



THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK

COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 1, 2021 6:30 p.m.

Virtual / Zoom

Welcome to the regularly scheduled meeting of the City of Poughkeepsie Common Council the date is November 1, 2021, and the time is 6:32 pm.

I'd like to acknowledge that we are gathered, wherever we are, on the traditional territory of the Lenape people and this territory was a critical resting place along a popular trade route for people of the Lenape Nation and other cultures as is evidenced in the earliest derivation of the name 'Poughkeepsie' with an indigenous string of words, U-puku-ipi-sing, that, when translated, means 'reed-covered lodge by the little water place' or resting place.

Let's all recite the pledge of allegiance.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

ROLL CALL – Nine present at time of roll call

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES:

**Public Hearing Meeting October 4, 2021
Common Council Meeting October 4, 2021**

**Motion to accept the minutes: Councilmember Brannen
2nd: Councilmember Menist**

III. READING OF ITEMS by the City Chamberlain of any resolutions not listed on the printed agenda.

NONE

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Three (3) minutes per person up to 45 minutes of public comment on any agenda and non-agenda items.

1. Laurie Sandow, S. Grand Ave. – submitted written comments

For those who've not yet done so, I urge you to please vote tomorrow, Election Day, November 2. And when you vote, I urge you to carefully consider who and what it will take to cure the factionalism and dysfunction of this current Council. The polls will be open citywide from 6am to 9pm. In the 8th Ward—where I'm on the ballot on the "People for PK" line—the two 8th Ward polling sites are either Krieger Elementary or St. John's Church on Wilbur.

Regarding tonight's agenda, please note that one resolution is a well-deserved retroactive salary increase for the Fire Department, but it is NOT a settlement of the contract that expired in December 2020, and which is still being negotiated.

As is the unfortunate habit in the City of Poughkeepsie, two other agenda items are listed under "Communications" in such a way as to conceal their content.

First is a communication described as the City Administrator's "acceptance of a donation of certain real property". That undescribed property is a 17-acre parcel directly adjacent to landmarked Springside, Andrew Jackson Downing's historic landscape. Springside, located on one of the major roads welcoming visitors to this city—a park where investment would help create both a national tourist attraction as well as produce revenue for the City. Yet, for lack of vision, and for other undisclosed reasons that are hard to understand, Springside was not included on the list of parks designated by the City for investment of \$4 million in funds from the American Rescue Plan (ARP).

Another camouflaged agenda item is the communication from Acting Development Director Natalie Quinn, supporting rezoning for 117 N. Hamilton. Don't recognize the address? Join the crowd. It's a Baxter-owned property buried on page 95 of the current agenda packet. I encourage all watching to look it up the address on Dutchess Parcel Access, where you'll find...nothing. Use the parcel # to find, and there's still no clue that it's a Baxter-owned property. What you'll find is one LLC after another, with the owner's primary address listed as a warehouse on Cottage Street, and not Baxter's office. And what a surprise!—this property that wants rezoning from the Council, and not from the ZBA, is just a three-minute walk from Page's re-development of 27 High Street.

Is no-one else concerned that Natalie Quinn's been promoted to a new, but unannounced job title? That she's justifying her rezoning recommendation based

on a 20-year-old Comprehensive Plan even while sitting at the helm of the PK4Keeps steering committee which, quoting from the PK4Keeps site itself: “...will help define the community’s vision for its future and translate that vision into priorities, strategies, policies, and guidance for making decisions within City Hall and throughout the city.”

Yeah, right...the secretive PK4Keeps might or might not define the community’s vision, but that’ll come long after developers have turned this City into a company town—getting their purchases, variances and site plans approved long before they’re subject to any new Comprehensive and Zoning plan. I urge this Council to look closely into Ms. Quinn’s seeming conflict of interest in this rezoning communication. [As it happens, this “communication” was never made at the November 1, 2021, Common Council meeting due to councilmembers who disappeared mid-way through meeting, leaving the meeting without a quorum. I’m sure these same councilmembers will rapidly reappear when it’s time to collect their paychecks.]

Councilmember Brannen made a motion to go into Executive Session at 6:58pm and was seconded by Councilmember Menist.

Executive Session						
☒ Accepted ☐ Defeated ☐ Tabled			Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Absent
	Councilmember Flowers	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember McClinton	Votes	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Cherry	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember R. Johnson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Menist	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Petsas	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember L. Johnson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Brannen	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Chair Salem	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐

Councilmember Brannen made a motion to resume the regular session at 8:27pm and was seconded by Councilmember Menist.

V. CHAIRPERSON’S COMMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

And now we'll move to chairperson's comments. So over the past few days here in the city of Poughkeepsie, there were several shootings, which is very unnerving. To say the least, and so I've been thinking over these days, a lot of them happening in the vicinity of Main Street. I know over in Yvonne's neighborhood on Main Street, down over in all parts of the city. And you know, honestly, I live right on Main Street and I was outside for both of the shootings, the one on Thursday night and Saturday night, and I thought I heard gunshots and I was like, Absolutely not, couldn't be gunshots. And it's feeling very, as I said, unnerving to be right. And to hear those shots so close by and to know that this is a weekend where a lot of people were out and about it was a beautiful weekend. Besides, you know, the washed out day that we had for part of it. And you know, we really we've got to leverage our resources, the resources we have, the resources we have coming in to address the underlying conditions and contributors to gun violence here in our community so that we can reduce the risks and increase our individuals, families and communities own resilience. And we can do that by investing in different things, investing in public safety reform and initiatives and public health solutions in social infrastructure improvements and recognizing that gun violence, as you know, as it is a critical and preventable public health and social safety net problem. And we are going through, you know, stages of developing and planning for the implementation of Comprehensive Community Safety Plan. We have to continue to do that in a way that reduces the violence. And, you know, in a way that helps us to include prevention and intervention in and in investing in the trauma that comes with this violence that this community has to experience so that we have high quality, culturally competent and coordinated mental health support services that come with it. And, you know, providing basic need to our community members to reduce some of the stressors that people are experiencing.

We know all of us here know that there are higher instances of gun violence in under resourced neighborhoods and in cities that suffer from underfunded services. Cities that have fewer job opportunities. Cities that experience concentrated poverty. And so we have to think of different avenues that can help us tackle those root causes. We need to find programs that tackle them as well as investing in our youth, which I know we're planning. And we're in the stages of dealing with the new Youth Empowerment Center and the New Youth Division of Youth Development and Empowerment. And we need to do things that help us stimulate our economy and plan for innovative economic development programs that attract industry so that we can create jobs so that we can grant people opportunity and so that we are able to then investing programs that encourage affordable housing. Again, we have to address the root causes using our own political influence for community members.

Using your citizen influence to continue to lobby for common sense gun laws and protections is important. However, that's not going to stop the illegal gun trafficking, which is how many of these weapons are getting into the city of the city. So we need to advocate for specific policies that help us as a community, close the

gaps in our federal and state laws that continue to allow firearms to be diverted from the underground gun market right here into our community. Things like background checks, lost and stolen, firearm reporting procedures and stronger licensing requirements.

We have got to get the guns out of our communities. And unfortunately, the approach that we've used to date have not been effective. They haven't worked. This community doesn't deserve this kind of trauma. I was glad to see that in the draft budget that was sent to us on October 15. Some of the American Rescue Plan funds are appropriated to departments into initiatives that might grant us a shot at tackling this persisting in this critical issue. However, we have to ensure that these funds are used in a strategic and targeted way so that we don't waste this once in a lifetime opportunity to pull the city out of its disinvest state and put it on a path of recovery and progress once and for all. There is no better time than now, and I know that this council will see that it gets done as we review this budget. We make amendments as needed, and we, we put it, put an end to this issue. Again, we have to address the root causes. We need to get these guns off the street. It is a really unsettling feeling, and I know I'm not the only one that feels that way. And I really trust in this body and the administration and the mayor to see what we can do to get this done. I'm held accountable by members of the public, and I've gotten numerous phone calls, texts, emails. People don't feel safe right now. They don't feel at home in a community that they love, and nobody should feel that way. So I know we can get this done, and I do really believe that these funds that were being granted by the federal government present a once in a lifetime opportunity. But we need to be strategic about it. So that's what I'll say about that.

And tomorrow's Election Day polls are open from six a.m. to nine p.m. make sure you get out and vote. And don't forget to flip your ballot over. There are a number of critical propositions on the back of the ballot. Five statewide, one county wide, one local proposition. And if you need any information on those, I know it's a lot of information to take in. Feel free to message me, call me, email me or, you know, I'm sure any of my colleagues on the council will have all the information that you might need to really make an informed decision when you flip that ballot over. If you're looking for where to go, you can go on the Dutchess Board of Election website to find your polling location. And again, polls are open tomorrow from six a.m. to nine p.m. There are some critical elections that are determining the future of our community in our county on that ballot, so please, everyone, if you can get out and vote. Don't forget, tell everyone that you know your neighbors, your friends, that it's an election. It's not a federal election year, but it's a local election year and all elections matter. And that concludes my comments. And with that, I'd like to move to the mayor's comments.

VI. MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Thank you chair. And co-chair and as you stated, we had violence in the city of Poughkeepsie over the past several days that we have not seen the likes of maybe ever or the types of violence in the way it was perpetrated. Officers were saying they hadn't seen that many individuals affected by gunfire and probably 30 years of one particular evening. I want to talk a little bit about that. I also respectfully, I have a call with police command that was scheduled for 8:30 to talk about some of the things we want to talk about right now. So I appreciate the ability to do that when I get done with these comments. And if there are any questions or discussions that need to be had, I will be in here first thing tomorrow morning with another meeting with additional resources that we're discussing and as part of the call tonight.

So I appreciate that chair and I first want to commend the men and women of the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department, who exhibit an unbelievable bravery the other night. And they do it every single day, 24 hours a day. But the strain on those officers the other night and extremely violent situations was exemplary how they handled it. Also want to thank all of our surrounding agencies that came in to the city of Poughkeepsie when calls for help were broadcast. And they also deserve our thanks because all of these agencies work together as a team.

There are many challenges to this gun violence and other types of violence that the cities and communities across this nation are facing, but specifically here in the city. And as you spoke about, there are lots of things that we need to discuss and we'll have that opportunity, especially with budget process starting to happen in earnest. I'm sure shortly where they run the gamut from prevention, education and enforcement and making sure that we have enough officers on the street to not only protect themselves, but the public and many of all of these. These challenges do have potential solutions that we will explore together.

We also want I want to talk just about a couple of things that that that took place in the early evening hours. And this was this was this was a series of events that started a little bit before midnight and went on through the early morning hours here in the city and we were aware of certain things. The police department was aware of certain things and there was special policing resources that were in place. However, when things changed dramatically after the initial incident, which took place on Cannon Street, which was a joint, I give detail on our gun involved violence elimination details. This one was with the state police and our officers were a vehicle stop was initiated due to certain types of activity that resulted in a brief pursuit that that vehicle ended up crashing into the wall in front of the Post Office.

There were two individuals in the car. The driver fled and subsequently eluded our officers and state police members. Two handguns were recovered in that car, along with the passenger who was charged by the state police. This is a state police case now. That was the beginning of it. Then approximately a little after one o'clock in the morning while we were still working on the incident that with the

chase that there was a report of an individual with a gun on Cannon Street, officers responded to that location of the individual with the gun was pointed out to our officers that had responded and there was a struggle with that individual at which time the report was that bottles and some rocks were thrown at our officers. In a fairly chaotic scene. They were essentially surrounded by some. Not all. Not everybody that was there. But there was enough to make it a very dangerous situation for the officers. The individual was taken into custody and was in possession of a handgun. Another additional handgun was found under a car on that street.

And so that shows you what was happening in in those in those early hours of Friday morning, starting just a little bit before midnight. And then we become aware of a bus that came down from the Albany area that was involved in a series of incidents in different parts of the downtown, where we believe that shots were exchanged and individuals were became gunshot victims. We tell you that the bus was subsequently located that during that initial search of the bus because the bus was at the hospital.

Where our understanding is that it dropped off some individuals who were wounded in one of these locations where shots were being fired, that there was a search warrant executed on the bus and five handguns were found on the bus along with shell casings, and that you had approximately you had nine handguns that were removed from the street that night there. At this point, there were the two arrests, one from the vehicle chase with the handguns and one with the individual who was in possession of the handgun on Cannon Street. We have made a targeted policing hotspot.

Policing has been part of the policing program here in the city of Poughkeepsie. For a good number of years, we will be doing additional hotspot and targeted policing in areas where we believe there is their propensity for gun violence. And unfortunately, you had five victims from the incidents on early Friday morning. My understanding is four were from the Albany area and one was from the city of Poughkeepsie. And then on Saturday evening, both in the six o'clock hours and I believe the 10:00 hours that would be another two incidents of gun violence in the city.

One of the main street and one near Soldiers Fountain at this time, I don't know. I would not speculate whether those are related to the Friday morning incidents, and there is a lot of work that is continuing to be done. And that's why I am speaking with command. And just a little bit is that we can we can say that cooperation has not been we haven't got as much cooperation as we need, but that doesn't mean that that they're not doing all the other things that they need to do. We have gun evidence. We have we have evidence from shell casings and expended rounds to work rounds fired into the bus. We believe that individuals were hit actually on the bus.

And what I would say is that I don't know what, how those types of things with other individuals coming into the community and apparently in possession of firearms. That is an extraordinary incident in the way that it took place and unfolded throughout the early morning hours, with our officers responding to multiple locations with the assistance of the state police, which were already in the city. And then additional state police members were here, along with sheriff's deputies and Poughkeepsie police officers and the MTA police. But very difficult to prepare for something like that.

I pray that we never have an incident like that again, and we are going to continue to do all that we can to prevent those types of things, but also to deter them like we tried to do. But the circumstances just overwhelmed the, you know, the amount of officers that we had available to handle these types of things. And we do we do need help from the public. And we say this after every incident of violence, you know, specifically gun violence and know I can say, you know, as many times as it can be said is that we don't get a lot of cooperation.

And that really makes it very difficult to make cases against people that we want to hold accountable for these incidents. And we encourage people to call, you know, our tip line, which is, you know, 451-7577 seven say something to someone. You know, all these calls are kept confidential. But this was a series of incidents that took place that, you know, essentially without our partners in other communities, could have been different.

And I understand that people are frustrated. I am. I am frustrated, but we are continuing to work on solutions. And we will obviously work together on this, and as you spoke about earlier than the fact that we have rescue plan money, this council, it's in the budget to be debated the body, and we look forward to that also over the weekend.

On a good note, and obviously many of you were present, I was able to attend one of the Halloween events. There were at least three actually, there were four. There was the trunk or treat that was originally that was that was scheduled to happen, there was the big event on College Hill that was moved to the library and appreciate everyone, you know, working together to try to move that. There also was an event at Change Point Church. There was another trunk or treat event and then there was the event on Sunday at Eastman Park. And the weather obviously cooperated for that very well attended and that was by many of our community partners and specifically involving the 35th Montgomery Street coalition.

Tonight I have the honor and the opportunity to introduce to you for some that may not know this person, but chair that is of the individual that I have asked to be our next corporation counsel with. Obviously, with your approval. Becky Valk, Rebecca Valk, who have served with the corporation counsel previously here in the city.

I've asked her to take over the position that Paul Ackerman is leaving after 14 years, and I can't ever say enough about my friend and our colleague Paul and what he has been able to do for the corporation counsel's office and taking care of the legal aspects with his team here in the city of Poughkeepsie for 14 years. And that's a pretty darn good run. But Becky comes with just a wealth of experience in municipal law, and she will be coming on board. She's going to start. Her effective start date is on November 15th, and we look forward to having Becky here working with all of us. And I believe Chair, she is here. If you wanted to, if you wanted to at least bring her on for a minute or two when she could, she could say hello to all of you. I know that recently sent an email and her resume has been circulated and anyone who wants to, you know, to meet with Becky can. We could certainly help out with that. Stacy Bottoms here in the offices is able to set up any meetings one on one or at will. I'll leave that up to you, chair and the council on how they might want to do it. I see that Rebecca, Becky Valk is here. Welcome to this meeting and look forward to the future meetings with you and the council.

Chair Salem: Thank you, Rob. Rebecca, it's great to have you on this meeting, I do want to offer you an opportunity just to say hi to everyone. We'll hold questions for another time. But yeah, I mean, welcome you to say hi to speak to whatever your experience, but you have.

Rebecca Valk, Esq.: Well, I won't take too long because you have a very heavy agenda this evening, first of all, thank you, mayor, for those lovely comments. I appreciate the introduction. I look forward to hopefully serving even close to what Mr. Ackerman has done in the last 14 years with the city of Poughkeepsie. He's done an amazing job. I worked with him for two years and I look forward to continuing his great work with the city. I look forward to meeting all of you. As the mayor stated, I've been asked to begin on November 15th. However, I am available any time between now and that point. If you would like to have a conversation with me and get to know me a little bit better, I do understand you have my resume. I have pretty much for my entire career focused on work that is government based on municipal base. And I'm just really excited for this opportunity. Thank you.

Chair Salem: Great. Thank you so much. Really appreciate that. Good to see you. Yeah. And we'll be in touch. And if any council members have questions, you have Rebecca or miss Bob's contact info and can reach out. And I do want to echo the mayor's sentiments, too, Mr. Ackerman. You've been incredible since I've been on the council. It's been a pleasure to work with you. And I'm actually very sad to see you go honestly. And I'm sorry if I accidentally text you legal questions, but I promise I will.

Corporation Counsel Paul Ackerman: Anytime you want.

Chair Salem: Great. Thanks, Paul. Awesome. So, Rebecca, I'm going to pop you back over to the attendee side.

Mayor Rolison: And chair, I appreciate the opportunity tonight. And as you had mentioned in your remarks, tomorrow is Election Day. Very important day for all the communities that have elections and people should go out and exercise that right. Thank you chair.

VII. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND BOARDS:

VIII. MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

A motion was made by Councilmember Brannen and seconded by Councilmember Flowers to receive and print.

1. Resolution R-21-79, Approving a Memorandum of Agreement with PPFFA

**R E S O L U T I O N
(R-21-79)**

**INTRODUCED BY COUNCIL MEMBERS L. JOHNSON, PETSAS, FLOWERS
McCLINTON, R. JOHNSON, CHERRY, MENIST, BRANNEN & SALEM:**

WHEREAS, the City of Poughkeepsie (the “City”) and the Professional Firefighters Association, Local 396, IAFF, AFL-CIO (“PPFFA”) are parties to a Collective Bargaining Agreement for the period ending December 31, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the parties are actively engaged in negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement and, pending the conclusion of said negotiations, the City has agreed to pay all members of the bargaining unit a raise of 2.5%, retroactive to January 1st, 2021, under the terms of the attached Memorandum of Agreement executed as of October 25, 2021, and

WHEREAS, the Firefighters union has ratified the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement, by a vote of its members, and

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Common Council to authorize and approve the financial terms of the settlement; and

WHEREAS, the Common Council has determined that this resolution constitutes a Type II action as defined by the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act and 6 NYCRR Part 617,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Poughkeepsie hereby approves a Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Poughkeepsie and the City of Poughkeepsie CSEA in form and substance as attached hereto; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Mayor is authorized to execute and give effect to the Memorandum of Agreement and that the terms contained in the Memorandum of Agreement shall supersede any inconsistent provisions in the Collective Bargaining Agreement currently in effect between the parties thereto to the extent that there is a conflict.

SECONDED BY _____.

R-21-79						
☒ Accepted ☐ Defeated ☐ Tabled			Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Absent
	Councilmember Flowers	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember McClinton	Votes	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Cherry	Voter	☐	☐	☐	☒
	Councilmember R. Johnson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Menist	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Petsas	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember L. Johnson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Brannen	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Chair Salem	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐

IX. ORDINANCES AND LOCAL LAWS:

X. PRESENTATIONS OF PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

- 1. A COMMUNICATION FROM CITY ADMINISTRATOR NELSON**, regarding the acceptance of a donation of certain real property
- 2. A PRESENTATION FROM ASSISTANT CORPORATION COUNSEL WILSON**, addressing Blight Through Updated Codes and Code Enforcement

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 by Chair Salem in the absence of quorum.

- 3. A COMMUNICATION FROM ACTING DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR QUINN**, Rezoning Application Regarding 117 N. Hamilton Street

4. ~~FROM WAYNE CRAFT, a notice of property damage sustained on October 13, 2021~~

~~XI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS~~

~~XII. NEW BUSINESS~~

~~XIII. ADJOURNMENT~~

Dated: November 19, 2021

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Common Council Meeting held on Monday, November 1, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

**Jasmin Nicole Davis
City Chamberlain**

