

A regular meeting of Bloomsburg Town Council was held Monday, February 22, 2016, beginning at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, Town Hall, 301 East Second Street, Bloomsburg, PA. Present were Mayor Sandy Davis, Council Members W. Carey Howell, Sylvia Costa, William Kreisher, Fred Trump, Eric Bower, and James Huber; Town Manager Lauren Martz; Administrative Assistant Amy Seamans; Director of Finance/Treasurer Lisa Dooley; Director of Human Resources/Asst. Secretary Tracy Lanzafame, and Chief of Police Roger Van Loan. Absent were Superintendent of Public Works John Barton; Director of Governmental Services/Recycling Coordinator Charles Fritz; Fire Chief Bob Rupp, and Solicitor Jack Mihalik.

#### **CITIZEN TO BE HEARD – FORREST BENNETT**

Forrest Bennett, 246 West Main Street, read the following statement:

Bloomsburg town council

As an employee of a main street business, board member of a 501c3 non-profit based on main street, frequent visitor of Bloomsburg eateries and shops and an elected and appointed official in a neighboring community I will be affected by these parking increases along with many others on a personal aspect and a business aspect.

At the last meeting during discussion of the B and L properties, HARB decision, Councilman Bower stated that it is his personal opinion that there is anything historical left in that part of the district.

Mayor Davis then explained that town council shouldn't vote their personal opinions. Which I agree with.

While there are many definitions of what an elected official is, I will read to you the definition of an elected official I find to be the most true and fitting for this situation.

"An elected official is/acts as a liaison between their respective municipality and its constituents."

I've listened to your constituents and heard them tell you to vote against the fee increase and change in enforcement hours.

With that being said I hope that town council will think long and hard and remember you vote how your constituents want you to vote.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mayor Davis adjourned the meeting into Executive Session at 7:02 p.m. to discuss a Police Department legal matter and a personnel matter, and reconvened the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

#### **APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 8, 2016 COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

On a motion by S. Costa, seconded by E. Bower and voted on unanimously, Council approved the February 8, 2016 Council meeting minutes with no additions or corrections.

#### **APPROVAL OF PAYMENT TO RE BUILDERS PLUS**

On a motion by C. Howell, seconded by F. Trump and voted on unanimously, Council approved payment to Re Builders Plus in the amount of \$2,687.52 for mold mitigation at Town Hall.

#### **APPROVAL OF ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENT CHARGES FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE RED CROSS BUILDING**

On a motion by C. Howell, seconded by B. Kreisher and voted on Six (6) (C. Howell, B. Kreisher, S. Davis, S. Costa and E. Bower voting "Yes") to One (1) (J. Huber voting "No"), Council approved additional settlement charges in the amount of \$4,154.83 for the purchase of the Red Cross building.

## **APPROVAL OF A PROPOSAL FROM PITNEY BOWES**

On a motion by C. Howell, seconded by F. Trump and voted on unanimously, Council approved a proposal from Pitney Bowes for the lease of a new mail machine in the amount of \$254.09/month for 60 months.

## **APPROVAL OF ACCEPTING A GRANT FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION BUREAU OF AVIATION**

On a motion F. Trump, seconded by C. Howell and voted on Six (6) (F. Trump, C. Howell, S. Davis, S. Costa, B. Kreisher, and E. Bower voting “Yes”) to One (1) (J. Huber voting “No”), Council approved accepting a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Bureau of Aviation in the amount of \$296,198.80 for the Airport Master Site Plan.

## **DOWNTOWN BLOOMSBURG, INC. UPDATE**

Fred Gaffney presented the following DBI update:

Dear Members of Town Council:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Downtown Bloomsburg Incorporated (DBI), I am pleased to submit the following update of the organization’s activities. As per your request, we intend to submit detailed reports to Council on a quarterly basis with interim updates monthly. Mayor Sandy Davis continues to serve on the DBI Board, and I am meeting with Lauren Martz regularly to maintain communications on issues and projects as well.

In early December, Laura Haden left the organization as Downtown Manager to accept a position with the Wilkes University Small Business Development Center. The DBI Board decided not to immediately fill the position for two primary reasons. The 2016 budget is extremely lean, and does not include sufficient funds to hire a full time manager. The Town’s funding therefore remains critical, and the Board expresses its appreciation to Council for budgeting \$23,000 for DBI’s operations.

DBI is utilizing the services of the Columbia-Montour Partnership for Community Development (Partnership) for administration. The Partnership was created by the Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce and Columbia-Montour Visitors Bureau in October, 2014 to allow us to serve our members more efficiently, and offer services to other community-based organizations. I am currently serving as the primary point of contact for the day to day activities of DBI. A copy of the 2016 Board of Directors is also provided at the end of this report.

The second reason for not immediately moving forward with the Downtown Manager position is that the Board is working to shift the organization from being largely focused on events and promotions to efforts to directly support downtown businesses and pursuing larger projects to improve the Downtown Commercial District. The Board feels it prudent to hold off on the position until priorities are reestablished.

DBI has been working with Facility Design since January, 2015 to develop a revitalization plan for the District. This process has included several public meetings, surveys, and demographic research of the community. Phase two of a three-phase process was recently complete and a public meeting will be scheduled to provide an update, hopefully before the end of March. The plan provides suggestions in a number of areas including streetscapes, improving pedestrian safety, building improvements, use of open spaces, incentive programs, and potential funding sources to strengthen the central business district.

While this Board is very excited about this plan for the future, we remain active in ongoing activities to strengthen the downtown. We have recently been contacted by two business people looking to expand and/or locate in Downtown Bloomsburg. A primary role of DBI is to help identify suitable locations for such requests and connect these individuals with property owners. We also refer these business people to support resources.

One such resource for both entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to grow is the Wilkes Small Business Development Center (SBDC). This organization provides free, confidential business consulting services including developing a business plan, understanding business

registration, marketing, and HR issues. SBDC consultants meet with individuals at the Chamber office as needed.

Bloomsburg University is currently conducting a feasibility study to determine if there is sufficient need in the area and available resources on campus to provide a more local “business services center”. University students and faculty could provide assistance to local businesses in a variety of areas while students would gain real world experience in fields of interest. Having such a resource in the community on a daily basis would help raise awareness of such resources and hopefully lead to greater utilization, resulting in a higher success rate for small business startups.

Currently, DBI is working with B.U. Professor Dr. Steven Welsh and the Enactus Group on campus to pilot this idea in conjunction with a retail incubator in the downtown. The Group is looking to operate a small business in the downtown and we are hopeful that their location will be large enough to host other small retail businesses to share overhead costs and receive assistance. The students are currently conducting a feasibility study on the types of businesses that could be successful, and DBI is working to find a suitable location. Hopefully, this can be operating by Fall, 2016.

While DBI is working to be less consumed by promotions and events, the Board wants to ensure that signature events continue. DBI is one of the partners in Renaissance Jamboree along with the Chamber of Commerce, Town and University. DBI’s primary role is in marketing the event. The University’s Program Board coordinates the entertainment. Crafters and non-profit participants are coordinated by the Chamber. Any community non-profit group interested in participating should call the Chamber office. The Renaissance Committee is interested in having representation from the Town on the Committee. The date for the 2016 event is Saturday, April 23rd.

To help get the downtown ready for the event, DBI will be coordinating with Bloomsburg University’s Community Government Association on a spring cleanup as part of the annual Big Event in the community.

The North Pole Express train rides are already confirmed this year for the Saturday and Sunday after Thanksgiving. DBI is coordinating with other individuals and organizations such as The Exchange to continue events such as Artfest, Halloween window painting, Farmers’ Market, and Santa’s Cottage.

The goal of DBI remains to enhance the vibrancy of the downtown business district by making it a place where people want to be, and operate a business. The Board is anxious to work with the Town on initiatives to strengthen Downtown Bloomsburg. Please let us know if you have any questions or feedback.

The 2016 Board of Directors is as follows:

Tim Wagner, President, Wagner’s Trophies & Engraveables  
Matt Beagle, Vice President, First Columbia Bank & Trust  
Fred Gaffney, Treasurer, Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce  
Valynn Boy, Secretary, Resident  
Mayor Sandy Davis, Town of Bloomsburg  
Heather Feldhaus, Ph.D., Bloomsburg University  
Laura Haden, Wilkes University SBDC  
Oren Helbok, The Exchange  
Dan Knorr, II, Bloomsburg University  
Al Luschas, Derr, Pursel, Luschas & Naparsteck, LLP  
Bob Manbeck, SUEZ  
Liz Masich, Key Partners Realty  
Cindy Schultz, Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble  
Denise Stone, Geisinger Health System  
Mark Williams, Bloomsburg University Foundation

Regards,  
Fred Gaffney  
On behalf of the Board of Downtown Bloomsburg, Inc.

## **CITIZEN TO BE HEARD – STEVE COLADONATO**

Steve Coladonato, 210 West Third Street, read the following prepared statement:

1) At the last Town Council meeting, council went into executive session at the end of a long meeting citing “a personnel issue” as the reason. As it turns out, pay raises for executives were discussed and then approved when council returned. Well, the effects of this “personnel issue” impacts the budget for this year and all succeeding years and also the town's liability for pensions. The cursory reason given for the executive session was less than explanatory of the true reason for the session and council should have been more forthright with the citizens who had attended the meeting.

2) In the follow up article in the Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> issue of the Press Enterprise, Lauren Martz stated that her health insurance plan would cost less than Bill Lowthert's because “...she won't opt for family coverage – a \$26,000 savings this year alone...” However, Lowthert did not have health insurance through the town and was instead being paid \$300/month by the town not to take insurance. Thus, the so called \$26,000 savings falls to only \$3,600 offset by an excess of \$50,000 in raises.

3) I attended the Zoning Hearing Board meeting of Feb. 11, 2016. My purpose was to raise concerns about ordinances that should have been flagged by the code officer/town engineer for Zoning Hearing Board review but were not. The project was under review for an ordinance other than the ones I was concerned with. However, I was told at the meeting that objections based on ordinances other than the one on the meeting agenda, would have to wait until the code officer issued a permit and then to appeal the issuance of that permit in order to have my concerns heard. That didn't really make sense to me as neighbors are invited to these hearings to express concerns, based on ordinances or not. My concerns were based on ordinances and I was trying to be proactive.

The main problem is that there is no place in the loop for a citizen's concerns to be heard. Projects are initially discussed with the developer, the code department, and the town's engineer. During those discussions, it is determined what actions must be taken to move the project forward. These actions most likely will include a presentation to the Planning Commission and may include a meeting with HARB and possibly a submission to the zoning board. The town's citizens are not aware of the outcome of these initial discussions and, except for zoning, no agenda is ever published for these meetings. The average citizen would have to attend every meeting in order to become aware of what was happening in the town. This is unreasonable. In the case of the Zoning Hearing Board meetings, there is a public notice published in the newspaper and notices are sent to the surrounding neighbors about the upcoming meeting. But, as I discovered at the meeting, that notice is also the agenda for the meeting and nothing else can be addressed. Also, since the project is occurring in the Historic District, all property owners in the Historic District have standing to raise concerns about the project. Not just the immediate neighbors. But only the immediate neighbors are sent notices of a Zoning Hearing Board meeting.

My concerns for the Zoning Hearing Board included sections of the International Property Maintenance Code and sections of the town's local ordinances as they related to the property in question. The proposed project also effectively changes the definition of terms in the Zoning ordinances and I wanted a clarification on that. How are a citizen's concerns supposed to be heard in a timely manner? Waiting until after a permit gets issued is just adding needless time to what is already a lengthy project.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Lauren Martz  
Town Manager/Secretary