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SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING.

PUBLIC HEARING

IN RE: FILE OF COUNCIL NO. 97, 2009 -
APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE EXPENSES OF THE CITY
GOVERNMENT FOR THE PERIOD COMMENCING ON THE FIRST DAY
OF JANUARY, 2010 TO AND INCLUDING DECEMBER 31, 2010 BY
THE ADOPTION OF THE GENERAL CITY OPERATING BUDGET FOR
THE YEAR 2010.

HELD:

Tuesday, December 1, 2009

LOCATION:

Council Chambers
Scranton City Hall
340 North Washington Avenue
Scranton, Pennsylvania

CATHENE S. NARDOZZI - COURT REPORTER

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CITY OF SCRANTON COUNCIL:

MR. ROBERT MCGOFF, PRESIDENT

MS. JUDY GATELLI, VICE-PRESIDENT

(Not present.)

MS. JANET E. EVANS

(Not present.)

MS. SHERRY FANUCCI

MR. WILLIAM COURTRIGHT

MS. KAY GARVEY, CITY CLERK

MR. NEIL COOLICAN, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

MR. AMIL MINORA, SOLICITOR

1 MR. MCGOFF: I'd like to call this
2 public hearing to order. Roll call, please.

3 MR. COOLICAN: Mrs. Evans. Mrs.
4 Gatelli. Ms. Fanucci.

5 MS. FANUCCI: Here.

6 MR. COOLICAN: Mr. Courtright.

7 MR. COURTRIGHT: Here.

8 MR. COOLICAN: Mr. McGoff.

9 MR. MCGOFF: Here. Notice is hereby
10 given that a Public Hearing of Scranton City
11 Council will be held on Tuesday, December 1,
12 2009, at 5:30 p.m. in council chambers, 2nd
13 Floor, Municipal Building.

14 The purpose of said Public Hearing
15 is to hear testimony and discuss the
16 following:

17 FILE OF COUNCIL NO. 97, 2009 -
18 APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE EXPENSES OF THE
19 CITY GOVERNMENT FOR THE PERIOD COMMENCING ON
20 THE FIRST DAY OF JANUARY, 2010 TO AND
21 INCLUDING DECEMBER 31, 2010 BY THE ADOPTION
22 OF THE GENERAL CITY OPERATING BUDGET FOR THE
23 YEAR 2010.

24 Speakers on the question will be
25 given three minutes time. Marie Schumacher.

1 MS. SCHUMACHER: Do we get a second
2 round if everybody is -- well, as we did
3 last year. Well, anyway. The budget's
4 local tax description notes the city's wage
5 tax is 2.4 percent, but is commonly
6 incorrectly stated as 3.4 percent because
7 the city wage tax is collected along with
8 the Scranton School District's 1 percent
9 wage tax. To me, this means 3.4 percent is
10 collected and split about 70/30 between the
11 city and school district.

12 However, the school district revenue
13 estimate from the wage tax is 7.5 million.
14 This means wages would have to total
15 \$750 million. This city budget is
16 estimating 21.9 million in collected and
17 uncollected wage taxes which would mean
18 total wages are 912.5 million. The
19 difference between 912 million and 750
20 million is significant and both can't be
21 correct. Which is correct? If the Scranton
22 school district is correct then the city
23 will only collect 18 million and there will
24 almost a \$4 million shortfall.

25 Regarding the increase in both meter

1 parking and tickets, I would really like to
2 know the percent of occupancy available in
3 the parking garages. As it appears, this is
4 an effort to drive parkers into the garages
5 from the meters. Further, if, and I
6 emphasize "if" these increases are approved
7 the increase in ticket cost time before the
8 \$10 penalty applies needs to be extended
9 from 24 hours to perhaps five days. Also,
10 if parking meter fees are doubling why is
11 the forecast revenue up one and a half
12 times.

13 I also must object to the misuse of
14 the proceeds from the sale of the golf
15 course for operating expenses unless we
16 taxpayers get a public apology from those
17 elected and appointed officials who told us
18 those monies would be invested and the
19 income would be used for funding
20 recreational programs.

21 The IT description states they are
22 information and telecommunications. Why
23 aren't they also automation? How are the
24 invoices for the permits and licenses
25 currently prepared? Why is the equivalent

1 of another employee required as professional
2 services for the IT Department? Also, there
3 is \$60,000 of equipment maintenance which
4 seems high, very high. Should there perhaps
5 be a capital expense to replace equipment
6 that appears to be high maintenance?

7 Also, I would like to see the job
8 description of the enforcer of sign
9 licensing -- licenses. It appears highly
10 illogical that we collect \$52,800 in sign
11 permits and spend \$33,000 -- may I finish
12 this one, and spend \$33,895 plus benefits
13 for an enforcer of sign licenses yet have no
14 rental housing license enforcer when it's
15 been estimated one and a half million could
16 be brought in and renters better protected
17 from substandard housing. I hope we get
18 another round. Thank you.

19 MR. MCGOFF: Andy Sbaraglia.

20 MR. SBARAGLIA: Andy Sbaraglia,
21 citizen of Scranton. Fellow Scrantonians,
22 the fees that you are going to institute for
23 the parking meters and the parking fines are
24 actually counterproductive. You are going
25 to drive people away from the city to the

1 places where they get free. I mean, the
2 first time somebody gets a ticket they are
3 going to say to heck with this town and I
4 don't blame them. You get a ticket for that
5 much for wanting to shop in your city? I am
6 surprised a lot of these people that don't
7 have parking, business people downtown ain't
8 up in arms at this. I would be. I looked
9 at it and the only really deal that may be
10 some beneficial to the city is you may stop
11 the parking authority from going into
12 bankruptcy because you are going to force a
13 lot of people that are on the streets into
14 the parking garages if they have to be in
15 Scranton.

16 But another thing is, as you know
17 the revenue for the parking -- the revenue
18 on the parking meters is all mortgaged, so
19 hence if you increase the parking meters
20 revenue you also let Scranton Parking
21 Authority be able to borrow them because
22 it's all based on revenue. I think they got
23 up to a million they can actually borrow. I
24 wish I knew exactly if some of these deals
25 that went through our still in effect or

1 not. I mean, they did borrow at one time on
2 their letter of credit, but as you can see I
3 think you are going to be counterproductive
4 really.

5 One mayor actually had free parking
6 downtown if you lived in the city long
7 enough to remember it and they tried to do
8 that, too, to bring people in, not drive
9 people out. That's the whole idea. We also
10 had satellite where people could actually
11 park and take a bus in. You may end up with
12 that again because people don't want to pay
13 that kind of money and I don't blame them.
14 Not to shop here.

15 I mean, the only deal is some of the
16 doctors that doesn't have parking and you
17 are stuck. When have you to go to a
18 doctoring town, you got to park but hence if
19 them doctors decide they should move out of
20 town you are going to have a lot of empty
21 space downtown. I wish you would look at
22 them fines and really go down to some of the
23 business people and knock on doors and ask
24 them what they feel about it. Ask them if
25 they think it's going to be a plus or a

1 minus regardless of what we have to do for
2 the Scranton Parking Authority. Like I say,
3 what happens there happens. Thank you.

4 MR. MCGOFF: Ozzie Quinn.

5 MR. QUINN: Ozzie Quinn. President
6 of the Scranton/Lackawanna County Taxpayers'
7 Association. The whole budget to me is iffy
8 as I've said for the last two readings
9 because of the fact that as Andy said, you
10 know, we don't know if we are going to get
11 that revenue for parking and also the LIPS
12 program as was said, Ron Ellman told you
13 last week that the mayor waived that
14 multi-million dollars project down there.
15 No, he didn't waive it, he charged Austin
16 Burke \$19, so I mean this is pretty iffy,
17 this whole thing.

18 I want to ask a question now and
19 maybe you can answer this, Mr. Courtright,
20 that 888 funds, you were supposed to get
21 4.2 million and you received two million and
22 it was supposed 2.4 million coming to us.

23 MR. COURTRIGHT: They didn't privy me
24 to that. I don't know what was in the
25 paper. They said we are going to see come

1 before the end of the year.

2 MR. QUINN: And if it doesn't come we
3 are going to go into a deficit; right?

4 MR. COURTRIGHT: Yeah.

5 MR. QUINN: How can we work like
6 that? The other thing here is I'm going
7 to -- we're going to eliminate the
8 Department of Public Safety? The Department
9 of Public Safety. What about the jobs
10 there?

11 MR. MCGOFF: I'm sorry?

12 MR. QUINN: The Department of Public
13 Safety is going to be eliminated?

14 MS. FANUCCI: They are moving the
15 jobs back to where they came from.

16 MR. QUINN: I'm asking Mr. McGoff.

17 MS. FANUCCI: Oh, okay.

18 MR. MCGOFF: Yes.

19 MR. QUINN: What about the jobs,
20 like the secretary and clerks?

21 MR. MCGOFF: If passed, the amendment
22 would place the secretary in the law
23 department and the assistant public safety
24 director and housing inspectors that part of
25 the department would move to licensing.

1 MR. QUINN: Okay, so in essence
2 you're eliminating Mr. Hayes' job.

3 MR. MCGOFF: Yes.

4 MR. QUINN: Which to me is tantamount
5 to a plumb job since he is no longer needed
6 and this is what Mrs. Evans has been saying
7 for four years in her budget, you don't need
8 a Department of Public Safety and you sat
9 there and now is the mayor finally listening
10 or are you trying to embarrass Mrs. Evans?
11 I don't know.

12 The other thing is this here, under
13 intergovernmental you have the OECD renting
14 down at the Scranton Life building, I
15 believe, Mr. Rinaldi who is big contributor
16 to Mr. Doherty's campaign, and the fact is
17 that if that department of OECD came up here
18 to city hall and had their headquarters here
19 in city hall that rent that you are paying
20 Mr. Rinaldi could be paid for
21 intergovernmental department and will be
22 more revenue for the City of Scranton. Am I
23 right? So I would hope that you would look
24 into that because it's too long that we have
25 been down there and it's just unbelievable

1 even the county is looking how they can get
2 their programs together.

3 I appreciate it, but again, I won't
4 be able to come tonight, but my God how this
5 budget, you know, can pass on all of these
6 if's, I don't know. Thank you.

7 MR. MCGOFF: Lee Morgan.

8 MR. MORGAN: Good evening, Council.
9 I just would like to say that I am in total
10 disagreement with this budget. My opinion
11 is probably much different than everyone
12 else here today in some ways, but in my
13 opinion some of these positions we're
14 cutting I most certainly don't agree with.
15 I don't agree with the master mechanic. I
16 don't agree with the traffic department. I
17 don't agree with getting rid of the sign
18 maker.

19 You know, I did look through this
20 budget, I just -- I think that what we are
21 doing here is we are making personnel cuts
22 in my opinion to service debt. Mrs. Gatelli
23 talked about going to the nonprofits and
24 some other council members, but that hasn't
25 changed. It's still \$118,000. We are

1 taking the last \$900,000 from the sale of
2 the golf course and we are plugging it into
3 this budget. This was -- there was an asset
4 that the city had that raised over \$200,000
5 and the city never, ever paid anything in
6 regards to the golf course because when you
7 read about how the golf course was created
8 it was a created by a citizen of this city.

9 I really do have a problem with
10 council because for a whole year this
11 council knew that we were in financial
12 straights and then we have a very short time
13 frame to come up with an alternative budget,
14 so I would just like to say that the way
15 wage taxes is decreasing, the city is really
16 in my opinion the only avenue of approaching
17 in my humble opinion is bankruptcy. Some
18 people don't want to hear this, some people
19 think it's just not a credible idea, but
20 there are other communities in Pennsylvania
21 that are doing it.

22 We are talking about a cable TV, I
23 don't know if the city has a new cable TV
24 franchise agreement with the provider, but
25 we have increase in that. We have a lot of

1 increases here in the budget that I don't
2 how you can really say they're realistic. I
3 find this budget to be totally unrealistic
4 because all we are doing is continuing the
5 decline of this city which has occurred over
6 decades and the truth of matter is that I
7 don't see the city being able to service
8 it's debt for much longer and sooner or
9 later the city will have no employees.

10 I think that we need to go to the
11 Courts and ask for intervention. We can't
12 blame the employees of the city because they
13 weren't elected officials that created
14 contracts and jobs for people in my opinion
15 for their support, and I just would like
16 this council even at this time to table this
17 budget and come up with ways to cut it by an
18 additional 10 percent in reality.

19 MR. MCGOFF: Anyone else?

20 MR. DOBRZYN: Dave Dobrzyn, resident
21 of Scranton, member of the Taxpayers'
22 Association. On this employees being laid
23 off once again. In the past I mentioned
24 that it would be interesting if the city
25 would get a committee of clerical employees

1 to collect delinquent taxes and so forth as
2 opposed to letting it fester until they have
3 to be sold over to the NCC and apparently
4 now we are going to have less people do
5 that.

6 You know, when you call down to city
7 hall and have you a question it took me a
8 year or two to get the hang of it and you
9 couldn't get a question answered. I called
10 about a garbage bill because I didn't get
11 one the second year I had my house and there
12 was nobody there that knew where I lived
13 even though the place has been there
14 100 years and it's probably just somebody
15 that didn't have a working computer or
16 access to it, what have you, but they
17 shouldn't be left to fester like this as the
18 last ditch attempt.

19 We could even be counseling these
20 people in these reverse mortgages and so
21 forth where you could mitigate some of the
22 damage instead of having somebody from
23 Hoboken, New Jersey, buying a note and
24 charging three times more or whatever.

25 That's what I've heard and also I'd

1 like to resound about the parking because
2 it's -- it's really. I mean, some merchants
3 downtown have gotten wonderful things and
4 they have gotten malls and they have gotten
5 this and they have gotten that and other
6 people have just been there for years and
7 nothing has been done for them. I was just
8 down at Coney Island this weekend and they
9 said they put pavement in at their expense
10 and they are waiting for a light to be put
11 in on the corner.

12 So, you know, it's really not right
13 to charge people -- charge people extra to
14 park and everything when you are doing this
15 for everybody else. I mean, the mall just
16 got a couple of million dollar loan and what
17 have you to stay open and small places just
18 left to hang by the thread, so hopefully we
19 could come up with some kind of alternatives
20 to this, but when you start dumping people
21 off the rolls that are actually worker bees
22 it's not -- I don't feel it's productive.

23 Furthermore, Mr. Courtright's
24 department there, he was the man that was
25 elected to run it so I don't know why

1 everybody is asking the person that hasn't
2 been elected to run it with. Catch you
3 later.

4 MR. MCGOFF: Anyone else?

5 MR. SPINDLER: Good evening, Council.
6 Les Spindler, city resident. For two weeks
7 now I wanted to talk about these parking
8 fees and I didn't have a chance to, but I'm
9 totally against these parking fees. We
10 can't get people to come downtown as it now,
11 raising these parking fees will just
12 guarantee that nobody is going to come down
13 here. You know, like I said they're not
14 coming there now, I'll tell you a quick
15 story. On black Friday my daughter when
16 shopping with her friend and her mother,
17 they went to Wal-Mart at five in the
18 morning, there was a three-hour wait in line
19 to get into Wal-Mart. They went to the
20 Viewmont Mall it was jammed. I called my
21 daughter about 8:00 that morning and said,
22 "We're at Steamtown Mall, there is nobody
23 here."

24 Every place else was jammed, nobody
25 in the Steamtown Mall, so why would anybody

1 come to shop at Scranton when the parking
2 fees are going up, they could park free at
3 the mall and they are still not coming
4 downtown, they are going all over but
5 they're not coming to downtown Scranton.

6 As Andy said, under some mayors
7 there was free parking, I know under Mayor
8 Connors from Thanksgiving to Christmas there
9 was free parking. Right now in Wilkes-Barre
10 there is free parking until Christmas, so
11 raising these fees is just going to chase
12 people out of here, it's going to be more of
13 a ghosttown than it is now and I definitely
14 think they should be voted down.

15 And, yeah, I'm glad to hear -- you
16 people are finally listening. I asked for
17 Ray Hayes' job to be eliminated and now I
18 hear it is, so maybe you are finally
19 listening. Thank you.

20 MR. MCGOFF: Anyone else?

21 MR. MARTIN: I'm here so, I just --
22 I thought I was coming down for a budget
23 hearing, but I guess that's not going to
24 happen tonight. I have just had a couple of
25 questions --

1 MR. MCGOFF: This is. This is the
2 budget hearing.

3 MR. MARTIN: Oh, okay. I have a
4 couple of questions that affect our contract
5 in the budget and the two positions that
6 have been in particular the grant writer and
7 the SIT and I hope everybody is aware that,
8 you know, there is an SIT decision that's
9 looming right now over the city be it to the
10 tune of about million dollars for violating
11 that original SIT agreement and now it's in
12 the budget to violate it again and just so
13 you know we are going to fight for those two
14 positions because they are very valuable to
15 us, not only to the entire department, of
16 course, is these grants, extremely valuable,
17 and secondly the other SIT clerk that does
18 the dictation.

19 I mean, those reports were
20 notoriously behind. A couple of times we
21 were tripped up, I think there is a position
22 that sat vacant right now that hasn't been
23 filled, I don't know why they aren't doing
24 that, but those are very valuable positions
25 because we rely on those now. I mean, those

1 are the positions we gave up originally as
2 police officers for the SIT clerks and now
3 we are finding out hunker down and we'll
4 have a victim who will call and say, "My
5 house was burglarized yesterday, what are
6 you guys doing about it?"

7 And we'll say, you know, "What's
8 your address," and we stark looking in the
9 reports and the report is or five days
10 behind because those positions were vacant.
11 But I just didn't -- I just wanted you to be
12 aware that those are valuable positions,
13 they are in our contract and again the
14 city -- I mean, very soon the Labor Board is
15 going to hand down a decision and it's going
16 to be very expensive and I just don't want
17 everybody blaming us for that.

18 And then there was a couple of other
19 little things in there, I noticed the -- it
20 says corporal of training, the actual title
21 of that is special services supervisor.
22 Now, that was placed in the Recovery Plan,
23 we discussed that, we negotiated, the
24 director and I negotiated somewhat as to the
25 exact description of that and they took the

1 position that they were going to do the
2 entire job description, which they did. We
3 haven't, you know -- we haven't had any
4 problems with that and we are going to let
5 be as it may, they are going to write it the
6 way they want to write it, that's fine, but
7 it was agreed upon that that was a
8 supervisor's position so it has to be the
9 minimum of a sergeant's pay. I'm not sure
10 exactly what the budget said, but I noticed
11 it said in there corporal in training and
12 that's not the exact title. The exact title
13 is supervisor, special services supervisor
14 who is going to oversee all of the special
15 units including the bomb unit, the SOG Team,
16 canine, everything that's specialized in the
17 in those technical terms that would be --
18 that would be what that position is created
19 for and the City agreed to that in the
20 Recovery Plan, so I just want to make sure
21 that -- you know, that you take a look at
22 that not a training corporal or whatever is
23 in the budget. Thank you.

24 MR. JACKOWITZ: Bill Jackowitz,
25 Scranton resident. All I can say about the

1 budget is I just hope that council really
2 looks at this budget very careful and very
3 closely. I mean, the budget is \$77 million,
4 our population is approximately 72,000, so I
5 mean, that's a large amount of money for a
6 small population and we have a lot of people
7 who work for the city or who are employed by
8 the city who are making an awful lot of
9 money and you really need to look at those
10 people, not these people who are making
11 \$22,000 a year or \$23,000 a year, because
12 that's not even a per capita -- that's not
13 even a good per capita or medium family
14 income wage. Those are the not the people
15 who need to lose their jobs or get their
16 pays cut. The people who are making \$85,000
17 a year and the \$150,000 a year jobs those
18 are the ones that need to be looked at
19 because Scranton is not a very large city.
20 You know, it's relatively a small city
21 compared to a lot of other areas.

22 I mean, there is people probably in
23 this city making more than people who are
24 working in New York City or Philadelphia who
25 are doing the same jobs. We have a public

1 safety office that doesn't need to be there,
2 Ray Hayes, and I believe he has two
3 secretaries. You know, that position is not
4 even supposed to be there and this guy is
5 making a lot of money and I don't know what
6 his secretary is making, at least cut maybe
7 one of his secretaries or someone from that
8 office because, you know, that office
9 doesn't need -- it's not even supposed to be
10 there.

11 MS. FANUCCI: Bill, actually they are
12 eliminating -- we are eliminating that
13 department and we didn't get to speak on
14 that.

15 MR. JACKOWITZ: You are eliminating
16 all three positions or just one?

17 MS. FANUCCI: Ray Hayes' position
18 will be leaving and the rest will be going,
19 and we discussed that earlier, licensing and
20 permits. That's where most of the positions
21 came from in the first place except for one
22 so they will be going back.

23 MR. JACKOWITZ: Okay. And then we
24 also need to look at this rental thing. I
25 mean, 60 some percent of the people who live

1 in the City of Scranton are renters. We are
2 losing a lot of money and this was
3 implemented two or three years ago passed on
4 by maybe not this council, I think some of
5 you are on here, I don't know if you all
6 were or not, that that was -- and this
7 ordinance was approved. Well, enforce the
8 darn thing. You know, if you're not going
9 to enforce it then take it off the books and
10 don't make the people who pay the taxes and
11 who have problem with taxes pay for all of
12 these other people who aren't paying for it.

13 I mean, so let's look at this budget
14 very, very closely and let's do the smart
15 thing, let's do the right thing, and let's
16 make Scranton a very popular city like it
17 was at one time.

18 MR. MCGOFF: Anyone else on the
19 budget?

20 MR. ANCHERANI: Good evening,
21 Council. Nelson Ancherani. I just have
22 some questions and comments. The questions
23 I'm going to ask never got answered during
24 regular council meetings. Maybe you can
25 think about these before you vote on a

1 budget. Why in the expenditure pie chart on
2 page five do all of the pie slices
3 representing the various offices, example
4 the Director of Public Safety or the Law
5 Department have inflated percentages? All
6 of those inflated percentages are not what
7 is actually spent for each department.

8 Number two, why is the difference
9 approximately equal the total of the
10 nondepartmental expenditures and why isn't
11 there a pie slice for nondepartmental
12 expenditures? Examples, the lease backs,
13 the museum, they are all nondepartmental.

14 Number three, why is the expenditure
15 for citation issuers 600 thousands plus? I
16 believe there is only four of them or even
17 six. Does that make their salaries \$100,000
18 each? Good questions. Is that money used
19 for the wages or what's it used for?

20 Comment. The amount of money for
21 raises and new hires over the years -- this
22 year was 20 million, it goes to 25 million
23 next year. Where in the budget -- question,
24 does it show where the attorneys that the
25 city is using to fight the unions get paid

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from? Thank you.

MR. MCGOFF: I hereby declare this
public hearing closed.

C E R T I F I C A T E

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I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes of testimony taken by me at the hearing of the above-captioned matter and that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the same to the best of my ability.

CATHENE S. NARDOZZI, RPR
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER