

STATED MEETING - CITY COUNCIL – DECEMBER 18, 2007

1

A meeting of the Lancaster City Council was held on Tuesday, December 18, 2007, in Council Chambers, Southern Market Center, 100 South Queen Street, Lancaster, PA, at 7:30 p.m., with President Dickson presiding.

Present – Mr. Graupera, Mr. Polite, Mr. Roschel, Ms. Saunders
Mr. Urdaneta, Ms. Williams & President Dickson - 7

City Council led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

City Council approved the minutes of December 11, 2007 by a unanimous roll call vote.

READING OF PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS & MEMORIALS - Mayor Gray administered the oath of office to Mr. E. William Andrews, City Controller. Mr. Andrews will fill the unexpired term of Mr. Craig Lehman who was recently elected to the Board of County Commissioners. Mr. Andrews addressed the Council, thanked them for their vote of confidence, and stated that he will do his best to serve as Controller to the City.

PUBLIC COMMENT - Ms. Pat Coller, 334 West Orange Street, publicly thanked Ms. Dickson and Mr. Graupera for their dedication to the City as Councilmembers. She stated that the meetings have been run smoothly and with dignity as only a few years ago, that was not the case. She wished them well as they return to private life.

FINANCE COMMITTEE - Councilwoman Saunders stated that we are finished with all of the budget hearings, so tonight on the agenda is Bill No. 18-2007, which is the proposed City Budget for 2008. Also on the agenda are Bill No. 19-2007 which changes the property tax rate and Bill No. 20-1007 which repeals the resident and per capita tax.

Administration Bill No. 18-2007, (the title) was read by the City Clerk as follows:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LANCASTER, COUNTY OF LANCASTER, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, APPROPRIATING THE SPECIFIC SUMS ESTIMATED TO BE REQUIRED FOR THE SPECIFIC PURPOSES OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT, HEREINAFTER SET FORTH DURING THE YEAR 2008; ALLOWING FOR A SEVERANCE PROVISION; PROVIDING FOR THE REPEAL OF INCONSISTENT ORDINANCES; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Councilwoman Saunders made the motion to approve and Councilman Urdaneta seconded.

Councilwoman Saunders stated that Bill No. 18 is the proposed budget for 2008. It totals \$45,000,000, which is a 3.4% increase from this year. We have met several times to discuss this budget and all of us asked many good questions, had some good discussions. She stated that she thinks that Council worked hard to make sure that this is where we want to be as far as the budget is concerned. She thanked Patrick Hopkins, the Mayor, City Council and the department

heads for all their work on this budget. She thinks we have struck a good balance between wanting to provide services and wanting to limit the tax burden.

Mayor Gray stated that when he ran for election one of the things that he was critical of was the manner in which the budgetary process operated. The Council would go over line items. He thinks we have made great strides in the last two years and he is looking into getting into more issue oriented and policy oriented decisions in the budgetary process. On behalf of himself, the department heads and the bureau chiefs, he stated how much they appreciated the treatment from City Council. There was intelligent discussion and a lot of work went into it.

City Council approved Administration Bill No. 18-2007 by a unanimous roll call vote and it shall hereinafter be known as Administration Ordinance No. 19-2007.

Administration Bill No. 19-2007, (the title) was read by the City Clerk as follows:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF LANCASTER, CHAPTER 270 - TAXATION, ARTICLE IV - PROPERTY AND RESIDENCE TAX, SECTION 270-26 – LEVY AND RATE, BY FIXING THE TAX RATE AT 9.18 MILLS ON PROPERTY IN THE CITY OF LANCASTER FOR GENERAL REVENUE PURPOSES; ALLOWING FOR A SEVERANCE PROVISION; PROVIDING FOR THE REPEAL OF INCONSISTENT ORDINANCES; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Councilwoman Saunders made the motion to approve and Councilman Urdaneta seconded.

Councilwoman Saunders stated that this ordinance increases property taxes by 4% with the cost to the average homeowner of an extra \$26.00 per year.

City Council approved Administration Bill No. 19-2007 by a unanimous roll call vote and it shall hereinafter be known as Administration Ordinance No. 20-2007.

Administration Bill No. 20-2007, (the title) was read by the City Clerk as follows:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LANCASTER, LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA REPEALING THE RESIDENT TAX AND PER CAPITA TAX BOTH AS CODIFIED IN ARTICLE III OF CHAPTER 270 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA AND PROVIDING FOR THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUCH REPEAL; PROVIDING FOR THE REPEAL OF INCONSISTENT ORDINANCES; AND PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY OF THE ORDINANCE.

Councilwoman Saunders made the motion to approve and Councilman Urdaneta seconded.

Councilwoman Saunders stated that now that we have cost the average homeowner \$26.00 a year we are now going to save you \$10.00 by eliminating the resident and per capita tax. It is a cumbersome tax to collect and we decided to do away with it.

Councilman Roschel pointed out that he has several retired couples living in his neighborhood and they will be saving \$20.00 because there are two, so this will even it out for their tax bill.

City Council approved Administration Bill No. 20-2007 by a unanimous roll call vote and it shall hereinafter be known as Administration Ordinance No. 21-2007.

PUBLIC COMMENT - Keith Cole, 717½ High Street, commented on the construction schedule for Harrisburg Pike where they are going to build a median island in the middle of the road. He commutes on that road twice a day and he is concerned that it will be a difficult commute because of the traffic. He cited a petition signed by 80 residents that was sent to PennDOT and was not acknowledged. He further stated that there was no public input and the permission was granted by PennDOT to the City and F&M.

Charlotte Katzenmoyer, Director of Public Works, explained that the plans would produce a safer turning movement for vehicles. PennDOT reviews the application because it is a PennDOT highway, so there really is no City requirement to approve it. This all went through a PennDOT approval process. They look at it in terms of all types of traffic engineering perspectives. So they have reviewed it in terms of proper stacking lanes for turning movements, they have verified that there will be proper stacking to allow for enough cars to be in the turning lane where the medians are breaking for the turning movements. The whole reason for the median is for pedestrian safety. That is a City concern as well as an F&M concern, so the City's input to PennDOT was that we agree with slowing traffic down on Harrisburg Pike with all the development that is going on. The shops that are being built at College Row will accommodate residents as well as the F&M community. We need to slow traffic down there for the safety of City residents as well as F&M students. President Dickson reminded Mr. Cole that the City Council is a legislative body and this application does not need approval from the City Council. Mayor Gray asked where the medians would be and Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that it would be from College Avenue to the Williamson Parking lot entrance. Mayor Gray also stated that when he first heard about the project he inquired of the Chief of Police and the Chief of Fire if this would impede the movement of emergency vehicles and they assured him that it would not.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that in terms of safety, public works professionals go to conventions, seminars, and conferences where other cities talk about what they have done in terms of traffic calming. There have been studies done across the United States, by traffic experts and data has been gathered and presented at these conferences all the time about different types of traffic calming measures that have slowed motorists. They show how much the speeds are reduced by traffic calming measures such as this. As much as the public wants input on these processes, you have experts who are in these positions who are making the decisions in the best interest of the public and they are not taking these decisions lightly.

REPORT OF THE MAYOR - Mayor Gray stated that he asked the County Assessor what the average price of a home in Lancaster is selling for over the last 5 or 6 years, and they brought him a chart that indicated that in 2001 the average home in the City sold for \$60,000 and now it is just short of \$100,000. That is good news that obviously, the value of property is rising, but it is bad news to a certain extent that it means that houses might be less affordable. The assessor's office stated that it is similar in the County, but not as dramatic as in the City. Mr. Hopkins also reported to the Mayor earlier this week, that the transfer tax in the City will hit a record high this year. Previous high was in 2005 and this year it will be almost a million dollars.

He further stated that Councilwoman Williams and he met, and an advertisement is going out for the new Chief of Police. The process at this point is that Ms. Williams and the Mayor are going to do the initial interviews and then probably involve the senior staff afterwards. Then we will bring a

recommendation to Council. We are trying to get it done within a couple of months, but Captain Palmer has accepted the position of Acting Chief and he is in that capacity at this point.

He stated that he would like to thank John Graupera for the time that he has devoted to the City. People have no idea the amount of time these council positions take. Council is diligent, sincere and comes prepared and ready to discuss issues, noting that it has been a pleasure working with Councilman Graupera. To our President he stated that it has been a real pleasure working with her, commending her for the way she runs a meeting and the way she sets an agenda. He stated that he would truly miss the meetings they shared together.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL - President Dickson stated that this working relationship has been positive because of the quality of the Mayor's team and this Council. For any members of the public who sat in Council meetings 4 years ago or so, and found that Councilmembers did not report on the bill that came through their committee because they turned it over to City Staff. You have heard from this group, their level of professionalism in truly doing their homework and coming to every meeting prepared makes the job of leadership very easy. The diversity of gender and age and ethnicity that we have in this group has made this such a positive experience, because of the mutual respect for an opinion that comes from the experiences of each of us, which are very different.

She further thanked the members of the public who have been an integral part of community involvement, offering their opinions and volunteering to serve on boards, commissions and authorities. The average citizen doesn't have a real understanding of how many people in this community have an interest and care about and are willing to put themselves on the line to say, "I will give time, I will give public service to make this a better place to live."

COUNCIL COMMENT - Councilman Graupera also thanked everyone, and wished everyone Happy Holidays and a very prosperous new year.

Councilman Polite stated that it has been an honor and a privilege to serve the last eight years with Councilwoman Dickson and Councilman Graupera. They made life on this Council much easier. It was rough for several years. The City benefited and they will be missed. He thanked them for the years of friendship and loyalty and the City cannot afford for them to just go away.

Councilman Urdaneta stated that when Ms. Dickson became President, she raised the bar. This is a great time to be serving on Council and Julie, John and Nelson have been such great help for the four of us that came in newly elected. He agreed with the mutual respect among each of the members of Council, and that respect will continue on. He thanked Ms. Dickson and Mr. Graupera for what they have done for our City.

President Dickson adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Julianne Dickson, President

Attest:

City Clerk
