

COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF SCRANTON

HELD:

Tuesday, October 6th, 2020

LOCATION:

VIA ZOOM

Maria McCool, RPR

Official Court Reporter

C O U N C I L M E M B E R S :

WILLIAM GAUGHAN, PRESIDENT

KYLE DONAHUE, VICE PRESIDENT

MARK MCANDREW

JESSICA ROTHCHILD

THOMAS SCHUSTER

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

KATHY CARRERA, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

KEVIN HAYES, COUNCIL SOLICITOR

(Pledge of Allegiance.)

MR. GAUGHAN: Please remain standing for a moment of silent reflection for our service men and women throughout the world and also for those who have passed away in our community.

Let us also take a moment of silence for all of the people in our community, our country and world who had passed away from the coronavirus. This pandemic has turned our world upside down. But we must remain hopeful and strong.

We continue to pray for the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they have protection and peace.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, let us stick together, endure together, mourn together and in place of our anxiety, let us have hope and peace. Okay. Thank you. Miss Carrera, roll call, please.

MS. CARRERA: Mr. Schuster.

1 MR. SCHUSTER: Present.

2 MS. CARRERA: Mr. McAndrew. Dr.

3 Rothchild.

4 DR. ROTHCHILD: Here.

5 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Donahue.

6 MR. DONAHUE: Here.

7 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

8 MR. GAUGHAN: Here. Thank you.

9 And, Mrs. Reed, please dispense with the
10 reading of the minutes.

11 MS. REED: Thank you. THIRD ORDER.

12 3-A. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM
13 UNITED STATES SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
14 DATED SEPTEMBER 14, 2020 REGARDING COVID-19
15 PANDEMIC.

16 3-B. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM
17 OECD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DATED SEPTEMBER 29,
18 2020 REGARDING BLIGHT TASKFORCE UPDATE.

19 3-C. SINGLE TAX OFFICE CITY FUNDS
20 DISTRIBUTED COMPARISON REPORT 2019-2020 YEAR TO
21 DATE SEPTEMBER 30, 2020.

22 3-D. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM
23 TROY & BANKS DATED SEPTEMBER 18, 2020 REGARDING
24 TELECOM AUDIT.

25 3-E. MINUTES OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

1 COMMISSION MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 3, 2020.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Mrs. Reed.
3 Are there any comments on any of the Third
4 Order items?

5 MR. SCHUSTER: I had three comments
6 on Third Order items. So starting with 3-B --
7 and Miss Cipriani is here. So I think she can
8 answer that. I was wondering who the members
9 of the Blight Task Force are. So I think that
10 could be done maybe in Fourth Order.

11 And then when looking at 3-C, the
12 Single Tax Office, I see as of September we're
13 about 420,000 off from last year. Where do we
14 expect to be at the end of the year?

15 And then with 3-E, with the
16 adjustments we made to Act 120 with the
17 employees and their job offers, I assume we're
18 still going to be taking the most qualified
19 candidates.

20 Is there a current method that we
21 use for taking those candidates and would we
22 still use that system or are we planning on
23 moving to a different or revamped system?

24 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you.
25 Does anyone else have any comments on the Third

1 Order items? I just want to say one thing.
2 There's a letter, 3-A that was received from
3 Senator Casey regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.
4 I just want to thank Senator Casey publically
5 and his office, especially Amy Wechsler.

6 They have been transparent. They've
7 been open with us. They have taken our calls
8 at any time over the last few months. And I
9 know Senator Casey is doing everything in his
10 power to help the City of Scranton and cities
11 like Scranton throughout Pennsylvania.

12 Unfortunately the CARES Act is just,
13 you know, there are members of the Senate that
14 I don't really know what they're thinking in
15 terms of letting cities just flounder like this
16 during the pandemic. But it's very, very
17 disappointing.

18 We did try -- Councilman Donahue and
19 I tried to get a meeting with Senator Toomey.
20 And we never heard back from him, which is
21 again very disappointing. But Senator Casey I
22 know is trying his best to help our City out.
23 So I do appreciate that.

24 The second thing I wanted to mention
25 was the correspondence received from Troy and

1 Banks. I asked over the past few months for an
2 update on the utility bill audit. So just so
3 everyone knows, that is an update on the
4 utility bill audit.

5 We are looking at realizing an
6 annual savings of \$2,360.40 based on their
7 audit, not as much as I was anticipating or
8 would have liked but it is something. So I did
9 appreciate the update there from the
10 administration. And that's all I have.

11 Thank you, Mrs. Reed. Are there any
12 other comments? If not, received and filed.
13 Do any Council members have any announcements
14 at this time?

15 MR. DONAHUE: I have one
16 announcement. The City of Scranton fall leaf
17 pickup and recycling program will begin next
18 week the week of October 12th. All leaves must
19 be placed -- must be placed in biodegradable
20 brown paper bags.

21 There's bags available at the DPW
22 complex located at 101 Poplar Street and also
23 at the Weston Fieldhouse located at 982
24 Providence Road.

25 All collections will be from the

1 curbside of streets and avenues. No
2 collections will be in courts or alleys, no
3 loose piles, no plastic bags, no household
4 trash in leaf bags.

5 Fall leaf pickups will be the week
6 of October 12th following paper, the week of
7 October 26th following cardboard, the week of
8 November 9th following paper, the week of
9 November 24th following cardboard and the week
10 of December 7th following paper.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. Anyone
12 else have any announcements?

13 DR. ROTHCHILD: Yes, I have an
14 announcement. There's going to be a ground
15 breaking ceremony this weekend on Saturday at
16 11 a.m. And that's going to be taking place at
17 715 Cedar Avenue. It's for the Garden of Cedar
18 which is going to be a great community garden
19 in South Side that they are starting to work
20 on.

21 So the public is invited if anyone
22 is interested in attending that. I know that
23 I'll be there because I'm excited about it.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Great. Anyone
25 else? All right. I have a few. As I

1 mentioned last week, we're making a very slight
2 change to the time of day in which public
3 comment will be received in our office and via
4 mail.

5 We're making a change from 4:30
6 p.m., to no later than 3 p.m., in order to
7 compile all public comment submission and to
8 enable them to be read aloud during Fourth
9 Order Public Participation. We did start this
10 process this week.

11 So moving forward, any comments and
12 questions should be submitted by the new
13 deadline of 3 p.m., on the day of the meeting
14 which is Tuesday. Also please keep in mind
15 that you should try to keep your written
16 comments to at least five minutes.

17 October 10th, there is a fall
18 fundraiser book sale at Nay Aug Park sponsored
19 by the Scranton Municipal Recreation Committee
20 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This is featuring three
21 local authors that are promoting and signing
22 their new books.

23 There will be paperback books,
24 hardcover, DVD, CDs, candles, crafts, raffles
25 and more. Mask and social distancing is

1 expected. Gloves and hand sanitizer will be
2 supplied at the event.

3 NDC will attend our caucus on
4 October 20th, 2020 at 5:45 p.m., to provide
5 their third quarter parking update.

6 Scranton Tomorrow will have a caucus
7 with Council that is scheduled for October 27th
8 at 5:45 p.m. And they're giving their
9 quarterly update to Council.

10 Next Monday, October 12th, City Hall
11 is going to be closed for Columbus Day holiday.
12 DPW will also be off this day. Refuse and
13 newspaper and recycling will be one day behind
14 schedule next week, the week of October 12th.

15 And finally, a paper copy of
16 Council's weekly agenda including a copy of all
17 legislation and backup is able to be reviewed
18 in the City Treasurer's Office, the first floor
19 of City Hall.

20 The Treasurer, Mary Jo Sheridan has
21 graciously agreed to the weekly agenda being
22 placed in her office for public inspection and
23 review in the event that the public does not
24 have internet access.

25 The agenda is posted to Council's

1 page on the City's website each week as well
2 and will continue to be posted there. The
3 paper copy is just another option and a means
4 of striving for full transparency with regard
5 to legislative matters.

6 Also, a legal notice is placed
7 weekly in the Sunday edition of the Scranton
8 Times with Council's agenda for the next
9 meeting. And that's all I have. Mrs. Reed.

10 MS. REED: Thank you. FOURTH ORDER.
11 CITIZENS PARTICIPATION.

12 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you. And
13 now we'll continue where we left off. Thank
14 you, Director Cipriani and Business
15 Administrator Deeley and Mayor Cignetti, for
16 sticking around here. I'll turn it over to
17 you, Eileen, if you want to talk about the
18 Blight Program.

19 MS. CIPRIANI: Thank you very much,
20 Chairman; and thank you, Council members for
21 giving me the opportunity tonight to talk about
22 the Mayor's initiative to fight blight in the
23 City.

24 We're taking a multiprong holistic
25 approach to blight. And when we started that

1 off with an internal task force. The internal
2 task force is a precursor to having a larger
3 external task force.

4 But currently to answer the question
5 that was asked in the earlier segment, the
6 internal task force currently consists of
7 myself and Rachael Swartz from our office, Don
8 King from City Planning, Tom Oleski from LIPS
9 and Carl Deeley and Megan Preambo who is the
10 Deputy Director in LIPS as well.

11 Those staff members are working
12 together internally. And we decided to work
13 internally before bringing it up to a larger
14 level because we really wanted to look at
15 process mapping and how we were dealing with
16 blight in the City.

17 So we've gone through the process of
18 documenting the entire process. And it was a
19 very valuable opportunity for us because we
20 found issues with some of the processes we have
21 that we've been able to iron them out so that
22 we could take a property from being identified
23 by someone in the public or inspectors and
24 placing it in the process to either hopefully
25 be rehabilitated.

1 But at the end of the road if we
2 can't rehabilitate the process or the property,
3 then we'd be able to take it and slate it for
4 demolition.

5 So this group has come together.
6 We've identified 80 properties so far that are
7 part of our blighted list that we're looking to
8 address in the City. We're working now to
9 develop a scoring rubric so that we can
10 prioritize and be as efficient and as effective
11 as possible in addressing this.

12 Like I said before, the idea
13 really -- we want to be able to rehabilitate as
14 many of these properties as we can. Demolition
15 is the last resort. But we do have quite a few
16 properties in the City that are past the point
17 of being rehabilitated.

18 Since May, we've taken down seven
19 properties in the City. OECD has taken down
20 six. One has come down by DPW. So that totals
21 the seven that we've taken down. We have three
22 others right now that are in the process of
23 going to the abatement process so that we can
24 address the asbestos in those properties.

25 So hopefully we will have those

1 addressed in the next month or so. Under the
2 current contract we have with our vendor,
3 Brdaric, we might be able to take down two more
4 properties before the end of the year.

5 So we've lined up these properties
6 that we've had and placed them in buckets of
7 funding. That was another priority of our task
8 force. Last year we had \$300,000 and we're
9 finishing up that contract right now for
10 demolition.

11 Next year we have 225,000 that's
12 CDBG funding that's slated for demolition. As
13 you know, we've had \$300,000 that we have
14 applied for for DCED grant. And I thank you
15 all for pushing that forward for us and
16 supporting us in that effort.

17 We also have what's called Act 98
18 money that addresses fire structures. So we
19 have quite a few properties that were affected
20 by fire in the City. So we're working in
21 concert with the City Treasurer to be able to
22 address those properties as well.

23 We met just recently with our
24 partners with the Land Bank, with the County
25 and with NeighborWorks so that we can get on

1 the same page with these organizations to see
2 what their strategies are, what their fundings
3 are and what they were planning to do going
4 forward. In talking to the Land Bank, there
5 are 63 vacant lots in the City of Scranton that
6 they're attempting to sell right now.

7 Some of those properties are not
8 properties that are buildable but they are
9 hoping that maybe they could get neighbors to
10 purchase those properties. In addition to
11 demolition though, that's not the only thing
12 that we're trying to do.

13 We have other programs that I'd like
14 to talk about a little bit. One is our Home
15 Rehabilitation Program. In the past five
16 years, we've been able to address 20 homes with
17 that program in the City. And those properties
18 have been taken to -- brought up to code in
19 this program.

20 So it's been really valuable for
21 properties that were in a really dire
22 situation. But as we looked at this program
23 over the course of the six months or so -- last
24 six months, what we realized is this program is
25 not being utilized and as effective as we would

1 like it to be.

2 So right now we're in the process of
3 drafting an RFP so that we could use our
4 community partners to administer this program.
5 That gives us the opportunity to avail
6 ourselves to programs that they have, whether
7 it's lead abatement, whether it's programs to
8 do medical adaptations to homes so that we're
9 not working in a silo.

10 It gives a more holistic approach to
11 that. So that's a program that we're working
12 on right now. Another program we're working on
13 is the U.S. Mayor's Conference. Mayor Cagnetti
14 has been given the opportunity to support a
15 program to apply for \$150,000 grant.

16 So the City is partnering up with
17 NeighborWorks will take the lead, UNC, and
18 SLHDA to apply for this grant. The idea of
19 this program would be -- we'd be able to do
20 smaller programs, some handyman programs that
21 we may be able to help elderly citizens in the
22 City stay in their homes.

23 That's really important that they
24 could take advantage of this program and be
25 able to make those repairs that allow them to

1 stay in there potentially medically but allow
2 them to stay in there because of some repair
3 that they can't afford to address.

4 Another great program we have is the
5 Home Buyer Program. In the past five years, 53
6 homeowners have taken advantage of this
7 program. NeighborWorks is who administers it
8 currently for the City. And we have 17
9 applicants in the program hoping to get through
10 and qualify.

11 My favorite program, Building
12 Blocks, two hundred and one households have
13 been able to take advantage of that program in
14 the City. Twenty-five blocks have been
15 addressed. And at a rate of two to one of
16 private funding and public funding together
17 have worked on this program.

18 So Carl Deeley and myself have been
19 looking to put together a way that we could
20 have sustainable funding so that this program
21 could be good into the future. That's a really
22 important goal of ours. I want to apologize.
23 I have two dogs here that decided to make a
24 little noise while we're doing this.

25 Another good program we have right

1 now is that just teed up is the Neighborhood
2 Initiative. The Mayor has taken City Hall out
3 into the streets and into the parks and into
4 the neighborhoods and have given City
5 members -- City residents the opportunity to
6 get their questions and concerns addressed and
7 be able to identify issues in their
8 neighborhood, concerns that they want to bring
9 to our attention.

10 It also had given the opportunity
11 for our inspectors to go out and walk around
12 the neighborhood and be proactive in finding
13 properties that may be problematic or
14 potentially problematic going forward. So
15 that's been a huge success.

16 It's also spawned another
17 initiative, the Mayor's Volunteer Corps, which
18 we had a number of people volunteer to come
19 forward and want to help address blight,
20 cleaning up these vacant properties in the
21 City, cleaning up trash and litter around the
22 City.

23 So this program will be coming
24 together in the future. We also talked to
25 NeighborWorks who I understand is putting

1 together an Adopt a Lot Program which would
2 allow neighborhood groups or community
3 organizations to adopt a property that they
4 could help maintain and take care of.

5 So a lot of good things going on in
6 around blight. I had sent you my remarks
7 earlier. So you do have those. But if there
8 is any questions that I might be able to answer
9 for you, I'd be more than happy to take those
10 questions.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: I just have one
12 question and one comment. My first comment is
13 I think there is a lot of great work going on
14 in OECD now just based on the number of grants
15 that we've seen come through on Council which
16 is more than I've seen in the last few years to
17 be quite honest with you. So that would be
18 number one.

19 Number two, the Beautiful Blocks
20 Program, I saw firsthand the effect that that
21 has on a neighborhood because my block was a
22 part of that. Now, I wasn't a part of it
23 because I thought it would be a conflict. But
24 all of my other neighbors up and down the one
25 side of me and then on the other side of Rock

1 and Rockwell Avenue took part in that and --
2 over the last two months and the difference the
3 people that are -- were employed on the
4 projects, the difference it made in the
5 neighborhood.

6 The property values definitely went
7 up. A neighbor of mine put a new roof on, new
8 sidewalks in, put a retaining wall in. You
9 just saw a lot of development. And it really
10 was because people need that extra push. And
11 it was a great thing to not only see that but
12 to see my neighbors come together for that
13 project.

14 So whatever we can do, Eileen, in
15 terms of making that as big as it can be I
16 would be in favor of that because it definitely
17 works and you could definitely see a difference
18 in the neighborhoods.

19 MS. CIPRIANI: I agree with you,
20 Councilman. I met with NeighborWorks last
21 week, week before last. And they're looking at
22 some strategies. You know, we want to go out
23 and talk to some more of the nonprofits that
24 might be interested in committing to this
25 program.

1 But you're right. Everywhere you go
2 when you talk to people they know about it and
3 they really appreciate it.

4 MR. GAUGHAN: Yeah, definitely. I
5 appreciate that that's -- that's still the
6 project that's really being focused on. The
7 only question that I had, I get stopped as all
8 Council members do I think on different
9 properties that people want taken down.

10 One specific one is 2939 Birney
11 Avenue. And I know that that was on the list
12 that was submitted with the grant for
13 demolition funding.

14 My only question would be I know
15 that maybe Carl and the Mayor could answer this
16 as well. There was \$145,000 line item in the
17 budget for demolition outside of OECD funding.
18 So is there any -- can you give us an update on
19 that specific property, 2939 Birney Avenue and
20 if -- is there any way -- are we utilizing the
21 \$145,000 funding for demolition or are we
22 pushing that off because of the pandemic?

23 MS. CIPRIANI: No, no. We will be
24 using that. LIPS is very much part of this
25 conversation. That's in my group of potential

1 properties if we have enough money left in this
2 contract that we have right now.

3 One of the things that we're doing
4 to try and move from this contract to the next
5 is, we're beginning to draft the next RFP so
6 that even before this is over, we can move into
7 that one. We are now almost maxed out in this
8 contract. So we do have to get another vendor
9 or have it bid out and have this vendor back.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you. And
11 I was just -- I'm really pleased to see the
12 demolition. There's an uptick in that. There
13 is so many -- when you mentioned, Eileen, about
14 the properties that were affect by fires, there
15 are so many properties that are still sitting
16 there that have gone through a fire.

17 And we get -- I get stopped all the
18 time from different neighbors throughout the
19 neighborhoods throughout the City who want an
20 update on those and want to know what the
21 status is. So I'm really, really glad to see
22 that's going to be a priority.

23 And last question from me would be
24 in the one piece of legislation that was sent
25 down, OECD was looking to get funding to

1 demolish several City properties throughout the
2 parks. One of them was in Connell Park. Do we
3 have an idea of -- I know those structures need
4 to be demolished.

5 Do we have any idea yet of what --
6 are we replacing those with something or are we
7 just getting rid of those structures
8 completely? What's --

9 MS. CIPRIANI: Right now the DCED
10 grant is just to demolish those. We're doing a
11 park's assessment. So the park's assessment
12 will give us an idea for CDBG funding. And
13 DCNR is opening a grant round at the beginning
14 of next year.

15 That will give us an idea to
16 prioritize which parks we need to address
17 first. So it will be a matter of working
18 through that list.

19 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Okay. Thank
20 you. Oh, sorry, Mayor. Go ahead.

21 MAYOR COGNETTI: To your point a
22 minute ago about the Act 98 and the fires,
23 pulling -- pulling this list together and
24 pulling all of these things together it's been
25 a really great example of how we're trying to

1 kind of break down the silos of the different
2 businesses of the City.

3 So you've got the Fire Department,
4 the Treasurer. You've got OECD. You've got
5 LIPS. You have so many different things that
6 were siloed. And by doing this Blight Task
7 Force and bringing all of these teams together,
8 we're able to really get through some of these
9 things.

10 Something like the fire properties,
11 it involves, you know, everything from legal to
12 licensing and inspections. It's very --
13 something very complicated. But now that we've
14 done the process map -- and we're happy to
15 share any of these very geeky process maps with
16 any of you. It's really helped us figure this
17 out and be able to have this plan going
18 forward.

19 So I'm just so appreciative to the
20 team and to all of you because every Council
21 person reaches out and you guys help us
22 understand what the problems are out there. So
23 I really see this as a team effort.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: The process -- thank
25 you, Mayor. The process map that you just

1 mentioned -- and I know I talked to Carl about
2 this because we talked about how important that
3 is for the public to understand. Over the last
4 few years what I've encountered is, you know, a
5 neighbor will stop a Councilman and ask what's
6 the status of this house?

7 You know, it's been in disrepair.
8 The grass is 8 feet high. Did anybody go out
9 and take a look at it? And sometimes it looks
10 like nothing is being done although something
11 is being done. But it's in that process, the
12 process map that you talked about.

13 So I would appreciate if those could
14 be made public, like, even, Eileen, when you're
15 talking about demolishing a house, I think
16 people need to understand the steps that have
17 to be taken first because, like I said, often
18 times they think nothing is going on when we're
19 just in the middle of step two or step three or
20 whatever that might look like.

21 And even in terms of, you know,
22 giving it a quality of life ticket or
23 demolishing a property, condemning a property,
24 there's all of these processes that again,
25 people need to be educated on because I

1 remember when I first came on Council, all of
2 these different things can be very confusing.
3 I think that would be very -- the process map
4 idea would be very helpful to me.

5 MS. CIPRIANI: Yeah, absolutely we
6 could actually post it up on our ScrantonWorks
7 website and look at it there. And we'll
8 certainly send it onto Council. One other
9 thing that I don't think people realize that's
10 a very frequent occurrence is that we may have
11 a property that we are scheduling to go through
12 the Housing Appeals Board or it's going to be
13 demolished and it's sold.

14 That's a very frequent occurrence.
15 And then we have to start over again. So I
16 don't think people realize the -- and I didn't
17 realize before I got into this how often that
18 happens.

19 MR. GAUGHAN: And I'd love -- that's
20 a great point. I'd love to be able to point
21 people from the public to that website and say,
22 okay, when you're coming to me as a councilman
23 with a problem property, here's what this
24 process looks like. And then people, you know,
25 will be able to understand that better. So I

1 appreciate that point being brought up.

2 I don't have any other questions. I
3 know, Councilman Schuster, it looks like you
4 have a question and then anyone else that wants
5 to jump in.

6 MR. SCHUSTER: Yeah, I will say once
7 I heard the term process mapping I was happy to
8 hear that. I've seen some of them in my own
9 workplace. And sometimes some of those
10 processes are crazier than one would realize.

11 So I think when it comes to say,
12 like, you know, the quality of life things if
13 we get an address or we get a property for
14 demolition, that will definitely help when it
15 comes to putting that in the right place and,
16 you know, sending it to the right channel.

17 I did have a couple questions. Mark
18 McAndrew prepared a statement. So I'll read
19 off Mark's statement. So he said, "Last week
20 during caucus we had technical difficulties
21 which prevented me to pose my questions to the
22 administration regarding the internal LIPS
23 Department assessment and the findings.

24 So this week because of a
25 contractual obligation as a teacher, I'm unable

1 to attend tonight's caucus but would like to
2 pose those questions. So recently I and like
3 clockwork at least twice a year, stories
4 referencing Mr. Bond appear in the Scranton
5 Times and Newswatch 16 Investigates.

6 Both of these report that Mr. Bond
7 continues to rent unregistered, uninspected and
8 therefore, illegal apartments while owing
9 around 250,000 to the City, School District,
10 and County taxes. Mr. Bond insists that his
11 apartments are registered.

12 The City records insist they are
13 not. Are they registered or are they not? And
14 I also want to know as well as citizens of
15 Scranton that do pay their property taxes and
16 refuse fees, what is going to be done to
17 resolve this once and for all so that best
18 practices are put in place to prevent this from
19 happening again? Mark McAndrew.

20 MAYOR COGNETTI: Yeah, so earlier
21 this year we did file a lawsuit against
22 Mr. Bond. So we'll check back in with the Law
23 Department for the status of that. That was
24 in -- I want to say that was in February
25 because that was before the courts closed we

1 got that in there.

2 And in terms of LIPS review, you'll
3 see -- so just the things that Eileen just
4 spoke to a lot of those we're piecing together
5 the review -- pieces of the review and some of
6 these other processes.

7 But you'll see right now we're
8 working on reviewing the quality of life
9 tickets and that process and looking at some
10 potential changes to put to Council is one
11 piece. We're also in the new budget as -- we
12 had previewed something with Councilman Gaughan
13 a couple weeks ago and will continue these
14 conversations about the budget with you all in
15 the coming weeks.

16 We're looking at restructuring
17 things a little bit, putting a bit of a
18 different structure in place and putting some
19 of the LIPS organization spreading it out a
20 little bit more and tieing it more to economic
21 and community development.

22 So we'll be sharing those ideas and
23 thoughts with you. Those are some of the
24 pieces of that -- us reviewing internally. And
25 that's -- a lot of it is going to be baked into

1 this new budget and some of these ideas not
2 just -- not just quality of life but also
3 rental registration.

4 The Law Department is looking into
5 rental registration ordinances and try to
6 figure out what it is that we need to change to
7 be able to have more teeth really to Councilman
8 McAndrew's (audio interruption.)

9 MR. SCHUSTER: And then a question
10 that I had regarding a Third Order item,
11 recently we changed the Act 120 requirements
12 when it comes to jobs and job offers with
13 employment with the City. I would assume that
14 we've always been taking the most qualified
15 candidates.

16 Is there a method or a system of
17 ranking that's currently in place? And do we
18 plan on continuing this system or are we
19 revamping that system as well?

20 MAYOR COGNETTI: I don't want to
21 answer any specific questions to that without
22 having either Chief Namiotka or the Civil
23 Service Commission here. Just absolutely not,
24 we're not -- we're not decreasing our
25 expectations of new hires. We're trying to

1 open this up further to more people that would
2 be qualified to join.

3 So this is absolutely not decreasing
4 the quality of candidates. But in terms of the
5 specifics, I'd rather bring on the Chief and/or
6 the Civil Service Commission to answer that.

7 MR. SCHUSTER: Yeah, and, I mean, to
8 clarify that one, I didn't think we were, you
9 know, lowering the qualifications or anything
10 like that. I understand that we're trying to
11 get -- to get more people to apply there. I
12 just didn't know if there was, you know, some
13 type of ranking system as to -- you know what I
14 mean?

15 MAYOR COGNETTI: There is. And I
16 wouldn't want to misspeak. And my
17 understanding of it is not as detailed as we
18 can get from somebody from the police
19 department.

20 ATTY. HAYES: Tom, there's a formula
21 that they use to rank the applicants based on
22 the written exam and the oral examination and
23 then -- and then just pass/fail on the physical
24 agility, psychological background and the rest.
25 So there's a formula they have in place.

1 And that will determine the rank.

2 And then the Mayor at her discretion can select
3 from the top three candidates or however many
4 hires the department needs. So there is a set
5 formula for that. And that's set forth in the
6 Civil Service rules.

7 MR. SCHUSTER: Okay, so, yeah, that
8 answers my questions. So is that going to be
9 revamped or we're looking --

10 ATTY. HAYES: No. No. That's still
11 in place. It's in the Civil Service Codes, 60
12 percent written, 40 percent oral. And then the
13 rest of the criteria are pass/fail. I think
14 what the Mayor is saying is, all that they're
15 doing is trying to get more applicants to open
16 it up so they have more people applying for
17 those entry level positions -- the patrol
18 position so there is a broader field for the
19 Civil Service Commission and the Mayor to
20 select from.

21 MR. SCHUSTER: Thank you.

22 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Councilman
23 Schuster. Anyone else have questions or
24 comments about Director Cipriani's
25 presentation?

1 MR. DONAHUE: I have just --

2 DR. ROTHCHILD: I'm sorry. You can
3 go ahead. That's fine.

4 MR. DONAHUE: I just have one
5 comment and just two quick questions. My one
6 comment is, I was happy to see that 913-915
7 Eynon Street was on this list. I know that's
8 been a problem property for the neighbors for
9 quite some time.

10 Myself, Councilman Gaughan and at
11 the time Councilman Evans were all over at that
12 property and what those neighbors had to deal
13 with. So I'm happy that that's being taken
14 care of. Do we have a timeline on when we're
15 going to get a progress update on the internal
16 LIPS assessment?

17 MAYOR COGNETTI: So in that --
18 that's what I'm talking about in the budget. I
19 mean, a lot of the -- the assessment is -- the
20 results of the -- our assessment changes in the
21 budget, changes to ordinances that we would be
22 proposing to you, quality of life, rental
23 registration and things of that nature.

24 MR. DONAHUE: I would just -- one
25 thing that I think should be is the process

1 that's used in LIPS to document certain things.
2 I believe that's an issue we've run into in the
3 past where things aren't properly documented.
4 And then if something goes in front of a
5 magistrate or, you know, we really don't have a
6 case.

7 So that's something -- just because,
8 you know, as I talked to some real estate
9 agents and as we see in our real estate
10 transfer numbers, you know, I think we're
11 getting a lot of influx in from New York and
12 New Jersey because of the pandemic. And we
13 don't want to be in a situation three years
14 from now where we're dealing with 10 Ken Bonds
15 instead of one.

16 MAYOR COGNETTI: Right. Some of
17 these things we absolutely are doing. For
18 example, Megan Preambo has come in. And she
19 has added a lot more process and documentation
20 to the department. Tom Oleski's been doing a
21 great job.

22 Megan's been able to come in and add
23 another administrative layer to that. So we
24 have a new -- we have a new tracking system for
25 all of the inspectors that they are following

1 to supplement -- have another check on what are
2 the properties in their area that they need to
3 be looking at, what's the status of those, when
4 do they need to go back.

5 And it's a shared spreadsheet across
6 departments so that we can all look at that.
7 So that's also something that my office has.
8 That way when a constituent e-mails Scranton
9 311, for example, we either -- Chris from my
10 office adds to that directly.

11 So that will pop up on the list for
12 the inspector. And Chris can also look at that
13 and update it if, you know, one of you e-mail
14 in and say what's the status of this particular
15 property. He has that information at his
16 finger tips too.

17 As you all know, next year we're
18 wanting to get all of this in real time, real
19 technology format that we're all sharing. In
20 the meantime though, we kind of have this new
21 process that is helping with that. And in
22 terms of documentation, Megan has done a really
23 good job working with Tom Oleski and Billy
24 Lucas to be -- doing a better job of filing
25 things electronically, especially so that

1 they're more searchable.

2 Nothing is going to be perfect until
3 we get this new system. But in the meantime,
4 we've made some good strides with some pretty
5 simple fixes on how we label documents, how we
6 label photographs, how we label information for
7 each particular property.

8 So in addition to that on the lot
9 Law Department side, the Law Department is
10 really focused on licensing and inspection so
11 to your point the documentation piece. It's
12 a -- yeah, we still got a ways to go. But
13 there has been great improvement this year.

14 MS. CIPRIANI: Mayor, and if I could
15 add, the list you referred to from LIPS, we've
16 taken that list, cross-referenced it with the
17 demolition list we had with the list that came
18 from the Housing Appeal Board and Treasurer's
19 list of Act 98 properties so that we've been
20 able to make sure that we have a really good
21 documentation across the board.

22 MR. DONAHUE: And just another --
23 so a problem in the past is a house would
24 appear or a property would appear on a
25 demolition list. The structure would be torn

1 down. And then the property would become
2 overgrown.

3 So, like, are we keeping a list of
4 that to make sure that those properties are
5 being maintained, you know, until they move
6 through the Land Bank or until they move
7 through some other avenue?

8 MS. CIPRIANI: Yes, we will have a
9 list. And we do have a list of the properties
10 that the Land Bank actually have. And we do
11 have a list of the properties that we have
12 demolished. Brdaric, the current vendor has
13 really been doing a good job of levelling the
14 properties and seeding the properties so that
15 they will not be overgrown.

16 And we can maintain them. And it
17 will make it easier for our team to maintain
18 them. And with the advent of the volunteer
19 corps and the Adopt a Lot Program from
20 NeighborWorks, we're hoping to be able to help
21 our DPW Department with a little bit more
22 resources to keep them maintained.

23 MR. DONAHUE: All right. Thank you.
24 And I just -- just, Miss Cipriani, you brought
25 up about housing being sold in the middle of

1 going through the demo process. Is there
2 anything on it from a legal standpoint we could
3 do at the front end to prevent that?

4 MS. CIPRIANI: Well, that's a
5 conversation that, you know, we opened up with
6 our legal department. I'm not sure of the
7 answer at that point. We've talked to -- the
8 Mayor and I have talked to the City of
9 Pittston. They have a great program in
10 Pittston.

11 So we're trying to get some lessons
12 learned from them. But that is a really good
13 point. And it's a real weak point in this
14 whole process which sets us back very often.
15 And we're not able to address that house at the
16 last minute when we're ready to take it down.

17 But that is something we'll look
18 into. It's something that really once we have
19 the overall task force together would be a
20 great initiative for them to take up as well.

21 MR. DONAHUE: All right. Thank you.

22 DR. ROTHCHILD: I have a couple
23 things that I wanted to add and a few questions
24 as well. I'll try to be brief. I just want to
25 thank Director Cipriani for giving us an

1 overview of the programs that we've had like
2 the Home Buyers Program and Beautiful Blocks.

3 I'm glad to see those programs are
4 working out and helping people in Scranton. I
5 also, you know, appreciate the update on where
6 we're at with the Blight Task Force. You know,
7 I think it's good that we've put these
8 different processes into place that we might
9 not have had before and helping to get more
10 organized.

11 Something that I've noticed that's
12 been problematic for me and I know I've
13 expressed this before to the administration in
14 speaking about it with the Mayor, I really
15 would hope that in the future that we have a
16 better system for closing the loop with
17 requests and complaints, not only with Council
18 but then with citizens who also make those
19 complaints so people do have an idea of where
20 things are at in the process for whether it be
21 for a particular property, for quality of life
22 or the demolition process because if -- if we
23 don't know, then it's hard for us to give that
24 information then to the citizens.

25 And it's -- I think been making my

1 job a little bit harder having to check back on
2 these different complaints. So that's
3 something that I still feel like we need a bit
4 of improvement on. And I think it will help
5 once we have -- if we're using a different
6 system with the computers and the tracking if
7 that changes then that will help too.

8 And I was -- I was going to bring up
9 the demolished properties Councilman Donahue
10 had brought up already. But just to echo his
11 points, I do see that being a problem often
12 times that we have these empty vacant lots
13 perhaps where there was a demolished building
14 or property.

15 And it is becoming overgrown and no
16 one is taking care of it. And it's not really
17 clear on who should be taking care of it. You
18 know, I think it's something that can be
19 prevented if we know to keep an eye on those
20 properties and have that list up to date.

21 And lastly, I have noticed and I'm
22 really happy to see this, props to our DPW
23 Department. I have been noticing them painting
24 pedestrian crosswalks and lines throughout City
25 and over the weekend. They were in my

1 neighborhood and not only helped the
2 appearance, but most importantly the safety of
3 the neighborhood by having freshly painted
4 crosswalks or new signs.

5 So I really do appreciate their work
6 on that. And I just want to thank you all for
7 coming in for our caucus and for part of the
8 meeting to help give us an update. Thank you.

9 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. I don't have
10 any more questions. Does anyone have anything
11 else to add before we wrap the -- this portion
12 of the meeting up? Okay. Director Cipriani,
13 thank you so much for coming and the great job
14 that you're doing I think so far and the
15 information that you provided to Council has
16 been very, very helpful.

17 And thank you, Mayor Cignetti and
18 Business Administrator Deeley, for your
19 presentation tonight. And we look forward to
20 continuing -- to continue to work with you,
21 okay?

22 MS. CIPRIANI: Thank you very much.

23 MR. DEELEY: Thank you.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, everybody.
25 Bye-bye. Okay. And now we'll continue with

1 the Citizens Participation portion of the
2 meeting. So I'd like to ask now if someone
3 would please make a motion to accept public
4 comment from the following individuals,
5 Patricia Nestor, Joseph Healey, Bev deBarros
6 and Marie Schumacher.

7 MR. DONAHUE: I make a motion to
8 accept public comment.

9 MR. SCHUSTER: I'll second.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: There's been a motion
11 and a second. On the question, on the
12 question, I'd like to ask Mrs. Reed now if she
13 would please read those comments from the
14 public into the record. Mrs. Reed?

15 MS. REED: Thank you, Councilman
16 Gaughan. The first submission was from
17 Patricia Nestor as follows:

18 Q: How bad is the housing situation
19 in Scranton?

20 A: 10:30 on a Saturday night I had a
21 woman I have never seen before knock on my door
22 and ask if I have any apartments available.

23 I don't and I wasn't advertising, so
24 I don't know how she found me.

25 Just letting you know it's getting

1 scary out here. Please have the mayor stop
2 telling New Yorkers (and everyone within the
3 sound of her voice) that Scranton has
4 affordable housing. It's not true.

5 Any financial advisor will tell you
6 that your housing should not be more than 25%
7 of your income. Because of the colleges and
8 universities, rents are sky high and out of
9 proportion when compared to the budgets of
10 working class people, and I mean people who
11 work locally, not remotely from NYC.
12 Again from Patricia Nestor.

13
14 The second submission is from
15 Mr. Joe Healey as follows:

16 Good Evening Council,

17 I am anxiously writing to you
18 tonight concerning the upcoming November
19 election and the safety of our poll workers and
20 citizens.

21 I tried my best to find the answer
22 to my question, but unfortunately I could not
23 so I am asking council tonight what is the
24 citizens laws concerning "open carrying" of
25 weapons?

1 I understand that in general, PA is
2 an open carry state, but it is my understanding
3 that local laws in cities and municipalities
4 can supersede that.

5 I can assure you, my intent for
6 reaching out to you is not to be an alarmist,
7 hyperbolic, or a nuisance. I do however want to
8 implore council to seriously consider enacting
9 laws BANNING the open carrying of any weapons
10 within the city limits if in fact no such laws
11 already exist.

12 Pennsylvania is in the nation's
13 spotlight as one of the most critical swing
14 states in the country that will determine the
15 outcome of this election.

16 If we have learned nothing else in
17 the last 4 years it has been that virtually
18 anything outside the bounds of normal protocol
19 can and regularly does happen. My fear and the
20 fear of many law abiding patriotic citizens is
21 that malevolent forces from both outside and
22 unfortunately inside our area will abuse their
23 2nd amendment rights in order to intimidate and
24 terrorize poll workers and voters at our
25 polling sites.

1 I understand that many have already
2 chosen to cast their ballots via mail, but no
3 citizen who does choose to approach the polls
4 in person on election day should have to fear
5 anything other than the virus itself.

6 I know it could be difficult (and
7 hopefully not impossible) to pass such a law,
8 but with such a reasonable Council and Mayoral
9 office in power, I know you will do anything
10 you can to keep the citizens you serve safe.

11 I sincerely hope that I am
12 overreacting and that my anxiety is just
13 getting the better of me and that no extra
14 security measures and protections will be
15 necessary.

16 However due to the overwhelming
17 amount of evidence that demonstrates time and
18 time again that these are NOT normal times, I
19 just want to make sure that we've all done our
20 part to be as alert, prepared, and safe as we
21 possibly can be.

22 Thank you for your time and consideration,
23 Mr. Joe Healey

24
25 The third submission is from Ms. Bev

1 deBarros:

2 Dear Friends ~ this is to agree with
3 and to thank Mr Coyne for his attention to the
4 matter of payment of garbage fees.

5 The billing and accounting for trash
6 fees absolutely needs to be separate from and
7 not included with any other tax (as has been
8 suggested).

9 For one thing, not every property
10 that is taxed necessarily has weekly garbage
11 collection. Some properties may be only a
12 parcel of land, not occupied.

13 Other properties may be rental units
14 or businesses that employ private trash
15 collectors.

16 The simple way that we have used is
17 the best. A designated trash fee bill with two
18 payment options comes in the mail.

19 Records are clearly kept, and
20 accounting is always transparent.

21 This revenue can be easily tallied
22 and compared to the actual cost of our garbage
23 collection.

24 Hopefully, the DPW keeps separate
25 records for garbage collection and street

1 maintenance, etc.

2 Submitted by Bev deBarros

3
4 The fourth and final submission is
5 from Miss Marie Schumacher:

6 0 It was disappointing the
7 technical difficulty kept the scheduled
8 Administration Year-End presentation from
9 happening. It was even more disappointing when
10 the Presentation was not in Third Order of
11 tonight's Agenda as it had been made clear at
12 the Meeting you would be receiving it during
13 the week.

14 0 How will citizens be made aware
15 of #5 of 3b's Scranton Together Neighborhood
16 Initiative?

17 0 Have you ensured the requested
18 adjustment to the telecon accounts been made?

19 0 A large orange sign stating "NO
20 TRUCK" has appeared on a utility pole at
21 Prospect and River Streets. Is it for only the
22 600 block of River or all of River and how are
23 these obtained.

24 0 5C implies Jessica Eskra is no
25 longer working for the City. What is her

1 status?

2 0 Are uniformed employees included
3 in 5D?

4 0 Have any changes been made in
5 LIPS as a result of the in-house review?

6 0 Before departing did Chief
7 Graziano establish a prearrest drug treatment
8 program and, if so, how much is budgeted for
9 2020 for this program.

10 0 "... I do think that the intent
11 is commendable. I understand the idea behind
12 it. I just am worried that, as I mentioned a
13 few weeks ago, this will end up being a money
14 pit and something that we won't b able to
15 sustain into the future."

16 This is a quote Mr. Gaughan made
17 almost four years ago and I believe it is still
18 valid in 2020 when the Emergency Services
19 Center was being discussed.

20 On the 1st and 2nd of October the
21 City solicited bidders for the "Simulator Area
22 Improvements of the Public Safety Building."

23 I believe this is the former Serrent
24 Building. I have read the Mayor's grandiose
25 description of plans for this facility which

1 extend utilization beyond the City.

2 I fear what Mr. Gaughan saw in his
3 crystal ball in 2017 is coming to fruition and
4 I believe we can't afford this and a separate
5 Meeting providing the planned expenditures for
6 the next five year at the Serrenti Center
7 should be conducted as soon as possible
8 from Marie Schumacher. And that concludes the
9 submissions.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Mrs. Reed.
11 On the question? Anyone else on the question?
12 I have a few things I just want to go through.
13 First of all, I'd like to thank Patricia
14 Nestor, Joseph Healey, Bev deBarros and Marie
15 Schumacher for submitting their comments.
16 There was a few questions in here.

17 Mr. Healey posed a question whether
18 or not the Council and the City can consider
19 enacting laws banning the open carrying of
20 weapons within the City.

21 Solicitor Hayes, I would defer to
22 you on that. I don't think we can. I think
23 that comes down to an issue of preemption if
24 I'm not mistaken. But, Solicitor Hayes, if you
25 know the answer to that off the top of your

1 head or if you just want to take a look at
2 that.

3 ATTY. HAYES: I think you're
4 correct, Councilman. That would be an overstep
5 on our part. But I will research it and
6 confirm. I think it's we're limited in what we
7 can do on the regulation of firearms in a
8 municipality. But I will certainly confirm
9 that to be the case and report back to you.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you. And
11 Bev deBarros has comments here as well as
12 Patricia Nestor so we appreciate those. Miss
13 Schumacher posed several questions. I'll just
14 run through the ones that I think I could
15 answer tonight.

16 The presentation -- in her first
17 comment here she asked why the presentation
18 from Mr. Deeley wasn't in Third Order on
19 tonight's agenda. Unfortunately, we just
20 received that before the meeting. I didn't
21 even get a chance to look at it.

22 But we will put that -- Mrs. Reed,
23 if we can put that next week in Third Order so
24 that the public can review that I would
25 appreciate it.

1 How will citizens be made aware of
2 number five of 3-B Scranton Together
3 Neighborhood initiative? I know that the Mayor
4 has town hall style -- not town hall but she
5 has updates I think every week. So -- and I
6 think she covers that sometimes. We can
7 certainly ask for an update on that as well to
8 make sure the public is informed.

9 Have you ensured the requested
10 adjustment to the Telecom accounts have been
11 made? I think Miss Schumacher is referring to
12 3-D there. I don't know that to be the case
13 for sure. But we can double-check. And I
14 think she's referring to the tax issue on
15 several of the Telecom accounts. So we'll send
16 a note to the Business Administrator.

17 5-C, Jessica no longer working for
18 the City; it's my understanding that Attorney
19 Eskra is going to continue working for the
20 City. She is just going to be the First
21 Assistant City Solicitor, am I correct with
22 that, Solicitor Hayes?

23 ATTY. HAYES: That's my
24 understanding. But she'll -- when Attorney
25 Eskra returns, she will be coming back in the

1 position of First Assistant City Solicitor.

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you.

3 And the other question that Miss Schumacher
4 had, are uniformed employees included in 5-D?
5 And 5-D was the resolution authorizing the City
6 to enter into a contract with Willis Towers
7 Watson for the consultant benefit broker
8 services for the City.

9 It's my understanding that that
10 would cover all uniformed employees, all
11 employees that work for the City. Have any
12 changes been made in LIPS as a result of the
13 inhouse review? I think we heard tonight from
14 Miss Cipriani. I think she answered that
15 question.

16 Miss Schumacher also posed a final
17 question here about Chief Graziano establishing
18 a prearrest drug treatment program. And how
19 much is budgeted for 2020 for this program? I
20 can't remember off the top of my head. I do
21 remember Council voting on this program -- this
22 prearrest drug program treatment program.

23 I was in favor of it at the time. I
24 thought it was really -- we were kind of being
25 ahead of the curve in doing what other cities

1 across the country had done in terms of a
2 prearrest drug treatment program.

3 But I'm glad that Miss Schumacher
4 brought it up because, Mrs. Reed, if you could
5 just ask for an update on that. I'd like to
6 see what the success of that -- hopefully the
7 success of that program has been. And then
8 we'll check the 2020 budget. I can't remember
9 off the top of my head if there was a line item
10 in there for that.

11 I think that was all of the
12 questions. Any other ones that I didn't get to
13 I'll certainly pose to the administration. And
14 then in Fifth Order I will go through some of
15 the questions that Mr. Coyne had posed on the
16 IT Department and the license plate reader
17 legislation. Those have come through from the
18 administration so we'll touch on that.

19 Anyone else on the question? Okay.
20 All those in favor of the motion to accept
21 public comment signify by saying aye.

22 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

23 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

24 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

25 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The

1 ayes have it and so moved. Mrs. Reed?

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

3 MOTIONS.

4 MR. GAUGHAN: Councilman Schuster,
5 do you have any motions or comments?

6 MR. SCHUSTER: My only comment
7 tonight would be to congratulate Mary Pat Ward.
8 She's being honored by the Women in
9 Philanthropy. Other than that, that's all.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you,
11 Councilman Schuster. Dr. Rothchild any motions
12 or comments?

13 DR. ROTHCHILD: No, not at this
14 time. Thank you.

15 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you, Dr.
16 Rothchild. And, Councilman Donahue, do you
17 have any motions or comments?

18 MR. DONAHUE: I don't have anything
19 at this time. Thank you.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you. I
21 just have a few things. First, I want to again
22 thank the Mayor, the Business Administrator and
23 the Director of OECD, Eileen Cipriani for
24 coming in tonight and presenting in caucus.

25 I thought a lot of the information

1 was very helpful. One of the things that came
2 up was in terms of whether or not we'll have a
3 deficit at the end of the year, I'm hopeful in
4 the information that we were provided by the
5 Mayor and the Business Administrator that at
6 this point it does not look like we'll have a
7 deficit at the end of the year.

8 If you remember back to I think June
9 or July when the Business Administrator at that
10 time came in, Pat Sheridan and the Mayor to
11 update us on the financial impact of COVID-19,
12 at that point it looked like we may have a
13 really dire situation on our hands.

14 Now, it is October 6th. Obviously,
15 a lot can change from now until the end of the
16 year. But at this point based on what they had
17 just presented to us, it looks like we won't be
18 in as rough of shape as we had originally
19 thought.

20 I think a large part of that from
21 what I can glean from the presentation was due
22 to the fact that we really -- the City has
23 really not spent a lot of money in terms of
24 capital projects and other items that they
25 expressed in their presentation.

1 I think one of the things that we
2 had asked for that is important is a breakdown
3 of what those major projects that have not been
4 funded. I could think of one or two off the
5 top of my head that although we may not fund it
6 this year, at some point we're going to need to
7 invest in that.

8 Like, one of the examples would be
9 the pool liner at Nay Aug. I think it was
10 \$250,000 in the budget for that. So I would be
11 curious to see a breakdown because if we don't
12 spend that this year, you know, I would be
13 concerned that we wouldn't be able to open the
14 pool at Nay Aug pool next year.

15 And then what would we do next year
16 with that. So there's those type of things
17 that I think are still outstanding. I was
18 pleased also to hear the information about the
19 healthcare costs. We'll talk more about that
20 in 5-D. And I do have some additional
21 questions.

22 But over the past few years,
23 obviously anyone who has taken a look at the
24 budget can tell that healthcare costs are a
25 huge part of our overall budget. And they have

1 continued to increase year over year. So we
2 have to find a way to give our employees the
3 best quality healthcare while at the same time
4 keeping the taxpayers in mind and making sure
5 that we can be efficient and we can control
6 those costs.

7 So again, I was glad to hear that.
8 Some of the questions we've been getting coming
9 in from the administration, there are still
10 some outstanding. One of the ones that keeps
11 coming up in my conversations with neighbors
12 over in West Side is the Novembrino Park
13 Project.

14 What I had asked for and what I'm
15 hopeful to receive is an update in terms of
16 change orders, in terms of what the total cost
17 of that project is towards what was actually
18 budgeted. And then I had additional questions
19 about the internship program, the status of
20 search for a Fire Chief and a Police Chief.

21 I know we have the acting Police
22 Chief and Fire Chief. But I wanted to know
23 where they were with that. So these are all
24 things that I'm hopeful within the next week or
25 two we'll receive information about.

1 The last thing I wanted to say was,
2 obviously we're still in the midst of this
3 pandemic. I had an opportunity to this past
4 week just to talk to a few people who are
5 Scranton residents who, you know, many people
6 may not realize because sometimes we are living
7 in a bubble now that there are people in our
8 City and across Pennsylvania and across the
9 country who are really, really suffering from
10 this pandemic, whether it's due to
11 unemployment, due to having trouble putting
12 food on the table.

13 Our elderly population, I talked to
14 an elderly neighbor of mine a couple of days
15 ago. This is really, really difficult. And I
16 continue to be concerned when I see the numbers
17 that keep coming out of Lackawanna County, out
18 of Pennsylvania and across the country and even
19 the amount of people who have passed away.

20 It's just -- it is unimaginable that
21 we're sitting here in October and this is
22 occurring. So I just wanted to reiterate what
23 I said over the past few months that if you
24 are -- a lot of elderly people watch these
25 Council meetings.

1 If you are in need of help, there
2 are people out there who will help you who are
3 willing to help you. So don't feel you are
4 alone during this pandemic. One of the things
5 that the City has put out there is to dial 211
6 if you need any sort of resources, rent
7 assistance, help with food.

8 There's so many resources throughout
9 our City that are out there to help you. And
10 also any City issues or any help that you need,
11 you could e-mail Scranton 311 at
12 Scrantonpa.gov. So I just want to make sure
13 that I said that again because I have spoken to
14 people, like I said, over the last week that
15 are really, really affected by this.

16 And I may not see it. You guys may
17 not see it. Some of us, like I said, are in a
18 bubble. But this has taken an unimaginable
19 toll on some of our -- some of our people in
20 the City. So we want to keep that in mind.
21 And that's all I have. Mrs. Reed?

22 MS. REED: Thank you. 5-B. FOR
23 INTRODUCTION – AN ORDINANCE – AUTHORIZING TWO
24 (2) R5-1 DO NOT ENTER SIGNS (30X30) TO BE
25 INSTALLED AT THE INTERSECTION OF DEPOT

1 STREET/SHAWNEE AVENUE AND R6-1L HORIZONTAL LEFT
2 ONE-WAY SIGNS TO BE INSTALLED AT THE
3 INTERSECTIONS OF RIVERSIDE DRIVE/CANTON PLACE
4 AND RIVERSIDE DRIVE/DEPOT STREET.

5 MR. GAUGHAN: At this time I'll
6 entertain a motion that Item 5-B be introduced
7 into its proper committee.

8 MR. DONAHUE: So moved.

9 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? All
11 those in favor of introduction signify by
12 saying aye.

13 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

14 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

15 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

16 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The
17 ayes have it and so moved.

18 MS. REED: 5-C. FOR INTRODUCTION -
19 A RESOLUTION - APPOINTMENT OF JOSEPH A.
20 O'BRIEN, ESQUIRE, 1012 COLUMBIA STREET,
21 SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA, 18509 AS CITY SOLICITOR
22 FOR THE CITY OF SCRANTON EFFECTIVE
23 SEPTEMBER 21, 2020 TO REPLACE JESSICA BOYLES
24 ESKRA, ESQUIRE WHO WAS SERVING AS CITY
25 SOLICITOR.

1 MR. GAUGHAN: At this time I'll
2 entertain a motion that Item 5-C be introduced
3 the into its proper committee.

4 MR. DONAHUE: So moved.

5 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

6 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? All
7 those in favor of introduction signify by
8 saying aye.

9 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

10 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

11 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

12 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The
13 ayes have it and so moved.

14 MS. REED: 5-D. FOR INTRODUCTION -
15 A RESOLUTION - AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND
16 OTHER APPROPRIATE CITY OFFICIALS TO EXECUTE AND
17 ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH WILLIS TOWERS WATSON
18 FOR CONSULTANT/BENEFITS BROKER SERVICES FOR THE
19 CITY OF SCRANTON EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FOR
20 A PERIOD OF TWO (2) YEARS.

21 MR. GAUGHAN: At this time I'll
22 entertain a motion that Item 5-D be introduced
23 the into its proper committee.

24 DR. ROTHCHILD: So moved.

25 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

1 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question?

2 MR. SCHUSTER: On the question, I'm
3 happy to see that this was put out to bid. And
4 I think the number we were given was \$700,000 a
5 year in savings. And I hope that pans out.
6 That's all.

7 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you.
8 Yes, on the question, I did have two or three
9 questions here. And I, you know, posed it in
10 Fifth Order because I think the administration
11 would have to go back and compile this
12 information.

13 One of them was I would like a list
14 of the fees that were charged by all 11
15 bidders. Next week on the agenda you'll see in
16 Third Order I requested documentation that was
17 provided to us by Mr. Deeley.

18 If you notice in the memo to
19 Solicitor O'Brien he mentioned that they did a
20 breakdown of I think the final four companies
21 or firms here which they did provide us, which
22 I do appreciate.

23 So we're going to put this memo to
24 Mr. O'Brien from Mr. Deeley in Third Order. I
25 think that will be helpful for people. But

1 what I would just like to see is a breakdown, a
2 list of the fees charged by all of the 11
3 bidders. That will be very helpful.

4 Also, I think moving forward what
5 I'd like to request is a copy of the monthly
6 reports that are issued on the financial
7 performance analysis. One of the issues we had
8 in the past -- and former Councilwoman Dempsey
9 was really on this -- was getting a breakdown
10 of the healthcare costs and of the healthcare
11 savings because they did get -- they were
12 getting out of control.

13 With the previous administration, we
14 were never able to really get any information.
15 So I think it would be important for Council to
16 really stay on top of this. So I would like a
17 monthly report of the financial overview of the
18 plan performance, an actual versus budget
19 comparison and the employee contribution
20 amounts.

21 This is something that they're going
22 to provide to the administration anyways. But
23 I think Council should receive that. Also, one
24 of the other questions I had was -- now this
25 was an RFQ. But one of the things I noticed

1 was that it didn't include a disclosure by
2 current contractors.

3 Usually in the RFPs that I've seen
4 over the last few months, one of the items that
5 was in there was a disclosure by current
6 contractors and that would show any political
7 contributions that were given to any elected
8 officials within the City.

9 And I have been on the record in the
10 past saying that I really thought that was a
11 good practice for any contract that we enter
12 into just because of the things that we've seen
13 happen here in the past with the previous
14 administration.

15 I think it's very good to be
16 transparent about of that. This could have
17 been just an oversight. I'm assuming that it
18 was. But I would like to find out why that was
19 not in there. And that's all I have. Anyone
20 else on the question? All those in favor of
21 introduction signify by saying aye.

22 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

23 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

24 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

25 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The

1 ayes have it and so moved.

2 MS. REED: SIXTH ORDER. 6-A.

3 READING BY TITLE - FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 28,
4 2020 - AN ORDINANCE - AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF
5 SCRANTON TO ALLOW THE R1-1 STOP SIGN WITH A
6 W3-1 STOP AHEAD SIGN PLACED IN ADVANCE OF THE
7 STOP SIGN ON PRICE STREET AT ITS INTERSECTION
8 WITH NEWTON ROAD (S.R.3003) TO REMAIN AS
9 INSTALLED ON AUGUST 27, 2020.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: You've heard reading
11 by title of Item 6-A. What is your pleasure?

12 MR. DONAHUE: I move that Item 6-A
13 pass reading by title.

14 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

15 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? All
16 those in favor signify by saying aye.

17 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

18 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

19 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The
21 ayes have it and so moved.

22 MS. REED: 6-B. READING BY TITLE -
23 FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 29, 2020 - AN
24 ORDINANCE - AMENDING FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 4,
25 2020, ENTITLED "AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND OTHER

1 APPROPRIATE CITY OFFICIALS FOR THE CITY OF
2 SCRANTON TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY ACTIONS TO
3 IMPLEMENT THE CONSOLIDATED SUBMISSION FOR
4 COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO
5 BE FUNDED UNDER THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK
6 GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM, HOME INVESTMENT
7 PARTNERSHIP (HOME) PROGRAM AND EMERGENCY
8 SOLUTIONS GRANTS (ESG) PROGRAM FOR THE FIVE
9 YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN, ANALYSIS OF
10 IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING CHOICE, AND ANNUAL
11 ACTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD BEGINNING JANUARY 1,
12 2020." BY AMENDING THE 2020 ACTION PLAN
13 PROGRAMMING BY \$522,531.00 IN CDBG-CV FUNDS
14 MADE AVAILABLE BY THE CARES ACT.

15 MR. GAUGHAN: You've heard reading
16 by title of Item 6-B. What is your pleasure?

17 MR. DONAHUE: I move that Item 6-B
18 pass reading by title.

19 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? All
21 those in favor signify by saying aye.

22 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

23 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

24 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

25 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The

1 ayes have it and so moved.

2 MS. REED: SEVENTH ORDER. 7-A. FOR
3 CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES - FOR
4 ADOPTION - RESOLUTION NO. 76, 2020 -
5 APPOINTMENT OF CHRISTINA L. MANUEL, 1801
6 SANDERSON AVENUE, SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA, 18509
7 AS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF THE SCRANTON
8 REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY FOR A FIVE (5) YEAR
9 TERM EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 14, 2020. MS. MANUEL
10 WILL BE REPLACING BURT SCHWARTZ WHOSE TERM
11 EXPIRED FEBRUARY 5, 2020 AND WAS HELD OVER, MS.
12 MANUEL'S TERM WILL EXPIRE ON FEBRUARY 5, 2025.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: As Chairperson of the
14 Committee on Rules, I recommend final passage
15 of Item 7-A.

16 MR. DONAHUE: Second.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? Roll
18 call, please.

19 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Schuster.

20 MR. SCHUSTER: Yes.

21 MS. CARRERA: Dr. Rothchild.

22 DR. ROTHCHILD: Yes.

23 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Donahue.

24 MR. DONAHUE: Yes.

25 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

1 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes. I hereby declare
2 Item 7-A legally and lawfully adopted.

3 MS. REED: 7-B. FOR CONSIDERATION
4 BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES - FOR ADOPTION -
5 RESOLUTION NO. 77, 2020 - APPOINTMENT OF
6 MICHAEL HANLEY, 800 WOODLAWN STREET, SCRANTON,
7 PENNSYLVANIA, 18509 AS A MEMBER OF THE SCRANTON
8 HOUSING AUTHORITY FOR A FIVE (5) YEAR TERM
9 EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 27, 2020. MR. HANLEY WILL
10 BE REPLACING MARY CLARE KINGSLEY WHOSE TERM
11 EXPIRED SEPTEMBER 27, 2020. MR. HANLEY'S TERM
12 WILL EXPIRE ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2025.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: As Chairperson for the
14 Committee on Rules, I recommend final passage
15 of Item 7-B.

16 MR. DONAHUE: Second.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? Roll
18 call, please.

19 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Schuster.

20 MR. SCHUSTER: Yes.

21 MS. CARRERA: Dr. Rothchild.

22 DR. ROTHCHILD: Yes.

23 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Donahue.

24 MR. DONAHUE: Yes.

25 MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

1 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes. I hereby declare
2 Item 7-B legally and lawfully adopted.

3 I just have one more thing -- and I
4 really want to apologize. I failed to bring
5 this up during the regular meeting or caucus
6 rather, because we didn't have any time.

7 But Mr. Finley, Thomas Finley who
8 had submitted his letter of interest and resume
9 for the Ethics Board has withdrawn his letter
10 of interest. So he is no longer going to be up
11 for consideration.

12 I would like at this time to make a
13 motion to have Solicitor Hayes draft
14 legislation appointing Dr. Matthew Myer to the
15 City's Ethics Board to fulfill the term
16 expiring August 31st, 2022.

17 MR. DONAHUE: I'll make that motion.

18 MR. SCHUSTER: I'll second.

19 MR. GAUGHAN: There's been a motion
20 and a second. On the question? On the
21 question, so there are two openings here. One
22 of them I'd like to just move forward because
23 we all had time now to review the three letters
24 of interest and resume.

25 Mr. Myer is a University of Scranton

1 philosophy professor. He has experience with
2 ethics. I think he taught ethics at one point
3 at the university. His resume speaks for
4 itself. I think he would be an outstanding
5 addition to the board.

6 I'm really glad he showed interest
7 in it. He is a City of Scranton resident. And
8 I think, like I said, would be a great
9 addition. And then what we'll do is we'll --
10 well, let's do this and then we'll talk about
11 what we're going to do with the other
12 appointment.

13 Anyone else on the question for Dr.
14 Myer? All those in favor of the motion to
15 appoint -- to ask Solicitor Hayes to draft
16 legislation appointing Dr. Myer, signify by
17 saying aye.

18 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

19 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

20 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

21 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The
22 ayes have it and, Solicitor Hayes, if you could
23 draft that and then get it to Mrs. Reed I would
24 appreciate it.

25 And now, Solicitor Hayes, I'll turn

1 it over to you. There was a question -- and I
2 think Councilman Schuster had asked about it.
3 Mr. Stanilka, the other person who was
4 submitting their name and there was a question
5 about whether or not he would be able to be
6 seated on the board because of his involvement
7 as a member of the City Democratic party.

8 ATTY. HAYES: That's right. So in
9 response to your inquiry, Councilman Schuster,
10 it seems that the applicant currently serves as
11 a committee man or as a -- he serves in a
12 leadership position in the Lackawanna County
13 Democratic party.

14 Pursuant to Section 3 C2 of the
15 Ethics Code, it is my opinion that he would not
16 be eligible to serve on the Ethics Board while
17 he serves in the capacity as an officer for the
18 Democratic party of Lackawanna County.

19 In any event that he no longer
20 serves in a leadership position or any
21 political party or any other political
22 organization, then he probably -- may be
23 eligible to serve on the Ethics Board. But
24 right now he would not be able to serve on the
25 Ethics Board.

1 MR. SCHUSTER: Thank you for finding
2 that out. And then as part of the other pieces
3 of the vetting process, he came through with
4 everything else other than that piece?

5 ATTY. HAYES: You know, I'm not
6 aware of -- that may be a question for the
7 Clerk as to whether or not there was any other
8 issues. But I was only asked to review the
9 issue of his involvement as an officer -- or
10 officer holder of the Lackawanna County
11 Democratic party.

12 MR. SCHUSTER: Yes. Thank you. I
13 understand. And thank you for looking into
14 that. Miss Reed, do we know if the other
15 pieces of the vetting process he was all right
16 on?

17 MS. REED: I'll double-check,
18 Councilman Schuster, and I'll look for the memo
19 from the Treasurer and I'll forward that.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you.

21 MS. REED: Thank you.

22 MR. GAUGHAN: Well, then we'll have
23 to decide, you know, what we want to do with
24 this. I would prefer at this point based on
25 what Solicitor Hayes said and just putting out

1 another advertisement and see if there is any
2 other interest for the one -- I think the term
3 goes until August of 2021.

4 So we need someone else to fill that
5 based on what Solicitor Hayes said tonight with
6 the issue there to no fault of Mr. Stanilka's
7 obviously. But I think that we should -- I
8 think we should just put it back out and see if
9 anybody else would like to apply.

10 MR. DONAHUE: And I agree with that
11 and I'd welcome Mr. Stanilka to apply again.
12 But in his letter of intent to state that if he
13 were to get the appointment he would resign
14 from any political organizations.

15 MR. SCHUSTER: Yeah, thank you, Mr.
16 Donahue. I was going to say the same. I'd
17 encourage him to put in for it again. And, I
18 mean, I think he has a decision to make for
19 himself. Maybe that might give him time to
20 make that decision.

21 DR. ROTHCHILD: I'm in agreement
22 with everyone. I would like to open it back up
23 to see if we have more candidates --

24 MR. DONAHUE: You know what too,
25 would we be able to put some sort of ad, you

1 know, what would disqualify you from serving on
2 the Ethics Board?

3 ATTY. HAYES: There's quite a -- you
4 know, there's a number of restrictions. So
5 we'd have to --

6 MR. DONAHUE: Yeah --

7 ATTY. HAYES: -- identify which ones
8 we think are going to be most -- who would
9 affect the most people but --

10 MR. DONAHUE: Maybe if we put up all
11 of them on our City Council website and then in
12 the ad say, you know, refer to the website for
13 any restrictions or just a suggestion there.

14 ATTY. HAYES: I think that's a good
15 idea. Yeah, I'll work with Lori on that
16 putting in what we think are going to be the
17 big issues for potential applicants.

18 But the only thing with regard to
19 this particular applicant, I would think that
20 he would have to be -- he could not be in those
21 positions at the time of the appointment
22 because, you know, otherwise, you know, I don't
23 think he's eligible to be appointed if he
24 has -- if he has an office within a political
25 party or political organization.

1 So I don't think we can just say he
2 could withdraw -- he would agree conditionally
3 to resign from those positions. I think he has
4 to be out of those positions at the time of the
5 appointment.

6 MR. DONAHUE: Okay.

7 MR. GAUGHAN: All right. So I
8 apologize for failing to bring that up before
9 we adjourn here. Anyone else have anything
10 before we adjourn? Okay, if there is further
11 business, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

12 MR. DONAHUE: Motion to adjourn.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you everyone.
14 This meeting's adjourned. Have a good night.

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 taken by me of the above-cause and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same to the best of my ability.

Maria McCool, RPR
Official Court Reporter

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