A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BECKLEY CONVENED AT 6:30 PM ON FEBRUARY 27, 2024, IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIA WEB-X.

PRESENT: Mayor Robert R. Rappold, Recorder-Treasurer Billie Trump, City Attorney Bill File, and Secretary Susan Miller. Council Members: Janine Bullock, Kevin Price, Robert Dunlap, Tom Sopher, Sherrie Hunter, Bob Canter, and Cody Reedy. The following City employees were present: Director of IT Bill Kelly, Anthony Martin (IT), Chief Coughlin of BFD, Board of Public Works (BPW) Director Pam Frey, Chief Code Enforcement Officer Donald Morgan, Chief of BPD Dean Bailey, Director of Parks & Recreation Leslie Baker.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The public had the option to join the meeting either in person or by WEB-X from their computer, or by phone, using the weblink or phone number provided the day of the meeting on the City's webpage at Beckley.org or the City's Facebook page.

Council dispensed with the reading of the minutes from the City Council meeting dated February 13, 2024, copies of which had been distributed to each member.

Council unanimously approved the minutes as written on a motion by Councilman Price and seconded by Councilwoman Bullock. Next, Executive Director of Seed Sower, Inc., Mr. Jay Phillips, gave Council a packet of information regarding Inclusive Recovery Cities (IRC). Seed Sower, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization specializing in addiction recovery, housing, transportation, and recovery support services. Seed Sower partners with Raleigh County Drug Court, Fruits of Labor, Family Treatment Court, The Day Report Center, Workforce WV, Jobs In Hope, Adult Education, WVU Tech, The Southern WV Men's Fellowship Home, Division of Rehabilitative Services, numerous behavioral health care providers, various faith-based organizations, and has plans to partner with many others. This is part of Seed Sower's Recovery Ecosystem. This is when multiple community stakeholders engage to leverage their collective strengths around the recovery efforts in the community. This work has been noticed at the state, national, and international levels, specifically for Beckley. It is known as a recovery-oriented system of care. He said Beckley has been made an offer to become the first IRC in the United States. There are twenty-six IRC's in various countries. The City of Beckley has been asked to be the first charter member of the IRC group in the US. Houston, TX has been asked to be the second charter member of the IRC group. The information provided by Mr. Phillips is incorporated into these minutes.

Seed Sower has commitments from various stakeholders such as NRGRDA, Work Force WV, Jobs In Hope, Fruits of Labor, The Day Report Center, Family Treatment Court, Drug Court, WVU Tech, and a couple of churches. An IRC Council will be formed. The Charter Signing Ceremony and launch of the IRC is tentatively scheduled for March 19th at 9:30 a.m. in the WVU Tech Auditorium on Neville Street. Mr. Phillips invited the Mayor and Council members to attend the event. Councilwoman at Large Hunter asked Mr. Phillips what R.C.O. represents. It is a Recovery Community Organization. Seed Sower, Inc. is the only active RCO that is south of Wheeling, WV. Councilman Bullock asked if Seed Sower works with the federal prison system. Mr. Phillips said Seed Sower works with Bev Sharp and the REACH initiative, but he isn't sure if a local contact has been established. Councilman Dunlap asked if Seed Sower works with Family Treatment Court and Drug Court. Mr. Phillips said yes. Councilman Dunlap suggested that Mr. Phillips work with Steven R. Davis to help inmates that do not have homes by helping them locate housing prior to being released. Mr. Phillips said he sees a pathway that Seed Sower could offer recovery coaches in the jail system.

Next, Mr. File presented a resolution the New River Transit Authority (NRTA) requested to extend the termination date of the lease that Council approved several meetings prior to this meeting. The NRTA is requesting to extend the existing lease by six years with a termination date of December 31, 2031. The extension increases the ability of the NRTA to obtain grants. Mr. File opened a public hearing. Christina Baisden spoke in favor of extending the lease. There were no further comments. Mr. File closed the public hearing. The resolution was unanimously approved by Council on a motion made by Councilman Sopher and seconded by Councilman Price. The resolution is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Next, Mr. File presented a resolution in which the City approves the Beckley Sanitary Board (BSB) receiving a grant that has been awarded to it from the West Virginia Emergency Management Division (WVEMD) in the amount of $848K. This money will be used for the alleviation of stormwater and flooding in the Robert C. Byrd Drive area in Beckly. This resolution authorizes General Manager of the Beckley Sanitary Board (BSB) to execute all documents regarding this grant and this project. Council unanimously approved the resolution on a motion made by Councilwoman at Large Hunter and seconded by Councilman at Large Reedy. The resolution is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Next, Mr. File presented a resolution for the City approving the Sanitary Board accepting a grant that has been awarded from the West Virginia Emergency Management Division (WVEMD) in the amount of $1,061,000.00. This money will be for the alleviation of stormwater and flooding in the area including Hartley Avenue, Beckley Little League, and Pinecrest Stormwater in Beckly. This resolution authorizes the General Manager of the Beckley Sanitary Board (BSB) Jerimiah Johnson to execute all documents regarding this grant and this project. Council unanimously approved the resolution on a motion made by Councilman Price and seconded by Councilwoman Bullock. The resolution is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Next, Mr. File presented a resolution authorizing the City to accept a grant from the US Department of the Treasury and the WV Department of Environmental Protection in the amount of $487K to provide assistance needed and warranted to remove abandoned and dilapidated structures in the City. Chief Code Enforcement Officer Donnie Morgan said that the expiration of the grant is January 31, 2025. The Code Enforcement Office application includes thirty-seven structures in the City needing removed. This application was approved by the Department of Environmental Protection. The WV Historic Preservation Office needs to give its approval before demolition can begin. Once approval is received from both offices the City can begin demolition. It has a goal date of January 31, 2025, to have the structures demolished. Council unanimously approved the resolution on a motion made by Councilwoman at Large Hunter and seconded by Councilman Sopher. The resolution is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

OLD BUSINESS: The Mayor expressed his appreciation for the number of activities from churches and schools throughout the City in support of Black History Month. He congratulated Councilwoman Bullock for her involvement. Councilwoman Bullock thanked Vicki Webb for attending the meeting with her on Wednesday February 21, 2024, in Charleston, WV at the State Historic Preservation Office for the Wright Hunter Cemetery which placed seventh out of nine to be considered to be placed on the national register of historic places. The decision is now up to the National Park Service. The Mayor thanked Ms. Webb for all the work she has done and continues to do for the City and said she was awarded a key to the City several years ago. Councilwoman Bullock asked Chief Bailey if he has had a chance to look into the Hartley Avenue and Bostic Street situation. He said he has not had time, but he will as soon as possible.

NEW BUSINESS: Councilwoman at Large Hunter acknowledged the passing of Larry George. The Mayor also acknowledged the passing of John Gorman. Councilman Dunlap congratulated the new owner of 343 Prince Street, Ben Worley with Edward Jones. Councilman Dunlap thanked Councilman Reedy for the great job he has done with the construction job at that location.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Mary West asked the City to help individuals that live alone by providing them with around-the clock care. She voiced concerns regarding feral cats and speeding drivers on Larew Avenue. Tom Mosley requested that the speed limit on Berry Street be decreased to 15 mph and a three way stop installed. Rose Hicks said she opposes the WV DOH and WVU Tech Streetscape project including one-way streets and said left turn signals are needed in various places downtown. Audra Brandon works at the Beckley Welcome Center and said it has experienced an increase in tourists utilizing the Bike Share Program and people from twenty-nine different states have visited the Beckley Welcome Center. Crystal Alanso Executive Director of the Raleigh County Community Action (RCCA) said the largest funder for the Pinehaven Homeless Shelter has cut its funding by $365K. Currently the shelter operates as a ninety-bed shelter, and it will have to decrease to a twenty-bed shelter. She said seventy individuals could potentially become homeless due to this decrease in funding. She requested a Workshop with the City of Beckley's Common Council and the Raleigh County Commission. Councilman Dunlap asked why RCCA's funding source is changing so dramatically. She said that she has a meeting with the funder Thursday, February 29th and hopes to learn more then. She said it's current grant runs through June 30, 2024, so the decrease would be effective July 1, 2024. Councilman Sopher asked if this involves the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHR). She said yes. Councilman Dunlap said Adult Protective Services may be able to help. He said the legislature is currently in session and it would be nice to have it work on things such as this. He said phone calls need to be made now. Danielle Stewart said the situation with the Pinehaven Homeless Shelter is dire. Danielle reminded everyone that the deadline to voice your concern with the Department of Highways (DOH) Streetscape project is March 4, 2024, and encourage everyone to do so.

She said the Raleigh County Prevention Coalition is made up of volunteers and it, as well as other agencies need to be recipients of some of the opioid settlement money the City received. Kris Kincaid recommended that the City of Beckley adopt a housing first initiative and adopt the same regulations the county has for tiny house communities. She said some of the money awarded to the City to tear down dilapidated structures should be used to help individuals that are homeless by considering an alternative for those structures. The Mayor asked if there were any comments online. The Mayor announced if calling in by phone dial *3 to raise your hand. If connected by computer: Click the "hand icon" on your participant's panel. Michael Smith called expressing his concern due to the number of panhandlers in the City causing problems with traffic and with litter. He said if these individuals are required to have a permit by the county and/or City (to do business) it needs enforced. He said if there is no permit required, one needs enacted. He supports contacting the legislature to legalize the recreational use of marijuana. A lady named Pat called but would not give her last name. She made negative comments about Seed Sower. There were no further comments. Council unanimously approved adjournment on a motion made by Councilman Price and seconded by Councilman Sopher. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

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Mayor Recorder-Treasurer