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SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING

HELD:

Thursday, February 27, 2014

LOCATION:

Council Chambers

Scranton City Hall

340 North Washington Avenue

Scranton, Pennsylvania

CATHENE S. NARDOZZI, RPR - OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER

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CITY OF SCRANTON COUNCIL:

ROBERT MCGOFF, PRESIDENT

PATRICK ROGAN, VICE-PRESIDENT

JOHN LOSCOMBE

JOSEPH WECHSLER

WILLIAM GAUGHAN

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

KATHY CARRERA, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

AMIL MINORA, SOLICITOR

1 (Pledge of Allegiance recited and
2 moment of reflection observed.)

3 MR. MCGOFF: Roll call, please.

4 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Wechsler.

5 MR. WECHSLER: Here.

6 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

7 MR. ROGAN: Here.

8 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Loscombe.

9 MR. LOSCOMBE: Here.

10 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: Here.

12 MS. CARRERA: Mr. McGoff.

13 MR. MCGOFF: Here. Let the minutes
14 reflect that Mr. Loscombe did call and say
15 that he was not feeling well and will not be
16 at the meeting this evening.

17 Dispense with the reading of the
18 minutes.

19 MS. REED: THIRD ORDER. 3-A.

20 MINUTES OF THE COMPOSITE PENSION BOARD
21 MEETING

22 HELD JANUARY 22, 2014.

23 MR. MCGOFF: Are there any comments?
24 If not, received and filed.

25 MS. REED: 3-B. AGENDA FOR THE CITY

1 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING HELD FEBRUARY
2 26, 2014.

3 MR. MCGOFF: Are there any comments?
4 If not, received and filed.

5 Any clerk's notes?

6 MS. REED: No, Mr. McGoff.

7 MR. MCGOFF: Do any council members
8 have announcements at this time?

9 MR. ROGAN: Just one. This is a
10 repeat, but next week in council chambers at
11 5:30 Scranton City Council will be having a
12 public caucus on a Senate Bill 76 Property
13 Tax Reform. We encourage everyone to attend
14 and this listen to the speakers give their
15 presentation on Senate Bill 76. Thank you.

16 MR. MCGOFF: Anyone else? A couple
17 of announcements. First of all, there will
18 be a public hearing conducted by DCED
19 dealing with the grant proposal that was
20 sent to DCED that was approved by council.
21 This hearing will be on March 17 at 1:30 in
22 Scranton in the council chambers. That's a
23 public hearing on the grant proposal March
24 17 at 1:30 in council chambers.

25 The other things two things: First

1 of all, the St. Patrick's Day parade is
2 coming quickly. It will be held on March
3 15, that's the Saturday before St. Patrick's
4 Day and encourage people to attend. It's a
5 great event.

6 And the other one, the first
7 Scranton half marathon will be held on April
8 6. It's run entirely through the City of
9 Scranton. There are -- well, they maxed out
10 at 2,500 runners for the race. I know they
11 are still looking for volunteers if anyone
12 would like to participate as a volunteer,
13 you know, you can contact me, I can put you
14 in touch with the people that are running
15 the half marathon. I'm sure if you went to
16 the Scranton Running Company that they too
17 could put you in touch with people if you
18 wish to volunteer. It looks like it's going
19 to be a great event for the city again.
20 That's on April 6.

21 And that's all I have. Fourth
22 Order.

23 MS. REED: FOURTH ORDER. CITIZENS'
24 PARTICIPATION.

25 MR. MCGOFF: Mr. Hetman.

1 MR. HETMAN: Good evening.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Good evening.

3 MR. HETMAN: Gerard Hetman from
4 Lackawanna County Community Relations
5 Department. To begin this evening, my
6 thanks for accommodating me a little bit
7 later in the month than I normally speak due
8 to the weather, as I'm sure we have all had
9 changes in our schedules, personal and
10 professional. I've had to change a couple
11 of things this month in order to try and
12 accommodate our services as best we can in
13 the 12 municipalities in Lackawanna County
14 so great to see you again even it's a little
15 bit later than normal.

16 To begin this evening, just as a
17 reminder, all of the council members and
18 also the mayor should have received a copy
19 of this letter in the mail. We would just
20 like to remind you of the Lackawanna County
21 Municipal Arts and Culture Grant Program
22 which is an operational again for the 2014
23 calendar year. And the Municipal Arts and
24 Cultural Grants provide \$500 worth of
25 funding to all 40 municipal governments in

1 Lackawanna County for them to provide arts
2 and culture programming during the calendar
3 year for their communities. A very simple
4 process to apply for.

5 We have the information here in the
6 letter and it should also be in the letter
7 you received and we encourage the city to
8 apply. You have got the whole calendar year
9 to submit an application, the department
10 just asks that you apply approximately 30
11 days before any programming that the city
12 plans to do in order to apply time for all
13 of the paperwork and the check to process.

14 But it's a great program with funds
15 available to benefit the community and we
16 would love to see the City of Scranton apply
17 for something during the 2014 calendar year,
18 and if you need more information about it
19 please free to ask me after the meeting or
20 contact me.

21 The second item for all of the
22 weather bugs out there, the National Weather
23 Service Office in Binghamton, New York, will
24 offer a free basic sky warning training
25 class. This is for the national weather

1 service spotter program that they can
2 activate for the severe weather in the city.
3 Most of us want to stay inside in adverse
4 weather, but there is some folks that like
5 to be out there watching and looking and
6 this is a training course designed to
7 provide them with the skills to do that when
8 severe weather hits and that way you can be
9 an asset to the National Weather Service.

10 The program takes places Wednesday,
11 March 5, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the
12 Lackawanna County 911 Center in Jessup.
13 Classes for beginners or anyone that has a
14 general interest in the weather, no previous
15 experience or training is required and there
16 is no cost involved to attend the program.
17 In order to RSVP, which they ask that you
18 register in advance, feel free to contact
19 the National Weather Service in Binghamton
20 at area 607-729-1597, extension four, or you
21 can also e-mail BGM.SKYWARN@NOAA.GOV.

22 I know the National Weather Service
23 also has Facebook and Twitter accounts for
24 all of their agencies across the country so
25 if you just look up National Weather Service

1 Binghamton, Facebook or Twitter, you can
2 also find information on the program.

3 Last, but not least, the county's
4 Area Agency on Aging has asked us to pass
5 along details of some of the programs and
6 services that they can offer funding
7 assistance for qualified individuals in
8 Lackawanna County with regards to in-home
9 care options. This includes areas that
10 include home delivered meals, adult DayCare,
11 in-home personal care, personal emergency
12 response systems, something similar to a
13 Life Alert or an alarm that would signal if
14 someone was injured or disabled, and then
15 also chore services, such as non-medical
16 in-home care.

17 To qualify for these options you
18 must present a need or be financially
19 eligible. Some cases may qualify for
20 partial eligibility. For more information,
21 contact the Lackawanna County Area Agency on
22 Aging at 570-963-6740 or First Referral
23 System at 570-961-1234.

24 That's all we have for this month.
25 Thank you as always, members of council.

1 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you, Mr. Hetman.
2 Prior to the next speaker, I just did want
3 to mention one thing, on the agenda, Item
4 6-A for procedural reasons Item 6-A is going
5 to be tabled this evening due to the need
6 for a public hearing and some changes that
7 are needed in the legislation. So if there
8 was anyone speaking to 6-A there will be a
9 motion to table it. And that is all. Thank
10 you. Mr. Spindler.

11 MR. SPINDLER: Good evening,
12 Council. Les Spindler, city resident,
13 homeowner and taxpayer. I couldn't make it
14 last week, I want to start off by saying my
15 thoughts and prayers are with the family of
16 Bill Connell. I met bill about eight years
17 ago working several different political
18 campaigns together, got to know him very
19 well, got to be close friends with Bill. We
20 just worked together helping to get Mayor
21 Courtright elected, and I am going to miss
22 him dearly. For a person who was a
23 non-politician he was a wonderful gentleman
24 as was evidenced I heard his viewing, which
25 unfortunately I couldn't attend, I had to

1 work, I heard there was, like, there was a
2 line for three and a half hours outside
3 including Senators Casey and Blake, so
4 that's a testament to Bill Connell what kind
5 of gentleman he was, and I am going to miss
6 him dearly. Rest in peace, Buddy.

7 Okay, moving on. Councilman
8 Wechsler, last meeting I attended I asked
9 you what the status was with trying to get
10 money to pay off the court award to the
11 firemen and policemen and you said I should
12 call the business administrator or the
13 mayor. Well, the previous Finance Chair I
14 asked him that same question and he had
15 answers for me whenever I asked him. The
16 last time I asked him he had an answer right
17 away and he said, "Well, we are working with
18 Amalgamated Bank," and I forget what else he
19 said. He had an answer for me.

20 I mean, I met you at several
21 political parties, you asked me for your
22 vote, and that's the answer that I get I
23 have to call the mayor or the business
24 administrator. I don't think that's right.

25 MR. WECHSLER: Mr. Spindler,

1 actually what I suggested you could also
2 contact him. That's all I said.

3 MR. SPINDLER: Yeah, but I think
4 it's your duty to work for the taxpayers.
5 We elected you and --

6 MR. WECHSLER: I agree with you.

7 MR. SPINDLER: And I hope you are
8 going to do a better job of working for the
9 taxpayers.

10 MR. WECHSLER: And I am doing that.

11 MR. SPINDLER: I hope so. Do you
12 have any answer on that question?

13 MR. WECHSLER: No, I do not.

14 MR. SPINDLER: Okay.

15 MR. WECHSLER: Well, I could tell
16 you this, I am working with Mr. Bulzoni on a
17 regular basis. I am communicating with the
18 mayor, I am communicating with Mr. Bulzoni,
19 as I said, and the information travels back
20 and forth. Is anything different or has
21 anything been settled? No.

22 MR. SPINDLER: Okay. Thank you. I
23 know two weeks ago the meeting was cancelled
24 because of a snow storm and it was on a
25 Saturday, but there was a meeting before

1 that that was also cancelled. Why was that,
2 Mr. McGoff?

3 MR. MCGOFF: There was a problem in
4 posting the agenda that was -- and there was
5 -- since we couldn't post -- did not post
6 the agenda we could not have a meeting on
7 Thursday and it was difficult to find an
8 alternative day at that point in time. We
9 weren't sure if we could get it. That was
10 in the midst of the last snow -- one of the
11 snow storm, and so it was thought that the
12 best thing to do was simply to cancel it and
13 wait until the next week.

14 MR. SPINDLER: Okay. That snow
15 storm was Tuesday night, it ended Wednesday
16 morning about 9:00, so I don't think there
17 was any reason we couldn't have the meeting
18 on Thursday.

19 MR. MCGOFF: What I'm saying is you
20 have to have the agenda posted 24 hours in
21 advance and it wasn't, and so we could not
22 legally have the meeting.

23 MR. SPINDLER: Okay. All right. I
24 want to talk about everyone's favorite
25 subject, the potholes. I know Main Avenue

1 is PennDOT's responsibility. I know it's
2 just a mess. I know under the Railroad
3 Bridge that they were filled in this week,
4 thank God. You can barely move under that
5 bridge, but there is one that I know is the
6 city's responsibility, at the top of the
7 Court Street where you go under the bridge
8 where the expressway goes over, I think it's
9 the 1200 block, it's coming out of the Tripp
10 Park development. You make a right and go
11 underneath. There is a hole there you could
12 lose a small car in that pothole. That's
13 how big it is. It's unbelievable. You have
14 to go around it. If you go through it, I
15 don't know if you will get through.

16 And I understand the city just
17 received a load of the coal patch today, I
18 saw the story on the news, but they were in
19 South Side on Cherry Street so I help we can
20 get that one taken care of.

21 When the weather breaks I will come
22 back with my annual problem of my property.
23 You know, Mr. Rogan and Mr. McGoff, you know
24 I come here year after year after year.
25 Right now when the weather is so bad nothing

1 can be done there. I will be back again
2 asking for help and see if this DPW director
3 will be cooperative, unlike the last one.
4 Thank you for your time.

5 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you,
6 Mr. Spindler.

7 Mrs. Franus.

8 MS. FRANUS: Fay Franus, Scranton.
9 I want to speak about the mayor for a little
10 bit here. People in Scranton, some people,
11 elected Bill Courtright to be the mayor. So
12 far I don't see anything he is doing except
13 hiring people to do the work that he should
14 be doing.

15 He has a business administrator so
16 he went and he hired Mr. Amaro, I believe
17 his name is, to be a financial wizard, and
18 then he wants to hire Ned Abrahamsen as a
19 lawyer for the Labor Relations. Well, we
20 always had one lawyer, maybe they had an
21 assistant, but they got a paid a salary.
22 They didn't get paid by the hourly so it's
23 on the agenda for a four-year term to get
24 paid by the hour. That could be
25 astronomical. I think it's absolutely

1 ludicrous he is taking care of his friends.

2 People have to remember it's the
3 same Ned Abrahamsen that had the credit and
4 collections that fined all of these people
5 thousands of dollars, some people lost their
6 homes because of all of this.

7 Bill Courtright is just taking care
8 of his friends. He has these grants coming
9 now, he is circumventing the budget from
10 last year. The council from last year with
11 Janet Evans and Frank Joyce they did not
12 allow for these raises in the administration
13 that they are asking for now. Bill
14 Courtright didn't open the budget, he is
15 doing it this way by getting a grant, which
16 taxpayers still pay for. When did anybody
17 that you know ever get a \$26,000 raise a
18 year? That's totally -- we are a distressed
19 city, but Bill Courtright is making sure all
20 of his friends and cronies are getting a
21 raise. He is creating a position in the
22 Business Administration Office for \$36,000.

23 We don't need this. Not when we are
24 distressed and the taxpayers are going to
25 lose their homes with the taxes this year,

1 but yet Bill Courtright wants to take care
2 of his friends? He didn't have the guts to
3 open the budget to do it the right way, he
4 had to do it through council.

5 This Dave Bulzoni, this guy that's
6 the business administrator, he's the same
7 man that worked -- same man that worked for
8 that Landmark Bank that got that loan
9 approved for \$2.3 million for the Parking
10 Authority, but it never came in front of the
11 council for approval. How is this even
12 legal this loan? And the Landmark Bank is
13 suing the City of Scranton for this money.
14 I don't know if the city really has to pay
15 that money back.

16 And, Council, you have the power
17 under Home Rule Charter, Section 112 and 113
18 to investigate how this loan ever got
19 approved. You have the right to do this,
20 Council, and I think you should investigate
21 how this loan came about, how Dave Bulzoni
22 and Mayor Doherty and anybody else that's
23 connected got this loan to go through and
24 not have it come through council for
25 approval. It just didn't so I can't see

1 where the city has to be liable for this.

2 So I really wish that you would
3 investigate this. Will you please consider
4 this since you have the power to do this?
5 Because Bill Courtright will say, "It's my
6 friend Dave, I'll be sure that that bank
7 gets -- and you have to wonder why did
8 Landmark Bank let him go? Why did they let
9 him out of his employment? I have to wonder
10 about that one.

11 Let me ask you this, I want to ask
12 you, Mr. Wechsler, and each one of you.
13 Mr. Wechsler, why did you think it's
14 necessary to have the caucuses in the back
15 room? I don't mean when you are just
16 meeting there by yourself, I mean when
17 people like OECD or Geisinger came in last
18 week, people like that, when somebody comes
19 in --

20 MR. MCGOFF: I'll answer the
21 question.

22 MS. FRANUS: I'm asking Mr.
23 Wechsler.

24 MR. MCGOFF: It was my decision.

25 MR. FRANUS: I'm not sayi8ng it

1 wasn't, but I'm asking them how do they feel
2 about that? Why do they feel -- I know you
3 might feel that way, but I want to know how
4 each council members feels about having the
5 caucuses in the back room whereas before
6 they were always out here in the public for
7 transparency. Mr. Wechsler, why do you
8 think it should be in the back room?

9 MR. MCGOFF: Would you care for me
10 to answer?

11 MR. WECHSLER: Yes, please.

12 MS. FRANUS: Mr. McGoff, I would
13 like to ask --

14 MR. MCGOFF: Well, Mr. Wechsler has
15 deferred to me because it was my decision.

16 MS. FRANUS: So he doesn't have an
17 opinion --

18 MR. MCGOFF: Excuse me, do you want
19 an answer or --

20 MS. FRANUS: I want an answer from
21 Mr. Wechsler, Mr. Rogan and --

22 MR. MCGOFF: -- do you want to argue?

23 MS. FRANUS: No, no argument, I'm
24 asking a simple question of elected
25 officials. Why do they feel the caucuses

1 should be in the back room because people
2 can't see it in the public? I don't have a
3 right to ask that question of Mr. Gaughan,
4 Mr. Rogan and Mr. Wechsler.

5 MR. MCGOFF: And I'm prepared to
6 answer it.

7 MS. FRANUS: For them?

8 MR. MCGOFF: Yes.

9 MS. FRANUS: You speak their minds?

10 MR. MCGOFF: No, but --

11 MS. FRANUS: Unless they all ---

12 MR. MCGOFF: It was our joint
13 decision to do this, so if you want an
14 answer I will provide it.

15 MS. FRANUS: So you can tell me how
16 Mr. Rogan and Mr. Wechsler and Mr. Loscombe
17 and Mr. Gaughan feel about it? Go ahead.
18 Tell me how each one of these feels about
19 how they don't want it in these chambers so
20 the people at home can see what's going on
21 instead of in the back room. Go ahead.

22 MR. MCGOFF: Traditionally prior to
23 the last council there were caucuses held
24 half an hour before ever meeting. That had
25 been a time honored tradition, I would say.

1 time somebody didn't want to go in front of
2 the cameras Mrs. Evans didn't allow them.
3 She said, "If you can't come in front of the
4 people and speak openly then I don't want
5 you to speak."

6 And that's the way it should be so
7 basically what you are saying is you want
8 backroom deals, so --

9 MR. MCGOFF: That's not what I said,
10 and thank you, Mrs. Franus.

11 MS. FRANUS: It's indirectly what
12 you are saying, Mr. McGoff.

13 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you, Mrs. Franus.

14 MS. FRANUS: Dictatorship by you
15 again.

16 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you. Mr. Miller.

17 MR. MILLER: Good evening, Council.
18 Doug Miller, Scranton. Just like to address
19 the issue of the caucuses here, I guess it's
20 become an issue here. I haven't been here
21 for quite some time, but apparently last
22 week there was an issue with the procedure
23 of the caucuses. You know, supposedly the
24 new procedure these days is the caucuses
25 take place in the back room. You know, when

1 I did become aware of that I will say I was
2 quite, you know, baffled by that decision
3 and definitely disappointed and discouraged
4 by that.

5 I have here with me today a copy of
6 the Sunshine Act I'm sure we all know what
7 that is or I would certainly hope we would
8 if we are in these positions, basically to
9 summarize what the Sunshine Act does is it
10 gives the public the ability to view their
11 government in action without, you know,
12 backroom procedures, smoke and mirrors, you
13 know, a lot of what I think backroom
14 meetings lead to are things that are kept
15 away from the public.

16 And, yeah, we could talk about how
17 nice it is that the public is still allowed
18 to go back and partake in any caucus that
19 may take place, but it just doesn't send the
20 right signal to the people, the viewing
21 audience, the people in the community,
22 people that come here to see their
23 government basically, in other words, trying
24 to, you know, prevent the public, so to
25 speak, from partaking in what goes on in

1 government.

2 And, you know, whether we want to
3 talk about what was traditional or not, you
4 know, what we saw here in the previous
5 council for four years was any public
6 hearings or caucuses, anything that had to
7 do with city business always took place in
8 this chamber because there was one thing
9 that the previous council knew, real simple
10 it's not complex. These cameras that are
11 all in these chambers here they don't lie,
12 and I think we all need to know that that
13 this room right here is about transparency
14 and openness, and when we conduct business
15 in the back room all it does is send a mixed
16 message that we are trying to hide something
17 from the people whether we are or we are
18 not, but that's the message it sends, and I
19 think that was probably one of the biggest
20 mistakes this new council made was depriving
21 the people of the transparency and the open
22 government that they are entitled to so I
23 would think -- I would recommend that we go
24 back to the procedure we had because it
25 worked, it allowed the viewing audience to

1 see what goes on here because, as I said,
2 the cameras don't lie, nothing is hidden,
3 and those that are discouraged are afraid of
4 the cameras, well, they don't have to come
5 here, but nothing should take place in the
6 back room and if that's where we are going
7 to go I guess we are going back to the old
8 days of smoke and mirrors and politics and
9 rhetoric.

10 But let me move on, I have quite a
11 bit here, I'd like to get into the agenda
12 this evening, I believe it's 5-B in regards
13 to executing into a four-year contract with
14 Abrahamsen, Conaboy and Abrahamsen. Just,
15 you know, I think what we are doing here is
16 we are just going to playing the political
17 crony game, that's all we are doing here.
18 Real simple. We are playing political
19 cronyism, favoritism by awarding a four-year
20 deal to Mr. Abrahamsen. It's no secret he
21 was one of the biggest contributors,
22 supporters, and if we can all recall was the
23 chairman of his transition team talking
24 about Mr. Courtright, and now tonight we
25 want to approve a four-year deal.

1 I mean, how comical can this get?
2 And now we have the audacity to put
3 something like this on the agenda is just an
4 insult to the residents of this city. You
5 know, and we want to laugh it off and
6 snicker and make a mockery of it, it's not.
7 It's a joke. It's another Carl Greco deal,
8 somebody leaching off the taxpayers.
9 Millions and millions of dollars that were
10 squandered with Carl Greco, that's all we're
11 going to have here with Mr. Abrahamsen.
12 It's a political deal and it shouldn't
13 happen and this council shouldn't stand for
14 it.

15 I don't care how close you are with
16 the mayor, we talked about cooperation, I
17 have heard enough of the cooperation and if
18 that's some major accomplishment. The city
19 faces serious challenges. I'm not
20 interested that after the meetings we can go
21 all have a drink together, we could all go
22 sit around the camp fire and sing kumbaya.
23 We got problems and we are still all waiting
24 for this grand miraculous plan that the
25 administration and that the council has to

1 save this city.

2 So instead of turning around and
3 patting ourselves on the backs and shaking
4 hands and, "That a boy," we get along,
5 that's our job. We are making it as if it's
6 some major accomplishment that we can
7 miraculously all cooperate with department
8 heads. That's what we're supposed to do.
9 That's why we elect you people to do that.

10 So instead of going prancing around
11 and being, you know, it's some major
12 accomplishment, let's address the serious
13 issue. Let's not have to bring this
14 consultant in from New Jersey to show us how
15 to put two and two together, that we are so
16 incompetent and incapable of putting our own
17 budgets together, of figuring out ways to
18 make money for the city, it's so difficult
19 we need outsiders to come in and do it.

20 Now, we need another financial
21 advisor. I mean, it's absolutely
22 ridiculous. We truly are a laughing stock,
23 and that's why I come down here because I
24 see what goes on here and it just completely
25 comical and, you know, I take it serious the

1 issues. But, you know, there is just no
2 creativity in our government and that's a
3 real problem.

4 And lastly, I just wanted to discuss
5 the last few days I was in Cleveland, Ohio
6 and taking a look at some of the things they
7 do in their city, you know, in the past we
8 discussed the University of Scranton --

9 MR. MCGOFF: Your time is up.

10 MR. MILLER: If I could just have
11 one more moment, if you don't mind,
12 Mr. McGoff.

13 MR. MCGOFF: Quickly.

14 MR. MILLER: Appreciate it. We
15 talked about in the past skywalks, you know,
16 around the University and things like that,
17 and one of the things that they have in in
18 Cleveland all throughout the whole city are
19 skywalks, and you are cutting back on the
20 pedestrian traffic, you know, when you talk
21 about the safety and a lot of times the
22 disregard that a lot of the pedestrians have
23 you alleviate that and that's why I think we
24 should -- I suggest that we put an ordinance
25 together to demand or force a traffic study

1 by the University, all of the universities,
2 that way we have a not singling out just
3 one, to do a pedestrian traffic study and
4 see how it can definitely help us in the
5 long run by investing in skywalks. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you. Mr. Quinn.

8 MR. QUINN: Ozzie Quinn, Scranton
9 Taxpayers' Association. First, I wasn't
10 here since January 30 and at that meeting
11 you extended the discount period for the
12 city taxes. I want to thank you on behalf
13 of the taxpayers for that, okay? I'm
14 guessing it will probably take them that
15 long to get out of the shack before they pay
16 it.

17 The other thing is that a personal
18 friend of mine was one of the persons
19 appointed to the Parking Authority, and I
20 know this gentleman for 40 years and I
21 worked with him and I know his family, his
22 wife, he raised a lovely family, a good man,
23 good God fearing man, and he was criticized
24 for liens on his property and I want to
25 defend him because I think the man would

1 have made a good asset to the City of
2 Scranton.

3 Third thing I want to thank you for
4 having the caucus with Chuck Liedke from the
5 Pennsylvania Realtors on House Bill and
6 Senate Bill 76 for the elimination of school
7 property tax, Pennsylvania Taxpayers'
8 Independence Act. We have been tootin' that
9 horn for a long time and I'm glad you are
10 meeting because of the fact it leads us to
11 the instant situation of people losing their
12 homes. People lose their homes because
13 taxation. They lose it through foreclosure,
14 and they lose them as they did last Monday
15 through the judiciary sale of delinquent
16 properties.

17 276 properties from the city, 162
18 were continued to March 24, that's for them
19 come up with the money, and they just got
20 their new tax bill for 2014, God bless them,
21 I hope they can get it. 58 went into the
22 repository. When it goes into the
23 repository it means it's put there and
24 anybody can buy it.

25 Let me just point out something with

1 the repository, okay? Here is a property
2 here that owed \$15,023 and it's being sold
3 for \$5,000. It's being sold because they
4 eliminated all of the penalties and
5 interest.

6 That leads me to what I have been
7 trying to address you on January 30 and I
8 seen Mr. Gaughan moved the needle a little
9 bit in regard to amnesty. I think that's a
10 very necessary thing in the City of
11 Scranton. There is going to be another
12 upset sale this year, another 540
13 properties, that would mean that one-third
14 of the properties in this city, nonprofits,
15 non-producing -- non tax producing and with
16 all of the people delinquent 60 percent of
17 the property owners are probably rowing the
18 boat for the City of Scranton in regards to
19 paying taxes.

20 You know, when you have properties
21 that are condemned and you see them
22 demolished using federal money, okay,
23 federal money is taxpayers' money, where
24 that money if you have a structural engineer
25 and go out and see if that property was able

1 to stand a rehabilitation why demolish it?
2 Why not even sell it to a contractor for a
3 dollar and let them rehabilitate it? We
4 demolish it, we have vacant lands.

5 I come down from Gibson Street and
6 just tonight I happened to notice 12 years
7 ago I asked the mayor at that time, Mayor
8 Doherty, for this land when I was with
9 Habitat for Humanity to build a tax
10 producing property. He says, "You got it."

11 I couldn't get it through. I
12 couldn't get it through. That property is
13 still vacant there. So what I'm saying is
14 that you got to start looking at these
15 properties, start looking at them. If they
16 are not buildable, start talking to the
17 people, start talking to each neighbor and
18 trying to see if each neighbor will take
19 them. Even if they don't pay a tax at least
20 they will get the blight out of the area.

21 This demolition -- this demolition
22 money could be used, federal money could be
23 used for police and the neighborhoods. It
24 just shouldn't be happening. \$12,000
25 wanting to put a lien on a property. So

1 what I'm saying is the fact that if you are
2 going to have these properties go into a
3 repository, why not amnesty? Why not
4 amnesty for the people? Give these people
5 an opportunity to pay. Forget about the
6 penalties and the interest, give them a
7 certain specific time to go ahead and pay
8 their delinquency and keep the city on the
9 tax rolls and not demolish them and cause
10 them more blight.

11 And, Mr. Gaughan, I hope you
12 follow-up. I want to leave these papers
13 with you, if I any approach you? The are
14 repository list and the list of properties
15 at the upset sale or in the judiciary sale
16 on Monday. Thank you very much.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you.

18 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you, Mr. Quinn.
19 Mr. Jackowitz.

20 MR. JACKOWITZ: Good evening,
21 Scranton City Council, and Amil and
22 Mrs. Reed. February 19 I faxed ten
23 questions to Scranton City Council. I was
24 wondering if we had any answers on the ten
25 questions that I faxed on the 19th of

1 February? I have a list of the questions
2 right here, I'll go over them.

3 February 1 has come and gone, what's
4 the status on the North Scranton Junior High
5 School building? I know we still have until
6 the 15th of April.

7 Number two, what's the status on the
8 Dickson Avenue project? I see it's pretty
9 much at a standstill.

10 Number three, what's the status on
11 the Scranton Lace project? I see that's
12 pretty much on a standstill.

13 What's the status on the replacement
14 business for Bon-Ton at the mall? Is the
15 mall current on its repayment of its loans?

16 Number five, how much money did the
17 city lose because of the snow storm and the
18 downtown streets not being plowed? Should
19 have been plowed during the evening hours.

20 Number six, what's the status of the
21 \$3 million that the Hilton owes the city
22 taxpayers?

23 Number seven, why do we continue to
24 hire more consultants and still give
25 appointees like the business administrator

1 and mayor huge pay raises when they need
2 consultants to do the jobs for them, plus
3 taxes were raised 56 percent, garbage bill
4 raised 69 percent.

5 Why has the garbage not been picked
6 up for two weeks? The snow storm was a one
7 or two day event. My garbage was finally
8 picked up yesterday after four weeks. I
9 would like to congratulate Mr. Vitris, the
10 dispatcher, who finally got a truck out to
11 our neighborhood after four weeks. We had
12 four weeks of garbage piled up in the alley,
13 the 1400 block of Hertz Court.
14 Unacceptable.

15 Mr. Gaughan, I really hope you can
16 get me an answer for that, you are the DPW
17 guy. I really would like an answer and
18 explanation as to why that block was
19 neglected for four weeks, okay?

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Yeah.

21 MR. JACKOWITZ: Number 9, was is the
22 status on the Supreme Court award?
23 Mr. McGoff addressed that or Mr. Wechsler
24 addressed that earlier. I guess we are
25 still at a standstill and we have no idea

1 and this has been going on for how many
2 years now? I think it's time somebody comes
3 up with a plan, somebody comes up with an
4 idea, and somebody come up with the money
5 and let's get this off the back of the
6 Scranton taxpayers. It's been going on for
7 too long. We're in year 22 now I believe.

8 Number ten, when will the parking
9 garages be repaired and the homeless removed
10 from the living in the garages and other
11 city-owned properties? This is another
12 problem. I think we have about \$10 million
13 in repairs that need to be done in those
14 garages. Is it ever going to be done?

15 And remember, taxes were raised 56
16 percent, so I think as taxpayers since we
17 are paying the bill I really think that we
18 need to get some results and I just don't
19 see the results. I see the same old
20 mistakes being made over and over and over
21 again. We are hiring the same people, the
22 same law firms, the same attorneys, and it
23 seems like if you are not politically
24 connected you are not going to a get a job
25 in the city.

1 And, you know, we are allegedly
2 hiring the best qualified and we are giving
3 some people pay raises, but yet we still
4 have to go out and hire consultants, I don't
5 understand that. If you hire a consultant
6 to help someone do their job then all you
7 are doing is paying more money, more
8 taxpayers' money to get the same job done,
9 but the job doesn't seem to be getting done
10 because we are still distressed. We still
11 have the same problems that we had 22 years
12 ago, 12 years ago or two years ago. The
13 only difference is the problems have gotten
14 bigger and have worsened since then and it's
15 time.

16 I mean, myself, and many other
17 people in this city are aggravated and they
18 are just tired of it. We want results,
19 okay? We have waited long enough. When are
20 we going to get the results? I mean, people
21 approach me all the time. I don't why, but
22 they do, and they ask me, I tell them I
23 don't know. I said all I can do is write
24 letters to the editor, come to city council
25 and try to explain my point of view to city

1 council and to the residents who are
2 listening and hopefully people are
3 listening, but we need results.

4 It's not a laughing matter. I see
5 councilmen up there snickering and laughing,
6 and I'm not saying anybody is doing it right
7 now, but I have seen it in the past, okay,
8 from previous councils, so far the current
9 council I haven't seen it, okay, but I have
10 seen it. That's because I haven't been
11 coming on a regular basis, but anyway, it's
12 time. It's time. We need answers.

13 I would like to know why we need to
14 hire all of these consultants. Is it
15 because the city workers are overworked? Is
16 it because the city administrators and the
17 managers are overworked and have too big of
18 a workload? Is it because we have
19 incompetent people? Is it just because they
20 are not doing their job? I would like
21 answers to that question. I would like to
22 know why we have to hire consultants. You
23 know, why do we have to bring someone in, we
24 just -- we are giving the business
25 administrator a pay raise, we just gave the

1 mayor a pay raise. Why do they need
2 consultants? If they need consultants then
3 they should have never gotten a pay raise.
4 I would like answers to these questions, I
5 really would.

6 And I sent these questions to the
7 mayor's office, also, so hopefully someone
8 one day will answer my questions.

9 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you, Mr.
10 Jackowitz.

11 Ms. Hodowanitz.

12 MS. HODAWANITZ: Joan Hodowanitz,
13 city taxpayer. There were two very
14 interesting articles in today's paper, one
15 refers to the Composite Pension Board,
16 "Board Seeks State Waiver on Pensions.
17 \$180,00 Penalty isn't Expected to be
18 Forgiven."

19 And the second one was, "AG," that's
20 the Attorney General, "Pensions Can Cripple.
21 Depasquale Calls for Changes."

22 And they are related articles. I
23 have noticed that in today's minutes you
24 received the minutes of the Composite
25 Pension Board meeting for January 22. Could

1 you tell me, please, are those meetings of
2 the Composite Pension Board open to the
3 public or just to city officials?

4 MR. MCGOFF: Yes.

5 MS. HODOWANITZ: They are the open
6 to the public, okay, because I would be
7 interested in what's going on with that
8 board. I'm not saying that they are
9 necessarily doing anything wrong, but I am
10 saying that as a taxpayer if I'm the one
11 that's going to have to be picking up some
12 of these penalties and interest down the
13 road, then I'm really interested in what's
14 happening with that board, what their
15 reasoning is.

16 For example, are they expecting to
17 make future pension contributions on time or
18 are we looking at another year of penalty
19 and interest? What is their investments
20 strategy? I see Mr. Hazzouri is looking at
21 a more aggressive investment strategy of
22 50/50 stocks and bonds. I have this bad
23 feeling that this is going to be one of the
24 sucking chest wounds financially that the
25 city is going to be facing and if that's

1 true this is going to be hitting me and
2 other taxpayers in the wallet not too far
3 down the road.

4 One of the things I would suggest if
5 it's possible is maybe it would be a good
6 idea to have this pension board attend a
7 public caucus here in chambers where they
8 could explain the status of their funding
9 because I think they are unfunded and what
10 their weight ahead is and how they see
11 themselves on getting a handle on these
12 pension liabilities.

13 According to this other article, the
14 combined pension board has a deficit of
15 something like \$113.6 million. That's a lot
16 of money and we could be digging a deeper
17 hole year by year, so perhaps you could
18 consider that. This is more than just a pay
19 raise to the mayor or pay raise to the
20 business administrator, this is something
21 that going to be a major impactor on every
22 taxpayer in the city so for what's that's
23 worth perhaps you can look into that.
24 That's all I have. Thank you.

25 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you.

1 MR. MCGOFF: Let me just -- I spoke
2 and said that they were open to the public,
3 I believe they are simply because the press
4 is in attendance at the meetings, so I would
5 assume that they must be open to the public.
6 If that was wrong I will inform you.

7 Is there anyone else who wishes to
8 speak?

9 MR. DOBRZYN: Good evening. Dave
10 Dobrzyn, resident and taxpayer.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: Good evening.

12 MR. DOBRZYN: Last week I brought a
13 little note on the sewer plant and I'd like
14 to bring that subject up again and on the
15 one side it had, "Water policy boosts
16 sprawl," but part of the water policy is
17 that thanks to our legislature in 2012 they
18 passed the state law that allows the water
19 companies to bill you for a gated community
20 and luxury cul-de-sac and are paying three
21 or four dollars month currently towards
22 their maintenance of their sewage treatment
23 plant.

24 And on the other side, which, I
25 mean, I pick my life-style after 25 years

1 the country wasn't cutting it, why should I
2 have to pay for a gated luxury community
3 sewage treatment plant somewhere else?

4 And on the second side it says,
5 "Don't privatize the sewer system," it was a
6 letter to the editor, and I pointed out that
7 the rates in Coatsville are double. They
8 are owned by the PA American Water Company.
9 There were bought out and they pay about
10 \$900 a year, I pay about \$400 give or take a
11 few.

12 And the reason I keep expressing
13 this concern is now this week there was an
14 article in the Scranton Times that Dunmore
15 is Opposed to any sale of the plant, and
16 before a lot of decisions get made and
17 assumptions get made that this is okay, it's
18 not okay with the me and I intend to try to
19 get the Taxpayers' Association in on a
20 conference some time after the elections in
21 the spring and hopefully we can get an
22 authority on the river that I have in mind.

23 Now, on Comcast, 10, 12 years ago we
24 talked about a digital divide in this
25 country, how does the person that loses an

1 even fairly good job, you are lucky if you
2 get \$250 a week, how does a person such as
3 that pay all of their bills with limited
4 unemployment available and turn around and
5 pay \$176 a month for computer service?
6 Well, the computer side and phone is about
7 \$85 of it, and the digital divide keeps
8 increasing. You cannot get a job even
9 with -- you send them an e-mail, a resume,
10 and they send you back an e-mail, and if you
11 don't have an e-address you don't even get
12 considered. They won't even accept a paper
13 resume from you.

14 So in relation to this, I don't know
15 what could be done about it, but it's not
16 throwing up our hands and saying, "So, so?"
17 Somewhere we have to start to lower the
18 cost, and if it takes everybody, I know I
19 get criticized a lot of times from the
20 audience and at meetings of bringing about
21 national issues, but it's a small world
22 after all. It's a very small world and
23 currently Comcast is talking about buying
24 out Time Warner so there is going to be one
25 provider for the whole country and if you

1 can't afford to pay the bill you just won't
2 get a job or you'll get a job wherever you
3 can walk in the front door which is only a
4 handful of places that actually do this.

5 And I'll try to wrap it up after
6 this, I forgot my glasses so I'm not really
7 full of it tonight, but in this book "The
8 Fine Print" David K. Johnston, what began as
9 an effort in Kentucky to help a single
10 company in Appalachia raise capital by
11 keeping state income taxes withheld from its
12 worker's paychecks has grown to more than
13 2,700 companies in many states when this
14 book was published.

15 Now, I might add that many of these
16 are foreign corporations, Chines, Japanese,
17 European, and with all of these taxes being
18 handed out why isn't anybody talking about
19 not putting a stop to it. It's ashame.
20 It's something I have to get out, but it's,
21 like I said, it's a small world after all.

22 By the way, Pennsylvania is doing
23 this so, we are talking about raising taxes
24 for schools and everything else, and they
25 are giving it away out the back door, why

1 not? Thank you and have a good night.

2 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you, Mr. Dobrzyn.

3 Anyone else who wishes to speak?

4 MR. SBARAGLIA: Andy Sbaraglia,
5 citizen of Scranton. Fellow Scrantonians,
6 Mr. Rogan brings up that House Bill 76 and
7 Senate Bill 76. I was here when the state
8 came up and gave the presentation on it.
9 This is what you got to face, all of your
10 food will be taxed except WIC, and God knows
11 at what percentage. That's one thing. Your
12 state income tax will rise.

13 Now, as a renter you get nothing.
14 You get hosed. They because you got to pay
15 for all of that and get nothing in return.
16 Who is the big winners? I told you this
17 before, businesses. As you know, you had
18 the real estate people here. Sure, they
19 plan to make a killing. They could say,
20 "You don't have to pay these taxes, look how
21 low it is."

22 These are the people that are going
23 to get something out of this bill. As far
24 as the individual, no, I can tell you what's
25 going to happen. Same thing that happened

1 with the income tax -- not income tax, your
2 social security. That was supposed to be
3 free. You are lucky now if you get it
4 partway free.

5 And there is so many other things
6 that the government will just turn their
7 back on to get money to pay for the schools.
8 They have no way of really doing this in a
9 smart way. You have to start with the
10 schools before you find a way of changing
11 the method of funding these schools, but the
12 sit there and ask every renter to take a
13 hit, no, that's not an America. That's the
14 haves attacking the have nots.

15 Have we gotten that bad? I guess we
16 have. So many special interest groups are
17 out there, thank God for Senator Blake. I
18 believe he got the right idea. This, as it
19 is written, is not a good bill. And don't
20 say it's there to help the senior citizens
21 like I keep telling Ozzie. They can pass a
22 bill tomorrow to say everybody over 70 is
23 exempt from school tax. They can do that.
24 Did they ever do it? No. Did they have any
25 intentions of doing it? No.

1 This is a -- I would say, look it,
2 as you know Scranton is in trouble, they
3 would grab a great portion of that tax that
4 we are now paying the school, we know this,
5 and we also know that the school tax will go
6 up and up and up and up because there is no
7 way they can control it. The pensions are
8 enormous. We are on the verge of collapse
9 everywhere with the pensions because they
10 never looked at it. There is no reason -- I
11 couldn't collect a pension until I was 55.
12 Why the heck should all of these other
13 people get off getting 20 or 23? There is
14 no reason for it. That's why your pensions
15 are in trouble. If you want to get full
16 pension, you should work to put money into
17 that pension system, not just take it out.

18 And these people want to council on
19 this went out and bought time so they get
20 the pension, that was another act, and then
21 you wonder why pensions are in trouble?

22 And then you have people saying you
23 have medical care for the life. You can't
24 afford that today. They knew it, why do you
25 think the government says you can't write

1 off your medical until it exceeds a certain
2 amount? Because they knew what was going to
3 happen. Nothing happens by chance.
4 Understand that. There is no chance
5 involved when it comes to mathematics. They
6 know exactly what's happening, they know
7 exactly how it's progressing, and they know
8 how it's going to end up. I don't think you
9 are going to do a darn thing for this city.

10 I can sit there and say you are not
11 going to do nothing. We are going to end up
12 paying higher taxes. There is no way out of
13 it. You can't borrow at 9 percent, what is
14 it 12 1/2 million, 22 million and another 4
15 or 5 million at 9 percent. Forget it.
16 You're just not going to be able to do it
17 anything and that's how it's going to end
18 up. We are going to go through these four
19 years when Billy is there and very little is
20 going to be changed because nobody is going
21 to change. Nobody has the gumption to say,
22 "We got to attack the nonprofits."

23 Not really attack them. They got to
24 pay their fair share and until you are going
25 out there and trying to do that, you can't

1 change what's going to happen. Look at the
2 path. Look at the path that's it's
3 following from when Mr. McGoff came on seven
4 years ago or eight years ago. Thank you.

5 MR. MCGOFF: Than you, Mr.
6 Sbaraglia.

7 MS. SCHUMACHER: Good evening,
8 Council. Marie Schumacher. I don't have a
9 whole lot tonight because my computer and I
10 are barely on speaking terms still so it
11 will take a little bit yet before I'm ready
12 to go.

13 But, you know, it dawned on me
14 during the silent reflection today that you
15 should also be including those who were born
16 this past week because we are leaving them a
17 terrible world. We are leaving them a pile
18 of debt, and I think it's really sad, so I
19 would suggest you might want to start adding
20 those who were born as well as those who
21 leave us.

22 The neighborhood summit that was
23 held on Tuesday, that really confused me. I
24 thought it was to become -- it was a first
25 step toward creating a council that would

1 meet like quarterly of all of the
2 associations. As a matter of fact, just
3 about the time the meeting was started,
4 about a half our before the meeting was
5 starting, I had a call from our neighborhood
6 association president and I said, "Well,
7 aren't you going to the 5:30 meeting --" or
8 the whatever 6:00.

9 And he said, "What meeting?"

10 I said, "The one downtown."

11 He knew nothing about it. And then
12 I read in the paper the next day and
13 understood it was only for communities that
14 have neighborhood watches. So I think
15 better communication of what that was, what
16 the intent was and if they are to be held in
17 the future and possibly include all of the
18 them and let them not come if they don't
19 care to.

20 And down here, the half marathon,
21 did I understand you correctly, Mr. McGoff,
22 the City of Scranton is getting the proceeds
23 from the half marathon?

24 MR. MCGOFF: Is getting?

25 MS. SCHUMACHER: The proceeds from

1 the half marathon.

2 MR. MCGOFF: I didn't say that.

3 MS. SCHUMACHER: Oh, you said it was
4 going to benefit the city, and I didn't know
5 if you meant indirectly or I thought you
6 meant into our treasury.

7 MR. MCGOFF: No.

8 MS. SCHUMACHER: No? Thank you. I
9 would also like to suggest an open caucus
10 with the city engineer on the signalization
11 project that seems to have gone astray.
12 When it was announced I thought it was going
13 to have sensors that if nobody was coming
14 other way the light would change and all of
15 those wonderful things. Instead, I find
16 myself falling asleep at the corner of South
17 Washington and Lackawanna Avenue waiting for
18 the light to change on Sunday mornings.

19 So I think it would be nice to have
20 the city engineer in and maybe even the
21 person at PennDOT and maybe prior to that
22 ask what the community thinks of it and get
23 questions to you and let us all hear what
24 happened.

25 And then is the East Mountain Fire

1 Station scheduled for receiving the needed
2 had capital improvements this calendar year?

3 MR. MCGOFF: I'm sorry?

4 MS. SCHUMACHER: I said is the East
5 Mountain Fire Station scheduled to receive
6 the capital improvements that are required
7 there this year?

8 MR. MCGOFF: I do not know that.

9 MS. SCHUMACHER: Whose bailiwick
10 does that fall in under.

11 MR. MCGOFF: Mr. Loscombe is public
12 safety, but as far as I know, I have not
13 seen any plan for doing that, so I don't
14 know.

15 MS. SCHUMACHER: So speaking of
16 that, my questions from the 8th of February
17 how are we doing on those? Are they getting
18 anywhere close to completion?

19 MR. MCGOFF: I'm working on them.
20 I'm sorry.

21 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay.

22 MR. MCGOFF: There are one or two
23 that I am having difficulty.

24 MS. SCHUMACHER: Well, maybe you
25 could do it in installments then. Again, in

1 addition to the others who have spoken on
2 5-B tonight I also have a question on that,
3 I don't understand, first of all, did the
4 RFP cover four years or was it for a single
5 year? Did anybody look at the RFP for it?

6 MR. MCGOFF: I can look in the
7 backup here. I'm not sure but --

8 MR. GAUGHAN: I think it was four
9 years, I'm not almost positive.

10 MS. SCHUMACHER: In the RFP? It
11 says -- okay, and four years seems excessive
12 to me. What does our Human Resources person
13 do? I thought the Human Resources was to
14 deal with the labor and employment issues?
15 I just think it's excessive. I have more
16 questions, I guess I'll bring them back next
17 week, but I would like to give, if I may,0,
18 before I leave the podium, give Mr. Rogan a
19 chance to his answer to the question last
20 week on whether or not Steamtown Partnership
21 have paid the installment that was due last
22 year and the status of getting the loan
23 information publically?

24 MR. ROGAN: As of now, it's still
25 not for public release.

1 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay. Well, I
2 guess I'll have to see what HUD has to say
3 about that and then I'll wish everybody
4 happy shoveling this weekend.

5 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you. Is there
6 anyone else who wishes to address council?

7 MS. REED: FIFTH ORDER. 5-A.

8 MOTIONS.

9 MR. MCGOFF: Mr. Wechsler?

10 MR. WECHSLER: Yes, Mr. McGoff. I
11 just want to touch a little bit on the
12 neighborhood summit that was conducted the
13 other day. These meetings actually have
14 been going on probably for about a year.
15 It's kind of been a focus of the crime watch
16 groups. Chief Graziano has kind of been the
17 lead person on this. Neighborhood
18 Associations are invited to attend. It's
19 open to any neighborhood group. At the
20 current point some of them are more active
21 than others, but it is held on a quarterly
22 basis and I believe if you -- the dates will
23 be posted on the city's side through Chief
24 Graziano's offices, and everyone is invited
25 to attend.

1 The meeting that was held on Tuesday
2 was kind of a different source. Several of
3 the cabinet members from the new
4 administration were there. They were open
5 to any kind of questions that they had. The
6 meeting was limited because there was only
7 an hour of taping time reserved in the
8 chambers here, so that's why it was only
9 about an hour long.

10 But there are going to be ones in
11 the future and the group is looking to
12 expand and it's up open to all the
13 neighborhoods.

14 I just want to touch on a couple of
15 things that were mentioned tonight at the
16 meeting. I think the fact that the city
17 council and the mayor are having open
18 dialogue is a tremendous success. In the
19 past couple of years it hasn't happened and
20 we are only in this for about eight weeks
21 that we have been sworn into office and the
22 communications is flowing back and forth.
23 Information, ideas, and I know right now I'm
24 frustrated, too. We are not seeing a lot of
25 progress. We don't have a lot of answers.

1 I can't tell you where the settlement with
2 the unions are. If I said I did, I had an
3 answer to that, I would be a liar and I
4 won't do that.

5 I know from myself that I am in
6 communication with Business Administrator
7 Bulzoni probably on an every other day
8 basis, I'm in contact with the mayor and the
9 answers just aren't available yet. They are
10 just not. We are trying to get our
11 financial house in order. We are making
12 some progress on that and just to give out
13 answers I couldn't do that right now.

14 The other thing I want to mention,
15 all of the council members we get
16 correspondence through many different ways
17 now. I get calls, I get e-mails, I still
18 get snail mail at my house, and I try to
19 respond to every question and every issue
20 that I have, but the one thing that I would
21 request if you are going to send information
22 to us, please sign your name to the letter.
23 The reason being that it's not because I
24 want to know who you are, the reason I would
25 like you to sign your name is so I can get

1 back to you.

2 I received a letter from a person
3 who did not include their phone number with
4 the letter so I was able to look up their
5 phone number and call them back to speak to
6 them. If you send us a letter, maybe I
7 don't understand exactly what you are saying
8 in the letter. I do need to speak to you
9 some times. Every letter that we get is
10 looked at. It's not -- if it's not signed
11 it goes in a different pile. Some of the
12 letters that we have gotten that aren't
13 signed have a lot of legitimate issues to
14 them, but just sign your name. I won't make
15 it public. It will stay with me and it will
16 make it easier for us to get responses back
17 to you. That's it for now, Mr. McGoff.

18 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you. Mr. Rogan?

19 MR. ROGAN: Yes, thank you. First,
20 just a housekeeping item, I would like to
21 make a motion to table Item 6-A.

22 MR. MCGOFF: Second?

23 MR. WECHSLER: Second.

24 MR. ROGAN: And as Councilman McGoff
25 mention would at the beginning of the

1 meeting, there is going to be some legal
2 language changes on that and it will coming
3 back shortly from the law department.

4 MR. MCGOFF: Anyone else on the
5 question? All those in favor of tabling
6 signify by saying aye.

7 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

8 MR. ROGAN: Aye.

9 MR. LOSCOMBE: Aye.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

11 MS. MCGOFF: Aye. Opposed? The
12 ayes have it and so moved.

13 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Just two
14 items I want to talk about, one is
15 Mr. Sbaraglia brought up some points about
16 Property Tax Reform and whether people
17 believe it or not property taxes is also
18 included in somebody who rents. When you
19 are paying rent to a landlord they are going
20 to make a profit on it. If they weren't,
21 they wouldn't be in the landlord business,
22 so by eliminating the property taxes, I
23 wouldn't say the renters would see a
24 decrease in rent, but you would think the
25 increases wouldn't go up at the same rate

1 they are with the property taxes.

2 But one point that was brought up
3 that I do agree with it has to start with
4 the school districts. The school district
5 needs to stop spending so much money. If
6 you look at the city's budget and the
7 services you receive in the city compared to
8 the school district, you see that the vast
9 majority of your tax dollars are going to
10 the school district, and the wage tax that
11 you pay, that 3.4 percent doesn't all come
12 to the city. 1 percent of that goes to the
13 school district, approximately a third.

14 On the property tax end, the school
15 district is taking the lion's share of your
16 property taxes, then the city and the county
17 are the next two in proper portion and I
18 know, unfortunately, the property tax bills
19 aren't divided that way. When you get your
20 bill the city wage tax, 3.4 percent, only
21 2.4 percent is actually going to the City of
22 Scranton.

23 And regarding the property taxes,
24 it's split between I believe county and then
25 city and school are together, and of that

1 city and school portion the city receives a
2 much smaller portion than the school
3 district does, so that is a good point that
4 the school districts do need to begin to
5 save money ever way they can.

6 But I do encourage everyone,
7 supporters, detractors and those who haven't
8 made up their mind about property tax reform
9 to come next week and listen to the panel
10 and the information that they will provide
11 and how it will effect taxes in the State of
12 Pennsylvania. It really is the biggest
13 issue going on in the state right now and a
14 city like Scranton would be a prime example
15 of the folks that could really be helped by
16 this bill passing with how high the school
17 property taxes are and with the large
18 population of senior citizens who own their
19 homes. They own their homes outright and
20 they write that check every year, it's quite
21 a burden so it's definitely something that I
22 believe will help.

23 Next, one other item, I did meet
24 with representatives from PPL. They are
25 reaching out to elected officials throughout

1 the state to talk about some of their new
2 plans regarding making electricity more
3 reliable and try to cut down on outages and
4 the length of the outages, and one thing
5 they mentioned was that for residents in
6 areas especially with a lot of trees, if you
7 notice a tree on your property that's
8 hanging overpower lines you can call PPL
9 with a 1-800 number that's on your bill and
10 they will send a crew out to assess the
11 situation. If it is in danger of falling
12 they will remove that at their own cost.

13 They are getting away -- they also
14 relayed that they are getting away from, and
15 I know you will see if you go down in
16 certain neighborhoods where you will see a
17 power line and a "V" basically cut into a
18 tree to let the power line go through, they
19 are getting away from that, trying to make
20 it more visually appealing for the
21 neighborhoods so that is just one thing for
22 residents who have large trees and their
23 power lines to think about. It's free, it's
24 no cost to you, and it would also save our
25 Department of Public Works money for

1 whenever storms happens when these trees
2 fall onto roads and our guys would have to
3 come out on overtime to take care of that.

4 That is all I have for now. I'll
5 hold my other comments for the votes. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you.

8 Mr. Gaughan?

9 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes, thanks. First
10 I'd like to thank Mr. Quinn for those
11 documents and just to let you know that I
12 have been in discussions with our Business
13 Administrator Mr. Bulzoni about the tax
14 amnesty program. We both think that it's a
15 good idea, but we are discussing the
16 logistics of the whole thing, so that is in
17 the works and thank you again for that.

18 Secondly, just one follow-up on what
19 I spoke about last week, as everybody knows
20 or if you don't know we're supposed to have
21 another snowstorm Sunday into Monday. I am
22 strongly recommending that the city create
23 an implement a snow emergency plan of
24 action, and I think we are in desperate need
25 of it. I have reached out to the

1 administration to have a meeting and discuss
2 the plan and, as I said, I think it's
3 imperative that we move on this.

4 I would hope that the mayor in the
5 event that he does declare a snow emergency,
6 number one, notifies the media and the
7 public; and number two, does something about
8 the downtown, either bans parking downtown
9 during the snow emergency, I think one of
10 our options is to reach out to the Parking
11 Authority to offer free parking or parking
12 at discounted rates to get the cars off the
13 streets downtown and allow the DPW to get in
14 and do their job without any trouble.

15 I also recommended last week that we
16 take a look at what Pittsburgh did, they
17 created a winter weather emergency resource
18 guide. It's accessible on their website and
19 it's something that we should do and create
20 and implement. Basically it's a welcome
21 from the mayor to have four phases of winter
22 weather emergency. It basically shows you
23 what the DPW does. If we get one to three
24 inches of snow, here is how the city
25 operates. I think this informs the public,

1 let's them know what the plan is and if
2 makes things a lot easier, so that's
3 something that I am recommending and I hope
4 Sunday the mayor does do that if we declare
5 a snow emergency. And that's all I have.
6 Thank you.

7 MR. MCGOFF: Thank you. Very
8 briefly I would like to continue my response
9 as far as the caucus is concerned. We, as a
10 council, felt that it was in our best
11 interest to hold a caucus prior to every
12 meeting. The purpose of the caucus is to
13 share information among council members and
14 to prepare us for that evening's meeting.

15 If there is an issue that we feel is
16 important enough to hold a caucus in council
17 chambers, we will do that, as we are doing
18 next week, but we feel that we have taken a
19 step forward by having a caucus every week,
20 whether it's of any importance, I think that
21 for the public to come to most of the
22 caucuses it's pretty boring that all we do
23 is discuss what's on the agenda and how we
24 are going to proceed that night.

25 We are not trying to conduct any

1 business surreptitiously, we are trying to
2 help one another so that we can operate more
3 efficiently. And again, the public is
4 invited to be part of the caucus, to be
5 there in attendance while we have this
6 meeting, and they are at half an hour prior
7 to the meeting, so 6:00 prior to every
8 meeting.

9 Just the neighborhood summit
10 meeting, just to add to what Mr. Wechsler
11 said, that was not a meeting scheduled by
12 council. I know we spoke in council about
13 something of that nature. This was a
14 meeting, this meeting was scheduled by the
15 crime watch groups and we were -- there were
16 three of us in attendance, but it was not a
17 meeting that we as a council scheduled, just
18 so that -- we had nothing to do with
19 announcing it or making it public to or
20 making it known to the public or to the
21 neighborhood associations.

22 And also for information sake, also
23 to add to what Mr. Wechsler said, there are
24 ongoing negotiations to deal with all of the
25 financial issues that are facing the city.

1 Some of these negotiations require that
2 meetings be held and things discussed that
3 are not available at this point in time to
4 the public. Some of these negotiations are
5 sensitive, but I know that Mr. Wechsler has
6 been in contact with Mr. Bulzoni. I, too,
7 have been in contact with him. I have
8 attended any number of meetings in which we
9 have been told that these -- that I have
10 been told that these negotiations are
11 ongoing and that they are looking for
12 resolution to some of the financial issues
13 that face the city, in particular, the
14 payment of the arbitration awards.

15 And also, in the past was asked
16 about the SAFER grant. There was a meeting
17 held on Wednesday, I believe, yesterday,
18 with members of the fire department, the
19 mayor's office and also with council and
20 there are ongoing efforts to pursue a
21 renewal of the SAFER grant that cannot be
22 done until the application -- the actual
23 application period is not until some time in
24 the summer, but there are efforts to have
25 that renewed, just to answer some questions

1 that people had about the SAFER grant.

2 And that is all I have at this point
3 in time. Thank you.

4 MS. REED: 5-B. FOR INTRODUCTION -
5 A RESOLUTION - AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND
6 OTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OF
7 SCRANTON TO ENTER INTO A PROFESSIONAL
8 SERVICES CONTRACT WITH THE LAW FIRM OF
9 ABRAHAMSEN CONABOY & ABRAHAMSEN, P.C. FOR
10 LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LEGAL SERVICES FOR A
11 TERM OF FOUR (4) YEARS.

12 MR. MCGOFF: At this time I'll
13 entertain a motion that Item 5-B be
14 introduced into its proper committee.

15 MR. ROGAN: So moved.

16 MR. LOSCOMBE: Second.

17 MR. MCGOFF: On the question?

18 MR. MCGOFF: On the question?

19 MR. WECHSLER: Yes, Mr. McGoff, just
20 to touch on something that was mentioned
21 from the podium, Mr. Abrahamsen is not going
22 to do not personnel matters. This contact
23 is for contractual matters involving the
24 city.

25 In terms of the line item in the

1 budget where this is coming from, it's
2 actually in the solicitor's budget. There
3 is a line item in the solicitor's budget for
4 special services, and that's where this
5 funding for this contract will come from.

6 MR. MCGOFF: Anyone else? I should
7 also note that the firm of Abrahamsen,
8 Conaboy and Abrahamsen was the low bidder of
9 I believe seven different law firms. They
10 were the low bidder and it is within the
11 purview of the mayor, the administration to
12 choose the service that they feel is best
13 for the city and being the low bidder I
14 believe that they have been made a wise
15 decision.

16 All those in favor of introduction
17 signify by saying aye.

18 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

19 MR. ROGAN: Aye.

20 MR. LOSCOMBE: Aye.

21 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

22 MS. MCGOFF: Aye. Opposed? The
23 ayes have it and so moved.

24 MS. REED: SIXTH ORDER. 6-A has
25 been tabled.

1 SEVENTH ORDER. 7-A. FOR
2 CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES -FOR
3 ADOPTION - RESOLUTION NO. 28, 2014 -
4 APPOINTMENT OF EMANUEL JOHNSON, 1007
5 SCRANTON STREET, SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA,
6 18504 AS A MEMBER OF THE SCRANTON MUNICIPAL
7 RECREATION AUTHORITY. MR. JOHNSON WILL
8 BE REPLACING CAROL OLESKI WHOSE TERM EXPIRED
9 DECEMBER 31, 2013. MR. JOHNSON'S TERM WILL
10 EXPIRE DECEMBER 31, 2018.

11 MR. MCGOFF: As Chair for the
12 Committee on Rules, I recommend final
13 passage of Item 7-A.

14 MR. ROGAN: Second.

15 MR. MCGOFF: On the question? Roll
16 call, please?

17 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Wechsler.

18 MR. MCGOFF: Yes.

19 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

20 MR. ROGAN: Yes.

21 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Loscombe.

22 MR. LOSCOMBE: Yes.

23 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes.

25 MS. CARRERA: Mr. McGoff.

1 MR. MCGOFF: Yes. I hereby declare
2 Item 7-A legally and lawfully adopted and
3 congratulate Mr. Johnson on his appointment
4 to the Recreation Authority.

5 MS. REED: 7-B. FOR CONSIDERATION BY
6 THE COMMITTEE ON RULES -FOR ADOPTION -
7 RESOLUTION NO. 29, 2014 - APPOINTMENT OF
8 TIMOTHY PERRY, 2325 BIRNEY AVENUE, SCRANTON,
9 PENNSYLVANIA, 18505 AS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD
10 OF THE SCRANTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY.
11 MR. PERRY WILL BE REPLACING PETER RIEBE
12 WHOSE TERM EXPIRED ON FEBRUARY 4, 2010. MR.
13 PERRY'S TERM WILL EXPIRE ON FEBRUARY 4,
14 2015.

15 MR. MCGOFF: As Chairperson for the
16 Committee on Rules, I recommend final
17 passage of Item 7-B.

18 MR. ROGAN: Second.

19 MR. MCGOFF: On the question? Roll
20 call, please?

21 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Wechsler.

22 MR. MCGOFF: Yes.

23 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Rogan.

24 MR. ROGAN: Yes.

25 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Loscombe.

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MR. LOSCOMBE: Yes.

MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

MR. GAUGHAN: Yes.

MS. CARRERA: Mr. McGoff.

MR. MCGOFF: Yes. I hereby declare
Item 7-B legally and lawfully adopted and
also congratulate Mr. Perry on his
appointment.

Any other business? Entertain a
motion to adjourn.

MR. ROGAN: Motion to adjourn.

MR. MCGOFF: Meeting is adjourned.
Thank you for your participation.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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