



THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE
NEW YORK
SPECIAL COMMON COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 3, 2024 6:00 pm Common Council Chambers

Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

- I. Welcome
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. ~~Roll Call~~

Attendance: Eight Common Councilmembers were present and seated in the audience (absent was Councilmember Shook), Mayor Yvonne Flowers and Councilmember-At-Large / Council Chair Da’Ron Wilson

City Hall Department Heads in attendance on the dais:

Jamar M. Cummings (Chamberlain), Joseph Donat, (City Administrator), Chief Joe Franco (Fire Department), Chris Gent (Department of Public Works), Dr. Brian Martinez (Commissioner of Finance/ IT), Eric Philipp (Building Department), Regina Pittman (Human Resources), John Taylor (Assessor), Rebecca Valk (Corporation Counsel), and Acting Chief Rich Wilson (Police Department).

IV. Public Participation

- 1. Jeff Aman – Barnard Rd
- 2. Darrett Roberts – Hooker Ave
- 3. Carmen McGill – Glenwood Ave
- 4. Laurie Sandow – S. Grand Ave *
- 5. ~~Daniel Atonna – College Ave~~
- 6. ~~Debra Long – Mill St~~
- 7. ~~Joseph Troche – Delafield St~~
- 8. ~~Suprina Troche – Delafield St~~
- 9. ~~Alex Faison – College Ave~~
- 10. ~~Peter Van Aken – Wilbur Blvd~~

*Submitted written comments/questions

**Laurie Sandow questions for 2x-yearly Charter-Mandated Informational Meeting,
September 3, 2024**

I didn't come here to discuss College Hill, but I am going to discuss a bit what I just witnessed and heard taking place during earlier questioning. I submitted an extensive FOIL (Freedom of Information Law request) to Dutchess County on July 31, and they sat on stuff that they could have provided instantly, but they sat on it for practically the full 30 days that FOIL allows, even though my FOIL included an extract from an advisory opinion by the Committee on Open Government regarding delays in providing information. Now, in response to Jeff Aman's comments and questioning earlier tonight, we've just listened to what the Mayor's said and some other stuff that's just been said on the record here that's a bunch of hooey. Never saying that a portion of College Hill that the County wants as a "swap" was never alienated. It's not a swap.

If the Council alienates any portion of that park, they'll get a letter from the County, exactly the same letter as the County provided for 26 Oakley. A letter that basically says, "Tough luck. We own it. Based on 'X' caselaw, we're not subject to your planning and zoning." So when this City conducts conversations behind closed doors, the public needs them to be fully transparent and conducted in front of the public because there's stuff that is being conveyed to you behind closed doors that is neither honest nor true. And if this City is basing its decision-making on that level of dishonesty, we have a problem. A very serious problem.

We also have a problem with this five minute limit. You can call this a "special" informational meeting, but the City Charter very clearly does not call it a "special" informational meeting. They call it an Informational Meeting. It's not limited by five minutes to each commenter. It gives each questioner and commenter as many questions directed to as many department heads or council members as they want and need to have addressed and answered. You can shake your head "no", but the Council and Corporation Counsel pulled this same stunt the last time, because you and some certain other members of these committees are hostile to the public. But that does not make it true that public questions and comments can be limited to five minutes.

At regular Council meetings, the public gets only three minutes in public comments that you don't reply to, and now you think you're going to limit us to five minutes? No, that's not the case. Maybe you should have been around for previous meetings to see that Informational Meetings are unlimited question and answer periods.

Questions to Da’Ron Wilson

—As a former member of the Historic District and Landmarks Preservation Committee, please tell the public which laws apply to protection of College Hill Park regarding the County's request for an alleged swap and alienation?

—Why does the Common Council not have a written Consent Agenda policy?

—As Councilmember At-Large, elected by and representing all eight wards of the City of Poughkeepsie, you’ve yet to hold an 8-Ward meeting. When do you plan to do that? In what way do you regularly communicate with constituents in all eight wards?

—You had me escorted from a Council meeting on February 20, 2024, with claims based on a rule that did not exist. It was obvious to all observers that it was planned in advance, from the new sound equipment, to your illegal instruction to the Chamberlain to turn off the public microphone. What price should you pay for using your Council seat for abuse of power and violation of law?

Questions to the Chamberlain:

—Is there a rule regarding time-stamping documents received by Chamberlain's office or any other office?

—Are there any rules regarding legible signatures and fully completed Certified Mail forms that are taken in by City employees?

—Are event permit fees paid to the Chamberlain's office, and if yes, how much was paid in permit fees, in City of Poughkeepsie Police, Department of Public Works and any other City department services, and for any other necessary and related event fees, by organizers of the following public events?

—the June Gilette Riverfront Rides Carnival. What was the total amount received by the City for the advertised "Proceeds to benefit programming in the City of Poughkeepsie" as was promised?

—Did Sun River, Renacer Church and Casa Comunitaria obtain permits and notify nearby S. Hamilton residents that they'd be blocking off traffic for the Fair they held in June?

—How much was paid by Riverfest in permit fees or any other fees, for City of Poughkeepsie Police, Department of Public Works and/or any other City department services?

—Have each of the above fully paid their fees, had their fees covered by any other party (and if so, by who), and/or still have unpaid balances?

Questions to the Corporation Counsel Rebecca Valk and/or City Administrator Joseph Donat:

—This City continues to violate the Americans with Disability Act concerning volume on meeting webcasts, the absence of closed captioning, the Council Chair's failure to instruct and remind speakers to speak directly into their microphones (both public and Councilmembers alike). What efforts is the City making to address and remedy these concerns?

—It's become clear that meeting volume is now adjustable from the Chamberlain's seat, but that has not been shown to amplify the volume on recordings. When will the City become compliant with the Americans with Disability Act regarding broadcast, hybrid zoom, broadcast volume and closed captioning?

—What efforts is the City making to communicate with City residents that do not have online access, and/or are not regular visitors to the City website?

—Which developers and developments are waiting in the pipeline for the new zoning plan to come into effect?

—What buildings are registered as vacant and abandoned, and where can the public find a complete listing of those buildings and parcels.

—What efforts have been made to establish a record of vacant and abandoned buildings that are blighting Main St. and other areas of the city as the owners wait until new zoning goes through, or perhaps even sitting on their properties beyond adoption of new zoning.

—City Hall doors on the third floor are now locked, turning City Hall into a fortress in response to the Council's inability to handle dissent and public dissension. What is the Corporation Counsel, the City Administrator and the Mayor doing to reverse that policy and return City Hall to a friendly and welcoming place for the public?

Questions to Terricena Brown:

—What is the current status of the Poughkeepsie Housing Authority's (PHA) public private partnership plans? Which PHA properties are slated for conversion? On what dates, and at which locations, have meetings been held with tenants and who is in possession of attendance and minutes from those meetings?

—How much money have you, personally, solicited from the Mayor and/or fellow Councilmembers behind the scenes in support of Riverfest?

—Why wasn't it a violation and why wasn't the City of Poughkeepsie's ethics rule invoked when Councilmember Terricena Brown represented the Geneva's application in front of the Planning Board?

Questions to Yvonne Flowers:

—What is the current status of discussions with Sue Serino re: 26 Oakley, and the extent to which those discussions might also revolve around other parcels in the City of Poughkeepsie, including but not limited to the Vassar-Warner home or any other existing or planned housing development in the c/PK?

—You ran on a platform of "Poughkeepsie before politics" and unifying the city. The court case rulings are very clear to both sides of the aisle: the social media platforms of elected officials are public forums when that platform is used to talk about government issues. Isn't it a supremely political act to block and delete critical comments? Is the City being unified by blocking critics?

—What is the status of the final lease for The Governess and who enforces the lease? Currently, The Governess does not have a concession stand as required. They've converted one of the bathrooms to a storage room, and the sign that used to be hung on the public deck in front of the restaurant has disappeared. Which department or departments enforce the lease agreement?

—Which department is responsible for enforcing health violations at the Exempt Firemens Association, as documented by a database available through the Poughkeepsie Journal?

—How many Councilmembers are Exempts members? How would the public know or be able to police whether discussions about City business ever take place at the Exempts in violation of Open Meetings Law?

Questions for Lori Garcia:

—Recently, I received a notice through CivicPlus that a certain Planning Board public hearing had been adjourned. But when I checked the agenda, right after receiving the notice, the adjournment was not reflected. After some back and forth, you wrote that "The [agenda] posting is not changed the week of the meeting." If agendas are not updated or redlined in the week prior to a PB meeting, and concerned citizens are not CivicPlus subscribers, who takes responsibility for concerned citizens showing up for a hearing that's been adjourned?

—Related: Though PB applicants receive copies of public comments submitted to the Board, the existence of any comments is never made known to the public. No notice is made to the public that public comments have been submitted in writing, even though those comments are immediately forwarded to the applicant. What efforts are being made to make the public aware and provide the public with the same information that is being supplied to any applicant?

Questions for Chris Grant:

—Who are the members of the City's Finance Committee?

—On what date was the Capital Plan in draft form first delivered to Councilmembers? On what date was the Capital Plan in draft form first delivered to members of the City's Finance Committee? On what date did any member of the Common Council share the Capital Plan with city residents?

—On what date and at what Common Council meeting did the Common Council vote to hold a public hearing about the Capital Plan?

—On what date was the Capital Plan in draft form posted to the City website?

—On what date was the Capital Plan finalized by the Finance Committee posted to the City website?

—What was the timeline of work on the Capital Plan by the Finance Committee?

The City of Poughkeepsie “Buzz” includes this phony statement:

“Council, Administration Work Together to Approve Capital Improvement Plan

The Common Council approved a \$170.6 million Capital Improvement Plan Tuesday, following a collaborative effort with Mayor Yvonne Flowers’ administration to identify key spending priorities from this year until 2029.

In another demonstration of cohesion between the Common Council and the administration, this year’s capital plan and priorities were evaluated by the Common Council Finance Committee and the Administration while pursuing an aggressive schedule to ensure the plan was passed by resolution prior to the City’s administrative deadline of Aug. 31.”

Questions for each Councilmember:

—Public monies were used by Councilmembers to travel to and attend the February 2024 NYCom meeting in Albany. Which specific class or classes did each Common Council member attend at that meeting? Were records of class attendance submitted to the Finance Department?

—Question for each Councilmember, without cheating by looking at your phones or previous agendas: At the last Council meeting, the Council Chair only read resolution numbers into the record under the consent agenda. What was the substance of Resolution R-24-65 recently passed by consent agenda? What was the substance of Resolutions 24-66, 24-67, and 24-68?

—Do members of this Council actually read and understand the entirety of their agenda packets? Which councilmember has ever communicated the substance of each resolution to their constituents prior agreeing to the item as part of the consent agenda?

—Each councilmember: what was the date of your last ward meeting? Have you ever held a meeting where you were the sole presenter, making a presentation and answering questions

by yourself? At which meetings did you invite a guest speaker? What was the date of your last newsletter to constituents?

—Recite a Resolution number passed under consent agenda and describe what the resolution was about. How is it that—illegally—resolutions are added to the agenda without naming sponsors?

—Where can the public find the meeting dates, attendance records and agendas for topics discussed at “Leadership Meetings”? Same question for caucus meetings: where can the public find the meeting dates, attendance records and agendas for topics discussed at caucus meetings.

Special Informational Meeting Minutes of Tuesday, September 3, 2024

V. Adjournment

[Speakers 5 –10 were unable to ask their questions as the meeting was abruptly adjourned]

The meeting was adjourned at 6:36 p.m.

Dated: September 6, 2024

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Special Informational Meeting held on September 3, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. DeLuca
Deputy City Chamberlain