

PUBLIC HEARING
2015 Proposed Budget
December 8, 2014

Members Present: Douglas Baker, Mayor
Donna Fletcher, Deputy Mayor
Samuel Lyons
James Marshall
Jennifer Morris
Ryan Rudegear
Garnet Wood

Members Excused: None

In Attendance: E. William Gabrys, City Manager
Tracy Jamieson, Deputy Manager
Brian Spaid, Esq., City Solicitor
R. Russell Lucas, Jr., Esq., Campbell Durrant Beatty & Miller Law Firm
Lucas
Darla Hawke, Recording Secretary
Bob Graham, 1237 - 15th Street
Bob Finch, General Authority Member, 1237 Washington Street
David R. Lord, 407 Forest Lane
Joseph Friedman, Esq., Clark Hill, 301 Grant St., 14th Flr, Pittsburgh 15219
James Greenfield, Esq., Dale Woodard Gent Law Firm
Robert Heller, 834 Elk Street
Tim & Penny Daniels, 1129 Chestnut Street
Hope Bittner, Shade Tree Commission Chairperson, 201 Rosemont Farm
Russ Campbell, General Authority Chairperson, 1235 Chestnut Street
Sheila Boughner, Venango Newspapers, Inc.

Mayor Baker called the hearing to order at 7:00 PM.

Mrs. Bittner gave a report on the 2014 Shade Tree Commission Budget. She detailed the expenditures for the budget and then went on to explain the details of the Tree Vitalize Grant. In answer to a question by Mr. Marshall, she explained this was a one time grant for the sole purpose of replacing the green ash trees in the 1200 block of Liberty Street, which have been greatly affected by the Emerald Ash Borer. She also advised that it was required for the committee to provide documentation and submit proof the project was completed as specified.

Mr. Marshall advised that, although he does not have a problem with replacing the trees in the 1200 block of Liberty Street, he feels citizens who want trees placed in the right-of-way of their property should purchase the trees themselves. He noted, in his opinion concerning next year's budget, this was an unnecessary item and he planned to suggest reducing the line item amount for the Shade Tree Commission from \$6,000 to \$1,000.

Mayor Baker strongly disagreed noting, that it has been proven that street trees help reduce pollution, heat and stormwater run-off. He also advised that several studies have shown trees to be traffic calming and reduce criminal activity in downtown areas.

Mr. Graham and Mr. Daniels were both in attendance to ask Council to re-consider the 1-mill tax increase. Mr. Graham advised that some citizens are struggling, especially the elderly, and asked Council to wait until the following year to consider raising taxes. Mr. Daniels stated, "When taxes go up, it hurts the community." It is his hope that, in the future, the Council can 'work something out.' Mr. Marshall explained that the increase was necessary, in part, because of unforeseen expenses, such as the fire truck payment and legal fees.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, the hearing was adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darla Hawke, Recording Secretary