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SCRANTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING

HELD:

Thursday, November 19, 2015

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
(Not present)

PATRICK ROGAN, VICE-PRESIDENT

WAYNE EVANS

JOSEPH WECHSLER

WILLIAM GAUGHAN

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

JAMIE MARCIANO, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

AMIL MINORA, SOLICITOR

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

3 MR. ROGAN: Roll call, please.

4 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Wechsler.

5 MR. WECHSLER: Here.

6 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Rogan.

7 MR. ROGAN: Here.

8 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Evans.

9 MR. EVANS: Here.

10 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Gaughan.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: Here.

12 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. McGoff.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: I'd like to make a
14 motion to appoint Councilman Rogan as
15 temporary Chairperson for the Committee on
16 Rules.

17 MR. WECHSLER: Second.

18 MR. ROGAN: On the question? All
19 those in favor signify by saying aye.

20 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

21 MR. EVANS: Aye.

22 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

23 MR. ROGAN: Aye. Opposed? The ayes
24 have it and so moved. Please dispense with
25 the reading of the minutes.

1 MS. REED: THIRD ORDER. 3-A. TAX
2 ASSESSOR'S RESULTS REPORT FOR HEARING DATE
3 HELD OCTOBER 21, 2015.

4 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?
5 If not, received and filed.

6 MS. REED: 3-B. CONTROLLER'S REPORT
7 FOR THE MONTH ENDING OCTOBER 31, 2015.

8 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?
9 If not, received and filed.

10 MS. REED: 3-C. MINUTES OF THE
11 COMPOSITE PENSION BOARD MEETING HELD OCTOBER
12 28, 2015.

13 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?
14 If not, received and filed.

15 MS. REED: 3-D. MINUTES OF THE
16 SCRANTON FIREFIGHTERS PENSION COMMISSION
17 MEETING HELD OCTOBER 28, 2015.

18 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?
19 If not, received and filed.

20 MS. REED: 3-E. AGENDA FOR THE
21 NON-UNIFORM MUNICIPAL PENSION BOARD MEETING
22 HELD NOVEMBER 18, 2015.

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

25 MS. REED: 3-F. MINUTES OF THE

1 NON-UNIFORM MUNICIPAL PENSION BOARD MEETING
2 HELD OCTOBER 28, 2015.

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

5 MS. REED: 3-G. MINUTES OF THE
6 SCRANTON POLICE PENSION COMMISSION MEETING
7 HELD OCTOBER 28, 2015.

8 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?
9 If not, received and filed.

10 MS. REED: 3-H. TAX ASSESSOR'S
11 REPORT FOR HEARING DATE TO BE HELD DECEMBER
12 2, 2015.

13 MR. ROGAN: Are there any comments?
14 If not, received and filed.

15 Do any council members have
16 announcements at this time?

17 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes, I have one. The
18 Electric City Trolley Museum will hold a
19 series of holiday season trips designed to
20 bring cheer to the less fortunate over
21 Thanksgiving weekend November 27 and 28.
22 Any child 12 and under who brings an
23 unwrapped toy valued at \$5 or more will
24 receive a free trolley ride. All of the
25 toys will be donated to the Toys for Tots

1 drive. The trolley departures for these
2 special runs are 10:30, noon, 1:30 p.m., and
3 3 p.m. Santa Claus will be riding the
4 trolley on November 29 and December 5th,
5 6th, 12th, 13th, 19th and 20th. Departure
6 times for the rides with Santa Claus are 10,
7 11 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 2 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.
8 Reservations are required for the santa
9 ride. The 10 mile trip goes through the
10 trolley works building and the PNC Field and
11 back to the museum.

12 For more information and
13 reservations, call the museum at
14 570-963-6590.

15 MR. ROGAN: I have a number of
16 announcements. First, I neglected to
17 mention during the prayer that our regular
18 council speaker, Bill Jackowitz, is in
19 Allied Rehab after a bad fall, but I hear he
20 is doing much better and we will keep him in
21 our prayers as well.

22 A number of announcements. The
23 first one is on Thanksgiving Giovanni
24 Picollino of Buona's Pizza will once again
25 be having a free dinner. This will be from

1 11 to 12 p.m. at Buona's and there are
2 takeouts available so if anyone cannot make
3 it or would like it to be delivered they can
4 call Buona's Pizza at 342-4032 and, again,
5 we thank Giovanni Piccolino I know he has
6 been doing this a number of years and
7 Mr. Bolus does it as Christmas as well so we
8 thank both of them for their great service.

9 A number of announcements. The West
10 Scranton Wrestling Boosters will be having a
11 designer purse bingo. It will be on Sunday,
12 December 6, at 375 Milwaukee Avenue in Old
13 Forge. That's the hose company where they
14 hold a number of bingos from 2 to 5 p.m. The
15 cost is \$20. Please come out and support
16 the West Scranton wrestling team.

17 The santa parade will be held this
18 Saturday, November 21, in downtown Scranton
19 being at 9:30 a.m. until 12 noon. The
20 parade route is new this year. It begins on
21 Spruce Street and Franklin Avenue and ends
22 at Adams Avenue and Spruce Street. Roads
23 will be closed to traffic as well as
24 Lackawanna Avenue to Penn Avenue and Mifflin
25 to Franklin Avenue to Linden Street so

1 please keep that in mind over the weekend.

2 Please note that next Thursday,

3 November 26, is Thanksgiving Day.

4 Therefore, city council will not meet next
5 week. The next meeting will be Thursday,
6 December 3. City hall will also be closed
7 on November 27 and DPW will be off that day.
8 DPW will be working on Friday, the 27th, for
9 refuse collection.

10 The City's 2016 proposed operating
11 budget has been posted to the City's website
12 and it can be found on the Business
13 Administrator's page.

14 And, finally, OECD's five-year
15 consolidated plan for 2015 to 2019 can also
16 be found on the City's website on the home
17 page.

18 MS. REED: FOURTH ORDER. CITIZENS'
19 PARTICIPATION.

20 MR. ROGAN: Our first speaker
21 tonight is Gerard Hetman.

22 MR. HETMAN: Good evening, Council.
23 Gerard Hetman from Lackawanna County's
24 Community Relations Department.

25 Mr. Gaughan, you beat me to my first

1 announcement there which was the santa --

2 MR. GAUGHAN: Sorry.

3 MR. HETMAN: -- no, that's fine.

4 That's the santa trolley excursions at the
5 Trolley Museum. We would just remind
6 everyone that the santa runs go for the full
7 length of that schedule. Sometimes someone
8 will hear about it on the weekend and
9 they'll think, oh, I missed that. So there
10 is many opportunities to have that service
11 and it's a really enjoyable ride and we just
12 ask everyone again to remind them that space
13 is limited on that so museum does request
14 RSVP's at 570-963-6590.

15 So just go down the list here we
16 have a couple of other Christmas and holiday
17 themed events, I'd just like to remind
18 everyone for the second one here is actually
19 the one that's relative new to the city,
20 it's gone on for a long time, I don't like
21 to use this phrase much, but up the line is
22 accurate in this case, that is the santa
23 train that's run by the Lackawanna Heritage
24 Valley, they're the one who pays for it,
25 it's Christmas in a small town. The train

1 excursion is Saturday, December 5, it's
2 always that first Saturday in December
3 normally. It starts out in Carbondale in
4 the morning and it comes down to the
5 railroad line and stops in on a number of
6 other smaller towns, I have got the full
7 schedule here on the flyer, but the Scranton
8 stop is the last one for the day. The last
9 three years prior to last year's stop they
10 came in at the state building parking lot,
11 and we got good crowds each of those three
12 years it grew a little bit, but there is not
13 much ambiance when we have to tell people
14 that it's in the parking lot, so with the
15 intermodal construction that moved to the
16 Steamtown Historic site itself and we got a
17 great buzz last year, even though it was a
18 rainy day, the crowd easily doubled from the
19 previous year, we anticipated probably 600,
20 700 people off the top of my head, it was a
21 great turn out. So, again, this year it
22 chug into Steamtown. The anticipated time
23 is 2:45 p.m., and santa will get off, the
24 bands, they are on the train, they will get
25 off and have musical entertainment and also

1 free refreshments at Steamtown that day.

2 That's Saturday, December 5, at 2:45 p.m.

3 Another event that we are going to
4 move for the first time this year is our
5 annual Festival of Trees. Normally that
6 takes place at the Electric City Trolley
7 Museum. We've learned this year that
8 because the Trolley Museum is federal
9 property we cannot have a fundraising event,
10 even though it benefits a great cause, which
11 is Toys for Tots, it has to move away from
12 the Trolley Museum this year and presumably
13 for the future so it will be held in the
14 former BonTon space in the Mall at
15 Steamtown. The theme coincides with the
16 Sesquicentennial of Scranton so it will be
17 "Scranton Through the Decades," it opens up
18 on Friday, December 4, with a preview
19 reception at 6:00 p.m. The cost of admission
20 is \$10 and community groups can sponsor a
21 tree. It's \$100 for corporations over 50
22 employees, and for businesses 50 employees
23 as well as nonprofits groups and schools
24 it's \$50. The deadlines to register is
25 December 1. You can do so by calling by

1 coworker, Michelle Leeberry, 570-963-6743,
2 extension 1873. Again, all of the proceeds
3 from this benefit Toys for Tots so it is a
4 really good cause, just a new location this
5 year and that weekend that it takes place
6 coincides with the -- normally the Holiday
7 on the Square Marketplace run by Scranton
8 Made that will also be moving to the Mall at
9 Steamtown this year. It's had a good home
10 on the square the lasts two years, but
11 weather, rain, cold outside just makes it
12 difficult for the vendors so it's got a good
13 opportunity to be inside now for this year.

14 Also, on the last holiday note, our
15 annual tree lighting at courthouse square
16 will be held Friday, December 4, also, 6
17 p.m. We will have some light music and some
18 refreshments and normally UNICO provides the
19 hot chocolate for that. It's a brief
20 ceremony and a lot of folks, I know council
21 regulars here like to turn out for that and
22 it's a really nice time to just light up
23 courthouse square. Again, without the
24 market it will be a little bit quicker, not
25 scaled down, but just a little smaller

1 ceremony if you call it, we'll still have a
2 nice time.

3 And lastly, the County library
4 system has a number of lecture series, the
5 final is with the author Steven Baker Kline.
6 We just want you to know that it's week, I
7 thought it was done after it was presented
8 last month, but it's going to be the name of
9 her book is Orphan Train and it's a novel
10 that's on the New York Times best seller
11 list, Thursday, December 3, 7 p.m. at the
12 Cultural Center. Free with the Lackawanna
13 County library system card. So that's all
14 we have for this month. Are there any
15 questions from council?

16 MR. ROGAN: Thank you very much.

17 MR. HETMAN: Thank you.

18 MR. ROGAN: Bob Bolus.

19 MR. BOLUS: Back again. Bob Bolus,
20 Scranton. You know, we already discussed
21 things in the budget, I want to thank Mr.
22 Wechsler last week for paying attention when
23 I brought out about the BA eliminating that
24 position and letting the University if they
25 would take over that chore for us and save

1 us 90 grand so it's somewhere to look. They
2 have the expertise, they know how to make
3 money and save money. Look at where they
4 are today, okay? So there is a lot out
5 there that we could draw on.

6 I'm going to go to your agenda on
7 7-A, I brought it up earlier, but I don't
8 think it's smart business when we have
9 people like Jack Sweeney, Fowler, Pat
10 Hinton, people in the zoning and
11 enforcement, we have electrical inspectors,
12 we have all of the inspectors we need in
13 this city on our payroll, why you have to
14 sit here and approve Highland Associates to
15 come in and tell you what's wrong with a
16 building. It's just absurd. This is the
17 cost savings to the city. Nothing against
18 Highland, I don't know them and I could care
19 less one way or the other. They're a
20 business, they operate as a business. We
21 have the people to do the work, we are
22 paying them, let them do their work. There
23 is nothing -- I mean, they could go out and
24 condemn a building tomorrow, put a sign on
25 and it and say you are dead, get the heck

1 out. Why can't they go look at the building
2 and tell you what's wrong with it? So I
3 think that should be tabled. Sit down with
4 them and revisit this at a later date after
5 you find out whether or not we have
6 qualified people, and if we don't they
7 shouldn't be here. We need qualified people
8 that can do this job, okay?

9 If we sit here and keep going back
10 and forth and back on forth we are playing
11 blind man's bluff with this budget. We know
12 where we're at. It was a joke listening to
13 this tonight because there is no future.
14 There is no where to go, just keep whacking
15 the people, whacking the people, whacking
16 the people.

17 We have an opportunity to put
18 windmills up on West Mountain, we could cut
19 the electric bills to this city and sell the
20 electric. We could get bonds to do this.
21 There are so many things we could do to be
22 creative. I brought out where we should
23 take the police and fire and charge for
24 their services to an accident that somebody
25 has an accident. We pay taxes to protect

1 our houses and our bills, we don't pay taxes
2 to have somebody who has an accident, they
3 get minimal service charge for our police
4 and fire when they could be doing other
5 thing. So figure out what the department
6 cost, figure out what police officers or the
7 fire department cost and charge
8 appropriately a minimum of two hours. It's
9 our money. We are paying our dollars out to
10 buy this equipment, pensions, insurance and
11 all of that. Why should they go to a
12 nonprofit and charge minimum amount of
13 money, to people who don't pay the tax here?
14 They are not deserving. Let them buy your
15 own fire department, set up their own police
16 department. They are not deserving of the
17 services of the City of Scranton when they
18 don't contribute anything for that service.
19 We do. We pay for that fire truck if it's
20 in an accident or a police officer gets
21 injured he is on our Workmens Comp, they
22 don't give us a thing back. So those are
23 things to look at.

24 As far as the lease with the Sewer
25 Authority, if that happens, or the garages,

1 I'm adamantly opposed to it. We have the
2 people in this city, the reason you may have
3 a problem there you got to make cuts.
4 Follow the example of the county. Yesterday
5 they had million of the dollars in surplus.
6 They could have squandered the money. Ask
7 them for help. We need to take and make
8 people pay in the city equally. Not just
9 political get away with everything.

10 I brought up the mall. I think John
11 is a great guy that bought the mall, I wish
12 him the best in the world, but not on my
13 dime. I bought a church to save the culture
14 in this city, I paid \$35,000, I owe \$50,000
15 in taxes right now and they assessed it at a
16 half a million dollars. The church was only
17 worth a \$1 to the city and they were going
18 to tear it down. Yet, the mall that was
19 worth 25 plus million dollars is now
20 reassessed and dropped down to a value of
21 the \$3 million? And John, who is spending
22 millions of dollars here and millions of
23 dollars there, let's be realistic. We need
24 equality and we need fairness. It's a
25 business venture he did, it's a business

1 venture you take the risk on it. We all
2 take risks here in the city.

3 One of the things I would like you
4 to do is challenge the Board of Assessment.
5 I'd like you to see put in your own budget
6 and veto the mayor's budget, because you
7 guys are intelligent guys, get the
8 information you need, do what's right,
9 freeze wages, make changes and do the right
10 thing for the people of the City of Scranton
11 and give us all a Happy Thanksgiving. And,
12 gentlemen, have a Happy Thanksgiving, but
13 give us what we want, that's why we have
14 you. Thank you.

15 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Doug Miller.

16 MR. MILLER: Good evening again,
17 Council, Doug Miller, Scranton. Just again
18 to kind of stay in line with the budget
19 tonight, you know, I really appreciate
20 hearing some different opinions tonight from
21 some new faces, particularly the young
22 gentlemen who came forward, particularly
23 pleased to see someone who has an interest
24 in the city and, you know, shares the same
25 frustration as we all do, a lot of us who

1 have lived here our whole lives and, you
2 know, we want to see the city turn around, we
3 want to see good things happen. And I think
4 that's just an example right there of some
5 of the creative innovative thinking that we
6 have talked about is taking advantage of
7 what the young people have to offer, the
8 University students, the high school
9 students, I mean, those who are going to,
10 you know, make their careers here, make
11 their livelihood here and plan on raising
12 their families here, not leaving like most
13 of the young generation is doing.

14 And the problem is we have just
15 elected people for decades who haven't done
16 anything to keep them here. We have been
17 the root of the problem by electing the
18 people we elect and have forced the young
19 people to leave here because there is no
20 opportunity for them. They come here, we
21 attract them to go to our universities to
22 get their degree and they go elsewhere to
23 seek employment. Why aren't we doing
24 anything to keep them here? When they
25 graduate, they come right out of school and

1 there is something here for them. Not have
2 to go to New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia,
3 leaving the state altogether. That's
4 something that we should really take a hard
5 look at, not just when we are discussing the
6 budget, but just in managing the city period
7 is what are we going to do to give them a
8 reason to stay.

9 But most of all, are we going to
10 take advantage of what they have to offer
11 because a lot of them do have good things to
12 offer and the age sometimes they get brushed
13 away because of that and that shouldn't be
14 the case because they are the future leaders
15 of this community and they have every right
16 to be involved just like the people that we
17 have here today.

18 You know, the other issue we
19 discussed and I have discussed many times is
20 blight, and in this morning's Scranton Times
21 there was an article in regards to a program
22 the city is looking at in terms of
23 foreclosed properties that banks have
24 control over and implementing fees and
25 having them register the properties as a way

1 to try and curb blight and, you know, this
2 just goes back to the whole idea of I just
3 think we are completely missing the point
4 when it comes to blight. We are blaming all
5 of the wrong people. We blame landlords, as
6 I've have said, we blame the people that
7 live in the homes, but yet we are not
8 blaming the people that have actually caused
9 the max exodus of this city through over
10 taxation, and that's our elected officials,
11 councils, administrations, those that have
12 caused the problems. That's what's caused
13 the blight, but it's easy to put it on the
14 landlords, it's easy to put it on the people
15 that live in the homes.

16 But what we just can't comprehend is
17 that when you continue to over tax people
18 and just pound the living heck out of them
19 time and time again they don't have the
20 ability to maintain their properties. Do
21 you really think that they are proud of the
22 fact that their homes are falling apart or
23 porches are falling apart, the seniors?
24 They don't want that but what are they going
25 to do when they don't have anything to fix

1 it or maintain in? But, yet, it's nice to
2 walk around and pull badges out and hand out
3 tickets and say, you know, you better cut
4 your grass or we are going to fine you \$100.
5 You better get that couch off your porch or
6 else. Come on, let's get realistic here.
7 Is that really progress or are we just the
8 cause of the problem? I think we are the
9 cause of the problem and I just think we
10 need to get our acts together because the
11 blight has been caused by over taxation and
12 this budget is just more of the same.

13 And, you know, i one side we want to
14 talk about eliminating blight, but then we
15 are going to put a plan, I refer to it as a
16 suicide mission on the table, that does
17 nothing but just drive people out of this
18 city, just sucks the life right out of them.

19 But when yard signs and 30 second
20 sound clips and just utter silliness
21 influence elections and we have people
22 voting based on that that's why you have a
23 city that's bankrupt or on the verge of
24 bankruptcy. We are at the point now where
25 we are very, very close to a receiver coming

1 in. In fact, if we really want to be
2 realistic, that's probably the route we
3 should really be exploring at this time
4 because to keep talking about all of the
5 same things old taxes and the sale and lease
6 of assets, you know, the last week I was
7 corrected that it's not a sale, it's a
8 lease, well, really there is no difference
9 because any organization or group that comes
10 in to manage the Sewer Authority or the
11 parking garages, whether it is an outright
12 sale or a lease, they are in it to make a
13 profit so whether we want to believe it or
14 not the reality is the rates will go up
15 because they are in it to make money like
16 any other business, so ultimately who gets
17 affected again? The ratepayers. What is
18 new?

19 So my question is really real simple
20 here with this budget, the council has the
21 ability to implement its own budget, you can
22 veto this mayor's budget. You have five
23 members of this council, put your own budget
24 together and let's see what creative ideas
25 you have and not relying on other people

1 because this city needs leadership and it
2 needed it yesterday. Thank you.

3 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Lee Morgan.

4 MR. MORGAN: Good evening, Council,
5 one more time. Mr. Bolus stood here and
6 talked about giving the city what they want,
7 and I don't think we should give the city
8 what they want, I think for once we should
9 give the city what they need, okay? All
10 five members, no disrespect to Mr. McGoff, I
11 know he is ill, you were elected to do a
12 job. The Home Rule Charter gives you
13 oversight of the budget. The pension
14 problems, they come back to the council.
15 Every problem this city has comes back to
16 the council. That's your job to make sure
17 that everything is right, just haven't done
18 it. Not just this council, but for so long
19 the councils just ignored everything.

20 Now, you know, no disrespect to
21 Mr. Evans, you're a realtor, if you can't
22 see the people losing all their value in
23 their homes and their assets, there is
24 nobody better on this council, that's why I
25 wanted you on this council. That's why I

1 sent that letter to the Scranton Times
2 because you are a businessman and a realtor.
3 You sat down with all of the mayoral
4 candidates and heard what they had to say,
5 and you know what, now is the time for this
6 council to say no to this budget, cut the
7 budget by 30 percent, give this city a
8 little breathing room, renegotiate whatever
9 you have to renegotiate and make a stand not
10 for yourselves, but for the city.

11 See all of the pictures around these
12 walls, how many them are actually leaders?
13 It's really a good question. And how long
14 is politics going to have play in this city
15 over reality? You know, Community
16 Champions, somehow they came up, Mr. Flynn
17 brought them forward to the city, we are
18 going to enter into some kind of foreclosure
19 agreement with them according the Scranton
20 Times here, my question is how did Mr. Flynn
21 find out about them because this --

22 MR. ROGAN: I can answer that.

23 MR. MORGAN: Go ahead.

24 MR. ROGAN: In Harrisburg Mr. Marty
25 Flynn heard about this firm, they do work

1 with other cities of similar size all
2 throughout the state and it's been very
3 successful so Marty called me asked that I
4 present it to the council, we set up a
5 caucus and that's how it became.

6 MR. MORGAN: Who is going to the
7 handle the litigation to collect this money
8 if the banks just ignore you?

9 MR. ROGAN: There won't be any
10 litigation. It's a tried -- it's not --
11 this isn't something new that Scranton is
12 doing, this is something that's been done in
13 numerous municipalities all across the city.
14 The exact same legislation.

15 MR. MORGAN: Okay, I agree with what
16 you are saying to me, but if the bank says
17 no, they are not going to pay who is going
18 to litigate it? Are we going to litigate it
19 or are they going to litigate it in Court?

20 MR. ROGAN: The company handles
21 everything, they handle the collection of
22 the money, they handle all of the contacts
23 as well.

24 MR. MORGAN: Okay, well, here is my
25 other question, do you mean to tell me the

1 city isn't competent enough to go collect
2 its own money because really that's what's
3 happened to this city over a long period of
4 time. We bring people in to do every bit of
5 the work that the city government should do,
6 so they reap all of the profits basically,
7 or the majority of the them, and the city
8 stands there and allows people to loot their
9 community. All of this stuff. Now, the
10 Scranton Times on the 13th of November
11 talked about a sale of the Sewer Authority,
12 not a lease, a sale. Now, maybe the
13 Scranton Times is wrong, but it was in their
14 newspaper on November 13, okay? And you
15 know what, we have a real problem here
16 because, and especially, Mr. Evans, you are
17 a businessman, you know, I don't know what
18 the rest -- if the rest of you believe you
19 are businessmen or not but, I mean, you are
20 in business, you sell homes and you're
21 probably the closest one to the ground here
22 to realize what's really taking place in
23 this city. And the other thing is,
24 Mr. Rogan and Mr. Evans are allegedly, and I
25 don't want to put words in your mouth, but

1 are Republicans, and don't Republicans
2 believe in small government?

3 MR. ROGAN: I'm a registered
4 Democrat, Mr. Morgan.

5 MR. MORGAN: Well, at this point,
6 but you ran for council initially as a
7 Republican, okay? And my point is, look it,
8 if you have no political center we have got
9 big problems because either you have a
10 belief system or you don't, but in the end,
11 everybody must in my opinion in government
12 move for the best interest of their
13 citizens, and nobody can tell me that this
14 budget is in anybody's best interest or that
15 this city is being managed correctly, and
16 council has an oversight obligation, an
17 obligation to the community as elected
18 officials to protect their property values
19 and protect their best interests no matter
20 what party you are in and it hasn't
21 happened.

22 Now, you know, I don't know what the
23 council knows about the East Mountain fire
24 engine, the renovations that are going to be
25 done, I have heard some rumors about the

1 amount of money and it's my opinion that
2 that project could be done for between 60
3 and 80,000 thousand dollars and I'd just
4 like to know who gave you those bids and
5 what their qualifications are, and that's
6 all I have. I just hope that really you
7 will shelf this budget, it will come late,
8 you will do what you have to do and for once
9 make a stand for the people who live here,
10 the few that are left.

11 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Les
12 Spindler.

13 MR. SPINDLER: Good evening,
14 Council. Les Spindler, city resident,
15 homeowner and taxpayer. You know, I'm going
16 to try to bring a little positive her with
17 all of the negative. Nobody wants to pay
18 higher taxes, but I don't think 5.7 percent
19 is that bad compared to the previous
20 administration. Just two shorts years ago
21 the previous administration raised our taxes
22 56 percent and I have been coming here a
23 long time and I remember all of the years
24 under Chris Doherty was 25 percent and some
25 of the people coming here tonight

1 criticizing the mayor were no where to be
2 found when those tax hikes were taking
3 effect. I was here all of those years
4 criticizing the previous administration.
5 Nobody wants to pay higher taxes, but 5.7
6 percent compared to 56 percent isn't bad. I
7 think that shows we're starting to turn the
8 corner.

9 And I do agree with the mayor and
10 the paper here, I do the think the city is
11 on the right path. The paper last week I
12 saw where a credit union is moving into an
13 old tire building, that's a business from
14 outside of the city moving in. We have a
15 new intermodal center which is going to open
16 up next week. I think the mall is on its
17 way back slowly but surely, and I think
18 these are all positive signs that this city
19 is turning the corner.

20 Mayor Courtright was left a mess and
21 I asked him myself and I thought he was
22 crazy to take the job, but his words to me
23 were, "I turned the tax office around,"
24 which he did, and he says, "Maybe I can turn
25 the city around."

1 And I think slowly but surely he is
2 doing it. I said as soon as he took office
3 people have to be patient, and I think he is
4 doing as good as job as possible no matter
5 how much criticism he takes from other
6 people, but my opinion is I think he is
7 doing a good job.

8 And as far as coming to the
9 meetings, in less than two years he has been
10 at more meetings than Chris Doherty was in
11 12 years so I think he has kept his promise
12 with that.

13 And as far as Mr. Bulzoni, I have
14 known Dave a long time, we worked together
15 and I think we are losing a huge asset to
16 the city and I think it's terrible he is
17 being forced to leave. I don't think we can
18 get anybody as qualified as him. Just
19 listening to him tonight, he is a very smart
20 and educated man and the city is going to
21 miss him dearly.

22 The only thing I have against the
23 budget is the refuse tax. I have said it
24 many times, Mr. Bolus has said it many
25 times, we pay our property taxes to have our

1 fire, police and our garbage collected.
2 This is taxation without representation.
3 It's wrong. I have said it before it went
4 up to \$300 we shouldn't be paying. It's
5 illegal and I wish somebody would take it to
6 Court. I wish I had the finances to do it,
7 but I would do it tomorrow.

8 Moving on, all throughout the summer
9 in Tripp Park the gas company was tearing up
10 the streets and putting new gas lines in.
11 They paved Dorothy Street, Farr Street and
12 West Gibson they only paved one side of the
13 street. It's the most ridiculous thing I
14 have ever seen in my life.

15 MR. ROGAN: We spoke about this, I
16 don't know if I spoke on air, but I know at
17 the caucus I did last week, I live a couple
18 of blocks from there. I've had a number of
19 calls and e-mails from angry neighbors about
20 that. I was in contact with DPW Director
21 Denny Gallagher who got in contact with the
22 project manager from the gas company who did
23 that work. I'm still waiting to hear back
24 from the project manager, so we are hoping
25 there is something that can be worked out

1 there, but it is a disgrace.

2 MR. SPINDLER: I lived in that area
3 my whole life --

4 MR. ROGAN: You drive down that road
5 and it just looks ridiculous.

6 MR. SPINDLER: Well, the residents
7 told me they said the other side of the
8 street isn't bad. Yes, it is. There is
9 some small potholes, there is cracks all
10 throughout, it's the most ridiculous thing I
11 have ever seen to pave one side of the
12 street and not the other. And they told the
13 residents, "Let the city do it."

14 Well, the city was going to do it,
15 the mayor told me personally, we were going
16 to pave Dorothy and Farr but since the gas
17 company was ripping it up they said they
18 would do it. I think the city should take
19 them to Court if they don't redo that.

20 MR. ROGAN: It's definitely
21 something we should look into and in a
22 situation like that if it turns out the gas
23 company isn't in compliance with the
24 ordinance, from what I am told they're
25 grandfathered in under the old pave cut

1 ordinance, if they aren't in compliance in
2 situation like that they should have
3 contacted us and said this is what their
4 plans were and we could have worked
5 something out because, as you said, the
6 street was planning on being paved by the
7 city.

8 MR. SPINDLER: They paved all of
9 Dorothy Street, I don't know why West Gibson
10 and Farr were only half done. It's
11 ridiculous.

12 As long as we talking about paving,
13 you know, Main Avenue was paved, it was
14 beautiful, already there are pave cuts in
15 it. Mr. Rogan, you probably go down where
16 National Bakery is, there is a pizza place
17 there, there is a pave cut there. It was
18 filled in, just pavement thrown in.

19 MR. ROGAN: I was at a meeting with
20 James May, whom I'm sure you see on WNEP all
21 the time from PennDOT on another matter and
22 I brought that up to him. He did confirm
23 that it was emergency work. PennDOT is not
24 happy about it either and neither are we.

25 MR. SPINDLER: Well, let them fill

1 it in nice though, the blacktop is thrown
2 in, it's rough there and where Stelmack's
3 Bar used to be. That's two spots that I
4 know of. You know, if you are going to do a
5 job do it right. Put the blacktop down and
6 put a steam roller and let it go over and
7 make it smooth. All right. Thank you for
8 your time.

9 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Next speaker
10 Gary, and I don't want to mispronounce your
11 last name.

12 MR. D'FLRUR: Oh, I'll speak again.
13 I thought I was on the list for the first
14 one, but hey, since I'm here.

15 MR. ROGAN: And I apologize.
16 Normally we have -- we normally have just
17 the one public participation --

18 MR. D'FLRUR: Yeah, sure.

19 MR. ROGAN: But because of the
20 budget that's why we have the first one and
21 it was only supposed to be about the budget
22 and the second one is on general city issues.

23 MR. D'FLRUR: Okay. So this is what
24 general issues now? Sure. I guess I said
25 my peace in the first one so I might as well

1 just probably ask some questions. What
2 really is your vision for the city, like, in
3 terms of real some simplistic like, you
4 know, technology we always say that we want
5 to create a product or an idea that a
6 five-year-old can understand, so in a
7 five-year-old way can you please explain to
8 me what's the vision of the city?

9 MR. ROGAN: Anyone want to take a
10 crack or -- I'll tell you what mine is, I
11 don't speak for everyone on council.

12 MR. D'FLRUR: Personally, I think
13 that the city needs to grow, and the problem
14 with Scranton over the last 50 years is, and
15 it's been mentioned by yourself and others
16 from the podium, is people get their
17 education here and they leave. So somebody
18 like you with your story coming here that's
19 what we need to attract. The developer I
20 met with, became friendly with went to the
21 University of Scranton and now he has his
22 business here. That's what we need at the
23 moment. We need to get people to come here,
24 live here, have families in the area and we
25 have a lot of things going for us as far as

1 city, we are very safe compared to
2 Wilkes-Barre, Hazelton and other cities
3 within our area, that needs to be the focal
4 point we need to grow the city from.
5 Obviously, taxes need to be reduced and I'm
6 hopeful, as Mr. Spindler mentioned three
7 years ago or two years ago taxes went up 50
8 percent, last year they went up 16 percent
9 this year, they are going up 5.7, the plan
10 calls for next year another small increase,
11 and then my hope is that it goes the other
12 way and that we start bringing the taxes
13 down to increase home ownership in the city
14 and bring more people in. So that's mine,
15 obviously I don't speak for my colleagues.

16 MR. D'FLRUR: Okay, but honestly
17 your end goal is to bring people here but my
18 question is how you plan to do that? You
19 see, you talk about the end goal, it is the
20 process that has to be discussed and agreed
21 upon, and what is the actual strategy you
22 have to get people to come her?

23 MR. ROGAN: We need to be more
24 business friendly. There need to be tax
25 incentives that are made. The business

1 privilege and mercantile taxes are two of
2 the most oppressive taxes in the city.
3 There is talk about changing to a different
4 structure. I think that could be very
5 helpful if we could do that on the business
6 end of things, and on the homeowner's side
7 of things much of what we can do is
8 restricted because of the state and county.
9 Two of the things that I have been screaming
10 about for years are to see Senate Bill 76
11 pass on the state level, which will
12 eliminate school property taxes, and the
13 second one is county reassessment so taxes
14 on properties can be fair, which they
15 currently are not.

16 MR. D'FLRUR: I see, so my
17 understanding is it that currently you are
18 trying to tax your way out of the budget
19 crises by increasing taxes and hoping that
20 happens --

21 MR. ROGAN: That's not what I said
22 at all. The one bill I mentioned would
23 eliminate school property taxes.

24 MR. D'FLRUR: I'm not talking about
25 the future, I'm talking about up to this

1 point, you reach an impasse or a point where
2 you don't have to create taxes any longer;
3 correct?

4 MR. ROGAN: That's what happened
5 over the last four years I think taxes have
6 gone up every year.

7 MR. D'FLRUR: Yes.

8 MR. ROGAN: That's part of the
9 problem.

10 MR. D'FLRUR: Yeah, I understand
11 that's what I'm saying is in the past where
12 the tax increase occur because from what I
13 understand --

14 MR. ROGAN: Growth.

15 MR. D'FLRUR: -- the liabilities and
16 the debts that you guys have are secure and
17 higher, so currently the government doesn't
18 have any money, it is borrowing to pay off
19 current liabilities and so what I don't see
20 or foresee is a situation where you can
21 actually reach a position where you start
22 decreasing taxes because if you increase the
23 tax budget to bring in revenue to pay off
24 liabilities, but you need a taxation to be
25 higher to pay liabilities then it creates a

1 situation where it never occurred.

2 MR. ROGAN: Well, we are interested
3 to hear your solutions.

4 MR. D'FLRUR: My solutions? Oh, I
5 gave my solutions. I have told you, you
6 should not pay anything you don't have. You
7 look at your budget, you look at your
8 accounts and you say this is how much we
9 have, this is how much we are going to pay.
10 That's it and that it. It's going to be --
11 of course, it's going to be hard, it's going
12 to wrangling, there's going to be a lot of
13 people upset, but you shrug your shoulders
14 and say, "I don't have the money, do you?"

15 It's as simple as that, and if you
16 need outside auditors or inspectors or there
17 is help for that you can contact the state,
18 contact the federal government, ask for
19 outside auditors, ask for outside
20 perspectives or actuaries, etc., explain in
21 detail that you cannot afford it, and as far
22 as jobs, I said how to make jobs. Like you
23 said yourself, make it business friendly, so
24 once you create this budget situation you
25 say, listen, we are not paying for what we

1 have now we have to decrease taxes because
2 you don't have this obligations, resolve
3 them we can base it on consumption and tax
4 consumption.

5 MR. ROGAN: Thank you very much.

6 MR. D'FLRUR: Sure, no problem.

7 MR. ROGAN: David Dobrzyn.

8 MR. DOBRZYN: Dave Dobrzyn,
9 resident. A few weeks ago or months ago I
10 made a mention for you young guys and that's
11 to say in the 60's don't trust anybody over
12 30. Don't trust them, except for me because
13 I'm sufficiently immature so you can trust
14 me any old time, but the day after last week
15 meeting an article in the paper, an
16 interview of Mr. Bulzoni, and I'm concerned
17 with how are we going to -- how much would
18 we have fund the pensions? I mean, we are
19 not given a chance of either/or as far as
20 tax increases or sale of assets, like the
21 sewer plant, and my concern is that, once
22 again, other people have said it, if a
23 profit gouging service corporation gets
24 their hands on it are we going to wind up in
25 worse shape than if we just taxed ourselves

1 and started to contribute to the pensions,
2 so personally I think it's time for some
3 referendums where people can make an
4 informed decision and then they can have to
5 live with it if they voted for it directly,
6 and a thought came to mind last week on
7 these repairs, like 7-A I think it is, yeah,
8 Highland Associates, weren't they a
9 significant name in the Cordaro and Munchak
10 debacle who are currently incarcerated for
11 it and a lot of money was slipped to them
12 and personally I think that if the unions
13 could help because I know some of these
14 people have those skills say to put a roof
15 on the firehouse up on East Mountain it
16 certainly would be a big help. We don't
17 need to be paying people outside of the city
18 to come in and say, "Yeah, you are right, it
19 needs a new roof, look at the leak."

20 You know, it doesn't make any sense.
21 And, once again, I'd like to mention that
22 it's beyond your control but it's time to
23 start throwing back into the federal
24 government's faces. The COLA has been a
25 farce for 35 years. The reason it's been a

1 farce is the price index is what it's based
2 on unnecessary items. If the price of rock
3 and roll CD's go down, it gets bigger than
4 the cost of living. If the price of
5 whatever goes down, gasoline that's the big
6 issue this year, but the retired person
7 doesn't need gasoline to any great quantity.
8 They are not driving to work and basically
9 they are a little bit of a gold mine in the
10 sense that unless they stare out the window
11 all day and turn in like imaginary police
12 reports or something like that, they don't
13 have any kids in school anymore, they don't
14 have a lot of issues that have to be dealt
15 with, like \$12,500 a year per student, which
16 is with the school and oh, by the way with
17 our recent teacher's strike you want to hear
18 my imitation of the parents? Oh, my God,
19 there is no football on Friday night. No
20 football. You know, it was just ridiculous.
21 Shame on them if that's all they are worried
22 about is Friday night football.

23 And tax exempts are a problem caused
24 by state constitution and we also have
25 fallen income so you are not getting the

1 wage taxes that you really should have been
2 getting all along. Years back the girls
3 went to the garment industry and they made
4 twice the minimum wage. Now, they are lucky
5 if they make minimum wage.

6 And one final thing on trash, I'll
7 handle this later, but some food for
8 thought, are the trucks full are just
9 overweight? What weighs more, a pound of
10 leather or a pound of feathers? They weigh
11 the same, right, but the volume is greatly
12 different. And, also, with pricing trash
13 trucks facilities fuel and weight and
14 landfills are the issues that need to be
15 addressed so I'll address that later in the
16 year or next year. Thank you and have a
17 good night, but don't forget don't trust
18 anybody over 30 unless it's me. I'm
19 immature, you must believe me.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Got you. Yeah, I'll
21 be 30 soon then I won't know what to do.

22 MR. DOBRZYN: Then you can't trust
23 yourself.

24 MR. ROGAN: Joe Hodowanitz.

25 MS. HODOWANITZ: Joan Hodowanitz,

1 Scranton resident and taxpayer. Again,
2 remind everybody that the friends of the
3 Scranton Public Library are having a book
4 sale December 1 to the 6 at the Library
5 Express, second floor, of the Steamtown Mall
6 and we will be selling books, paper book and
7 hardcover, DVD's and CD's for one to two
8 dollars each. Great way to fill out your
9 Christmas list.

10 I saw in the paper on the 15th a
11 small article, "Police focus in on driver's
12 safety. Local police will participate in a
13 nationwide enforcement effort to crack down
14 on seatbelt scoff laws."

15 Now, if we have the time and
16 personnel to devote to that, I would like to
17 see at least an attempt for our police to
18 monitor some of the pedestrian crosswalks in
19 town. I still think it's a major safety
20 issue and I hope, Mr. Wechsler, that you can
21 periodically monitor what's going on that
22 because I do think we are going to see
23 another pedestrian injured or killed if you
24 don't get that situation in hand.

25 Can you tell me when is the last

1 council meeting for the year, December 17 or
2 10th? Does anyone know?

3 MR. ROGAN: It would depend on the
4 legislation that is forthcoming in the next
5 week.

6 MS. HODOWANITZ: All right. So you
7 probably will know when we come back in
8 December 3 when your last meeting is.

9 MR. ROGAN: It will not be December
10 3.

11 MS. HODOWANITZ: Well, obviously
12 not. Oh, let's see. Oh, I was curious
13 about one thing in the budget, there is a
14 city pension item line for the police, the
15 fire, and the business administrator's
16 office, okay, but there is a fourth pension
17 line called IAM pension under public works.
18 What is the difference between city pension
19 and IAM pension? It's \$300,344.

20 MR. ROGAN: I know the IAM is the
21 union that the DPW workers belong to. It
22 could just be a different --

23 MS. HODOWANITZ: They are not part
24 of the non-uniform pension plan?

25 MR. ROGAN: I could check on it.

1 MS. HODOWANITZ: Because if you add
2 up the BA number police and fire it comes up
3 to the 14.4 million that Terry
4 Besecker-Morgan has in her article on
5 underfunded pensions, but then there is
6 \$300,000 called IAM pensions under Public
7 Works and I was just wondering what that is
8 it because that doesn't seem to be addressed
9 under all of the articles about pensions.

10 And are we still actively -- is the
11 city still actively working on revising a
12 lot of the ordinances like rental
13 registration, are we looking at those
14 things?

15 MR. EVANS: Yes. On tonight's
16 agenda it's a repeal of the existing
17 legislation, rental registration.

18 MR. HODOWANITZ: Is it a repeal or
19 just an amendment?

20 MR. EVANS: Repeal.

21 MS. HODOWANITZ: Repeal, okay.

22 MR. EVANS: And we will be looking
23 at a new revised one probably the first of
24 January.

25 MR. HODOWANITZ: God bless you all

1 and all of you have a wonderful Thanksgiving
2 holiday.

3 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. Is there
4 anyone else who would like to address
5 council?

6 MR. HIRSH: Good night. I just had
7 a couple of questions here, looking at
8 SaveScranton.com I was going to through some
9 of the information on here and I wanted to
10 know how you guys planned to address some of
11 the issues. The first thing I see here it
12 says that 66 percent of the city is in
13 poverty and I'd like to know you guys plan
14 to address that?

15 MR. ROGAN: I'm not familiar with
16 that website.

17 MR. HIRSH: So is this false
18 information?

19 MR. ROGAN: I'm just not familiar
20 with it.

21 MR. HIRSH: I see something else
22 here that says 50 percent of police officers
23 are on disability, are you familiar with
24 that? And 56 percent of firemen in Scranton
25 are currently also on disability and

1 receiving disability pension funds?

2 MR. ROGAN: Those numbers don't seem
3 accurate, but that is something that has
4 been discussed quite extensively at least
5 over the last two years that the five of us
6 have been on board.

7 MR. HIRSH: And what is the outcome?

8 MR. ROGAN: There is ongoing talks,
9 as mentioned by Mr. Bulzoni, there is
10 ongoing talks between the unions and the
11 administration to change the disability
12 pensions specifically that are handed out.
13 Part of it was changed in the last contract
14 to reduce the process of three different
15 doctors, the union had a doctor, the
16 administration had a doctor, so that was
17 changed during the course of that process,
18 and also physical checks for new hires. So
19 there has been some progress on that front,
20 but there is much more that needs to be
21 done.

22 MR. HIRSH: Okay. Do you have any
23 intentions to move towards a comprehensive
24 pension reform?

25 MR. ROGAN: We have been talking,

1 Councilmen Evans specifically, have been
2 talking about --

3 MR. EVANS: I have been talking
4 about this for the past year and a half and
5 the administration is negotiating with the
6 unions to come to some agreement, but I have
7 been very much in the forefront of trying to
8 get that done and expecting that to get done
9 and we continually put the pressure on the
10 administration to get it done.

11 MR. MINORA: If I can add something
12 to that, the State Senate just passed
13 something today that would help.

14 MR. EVANS: On the committee.

15 MR. MINORA: I don't know if it will
16 pass yet or come into law, but part of our
17 problem is state relief.

18 MR. EVANS: Right. A lot of our
19 pension reforms are intertwined with state
20 law, so there is issues with that as well.

21 MR. HIRSH: Okay. I'd also note
22 here it says here the city is in \$232
23 million in debt, do you guys have a plan to
24 reduce that long-term?

25 MR. ROGAN: One of the items that

1 will be addressed, and hopefully in January,
2 is regarding \$50 million with the Parking
3 Authority, and we are hopeful to get that
4 reduced significant legal in January of next
5 year.

6 MR. HIRSH: What does that entail?

7 MR. ROGAN: There is -- the plan
8 hasn't been finalized as of yet, but right
9 now it looks like a lease of the parking
10 garages we are losing well in excess of \$1
11 million every year out of the budget as well
12 as we have the 50 million in debt which if
13 we pay it over the course of the term it
14 will cost us \$100 million, so if we are able
15 to pay down 20 or 30 million dollars of that
16 it's going to save us that interest on the
17 back end as well.

18 MR. HIRSH: How do you guys plan to
19 deal with the credit rating of Scranton? I
20 see that the credit rating is already pretty
21 bad.

22 MR. ROGAN: Everything we do is it
23 meant to try and get -- we actually have no
24 credit rating. As Mr. Bulzoni mentioned,
25 everything that we do is trying to restore

1 our credit whether it be through actions
2 that were taken again with the parking
3 garages previously trying to pay down some
4 of that debt, and we also have a big debt
5 hanging over us which is the arbitration
6 award owed to our police and firefighters
7 from the past mayor.

8 MR. HIRSH: Do you see this becoming
9 successful? Do you see this effort actually
10 helping?

11 MR. ROGAN: Well, the business
12 administrator is best to answer that, he is
13 hopeful by the end of next year that that's
14 a possibility to have a credit rating.

15 MR. HIRSH: All right. That's it.
16 Thank you.

17 MR. ROGAN: Is there anyone else?

18 MS. SCHUMACHER: Marie Schumacher.
19 First I'd like to give a shout out to
20 PennDOT for all of the work they did on 307
21 South on the shoulders, restoring the
22 shoulders, and also where the roads were
23 crumbling into the abyss.

24 Last week, Mr. Evans, you said you
25 would provide me the amount required to get

1 the pension funding up to the 50 percent
2 level. I am ready to receive that amount.

3 MR. EVANS: I don't have -- I don't
4 have it yet. I'll work on that for you.

5 MS. SCHUMACHER: As stated during
6 the earlier public hearing to the vote to
7 approve the 2015 budget Mr. Wechsler stated,
8 "We already put these things into place to
9 be more efficient in collecting our refuse
10 tax, keeping track of who paid and who
11 didn't pay."

12 Please provide the numbers of who
13 paid and who didn't pay.

14 MR. WECHSLER: I don't have numbers
15 available to me tonight, but I have been
16 working with the collection agency and
17 getting that information, I don't have it
18 with me tonight.

19 MS. SCHUMACHER: Next -- on the
20 fourth?

21 MR. WECHSLER: The numbers that I
22 have are through October, I believe. I'm
23 sorry, through September.

24 MS. SCHUMACHER: Okay. Also, I hope
25 you don't adjourn until the 2014 audit has

1 been received and we get an estimate for the
2 2015 audit.

3 The 2016 police budget includes
4 \$150,000 savings for new contracts, I'd like
5 a quick yes or no from each of you as to
6 whether or not you believe this amount is
7 sufficient compensation for a four-year
8 extension that was given?

9 MR. ROGAN: I would say as was
10 explained earlier --

11 MS. SCHUMACHER: Yes or no.

12 MR. ROGAN: It's not a yes or no
13 question because --

14 MS. SCHUMACHER: Don't take up my
15 time.

16 MR. ROGAN: I'll hold your time,
17 I'll answer it. There is state cost savings
18 that are an actual savings you see in the
19 budget and there are reductions and
20 increases so if the line item was to go up 3
21 percent without the contract and it stayed
22 flat that's a savings, but not one you can
23 see in the budget. So there are, as
24 Mr. Bulzoni mentioned, a number of other
25 items that are quantified.

1 MS. SCHUMACHER: That's not the way
2 it was sold to you and the taxpayers I would
3 like to say.

4 MR. GAUGHAN: My answer is no.

5 MR. EVANS: And my answer is no.

6 MS. SCHUMACHER: Joe?

7 MR. WECHSLER: My answer is yes.

8 MS. SCHUMACHER: Thank you. Yet
9 another RFP nose thumbing is planning to
10 lease the parking assets to a nonprofit. We
11 are supposed -- what would happen if the
12 current nonprofits are surveyed and the
13 holder of the lease fails the test?

14 MR. ROGAN: They would have to pay
15 tax on it.

16 MR. EVANS: They would have to pay
17 taxes, yeah.

18 MS. SCHUMACHER: Now, traffic
19 signalization. It's interesting on the
20 corner of Linden and Jefferson where I
21 happened to be stopped the other day has
22 four-way stops, red lights, when the young
23 mobile, quick response students are
24 crossing, and other people, but it's
25 primarily University students, are crossing,

1 that's what they get. The elderly and the
2 infirm that try to get to the mall by
3 crossing Lackawanna Avenue and Wyoming
4 Avenue don't get that same service. I would
5 like to know when all corners with
6 signalization are going to have four-way
7 stops? When the walk lights --

8 MR. WECHSLER: I can't tell you when
9 they are all going to have it, but it's an
10 option that Chief Graziano is looking at.
11 There is a meeting on Wednesday with
12 PennDOT. They are going to come down and
13 take a look at the crosswalks on Lackawanna
14 Avenue and that is one of the options is to
15 put a delayed light at some of them, I don't
16 know about all of them, but some of them at
17 least.

18 MS. SCHUMACHER: Well, that's
19 certainly encouraging. What was the
20 property tax assumed collection for 2015?

21 MR. EVANS: What do you mean? What
22 was it year-to-date or what?

23 MS. SCHUMACHER: No. No. What
24 percentage of people were going to pay their
25 bills?

1 MR. EVANS: Oh, I'm not sure. I
2 would have to check. I don't know if there
3 is a built in assumption there.

4 MS. GAUGHAN: I think we are going
5 to stick with 89 percent based on the --

6 MR. EVANS: Historical data.

7 MS. SCHUMACHER: Did we? No, it was
8 like down at 85 or something, I don't know,
9 but I really think the 89 for this year is
10 fictional and it's just to keep the number
11 under. But there is one more, 5-C, what is
12 the difference between this legislation and
13 the amendments that are being made to
14 Section 9 in the original legislation?

15 MR. ROGAN: This repeals the entire
16 original legislation --

17 MS. SCHUMACHER: Thank you.

18 MR. ROGAN: -- and the fees. Is
19 there anyone else who would like to address
20 council?

21 Mr. Wechsler, any comments or
22 motions?

23 MR. WECHSLER: Yes, I do. It's been
24 a long night so far. I would like to thank
25 all of the citizens that came out tonight to

1 add comments to the budget. I think it was
2 quite encouraging that there was interest
3 this year. We have had other budget
4 caucuses that were not as well attended and
5 I was happy that there was some new ideas
6 discussed and I do welcome that effort.

7 As a council we have been looking
8 the budget for a few weeks now, and I myself
9 have been in contact with Business
10 Administrator Bulzoni, I've also been in
11 contact with Chief Graziano, and also with
12 Chief DeSarno. Each of them have provided
13 myself with information that is going to
14 allow us to evaluate the additional costs to
15 the budget, so we are still reviewing that.

16 As we hear about the potential for
17 cuts in this budget, so much of this budget
18 is locked in already because of salaries and
19 contracts and things like that. We also
20 have a huge debt service that we have to pay
21 so there is a lot of this budget that's
22 locked in. And tonight we heard a lot of
23 comments about service, we still do have to
24 offer services in the city. We still have
25 to collect garbage, we still have to have

1 police and have fire, we have to have
2 inspectors. These all cost money. And to
3 say just to cut by 30 percent or 40 percent,
4 to me it's unreasonable because we do have
5 to provide the service to the people.

6 For several years the staffs were
7 cut, pays were cut, and you are starting to
8 see some results of that. In my opinion we
9 actually need more people working for the
10 city. I know we can't afford it, bu, to get
11 some of the things done that we have to get
12 done I think we need more people.

13 We also have to remember that this
14 budget is reviewed by the Pennsylvania
15 Economy League. We did receive
16 correspondence this week that the
17 Pennsylvania Economy League reviewed it and
18 it is acceptable to them in terms of where
19 we should be at.

20 Also, this budget is part of our
21 recovery plan. The recovery plan is
22 measured for certain triggers that if they
23 are not met we are headed towards
24 receivership. When I hear receivership I
25 would caution everyone of encouraging the

1 city to go into receivership. All the
2 receiver does is take advantage of what
3 opportunities are available to them for
4 income and, unfortunately, right now the
5 only income that we have that we can raise
6 is through the wage tax and property tax,
7 and any substantial increases will be
8 detrimental to what we are trying to
9 accomplish here.

10 We have heard a lot about what's our
11 plan for this and what's our plan for that.
12 Unfortunately, for us, we have been on
13 council -- can be responsible for today.
14 We have to get the city through the next
15 couple of years or we will have this dire
16 consequence of receivership. Since I'm on
17 council, I think we are on here a couple
18 years right now, I think there was one
19 meeting where we talked about economic
20 development. We just don't get around to
21 talking about it because we have so much
22 responsibility in terms of the budget and,
23 unfortunately, with the pensions. I would
24 love to have an opportunity to encourage new
25 businesses to come to the area, but until we

1 get our financial house in order I'm not
2 sure who wants to come and deal with this.

3 Just the fact that we had default on
4 the parking garages has made us a bride on
5 the financial community. We're working very
6 hard to get some type of at least some type
7 of junk bond status, we have nothing right
8 now, so we people say, "Are you making
9 progress?"

10 Yes, we are making process. I think
11 you will see it when we get the tax
12 anticipation loan this year, I think our
13 rate should be lower than it was last year,
14 still not where it should be, but lower. We
15 also received notification this week that
16 Scranton had a positive review in a
17 municipal bond magazine, the efforts that we
18 are making are starting to pay some
19 dividends in that so the budget, as it sits
20 right now, we going to take a look at it
21 again to see if there is anything, and I
22 think Mr. Evans will talk about that as he
23 goes through his comments, but right now
24 there is not much that we can cut.

25 In the comments that were made

1 earlier today, I do wish that Mayor
2 Courtright had come to the meeting. His
3 staff, like I said, we spoke to Chief
4 Graziano and we spoke to Chief DeSarno,
5 Business Administrator Bulzoni, and they all
6 did a great job, and I think Mr. Courtright
7 should come and take pride in the work that
8 his people have done, and I would encourage
9 him, there is one more opportunity for him
10 to come and address the budget before we
11 vote on it, and I would encourage him to
12 attend that meeting and take credit for the
13 work that he has lead his people to do.

14 And one other issue that's minor in
15 comparison to all of the budget talk today,
16 I was very disappointed that Comcast has
17 stopped carrying the YES baseball network.
18 I know a lot of people are Yankees fans, I
19 don't count myself in that group, but I know
20 a lot of people do like the Yankees and
21 hopefully Comcast and Fox can come to some
22 agreement to get the Yankees on for the
23 summer because I know there is many people
24 that just enjoy them.

25 The other thing that I was concerned

1 about in the paper we talked about the
2 budget story, Mayor Courtright suggested
3 that the Sewer Authority is on as fast as
4 track as the parking garage. That was news
5 to me. We have not had any discussions with
6 the administration in terms of lease of the
7 Sewer Authority so right now I am in the
8 dark about that being on any type of fast
9 track so perhaps we can get an update on
10 that and see where we are. And that's all I
11 have for tonight.

12 MR. ROGAN: Thank you very much.
13 Councilmen Evans, do you have any motions or
14 comments?

15 MR. EVANS: Thank you. I had
16 planned on offering additional comments on
17 the budget, but tonight I will simply ask
18 that you keep Council President Bob McGoff
19 and his family in your thoughts and prayers.
20 Thank you.

21 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. I received
22 a few complaints about the condition of
23 Colliery Avenue in Minooka. Certain
24 sections are riddled with potholes and
25 neighbors in the Minooka section are really

1 frustrated by the condition of that street,
2 so I will be sending correspondence to the
3 DPW asking that that street be patched if
4 possible before winter sets in, and possibly
5 included on the next paving project.

6 I'm happy to announce that Mary
7 Street in North Scranton is being paved by
8 the utility companies. I've been contacted
9 by many residents over the last few months
10 in that area who were upset by some of the
11 pave cuts and the conditions of that street
12 and residents should prepare for traffic
13 delays over the next few days.

14 I also received a couple of
15 questions and e-mails about the paving of
16 Kane Street. This will not occur until next
17 year in the spring along with the city's \$2
18 1/2 million paving project.

19 And I was asked to provide an update
20 on the permit parking petition for the 1000
21 block of Myrtle Street. We did send
22 correspondence to Chief Graziano and we are
23 waiting to hear back from him. And I'll
24 save the rest of my comments for agenda
25 items. Thank you.

1 MR. WECHSLER: Yes, Mr. Rogan, and I
2 apologize, I do have one other item that I
3 would like to mention. When Mr. Quinn was
4 here talking about the pool fees, we heard
5 from Business Administrator Dave Bulzoni
6 today that there is a contingency fund that
7 has been increased and I would like to
8 suggest that if we do not have to get into
9 that contingency fund over the salt for the
10 winter that there is a possibility that the
11 swim fees could come out of the contingency
12 fund.

13 MR. ROGAN: Thank you. I will hold
14 my comments for the agenda items as well.

15 MS. REED: 5-B. FOR INTRODUCTION -
16 AN ORDINANCE - AMENDING FILE OF THE COUNCIL
17 NO. 45, 2014, AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED
18 "APPROVING PENALTY, INTEREST AND FEE
19 SCHEDULE FOR COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT REFUSE
20 FEES" TO CORRECT A TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR IN
21 THE THIRD WHEREAS CLAUSE, SECOND LINE,
22 BEFORE THE WORD "INTEREST" BY INSERTING THE
23 WORD "ADD" AFTER THE WORD "TO" AND IN THE
24 NOW THEREFORE CLAUSE, UNDER NUMBER TWO
25 INCLUDE THE ADDITION OF PARAGRAPH G.

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

4 MR. WECHSLER: So moved.

5 MR. EVANS: Second.

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

9 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

10 MR. EVANS: Aye.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

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

14 MS. REED: 5-C. FOR INTRODUCTION -
15 AN ORDINANCE - REPEALING FILE OF THE COUNCIL
16 NO. 7, 2014 AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED "AMENDING
17 FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 17, 2012, (AS
18 AMENDED) ENTITLED "ESTABLISHING A
19 REGISTRATION PROGRAM FOR RESIDENTIAL RENTAL
20 PROPERTIES; REQUIRING ALL OWNERS OF
21 RESIDENTIAL RENTAL PROPERTIES TO DESIGNATE
22 AN AGENT FOR SERVICE OF PROCESS; AND
23 PRESCRIBING DUTIES OF OWNERS, AGENTS AND
24 OCCUPANTS; DIRECTING THE DESIGNATION OF
25 AGENTS; ESTABLISHING FEES FOR THE COST

1 ASSOCIATED WITH THE REGISTRATION OF RENTAL
2 PROPERTY; AND PRESCRIBING PENALTIES FOR
3 VIOLATIONS" BY AMENDING SECTION 9 FEES TO
4 INCLUDE THE INCREASES IN THE ANNUAL RENTAL
5 REGISTRATION FEE TO \$50.00 PER UNIT AND THE
6 ANNUAL PERMIT FEE TO \$150.00 PER SITE.

7 MR. ROGAN: At this time I'll
8 entertain a motion that Item 5-C be
9 introduced into its proper committee.

10 MR. WECHSLER: So moved.

11 MR. EVANS: Second.

12 MR. ROGAN: On the question? I
13 would just like to say I'm very happy to
14 before we finally vote to repeal this
15 legislation the rental registration in the
16 City of Scranton has been for 15 years --
17 over 15 years has been something that keeps
18 changing and fluctuated and it hasn't worked
19 and obviously a fee of \$50 per unit or \$100
20 per side is very excessive. When it was
21 initially proposed the thought was because
22 many police calls go to rental units and
23 this would be a good idea and having them
24 registered would crack down on some of that
25 activity.

1 As everyone knows, there is a
2 lawsuit filed because of the fees being well
3 in excess of the cost of the registration so
4 I know there is draft legislation, I know we
5 all be looking at that and specifically
6 Councilmen Evans and myself have some
7 suggestions to add into the new legislation
8 to make it more fair, more business
9 friendly, and for -- it doesn't only apply
10 to landlords. Anyone who rents in the City
11 of Scranton this impacts them as well. So
12 by reducing these fees, you know, the new
13 ordinance and changing some of the language
14 I think we can make the city -- put us in a
15 much better place.

16 Anyone else on the question? All
17 those in favor signify by saying aye.

18 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

19 MR. EVANS: Aye.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

21 MR. ROGAN: Aye. Opposed? The ayes
22 have it and so moved.

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

24 READING BY TITLE - FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO.
25 125, 2015 - AN ORDINANCE - ESTABLISHING

1 PERMIT PARKING ON THE NORTHERN (ODD) SIDE OF
2 THE 800 BLOCK OF EAST GIBSON STREET FROM 811
3 TO 819 EAST GIBSON STREET.

4 MR. ROGAN: You've heard reading by
5 title of Item 6-A, what is your pleasure?

6 MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I move
7 that Item 6-A pass reading by title.

8 MR. WECHSLER: Second.

9 MR. ROGAN: On the question? All
10 those in favor signify by saying aye.

11 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

12 MR. EVANS: Aye.

13 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

14 MR. ROGAN: Aye. Opposed? The ayes
15 have it and so moved.

16 MS. REED: 6-B. READING BY TITLE -
17 FILE OF THE COUNCIL NO. 126, 2015 - AN
18 ORDINANCE - APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE
19 EXPENSES OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT FOR THE
20 PERIOD COMMENCING ON THE FIRST DAY OF
21 JANUARY, 2016 TO AND INCLUDING DECEMBER 31,
22 2016 BY THE ADOPTION OF THE GENERAL CITY
23 OPERATING BUDGET FOR THE YEAR 2016.

24 MR. ROGAN: You've heard reading by
25 title of Item 6-B, what is your pleasure?

1 MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I move
2 that Item 6-B pass reading by title.

3 MR. WECHSLER: Second.

4 MR. ROGAN: On the question? All
5 those in favor --

6 MR. GAUGHAN: Wait. That was quick.
7 I have a comment. Tonight I'll be voting to
8 move the budget for a final vote on December
9 3. I appreciate Mr. Bulzoni coming in to
10 address the 2016 budget, however,
11 Mr. Bulzoni was not elected by the people of
12 this city. Henry Amoroso was not elected by
13 the people of this city. Bill Courtright
14 was. Yet, for almost two years he has been
15 playing hide and seek with his constituents
16 and this city council. Many of the
17 questions I have should have been answered
18 by Mayor Courtright. This is his budget.
19 It's his responsibility. As mayor of
20 Scranton, he has the final say. This is why
21 we have a strong mayor form of government.
22 Mayor Courtright is asking us to add
23 positions to his administration, approve
24 raises, and he doesn't even have the decency
25 to show up and defend his decisions.

1 We are a severely financially
2 distressed city, yet Mayor Courtright
3 continues to add more fat to the budget. I
4 think he needs to be reminded that he is not
5 playing with Monopoly money. As we move
6 forward towards a final vote, I'm still not
7 confident in some of the projections in
8 Mayor Courtright's budget. I'm also very
9 concerned about the major increases in
10 departmental expenditures across the board.
11 This is a time when we should be holding the
12 line or decreasing expenditures, not
13 increasing them. And I'm also disappointed
14 that we cannot seem to figure out the impact
15 of the police and fire contracts when they
16 were renegotiated last year. I would assume
17 that in any business you would track the
18 savings and the costs, but we can't seem to
19 do that. I have been getting all of these
20 different answers, so eventually at some
21 point I would like to know if we are saving
22 money. I know in the budget we saved
23 \$150,000 here, \$90,000 here, did we hit the
24 million dollars savings? Are we close? We
25 don't know. So hopefully some time in the

1 future we will find that out.

2 And, again, I'm disappointed I think
3 that Mayor Courtright has this city stuck in
4 neutral and I think we can do better. Thank
5 you.

6 MR. ROGAN: Anyone else on the
7 question? All those in favor signify by
8 saying aye.

9 MR. WECHSLER: Aye.

10 MR. EVANS: Aye.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye.

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

14 MS. REED: SEVENTH ORDER. 7-A. FOR
15 CONSIDERATION - BY THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC
16 SAFETY FOR ADOPTION - RESOLUTION NO. 219,
17 2015 - AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND OTHER
18 APPROPRIATE CITY OFFICIALS TO EXECUTE AND
19 ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH HIGHLAND
20 ASSOCIATES LTD. TO PERFORM A FIRE DEPARTMENT
21 FACILITIES CONDITION ASSESSMENT.

22 MR. ROGAN: What is the
23 recommendation of the Chair for the
24 Committee on Finance?

25 MR. WECHSLER: As Chairperson for

1 the Committee on Finance, I recommend final
2 passage of Item 7-A.

3 MR. WECHSLER: Second.

4 MR. ROGAN: On the question?

5 MR. WECHSLER: Yes, Mr. Rogan, on
6 the question, we heard some comments tonight
7 on why this type of a study isn't performed
8 in-house. With my brief experience with
9 these type of things many of these studies
10 will require a professional engineers to
11 determine drawings and materials and I'm not
12 sure if anyone on staff in the municipality
13 is a professional engineer.

14 MR. ROGAN: Anyone else? Roll call,
15 please?

16 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Wechsler.

17 MR. WECHSLER: Yes.

18 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Evans.

19 MR. EVANS: Yes.

20 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Gaughan.

21 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes.

22 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Rogan.

23 MR. ROGAN: Yes. I hereby declare
24 Item 7-A legally and lawfully adopted.

25 MS. REED: 7-B. FOR CONSIDERATION

1 BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES - FOR ADOPTION
2 RESOLUTION NO. 220, 2015 - AUTHORIZING THE
3 MAYOR AND OTHER APPROPRIATE CITY OFFICIALS
4 TO EXECUTE AND ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH
5 COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS CORPORATION AS PROPERTY
6 MANAGEMENT COMPANY FOR CITY OF SCRANTON'S
7 FORECLOSURE REGISTRATION PROGRAM FOR A THREE
8 (3) YEAR PERIOD FROM THE DATE OF EXECUTION
9 OF THE CONTRACT.

10 MR. ROGAN: As temporary Chairperson
11 for the Committee on Rules, I recommend
12 final passage of Item 7-B.

13 MR. WECHSLER: Second.

14 MR. ROGAN: On the question? Roll
15 call, please?

16 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Wechsler.

17 MR. WECHSLER: Yes.

18 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Evans.

19 MR. EVANS: Yes.

20 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Gaughan.

21 MR. GAUGHAN: Yes.

22 MS. MARCIANO: Mr. Rogan.

23 MR. ROGAN: Yes. I hereby declare
24 Item 7-B legally and lawfully adopted.

25 If there is no further business,

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I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

MR. WECHSLER: Motion to adjourn.

MR. ROGAN: This meeting is
adjourned.

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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