

**Thursday, October 8, 2020
Williamsport, PA**

Council President Randy Allison brought the Williamsport City Council meeting to order on Thursday October 8, 2020 at 6:30 PM on Zoom. Chris Cooley did livestream the meeting.

Council members present:

Randy Allison, President
Elizabeth Miele, Vice President
Bonnie Katz, Councilwoman
Adam Yoder, Councilman
Vince Pulizzi, Councilman
Jon Mackey, Councilman,
David Banks, Councilman

Absent:

Also, Present:

Derek Slaughter, Mayor
Mr. Joe Gerardi,
Mr. Joe Pawlak
Gary Knarr,
Mark Killian, Fire Chief,
Damon Hagan, Police Chief
Norman Lubin
Janice Frank, City Clerk
Adam Winder, RVT
Jon Sanders,

Approval of the Williamsport City Council minutes for the 09/25/20 were approved upon a motion **Mr. Pulizzi** and a second from **Mrs. Katz**. **All were in favor. The vote was 7 to 0.**

Mr. Allison announced there was an executive session Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 6:30 PM concerning contract negotiations and tonight following the Police Pension Meeting, there will be an executive session concerning legal matters.

Mr. Allison stated we have had several requests tonight and there is a cap of number of requests we take, so some will be at the end of the meeting under Public comments.

Limited Courtesy of the Floor

Mr. Ryan Adams, 433 Glenwood Ave.

Dear Williamsport City Council,

As a resident of Williamsport and a frequent visitor to the local businesses around 305 Washington Boulevard, I am concerned about the plans to build a Dollar General store at that location. As an economic anthropologist, I am familiar with the research related to economic development models. Development driven by retail like the Dollar Store, which admittedly targets low income areas and pays the lowest possible wages (Evidence: Interview with Dollar Store founder in a recent ProPublica Article <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-dollar-stores-became-magnets-for-crime-and-killing/amp>), has a terrible impact on the community.

1) This type of development shifts local spending from an economy based on the entrepreneurship and business ventures of our local residents to extracting wealth from our area to enrich shareholders and executives in Chesapeake, Virginia where Dollar Store is headquartered. By moving away from locally-owned businesses to franchises, you would be reducing the ability of Williamsport residents to invest in our own people, and instead replacing that with only minimum wage jobs for a very limited number of employees (2 workers per shift in most cases, according to ProPublica <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-dollar-stores-became-magnets-for-crime-and-killing/amp>).

2) Dollar stores contribute to the exacerbation of the same economically precarious conditions that draw the stores to those locations. Research shows that these stores are deliberately located in areas with people who are politically and economically disadvantaged such as minority communities that experienced redlining, Native American reservations, and parts of Appalachia that are home to poor whites devastated by the loss of manufacturing jobs. When dollar stores go in, these communities become poorer and the concentration of minorities and other disadvantaged groups increases near the stores. (The research supporting these claims was carried out by a Geographer at the University of Georgia and published just two months ago: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/24694452.2020.1775544>)

3) An area of particular concern for me, as I'm sure those of you who know me can attest, is the problem of hunger and access to healthy food in our community. The research is extremely dire about the health effects when you increase the density of food retail establishments like Dollar Store. Consumption of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables all decline drastically and consumption of calorie-dense processed foods (junk food) rises (based on a large-scale study published in the International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity in 2017: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12966-017-0531-x>).

Approving the construction of a Dollar Store at 305 Washington Boulevard will cost our community in terms of disinvesting from local entrepreneurs and businesses, it will increase the concentration and quantity of people living in economically and socially precarious conditions, and it will literally cost our community in years of life and quality of life. Thank you,

Ryan Adams, PhD

Economic Anthropologist at Lycoming College

.Jane H. Darrow

These are my thoughts concerning the greater community's welfare in reference to the opening of another Dollar General Store.

As you consider granting permission for another Dollar General Store to be opened (this time on Washington Blvd.) please consider the quality of life in the old Dutch Hill neighborhood. I'm sure you have been made aware of studies concerning the negative impacts this kind of store makes on the economy,

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residents' health and well being and CRIME in a community. Please keep this "Big Picture" in mind as you consider allowing another corporative store to infiltrate our community.

These are my thoughts as the owner of the building next to the proposed Dollar General Store.

I have owned the property at 303 Washington Boulevard for nearly six years. In that period of time I have expended dollars, time and care to improve the building which now includes a restaurant that is a hub of the community and lovely homes for tenants. During this time my tenants have enjoyed a secure and relatively quiet existence. If the proposed Dollar General Store is approved they (and other neighbors) will face weekly early morning deliveries in the form of a tractor trailer truck arriving outside their windows and shoppers coming and going until 9:00 PM seven days a week in addition to the loss of security caused by this increased activity.

As a property owner I face the reduction of the value of the property I have worked to improve, a greater likelihood of damage to my property, littler, noise, increased traffic and a general degradation of this fine neighborhood.

PLEASE consider the public outcry against this invasive and unnecessary business as you decide whether or not to accept this degradation of the neighborhood.

Thank you.

Jane H. Darrow

Beth Eckert

As a member of the neighborhood I beg you to vote NO to Dollar General moving into 305 Washington Blvd

Not only is it a residential neighborhood full of children but with a school directly across the street to bring that much traffic to the corner would be very dangerous for the school

Tristan Hauck

I request that my opinion be read as part of the limited courtesy of the floor. As a homeowner on Germania Street, I strongly oppose the construction and opening of the Dollar General at 305 Washington Blvd. I purchased a home in this section of Williamsport believing that it was an up-and-coming neighborhood in the city, but the opening of this store is in direct opposition to that. Dollar stores hurt property values, are proven to increase crime rates, and it jeopardizes my own personal investment in the community. I ask that the council vote no regarding the construction of this Dollar General.

Elizabeth Snow

I write to you urging the Council to vote "no" to the proposed Dollar General on Washington Blvd. This store would create a nuisance to residents and cause an incredible amount of traffic problems on an already busy street. Available parking is already stretched too thin, and any further impact on parking will truly be a detriment to the nearby, locally-owned small businesses. With small businesses already being gravely affected by the pandemic, a vote to add a store like Dollar General is a vote AGAINST already-struggling local business owners, workers, and residents. A Dollar General is completely unnecessary, especially given that there are already similar stores (Family Dollar, Dollar Tree) nearby, small businesses offering better products, and 2 large grocery stores a mile away. A vote for Dollar General tells the community loudly and clearly that the City Council does not care about this area's residents or local businesses.

Nick Laylon

It has come to my attention that there is a proposed plan to erect a new Dollar General store at [305 Washington Blvd](#). I believe this to be in direct contradiction to the overarching goal and vision of Williamsport, especially in this area. It's commonly accepted that Dollar General stores decrease the property values and the viability of surrounding neighborhoods. While Dollar General will defend this with the possibility of new jobs, these are low skill, part time positions that rarely include benefits. If jobs, safety, and security for the Washington Blvd area are this committee's concern, installing a Dollar General will have a negative effect on all three.

Existing local businesses such as Tony's Deli, Sawhorse Cafe, and Roy's Bakery could all use help with parking and traffic that some blighted properties are in direct hindrance of. Maybe some focus should be put on such properties.

Independent, family run, businesses are the backbone of this vibrant community and I truly believe that this prospect will run in direct opposition. Thank you,

Molly Garczyski

I urge members of the council to reject the proposal that would bring a Dollar General to Washington Boulevard. This is an unwanted addition to the neighborhood. It would be detrimental for several reasons; one of the most important being the repercussions on small businesses in the area.

NO to Dollar General!

Christopher Kohler

It has come to my attention that there is a proposed plan to erect a new Dollar General store at 305 Washington Blvd. I believe this to be in direct contradiction to the overarching goal and vision of Williamsport, especially in this area. It's commonly accepted that Dollar General stores decrease the property values and the viability of surrounding neighborhoods. While Dollar General will defend this with the possibility of new jobs, these are low skill, part time positions that rarely include benefits. If jobs, safety, and security for the Washington Blvd area are this committee's concern, installing a Dollar General will have a negative effect on all three. Existing local businesses such as Tony's Deli, Sawhorse Cafe, and Roy's Bakery could all use help with parking and traffic that some blighted properties are in direct hindrance of. Maybe some focus should be put on such properties.

Independent, family run, businesses are the backbone of this vibrant community and I truly believe that this prospect will run in direct opposition.

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Kristen Mazzante

Please accept this email To be read as limited courtesy of the floor!! The communities small businesses are already struggling with covid, having another dollar general is not what our community needs. There are plenty in our area as of now Please reconsider your decision for the small business owners and for our community as a whole.

Giovanna Danielle

I have recently been made aware of a proposal to build a Dollar General at 305 Washington Boulevard in Williamsport, PA.

From a socioeconomic perspective, I believe that this is a horrible idea that will diminish the property values in the surrounding area and add to poverty and crime rates in this section of Williamsport. It has been shown through multiple studies that Dollar General stores eventually eradicate family-owned businesses in their surrounding area. The Institute for Local Self-Reliance, which advocates for small businesses, provided a brief which reads: "While dollar stores sometimes fill a need in cash-strapped communities, growing evidence suggests these stores are not merely a byproduct of economic distress, they're a cause of it." These establishments, and those behind them (with their habits of buying up real estate and letting it waste away) restrict true economic growth in our area.

From a personal standpoint, as a member of a three-generation family business in Williamsport, I would hate to see our growing city become a sprawl of corporation storefronts. These large companies have no investment in our community; they will not sponsor your child's baseball team, nor donate to your neighbor's cancer benefit. All they do is profit off of the poor and create a larger void to fix down the line. Thank you for taking the time to read this; please preserve Williamsport and help it to flourish. We are counting on you.

Andrew Evick

I would like the following brief opinion to be read as part of the limited courtesy of the floor portion of this evening's city council meeting:

The idea of Dollar General coming to 305 Washington Blvd is another step in the dominance of blight taking over Williamsport, not to mention of corporate America pushing aside Main Street. Research has proven that Dollar General is ready to take a 2 year loss to keep pricing low enough to build clientele at the expense of local businesses. These stores are not merely a byproduct of economic distress, but also the cause of it. They are nothing but tumors dotting our landscape. We are leaving a legacy of little value to future generations residing in Williamsport.

Mr. Allison stated that concludes for limited courtesy of the floor and thanked everyone. Mr. Allison changed the order of the agenda.

Resolution #9076

Resolution to Approve Employment – Director of Community & Economic Development

The City Clerk read the resolution.

Mr. Allison asked for a motion on the resolution.

Mr. Pulizzi made the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Banks.

Ms. Chappelle stated this resolution is to approve August "Skip" Memmi as the Director of Community & Economic Development at a salary of \$61,000 for the first 6 months and \$65,000 there after. Mr. Memmi retired as the Executive Director at Daulphin's County's Community & Economic Development. He holds an Associates Degree in Business Management from Shippensburg. He brings more than 30 years experience and is well qualified. He currently resides in Hummelstown and plans on becoming a resident in the City of Williamsport. His start date is Monday, October 12, 2020.

Mr. Allison welcomed him and Mr. Memmi thanked him.

Mr. Banks welcomed him and stated his resume looks great and it is nice that he can step into the role.

Mr. Yoder stated he is happy to have someone of his caliber joining the City and he is a great hire. This was reviewed in Finance and there is one thing he wanted to reiterate. The discussion we had involves setting goals, this trial period that will set him up for success, and he asked that in a couple of weeks that City Council may see those goals and have a chance to review them.

Ms. Miele stated this was reviewed by Finance and sent to the full body of Council with a positive recommendation and the salary is within the budget. Some of the things we discussed related to setting goals for a 6 month probationary period and this will help the administration to review. The other question, we discussed was, what is his visualization for his career with the City? Is this something you will do for a hand full of years, or...

Mr. Memmi answered that his immediate goal is to be in this position for at least five years and he will stay as long as health holds out. He enjoys public service and wants to lift up the community and is committed to this position for as long as his health holds up.

Mrs. Katz stated it looks like he is a owner of a small bakery.

Mr. Memmi stated he has owned 2 bakeries, 2 pizza shops, card and gift shop, he has been a small business owns and understands all efforts that goes into businesses. He also had been an elected official and wants to help facilitate businesses in Williamsport.

Mrs. Katz stated she is excited about his resume and asked what brings him to Williamsport.

Mr. Memmi stated he has been looking for an opportunity and the Mayor has convinced him that Williamsport is a great place to be so he is looking for housing here.

Mr. Pulizzi also welcomed him and stated he is excited about what we can accomplish and he is happy that the Mayor and others convinced him to come here.

Mr. Yoder stated if the Mayor or Joellen can give update on how we are doing with Public Works.

Ms. Chappelle stated we made a offer and it is was declined, so we will repost the position.

Mr. Yoder also said he is looking forward in the coming months to take a look at the other positions that are filled or to be filled.

Mr. Allison also welcomed him and stated we are looking forward to having him as part of the team and work on positive things that we are having in the community. He commended the administration for doing a good job and being successful in filling this position.

Mayor Slaughter thanked Mr. Memmi for taking this position and looks forward to the future.

Mr. Allison asked for a vote on the resolution.

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The resolution was carried with seven yes roll call votes. The vote was 7 to 0. All were in favor. Mr. Yoder voted yes, Mr. Mackey voted yes, Mr. Pulizzi voted yes, Mrs. Katz voted yes, Mr. Banks voted yes, Ms. Miele voted yes and Mr. Allison voted yes.

Resolution #9074

Resolution to Approve a Settlement & Release Agreement

The City Clerk read the resolution.

Mr. Allison asked for a motion on the resolution.

Mr. Pulizzi made the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Yoder.

Mr. Lubin stated this resolution is to approve a settlement with one of our insurance carriers. There was a dispute over coverage and we reached a resolution and asking for approval.

Mr. Allison asked if there were comments or questions.

The resolution was carried with seven yes roll call votes. The vote was 7 to 0. All were in favor.

Mr. Yoder voted yes, Mr. Mackey voted yes, Mr. Pulizzi voted yes, Mrs. Katz voted yes, Mr. Banks voted yes, Ms. Miele voted yes and Mr. Allison voted yes.

Resolution #9075

Resolution Authorizing Excavation of Certain Sts for Water Main Replacement Project Fiscal Year 2021

The City Clerk read the resolution.

Mr. Allison asked for a motion on the resolution.

Mrs. Katz made the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Yoder.

Mr. Gerardi stated this resolution is typical for this time of year. This one involves three streets, Susquehanna, Dubois St and Upland Road. The plant closes in November and we don't allow cuts in the streets without approval. We are requesting high performance cold patch and they have 45 days to mill and overlay. We did add brick streets should be put back the way they were. The Water Authority has already started this and they are permitted to do that and are requesting an extension. This was reviewed in Public Works.

Mrs. Katz stated this did come to Public Works and there is a lot of underground work that has to be done. We usually get one or two towards the end of the season and it is important that we know why they are being repaired and where they are. This was forwarded to the full body of Council with a positive recommendation.

Mr. Mike Miller stated this is a 1.2 million effort with the City and we are getting the City's paving list and we are updating and we will contribute to the City's paving amount. It is a win/win for both City and the administration.

Mr. Allison stated we are all happy with the replacements and it is a win/win.

The resolution was carried with seven yes roll call votes. The vote was 7 to 0. All were in favor.

Mr. Yoder voted yes, Mr. Mackey voted yes, Mr. Pulizzi voted yes, Mrs. Katz voted yes, Mr. Banks voted yes, Ms. Miele voted yes and Mr. Allison voted yes.

Resolution #9077

Resolution Authorizing MOU between City of Williamsport & Williamsport Area School District

The City Clerk read the resolution.

Mr. Allison asked for a motion on the resolution.

Mr. Pulizzi made the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Yoder.

Chief Hagan stated this resolution is our standard MOU and similar to the one approved in Feb. and the only change is the amount of the salary which goes up this year. Sgt. Jody Miller is doing a great job and we plan on continuing this.

Ms. Miele stated Finance did forward this to the full body of Council with a positive recommendation. We have had a school resource officer for several years now. She asked about the impact of COVID and when the officer is not at the school, he is serving as officer at City hall. The amount increased about 9%.

The resolution was carried with seven yes roll call votes. The vote was 7 to 0. All were in favor.

Mr. Yoder voted yes, Mr. Mackey voted yes, Mr. Pulizzi voted yes, Mrs. Katz voted yes, Mr. Banks voted yes, Ms. Miele voted yes and Mr. Allison voted yes.

Land Development – Dollar General - 305 Washington Blvd.

Mr. Knarr stated this is a request from Hutchinson Co LLC and as part of this is a demo plan to build a building. The new 5,990 feet is in the CC Zoning and is a permitted use. It is required to have 25 off street parking and it is 200sq feet, so they do meet Article 1345 for parking. The storm water was reviewed by the City Engineer and himself and it does meet the requirements. The facility will have two means of entrance, Franklin St and Washington Blvd. Washington Blvd will have to have Penn Dot approval. They were granted by Penn Dot and it was reviewed by our Planning Commission and County Planning Commission and was approved. It does mean all the requirements.

Mr. Allison stated before we start, he wanted to make a couple of statements to the public. It was addressed in some of the comments that City Council should not have approved this or welcomed this. Land Development is not something that City Council is involved in, it is a legal process, the development an land owner have to go to legal process. That process includes our Zoning Hearing Board, the County Planning Commission and City Planning Commission. Our hands are definitely tied legally and we don't have the latitude to address any developments as long as this follows the Code in the City ordinance. The business has to comply and fit in with the Zoning requirement and a Dollar General does fit in the zone. I am not making a judgement and am not arguing the points that people brought up, but City Council is bound by the legal system. Our own personal opinion, or the way we think and how we fit in, don't hold weight and we rarely has a hand in the development itself. If it goes through anyway, it is the administration or community development. The private business can pursue their development. A vote by Council does not mean....we need to follow the law.

Mr. Knarr stated to clarify, what happens is the developer or the property owner submits a plan to us and it is reviewed extensively myself and City engineer to make sure it meets our zoning standard and other criteris and then sent to Lycoming County Planning and they sent it back to us with comments and goes to

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our planning commission where it is reviewed. We look at it and if it does not meet our requirements, they have 30 days before it goes to Zoning board. If it does not meet the requirements, it goes to Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Allison asked for a motion and second.

Mr. Yoder made the motion and it was seconded by Mrs. Katz.

Mr. Banks stated he will have to abstain from this due to his significant other being involved in a law suit with the applicant.

Mr. Banks stated the plans have to be addressed, whether the public likes it or not, we have to push to change the code. It is not the developer's fault. The trees need to be addressed...what is not being addressed here is overhead hanging cable, the trees have to be trimmed or taken down and Codes might have to go out there. The other thing is the building set back and we need to require public access from the front of the building...the landscape plan ...getting to the bldg., you have to go two properties down, people will cut through the landscaping area and that doesn't even address the issues if you have mobility problems. So going in there, you can potentially get hit by a car. The biggest set back is for retail, this imply that you should drive here...we need to fix the Code tomorrow.

Ms. Miele stated that Dave is absolutely right, we have to recognize that they are deficiencies in our Code. We want to assure the walkability...our code does not do that. We found ourselves in a bit of a bind. She firmly opposes a bldg. that is set back in the street....There is some elderly houses in the East End, a school nearby and students would stop by after school....looking at the plans, why is the bldg. set back from the street, it would seem that it would maximize the parking, and settle the issue of pedestrian access, is there a reason why?

Mr. Knarr answered when you deal with the parking, there was already an existing bldg. with a drive through and his assumption is because of where the former bldg. is.. It was modified cause they were moving the drive through access.

Ms. Miele asked if someone could give insight.

Engineer from developer, we looked at a couple of things, but one of the issues was truck access. Having parking at rear would definitely bring access. It has more to do with the length of this lot, it needed to have the truck straight out on Washington Blvd.

Ms. Miele stated so what your are saying is, if we had required the bldg. to be closer to the street, you would not have been able to do this, correct?

Engineer answered that is correct based on the understanding of the way Dollar General handles their delivery, no, we could not.

Ms. Miele asked Mr. Knarr if the 10% and 3%, what does that actually mean?

Mr. Knarr read the ordinance stating, a vehicle use area which provides for 20 more....inaudible...in addition have a minimum of 3% reserved for landscaping...landscaping shall be reasonable distribution, discourage the growth of weeds....this is so you are not making this all a paved area, they are required to have that 10% landscape on commercial area on square footage of the area.

Ms. Miele stated so the 10% of the entire lot, of 26,000 sq feet, so the 3% is for the parking area, so 13% on any space that can be driven on...and the building area is?

Mr. Knarr stated the proposed plan is 5,990 square feet to meet the parking and all other requirements of the zoning code.

Engineer stated what Gary is saying we reduced it down to just the public accesable area.

Ms. Miele stated so the parcel area is about 28,000 minus the 7,000 which they have to do the 3% on...

Mr. Knarr answered correct.

Engineer stated what you are seeing there....inaudible...the 20% represents the whole parcel, green space and the pedestrian space.

Mrs. Katz stated she'd like to clarify about the truck coming in from Washington Blvd.

Engineer answered there is a turn over demstrated....it will come in off of Frankllin and will proceed on to Washington Blvd.

Mrs. Katz stated this goes back to Wendy's, it was difficult trying to get out of there...is there a way for the turn around and not have the parking spaces in the back.

Engineer answered unfortunately no..

Mrs. Katz stated we are trying to make sure our town looks terrific and she was happy about the brick fascade and trying to make this more upscale.

Mr. Mackey stated he won't beat a dead horse, because there is not a whole lot we can do about this. We heard also from the Hutchinson attorneys. We have received over 30 emails and he would encourage Hutchinson to stay on tonight and listen to some of the emails. He encourage them to listen to some of their concerns.

Ms. Miele asked the representatives what product will be offered.

Gabe Hutchinson stated this is our 51st year in business, we are local and we service the people. We are focusing on the Williamsport market. There are household items, clothes, school supplies, they are built in areas that have a need for this type of product.

Ms. Miele stated she wanted to recognize the community's feelings and concerns and the development in this area. She shares their concerns and one of their main charges is the improvement of our community.

The codes fall on us and it is our failutre that if the business does not meet the needs of the community. Our next task is to modify our Codes and our ordinances to better fit our community. We should bring all of our heads together for the next ERC meeting to take a look at our codes. If our community feels that this does not make our standards, we owe it to ourselves and constituents to change our codes and make the changes necessary.

Mr. Allison asked due to the fact that it is close to the corner when truck turns, will they be making a right turn.

Engineer answered they will be existing left and it will be prior to opening hours.....inaudible.

Mr. Jon Sander stated he wanted to comment...what they are looking to do is to replace an existing vacant building that will bring revenue, tax revenue and jobs and it meets all the requirements and will serve the college. This is a vacant lot right now, they stepped up to the plate and wanted to put a business there.

Mr. Gerardi stated the permit will tell them whether they can turn left or right. Franklin St. is ours and the City could require them to make the turns.

Mr. Sander stated they are taking an empty lot and tweeking it to look good, and he is all for the project.

Mr. Allison stated that is good information to have that detail ...

Mr. Knarr stated that is all part of the process, we look at industry standards as we review.

Mr. Allison stated there are a lot of details that go into it, it is not a rubber stamp.

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The land development was carried with six yes roll call votes. The vote was 6 to 0.

Mr. Yoder voted yes, Mr. Mackey voted yes, Mr. Pulizzi voted yes, Mrs. Katz voted yes, Mr. Banks abstained, Ms. Miele voted yes and Mr. Allison voted yes.

Discussion item - Setting City Council Meetings for 2021

Mr. Allison stated we have a prospective calendar presented to us and we are discussing two issues, one is our meeting time and the other is only having one meeting in August.

Mr. Allison asked for everyone's opinion on the time of meetings and there was a discussion about maybe still being on Zoom. He stated right now we are meeting at 6:30 Zoom, should we be able to meet at that time when returning in person.

Mr. Lubin stated under State law, people can participate and have the ability to act and vote remotely. So it was stated that we can have both an in person and remote meeting. So it was agreed that some people can participate remotely when meetings are back in person.

It was also decided that we would only have one meeting in August in 2021 and we are hoping that Little League will be started again. It was also discussed about maybe limit the time of debates and we can try to move the meetings through more quickly.

Mr. Allison stated that Council can do a better job and also work with the administration to move meetings a little bit faster. The meetings will be left on Thursdays and we will need a hybrid for a while, we can't predict the further.

After much discussion the meeting time was set at **7:00 PM** on Thursday in person and still meet at **6:30 PM** when we are on zoom/remote. It was also decided that we can also continue to have meetings on remote and also in person.

The resolution will appear on the next agenda for City Council to vote on it.

Accept for Filing:

Public Safety Meeting Minutes 09/22/20
Housing Needs Minutes 06/19/20
ERC Meeting Minutes 06/19/20
Finance Meeting Minutes 04/28/20 & 08/04/20, 09/22/20
Controller's Report June 2020
Codes Report August 2020

Mr. Allison asked for a motion to accept these minutes for filing.

Mr. Pulizzi made the motion and it was seconded by Mrs. Katz.

The minutes were accepted for filing with seven yes roll call votes. The vote was 7 to 0. All were in favor.

Mr. Yoder voted yes, Mr. Mackey voted yes, Mr. Pulizzi voted yes, Mrs. Katz voted yes, Mr. Banks voted yes, Ms. Miele voted yes and Mr. Allison voted yes.

Announcements

There will be a Police Pension Board meeting immediately following this City Council Meeting. The next regularly scheduled City Council meeting will be held on Thursday, October 22, 2020 a 6:30 PM, **Per zoom.**

Upcoming Meetings:

Friday, Oct. 9	11:00 AM ERC
	12:00 PM Housing Needs
Tuesday, Oct. 13	4:00 PM AD HOC/City Hall
Wednesday, Oct. 14	3:30 PM O&E Pension
Thursday, Oct. 15	10:30 AM Zoning Hearing Board
	4:00 PM Board of Health
Tuesday, Oct. 20	10:00 AM Blighted Property
	11:30 AM Public Safety
	1:00 PM Finance Meeting
	2:30 PM Public Works Meeting
	6:30 PM HARB
Thursday, Oct 22	6:30 PM City Council meeting

[Meetings Held in Trade & Transit, Unless Otherwise Noted – [scr] = William Sechler Community Room]

Mr. Allison asked for comments from members of City Council.

Mrs. Katz wanted to tell everyone about the Gold Star Family that John Markley was working on.

Mr. Allison stated There will be a monument constructed at Veterans Memorial Park. It is for families that lost loved ones in the line of duty. Nationally there are 62 of these now in existence, but there are 73 in the process right now, and we are one of them. This one will be the second in Pennsylvania. The Gold Star group will take the lead in this. This is a wonderful tribute to those who have given the ultimate sacrifice so we can enjoy the freedom that we are given. It doesn't have a dollar of City government into it, although it is worthy of it, but the volunteer effort is amazing. They have great plans. John Markley is very dedicated and enthusiastic about it. There is a plaque in the front. This a great thing coming to the City of Williamsport and we thank everyone involved.

Mr. Banks stated there is a supreme court to end the census, but there are workers still going around, so please fill out your census.

Mr. Allison stated yes, the census is very important for grants in our community.

Mr. Allison asked for comments from members of the administration.

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Mayor Slaughter wanted to give updates, we have the DEP recycling grant is ready to get started. Memorial Park is just about completed and East Third Street is in the final phases and should be opening up here soon. We are excited to have this good news.

Mr. Gerardi added it is leaf collection coming up, just leaves and no debris or brush. Place the leaves on the street for pick up, we don't want them in bags.

Mr. Winder stated with the recycling grant, we did apply for a new leaf machine, that was approved and he will be bringing forward a resolution to make that purchase. Once approved, it will take a month to get that machine in. He stated then we will have three leaf machines and it will help to make a difference.

Mr. Mackey updated everyone on the accessibility committee. He has scheduled some interviews and if there is anyone else interested, those interviews will be taking place next Tuesday, October 21, either at 11:30, 1:00 or 2:30 PM.

Mr. Winder stated he would appreciate if any member of Council would drive by Memorial Park, it has features that addresses every aspect of disability and we work hard on picking out the equipment.

Mr. Allison asked for comments from members of the public.

Jen Parks

As a resident and business owner within 1 mile of the proposed location for this Dollar General, I do NOT want to see yet another dollar store in Williamsport or the surrounding area. How many does Williamsport really need? Especially in our current economic situation, it is a great disservice to our community to top off the East Third Street Old City Gateway Project with a dollar store at the top of Franklin Street. Small businesses in this area contribute to our local economy as well community building, and will no doubt be harmed by putting corporate profits above the value of our locally owned establishments we are so fortunate to have. In addition to the ramifications to our local economy, there is simply not enough space to support the necessary parking and deliveries nor can the area sustain increased traffic congestion as a result. I ask that the City Council put the residents and locally owned businesses first and deny the proposal for the Dollar General at 305 Washington Blvd to protect our neighborhood from a large corporation pushing out these local businesses and reducing our property values.

Sarah Updegraff

I just wanted to throw in my voice to the dissent of the building of the dollar general on Washington Boulevard. I believe it would be bad for our community and for small businesses in the area. I would love to see that site creatively used for a park or a small local business instead of a mega-store filled with cheaply made, imported products.

Thanks so much for your attention to this matter

Alex Boyce

A dollar general is not wanted, needed or beneficial to our local community. There's always a family dollar off of park st. The impact of the dollar general on local economy would go one of two ways: 1) the large corporation makes negative impact on other local businesses, putting them out of business, decreasing the net tax revenue in total sum; or 2) local businesses thrive despite the dollar general, the dollar general closes the store, people lose jobs, estimated tax revenue is impacted negatively. There is no win to either scenario, the only win is to not allow a dollar general to be built within Williamsport city limits.

George Ness

I am writing to express my opposition to allowing Dollar General to put a store at 305 Washington Blvd. I respectfully ask that my opinion be read as part of the "limited courtesy of the floor" portion of the upcoming City Council meeting.

As a resident of the east-end community for over 30 years, I have several reasons for opposing such a move. I feel the community would be much better served by allowing a small independent business to occupy that space, not a corporate franchise. In the current economic climate of our country small businesses are endangered while big corporations continue to thrive as profits flow to a few wealthy CEOs rather than local small business owners. There is no need for a Dollar General at this location as there are a number of small businesses within a few blocks that provide whatever a Dollar General store would offer. An additional concern, particularly for the homes and neighboring businesses, is the negative impact of large semi trucks delivering to a store with limited large truck access. Much has been written and documented about the negative impact that such dollar-stores have on the neighborhood communities in which they are situated. It is my hope that council consider the concerns of the people living in this neighborhood and oppose Dollar General and look more favorably on a different small business to occupy the site at 305 Washington Blvd.

Barb Smith

I am a Williamsport resident, and I am writing in regards to the proposed Dollar General at 305 Washington Avenue. I request that my opinion be read as part of the "limited courtesy of the floor" portion of the October 8th City Council meeting.

I am wholeheartedly opposed to the opening of yet another dollar store in Williamsport.

Dollar stores are proven to hurt local "mom-and-pop" businesses, lower property values, attract violence & crime, and diminish residents' access to healthy food. Our area already has too many of them.

The site of this proposal is additionally problematic -- that area cannot handle any more traffic complications, and it is already nearly impossible to find parking. There are many locally-owned small businesses in that neighborhood that would be hurt by this development. And those businesses already provide so that there is no community need for a Dollar General at that site.

Please support our local small businesses and the health of our residents. Please do NOT allow a Dollar General to be opened at 305 Washington Avenue.

Stefanie Welty,

I'm writing in regards to the vote taking place tomorrow (Thursday, 10/8) to build a Dollar General on Washington Blvd. next to the Sawhorse Cafe where the old Bennie's Burgers & Wings is.

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As a resident of this neighborhood, I strongly urge you to NOT approve this addition. Stores such as these (Dollar General, Family Dollar, Dollar Tree, and the like) have a negative impact on the neighborhood and community as well as the locally owned small businesses in the vicinity. Their low prices encourage less spending with a focus on low-end products and devalues the higher-end products and services that our local businesses have to offer. This in turn hurts our local economy and will ultimately force more small businesses to close.

Again, I strongly urge you to NOT put in a low-end chain store that will hurt our local economy and small businesses.

Leah Peterson

I do not support the proposal to build a Dollar General on Washington Boulevard. As a professor at Lycoming College, I have deep concerns about how the Dollar General will negatively impact the area by halting economic growth which would result in the loss of a safe environment for the local community, including our college students. Statistically, Dollar Generals create greater food deserts, increase poverty rates, and eradicate family owned businesses that support our community.

With so many other Dollar Generals and other discount stores in Williamsport, why would the city of Williamsport support another store from this corporation? Why isn't the city defending and supporting local businesses more or bringing more sustainable and economically beneficial businesses to the area? Why is the city entertaining the idea of a corporation that has a history of preying on the poor, offering unhealthy foods, limiting the community's access to healthy food, and employing the minimum number of employees (typically only 2-4)? This business will not create jobs or support the economic growth of the area.

There are an extraordinary number of articles denouncing Dollar Generals and discount stores with evidence based research and history. Here are a few for you to read to educate yourselves on the problems that you will be creating if this vote passes:

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/19/business/dollar-general-opposition/index.html>

<https://www.propublica.org/article/how-dollar-stores-became-magnets-for-crime-and-killing>

<https://www.fastcompany.com/90278384/why-dollar-stores-are-bad-business-for-the-neighborhoods-they-open-in>

As the article by CNN states, "Advocates of tighter controls on dollar stores say the big chains intentionally cluster multiple stores in low-income areas. That strategy discourages supermarkets from opening and it threatens existing mom-and-pop grocers." They go on to say, "Family-owned grocery stores operate at razor-thin profit margins and dollar stores can pressure them with lower prices." These types of businesses not only undercut local grocers, but they also deter other businesses from operating nearby.

This chain is a threat that must be taken seriously. Our city needs clothing stores and other stores that sell higher quality necessities, not a store with a history of destroying the very communities that they reside in. Our city has an opportunity to support our local community by voting NO.

Ingrid Callenberger

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to state my anger and disapproval about the proposed variance approval for 305 Washington Boulevard without community input.

I was aware that the variance was voted against and now that the proposal has been changed to suit requirements it will be approved by the city council. What value is it to the city and the people of East End to have the variance approved?

At a time when The small businesses of The City of Williamsport are at risk of closing, the city chooses big business. We have seen what has happened to big businesses in rural PA. They walk out the door leaving behind unemployment and blight. I for one, and would hope my city council, my elected representatives, would hope we've seen enough of boom or bust corporations leaving our city in the dust. The arrival of so many Dollar Generals to the area show the quick slide into large swaths of poverty plaguing this city. Small businesses will save this city not corporations. When the needs of the few over the desires of the many are given power over our communities, the community is doomed. At a time when we need to stay together, approval of this corporate blight is a vote against our community.

Every location of Dollar General in this small community is surrounded by blight. I dread what the future holds as we continue to hope Williamsport will thrive instead of just survive. We don't need another company with low salaries in our community, whose profits move over seas and whose shareholders have never even visited our small and vulnerable city let alone spend their money here.

As a small business owner within the city of Williamsport as well as a member of the east end community, I do not want you to vote your approval for the building of 305 into a Dollar General until the public opinion has had a chance to be heard.

Beau Schemery

Allowing a Dollar General to occupy this space is an affront not just to the local businesses in the general area but to the city as a whole. This is something no one needs. There is a Family Dollar less than a mile away and it is a breeding ground for poorly made merchandise, food with nearly no nutritional value, and is a disservice to its clientele. Dollar General will be no different. I have lived my entire life in this city and I have seen too many of these sad corporate dispensaries dropped in our neighborhoods. There is ABSOLUTELY no need for this on a block that has already become a blight due to an underutilized building. The city would be better served using this space as a public parking lot to aid the surrounding businesses and church and could generate some revenue for the city. City Council, you did the right thing by denying this business previously. I urge you to maintain that conviction and integrity now. Say no to Dollar General. Say yes to Williamsport and the small local businesses that make this city awesome. Please read this as an opinion at the city council meeting. Thank you for your time.

Kathy Harman

I hope this can be read at the open portion of the meeting as public comment against the building of Yet another unneeded Dollar General Store At 305 Washington Blvd. that would risk the loss of our neighborhood peace and risk jeopardizing the livelihoods of more family and small businesses.

I am opposing this ordinance to allow a dollar general on Washington Blvd.

As a city resident and small business owner I am tired of big box stores getting the breaks on taxes, variances and essential status especially during this ongoing pandemic.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

Give the small business owner a break!!
thank you for your time

Martha Townsend-Ness

Please relay to the City Council at tonight's meeting my opposition to the proposed Dollar General Store on Washington Boulevard. To consider putting this store into this neighborhood is potentially dangerous as well as unfair to all of the residents and business owners in this area, all of whom expressed their opposition at the meeting held in the summer. Safety issues, parking concerns, traffic disruptions and potential damage to small alleys by large delivery trucks are some of the concerns raised by the plan to put in an unneeded store at this location. Property values will decline as well. Please reconsider this proposal and turn it down.

Lori Marzilli

I'd like to express my concerns on the proposed Dollar General build on Washington blvd. I feel like this is an unnecessary step backwards for our city at a time when we should be extra vigilant in our attentions when it comes to our local economy and growth.

I feel it is far more important for us to focus on our small businesses and the positive impact they have on our community than it is to allow an unneeded chain to build in an area that needs a boost, not a setback. Please reconsider, this year has been hard enough and this plan will no doubt drop the value of homes and businesses in that area.

Your local businesses owners need you more.

Nicole Judge

The proposed plans for a Dollar General at 305 Washington Blvd are quite honestly a very bad idea. Especially when within a very vibrant local community, these thinly staffed, chaotic excuses for stores bring nothing but crime and disarray. Gun violence has decreased in prosperous cities and towns around the country but remains high in poor communities where these stores predominate. This area of Williamsport still (thankfully) supports a Weis market and several locally owned businesses that can serve all of the functions AND MORE than a Dollar General. The Dollar General store will happily sell cheap, foreign-made products and prey on low income local residents. They offer low wages and little to no benefits to employees and directly compete with local businesses for customers.

Please, please do not fall through this rabbit hole of decay and protect our communities from corporate takeover.

Adjournment

Mr. Allison asked for a motion to adjourn. **Mr. Yoder made the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Pulizzi.** Meeting was adjourned with at **9:13 PM** with unanimous ayes.

Respectfully Submitted by

Janice M. Frank
City Clerk