able to do over the years because we were able to reduce taxes one mill for one year and unfortunately last year that mill came back. Yes, we are in some tough economic times and we understand overall this has an impact on everybody in our community. We're hoping along with the economy we can make some key evaluations in 2009 and possibly find some different funding sources and utilize some changes so we may be in a better situation at the end of 2009 sitting here looking forward with regards to our taxes."

Mr. Vanderhoff, "You're saying you would be in a position to rescind this tax increase or reduce taxes?"

Mayor Eisaman, "In a perfect world, if the economy turns and our wage tax dollars increase, because you know our wage taxes are affected by layoffs at Sony and other places. Our real estate tax assessment has been decreased by the County Assessment Board, and that has an effect on us. Actually on some of them we have to refund real estate taxes on money we've already collected in the past and pay it back over the next couple years, which has an affect not only on the reduction of the real estate taxes but also its depleting money out of the General Fund we already had in our budget and now it's gone. I appreciate your comments and I didn't mean to cut you off."

Mr. Vanderhoff, "Thank you and I appreciate your comments and the insights you have given. I realize you don't increase taxes for the fun of it. I do think a downward spiral occurs when you increase taxes. Fewer people move in and more people move out. Now you're in worse trouble. If more businesses close you're in worse trouble. I think it gets down to priorities. How strong are your priorities on reducing or keeping taxes low versus cutting services and staffing? Those are hard decisions. I work for a company where we went from 90 people to 70 people in one year, but the company survived. I saw our competitor who didn't make the cuts go bankrupt. Those were painful. I think cutting staff and services is better for this community long-term than maintaining the level of services we currently have and increasing taxes, because I think it puts us in that death spiral. I don't want us to be like Latrobe and Jeannette and these others and I think we're in threat of that situation occurring with increased taxes, especially the magnitude of increased taxes you're talking about. This kind of headline drives people and businesses away from moving into Greensburg."

Mayor Eisaman, "Unfortunately we have no control over the ink."

Mr. Vanderhoff, "If that were not factual, you would make them rescind it. He's being kind in not reminding everybody that the taxes were increased 7% the year before for a total of 25% in two years. So thank him for that. Thank you very much for your time. This is my first time coming here. I do have sympathy for those of you running for re-election. I think you will hopefully see people run against you and make you defend the 25% tax increase in two years. Thank you."

Mayor Eisaman, "Thank you, sir."

*****ADOPTION OF BILLS AS ORDINANCES*****

Bill No. 8 as Ordinance No. 1973 – AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE TAX RATE FOR CITY PURPOSES FOR THE YEAR 2009. Ms. Trout, "Upon enactment, Ordinance No. 1973 sets the Real Estate Millage for 2009 at 25.05 mills."

Councilman Finfrock **MOVED** to adopt Bill No. 8 as Ordinance No. 1973, and Councilman DePasquale **SECONDED**. No discussion. **All voted unanimously to adopt.**

Bill No. 9 as Ordinance No. 1974 – AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GREENSBURG FIXING THE NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF ALL DEPARTMENTS OF THE CITY OF GREENSBURG AND RATES OF COMPENSATION THEREOF FOR THE YEAR 2009. Ms. Trout, “Ordinance No. 1974 sets forth the 2009 wages for City personnel.”

Councilman Tridico **MOVED** to adopt Bill No. 9 as Ordinance No. 1974, and Councilman DePasquale **SECONDED**. No discussion. **All voted unanimously to adopt.**

Bill No. 10 as Ordinance No. 1975 – AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GREENSBURG, COUNTY OF WESTMORELAND AND COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, APPROPRIATING SPECIFIC SUMS ESTIMATED TO BE REQUIRED FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR THE CITY GOVERNMENT HEREINAFTER SET FORTH DURING THE YEAR 2009. Ms. Trout, “Ordinance No. 1975 is our City Budget for 2009.”

Councilman DePasquale **MOVED** to adopt Bill No. 10 as Ordinance No. 1975, and Councilman Tridico **SECONDED**. No discussion. **All voted unanimously to adopt.**

Bill No. 11 as Ordinance No. 1976 – AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 151, KNOWN AS ‘FEES’, OF ORDINANCE NO. 1646, THE CODE OF THE CITY OF GREENSBURG, CHANGING AND/OR ADDING CERTAIN FEES AND/OR LANGUAGE FOR CERTAIN CITY SERVICES. Ms. Trout, “Adoption of Bill No. 11 adds under the Recreation Department, a new use and hourly fee for the rink of \$7 for stick time, a new use and fee of \$500 for a season’s cart pass at the golf course at Mt. Odin, a new rental charge of \$25 per hour for the sound system service, a new use and fee for a winter basketball program of \$35 per participant, an increase in the birthday party package fee for the pool from \$8 to \$10 per child and the same increase for the rink party package effective August 2009, an increase from \$45 to \$100 per participant for the American and Junior Legion baseball programs, and a \$25 decrease in the rental fee for use of the Log Cabin at Mt. Odin; under Parking the on-street lease rates for various areas is changed from \$40 to \$60 to the new scale of \$40 to \$110; under Administration, a new fee is added for Liquor License Hearings of \$350 per hearing; and under Planning and Zoning, new uses and fees are listed for a Zoning variance, special exception or appeal of \$350 each.” Mayor Eisaman, “With regard to the various on-street parking rates that are currently \$40 to \$60 and they’re going to \$40 to \$110, where is that applicable?”

Ms. Perez, “That is to capture the media spaces that are alongside the Courthouse that are leased from Channels 2, 4 and 11.”

Mayor Eisaman, “They are currently leasing even though they’re down the street in the Stark Building?”

Ms. Perez, “Yes.”

Councilman DePasquale **MOVED** to adopt Bill No. 11 as Ordinance No. 1976, and Councilman Tridico **SECONDED**. No further discussion. **All voted unanimously to adopt Bill No. 11 as Ordinance No. 1976.**

*****COUNCIL APPROVAL*****

- a. **Transfer of Debt Owed to the Redevelopment Authority of Westmoreland County (RAWC) from the Greensburg Parking Authority to the City of Greensburg.** Ms. Trout, "Council approval authorizes the Mayor to execute on behalf of the City an assignment agreement transferring a \$200,000 debt to the City of Greensburg that was originally incurred between the Parking Authority and the RAWC for the purchase of the land where the Robert A. Bell Parking Garage exists. This is an old debt not due to be paid I believe until 2016." Solicitor McCormick, "Let me explain it this way. The City has always been the guarantor on that debt, so even though we had a legal entity known as the Greensburg Parking Authority, which was the debtor to the RAWC, the City was always the guarantor. So it was always our debt one way or the other. This past year the City and the Parking Authority have decided to dissolve the Parking Authority largely because in this day and age there's really no use for them any longer. So this is really just a transfer of a debt to the City that the City was already responsible for but legally the paperwork has to show that between the City and the RAWC. So while it may be construed that the City is taking on \$200,000 of new debt, that's not the case. It's because of the dissolution of the Parking Authority; the debt was always there." Councilman DePasquale, "What year did you say it was due?" Ms. Trout, "I believe it is owed in 2016." Councilman Finfrock **MOVED** to approve the transfer of debt, and Councilman DePasquale **SECONDED**. No further discussion. **All voted unanimously to approve the transfer of debt.**
- b. **Encroachment Agreement between the City of Greensburg and Mary Levy.** Ms. Trout, "Council approval of the agreement is requested for a portion of the former Lilly Shop Building which encroaches onto the City's Pennsylvania Avenue Parklet. A closing on the sale of the property is scheduled on or before January 9th. I believe it affects almost two feet." Solicitor McCormick, "Again this is a positive development in that the property which is now vacant is being sold to someone who intends obviously to occupy the property, the Tarosky development, which is a very positive development. It will become a much more valuable property once it is developed and that whole development process and approval process has already been started. When they were doing the survey they found that for however many years the Levy property came onto the City property where that parklet is on Pennsylvania Avenue by a few feet. So what we're doing is just saying to them we're recognizing that but the parklet will not be disturbed. The City continues to own the property. It's just a legal recognition for title purposes of what has existed for decades literally." Councilman Tridico **MOVED** to approve the encroachment agreement, and Councilman DePasquale **SECONDED**. No further discussion. **All voted unanimously to approve the encroachment agreement.**

- c. **Dissolution of the Greensburg Parking Authority.** Ms. Trout, "This is an action that Tim referred to earlier that we've been discussing. Hopefully this will be the formal action which dissolves the existence of the Greensburg Parking Authority effective December 31, 2008. This just makes the process final."

Solicitor McCormick, "My understanding is that the Parking Authority also recognized over time that there really was no purpose in continuing the Authority. This is probably the second or third authority that I recall that has been dissolved; wasn't there something called the Greensburg Municipal Authority? It used to be for whatever reason when the concept of authorities came into law in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania a lot of municipalities did their borrowing primarily through these authorities. That whole situation legally has changed and ultimately the municipality ends up being the guarantor of the debt and that type of thing. So a lot of these authorities no longer exist other than sort of a ceremonial form or whatever. It's just getting rid of something that isn't needed."

Councilman DePasquale, "I would assume we'll send letters to the people who were on this Authority thanking them for serving."

Ms. Trout, "Absolutely."

Councilman Finfrock **MOVED** to approve the dissolution of the Greensburg Parking Authority, and Councilman DePasquale **SECONDED**.

Mayor Eisaman, "The Parking Authority has already voted to dissolve themselves, so this is just a final step in eliminating the Authority."

Solicitor McCormick, "With some cost savings; not much. It's nothing to write home about but there are some cost savings."

No further discussion. **All voted unanimously to approve the dissolution.**

*****ADJOURNMENT*****Councilman DePasquale **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. **SECONDED:** Councilman Tridico. Unanimously all voted in favor to **adjourn**.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Susan M. Trout, City Administrator

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