SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

A Special Council Meeting was held on May 4, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. with Council President Bonar presiding. Members present were Mr. Anderson, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Slavin, Mr. Hare, and Mr. Hutchison. Mr. Perza and Mrs. Williams were absent.

Council staff members present were Deputy Police Chief Mailey, Mr. Koenig, Mrs. Townshend, Mr. Rodriguez, and Mrs. McDowell. Mayor Christiansen and Councilmen-Elect Cole, Lewis, and Neil were also present.

The invocation was given by Reverend Theodore Henderson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Mr. Slavin moved for approval of the agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Hare and unanimously carried.

OATH OF OFFICE

The Honorable William L. Witham, Jr., Resident Judge - Superior Court, administered the Oath of Office, as follows:

Council - Third District - Fred A. Neil

By unanimous consent, there was a brief recess to take photographs of Councilman Neil.

Meeting recessed at 6:06 p.m. and reconvened at 6:08 p.m.

Council President Bonar welcomed Councilman Neil to the Chamber, stating that his service would be different than it was in Baltimore when serving as Mayor William Donald Schaefer's press aide. He stated that he was very proud of Mr. Neil, noting that Mr. Neil had worked very had for his community and for people in the Third District. From his personal experience with Mr. Neil, Mr. Bonar stated that he is dedicated, tenacious, and the type who gets the job done.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CANDIDATES - OPENING STATEMENTS

Council President Bonar stated that, unless Council decides otherwise, this evening's meeting would be the only opportunity for members interested in serving as Council President for 2015/16 to make comments and present their case.

Mr. Slavin stated that he would like to be considered as Council President and offered the following statement:

> I just have a brief statement, and I want to thank you all very much for this consideration. By way of introduction and by way of background, many of you know I've been on Council on two separate occasions, first from 2004 through 2010, and most recently from 2013 to the present. In both of my times on Council, I've been a member of the Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee and chaired that Committee on two separate occasions, as well as held other committees.

I see the role of Council President as essentially a simple one, and I don't want to misconstrue it. The Council President has to chair the meeting, to serve as the Vice-Mayor, to assist in setting the agenda for the meetings, to help to obtain the consensus of fellow Council members, and to speak on your behalf when asked. That's it. The Council President is not to be misconstrued as the president of the City, nor as being in charge of City Council. In my opinion, the Council President is but one co-equal voice among the nine voices we have here on Council. We all know that we have challenges that we face in the coming year. Yes, we will have a budget challenge, but here's my somewhat simplistic view: Every Council in the history of the City has dealt with a budget. We will deal with it and I'm confident, with the team that we've assembled, that we'll get through it. Those challenges we have are surely significant, but we should not shut down creativity. We should continue to listen to our constituents, our businesses, our staff, and each other on ideas on how we can improve our City, how we can move forward.

Some of my ideas, and just my ideas, for the coming year would be to convene a workshop for all of you to gather your ideas for our coming year. Our legislative year is May through April. We used to do something similar in the past, and I'd like us to revisit that. I value your input on this and I look forward to hearing your ideas. I believe, again my opinion, that we need to address the cost of electricity to businesses. We have some of the highest costs for electricity in this State for businesses, and this makes it very difficult to build our job space here. We need to bring an equitable solution for consideration. This is something that is limiting our ability to hold and to attract jobs.

We have some unfinished business from the last term in completing financial reforms that were proposed. There were 14 financial reforms that I had proposed and, with your help, we were able to get through, I believe, nine of them. We have some additional ones we need to make a decision, up or down about, and see where we want to go with that. We've had some tumult over the role of the Mayor, and some of the concerns. What I would propose is maybe we consider a recall provision in our City charter for members of Council, as well as the Mayor. I think this would ameliorate some of the concerns we had about problems we had in the previous administration. It's not directed at any one person; it's just another tool that we can look at.

We should also consider the tool of referendum to gauge public interest. I believe the last time this City went out to a non-binding referendum was more than 10 years ago, and I think it's a useful tool to go out and ask our citizens what they think. We need to continue to strengthen our resolve on public safety. This heroin epidemic is not going away, and the example I'll use is from the town that I was born in and lived up through about age 18: Trenton, New Jersey. The heroin epidemic came there and hit hard. The city did not respond, in my opinion, in an adequate way, and if you've

watched what happened there in the last five years, that city has had a complete collapse of its infrastructure. Its citizenry has left, its businesses have left, and it's just a series of crime-ridden neighborhoods at this time.

Finally, I think we just talk less and listen more: A simple solution. We have a Youth Advisory Committee, which, Mr. Anderson, thank you very much for restarting. Councilman-Elect Cole has mentioned the Services to Seniors Committee as something that could be re-enacted on an ad hoc basis. We can strengthen our relationships Levy Court and the School Districts. Let's all just be careful that we don't become too insular, and we keep looking out and listening to people in the community. In the end, the Council President doesn't set the agenda, we all do. The Council President doesn't define the vision for the City, we all do. The Council President, as I said, is not the president of the City. He or she is simply one person entrusted by his or her peers to enable that discussion, and I would be honored to serve in that role and I hope I can earn your vote. Thank you very much.

Mr. Anderson indicated his interest in being Council President and offered the following statement:

Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I want to say thank you to Mr. Slavin for his remarks. He's a fine gentleman and someone I have the utmost respect for, and I think he's definitely earned that respect. Regardless of how this election turns out, if he wins, I'd be proud to serve with him. If he doesn't, I'd be proud to make sure he is part of the team, because there's no one I have more respect for.

I have some ideas that I would like to share with you. At this current time, our City is facing many challenges, and those challenges I believe are based in communication with the citizenry. We used to at one point have more communication with the citizens, but we've cut out some of the methods that we used to give those communications. We used to communicate with the citizens in getting information out with a newsletter that we used to send out. I've heard people say, "Where is that? Why don't we do that anymore?" And we have other concerns. We used to put in what our objectives are, survey the citizens. We used to have input from the citizens about the job performance, about how the City is accomplishing its vision. We don't do that anymore. I certainly agree with Councilman Slavin that referendum is a good thing, but to know what the citizens think, we don't necessarily need to spend that amount of money all the time. I think if people want it for certain key issues, I'm all for it. A constant pipeline of communication is something we need to open. We have that to a large degree, but perception is reality, and when people feel like we're not communicating to them and we're not hearing back from them, there's a problem.

We used to do some different things that attempted to foster information. We used to pick a big issue every quarter. I'm not saying we need to do it every quarter, to communicate with a big issue in a town hall, we found out we didn't need it all the

time, because of the fifteen minutes, but then we discovered that we could do it well with covering a big issue, like things with economic development or crime. Those issues are issues people want to speak about today. I think that we should schedule, at least once a year, one of those town hall meetings, not necessarily quarterly, but where we take a big issue and say, "Okay, citizens. What do you think are solutions to crime? What do you want to hear? We're bringing the experts from the different departments on how it's being dealt with." We would have large public input, get concerns, and get a lot of ideas back if people know that we care. I think it will make these people of the City happier, because they will know that their leadership is engaged. I think we need to interact more with some of the institutions that we have.

We have a great public relations operation. We need to, as Councilmen, interact more with that to ensure that we're utilizing the Facebook page to get some polling, to get interaction, so that it becomes a two-way communication. We need the City to start operating as a 21st-century city that is connected with the citizens, and that connection would help us as Council people to better serve the people. By serving the people better, of course, it has the side benefit of making our streets safer. One of the things that a Council President can do is to ensure that the people feel the doors of communication are open. We need to make sure they're open, not just to people who feel comfortable to stand up to lecture and speak their mind, but we also need to be willing to hear the quiet people – people who at the thought of that are terrified because they imagine everybody in the City, if they say something silly, is thinking that they're stupid, and it absolutely terrifies them.

These people, many of them have great ideas, and we need to make sure that they know they can be heard so that we're listening to the full spectrum of people. That's why we need to go back and start, once again, taking and doing evaluations so that the people can evaluate how the services are being done in the City. How the streets are, how safe they feel in the City, how the jobs environment is in the City, the rent environment, the cost to live. Just give us all the information that we need, that we can compile. How are we doing as a City? Are we living up to our motto? Once that happens, it's going to provide us more information because everyone here is confident, everyone here is intelligent, and everyone here is a leader. The more information we have, the better.

I believe if I have the privilege this year to be Council President, we will have something important. I want to have a humble leadership that recognizes the greatness that is within each of you, that recognizes that everyone here is an elected leader, and everyone here has something to benefit so that your concerns are heard. Not every idea you have is going to pass, and that's okay. Sometimes it may not even get out of committee.

If we don't start having those ideas brought where people in the public know that there's a variety of ideas that are percolating, that are being brought forward, then we lose something. We may need to find ways so that committee meetings are more available to the public. That's something we may need to investigate. We need people understanding that there's a variety of ideas, that a variety of voices are being heard, that when they vote for someone it counts, because each and every person's voice matters.

I believe that we need to also focus on addressing our priorities. Each year, I believe we need to set the priorities that we want to address for the City. I personally have four, but each of us has some that we need to talk about. My four are basically public safety, the infrastructure, the fiscal integrity of the City, and economic development and jobs. Those are basically the four that I see as important. Maybe different people have different ones, but we need to set all of our priorities at the beginning of each calendar year so that when we build the budget, the budget reflects our priorities. We shouldn't be trying to come up with the priorities after we set our budget.

Our budget needs to reflect what's important to us. I think that's something we need to restore. If we do that, I believe people will understand over the course of time why we're making decisions and the rationale of the decisions, whether or not we particularly agree with them all the time.

If we communicate to the people, the people will respect the decisions we make because they will know that they are thoughtful decisions. They will know that they are rational decisions, and they will know that they are decisions based upon the best information available at the time. Then when there are certain decisions that come about that we can't explain to people because of litigation or legal matters, people will trust us, because they will say, "I know how these guys operate, and if they say that it had to be done that way, it's because they took all the information into account, and I have faith in them because that's how I see they operate." That's what we need to do as the Council, I believe.

I believe that we need to take a good servant's heart to the people so they can see that we're listening to them, that we care about them, and that we cared about the lives of them and their children being better than before we came to this office. We may not fix all the problems, but we can make it better, and if each of us does that in each term of office, this will be the best City that it can be, and it will be a jewel for this State.

I have many other ideas and I would start boring you if I went through all of them. and I'm afraid to do that because that's a way to start losing votes. There are many ways to open up citizen involvement, communication, bringing new people into the

process to serve on committees – there are going to be slots opened – and truly gearing up citizen involvement. If you want to hold a coffee or town hall meeting in your district, I'd be glad to even help you with that. Many of you do it yourself, you are old pros, but some people are newer.

If you want professional development for newer Council people, because there's a lot of people with questions about how things work and best procedures, I'd be glad to work with the League of Local Governments to bring that right here, so that it fits in your schedule, and have that professional development right here to get those best practices, and get that information, so that we can serve the City the best we can. Thank you.

Council President Bonar asked if there was anyone else present who would like to express interest in being a candidate for Council President. There was no one present wishing to speak.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CANDIDATES - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

There was no one present wishing to ask questions of the candidates for Council President.

Council President Bonar thanked Mr. Slavin and Mr. Anderson for expressing their interest in the Council presidency. Noting that Councilmen-Elect Brian Lewis and Scott Cole were in attendance, Mr. Bonar stated that any Council member could be nominated for Council President during the Annual City Council Meeting scheduled for May 11, 2015.

Council President Bonar expressed his thanks to those with whom he had served over the last several years. He stated that his role at the Annual Council Meeting would be very limited as the Mayor would preside, new members would be sworn in, and outgoing members would receive their Dover Cups and keys to the City when departing. Mr. Bonar advised members that they would have a daunting challenge over the next year. They would have a budget deficit of several million dollars, like the City had never seen before. There would be an unfunded pension liability somewhere in the neighborhood of $130M that they would have to find a way to overcome. They would have to make a decision within the next year or two (2) whether or not to stay in the power business or rebuild the generators at McKee Run, which would be another $170M or so. Mr. Bonar stated that the City's electric system is very expensive for commercial and industrial customers, and he felt that this must be addressed if the community is to stay healthy and vibrant.

Mr. Bonar stated that he when he ran for Council President, he said that he would give everyone a right to completely air their views and speak their piece on any topic on the agenda. He had said that the one (1) important factor on this Council is that when their business is finished, members are, above all else, residents in the City and friends. Members may agree or not agree, but they would still walk out of the Chamber as friends, and there would be no room for animosity, tempers, or personal agendas in this Council Chamber. Mr. Bonar stated that he was quite proud to say that he thought he could leave this position having fostered that type of relationship, and expressed his hope that this would continue.

Council President Bonar advised members that there are four (4) women working in the City that on whom Council depends on a day-to-day basis. He stated that the City Clerk's Office does a wonderful job. He noted that he did not want to diminish any of the other departments in the City but stated that the City Clerk's Office keeps Council from stepping where they should not step. He advised members to pay attention to what they say because they are very good at what they do, and they had been an absolute joy for him to work with.

By unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

TRACI A. McDOWELL
CITY CLERK

All orders, ordinances, and resolutions adopted by City Council during their Special Meeting of May 4, 2015 are hereby approved.

ROBIN R. CHRISTIANSEN
MAYOR

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