

WRIGHTSVILLE BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING MEETING

February 19, 2024

Borough Chambers * 601 Water Street * Wrightsville

The Planning Meeting of the Borough of Wrightsville governing body convened at 6:30 pm on Monday, February 19, 2024. Council President Giandalia called the meeting to order and led the salute to the American Flag.

In attendance: Council President Giandalia, Vice President Lyle, Councilwoman Barrett, Councilwoman Ferrari, Councilman Gromling, Mayor Slenker, Secretary Hoff

Absent: Treasurer Sahd, Engineer McCoy, Solicitor Ruth

PATRONS:

Ed Sipes:

Mr. Sipes introduced himself to members of council and those in attendance and stated he was in attendance to ask council to honor not putting Eric White on the ballot for the upcoming municipal election. No further discussion was held.

Mel McDonald:

Mrs. McDonald relayed to those in attendance that she had no idea who Patrica Young was and after finding out where she lived, she went to her home to talk with her. Mrs. McDonald told council members that “she works with war vets, grew up in Wrightsville and she is the best thing to hit Wrightsville and should be given a chance”.

Comments from Mrs. McDonald were made after each potential candidate for the vacant council seat was asked questions from current council members.

Mrs. McDonald asked members of council “why does Mike have borough training documents at his home?”

ACTION ITEMS:

Councilman Gromling made a motion to approve a Cooperation Agreement between Wrightsville Borough, Grantee, and the Susquehanna National Heritage Area, sub-grantee, for the Local Share Account- Statewide Grant. Vice President Lyle seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Before the public comment period, President Giandalia explained the process for voting and choosing an individual to fill the vacant council seat. President Giandalia that a roll call vote is taken after an individual is nominated and majority vote wins, noting in a case of a tie the mayor will cast the tie-breaking vote. President Giandalia announced that 3 letters of interest were received from Edward Sipes, (Dr.) Patricia Young and Eric J. White.

Councilwoman Barrett announced to those in attendance that she had prepared a series of 4 questions to ask each potential candidate for Borough Council. Before each candidate was asked the prepared questions, she asked that the other candidates be sequestered while the other candidates were being interviewed. The following questions were asked of each candidate:

(1) Wrightsville residents interested in serving the community as a member of Borough Council have varied backgrounds and experience. Some have direct experience in local government, and others possess skills and expertise in other areas that are transferrable to municipal government service. How has your experience prepared you to make decisions on behalf of your constituents, if elected to office? (2) How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process in our borough? (3) What steps do you think should be taken to ensure transparency and accountability in the Borough Council's decisions and (4) If you received a \$1 million (dollar) grant to use for the borough any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why. Councilwoman Barrett and Councilwoman Ferrari asked the questions to each candidate, no other member of council participated in the interview process.

Question	Dr. Patricia Young	Edward Sipes	Eric J. White
#1 Wrightsville residents interested in serving the community as a member of Borough Council have varied backgrounds and experience. Some have direct experience in local government, and others possess skills and expertise in other areas that are transferable to municipal government service. How has your experience prepared you to make decisions on behalf of your constituents, if elected to office?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have my PsyD in Clinical Psychology • I work with a variety of people across departments. • I'm the VP of an outpatient program and I oversee 14 outpatient offices and supervise 100+ therapists. • I serve on an executive board. • I think one of my strengths is my ability to work with different people and personalities and find common ground. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stormwater conservation. • We are along the river. • I was president of a committee. • Able to educate the residents about the importance of stormwater from the knowledge I have received over the years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I served on council for 8 years, and I was the president for 5 years. • I got grant money for the borough, which meant there were no tax increases. • Before this I was the CIO of Trinity Pharmacy Services. • I also ran a chain of video stores and a toy and candy store.
#2 How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process in our borough?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would "get out there." • Engage with the residents and ask the residents questions. • Knocking on doors • I would also be present at community events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make yourself available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call me
#3 What steps do you think should be taken to ensure transparency and accountability in the Borough Council's decisions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open conversations • Sharing meeting minutes • Being honest about conversations on/off the record 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put everything out on social media. • Present ahead of meetings. • Respond to the residents' questions/concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's not transparent? "Records are open to the public".

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly address issues/communities of interest 		
<p>#4 If you received a \$1M grant to use for the borough in any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the community. • Discuss community needs with council. • Take our mission/vision into consideration. • Review the 2011 Strategic Plan & include the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask: What are the needs of the borough? • Address the rainwater issue in the Walnut Street alley. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've done that already, several times. • I've worked on the fishing pier, road work, and work needed on alleys (with grants). • Secured several grants while serving on council.

After the question-and-answer period, President Giandalia announced that nominations to fill the vacancy will begin.

Councilwoman Barrett nominated (Dr.) Patrica Young to fill vacant borough council seat in Ward 2. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll call votes:

Councilwoman Barrett- aye

Councilwoman Ferrari – aye

Vice President Lyle – nay

Councilman Gromling – nay

President Giandalia -nay

Nomination failed with a 3-2 vote.

Councilman Gromling nominated Eric J. White to fill vacant borough council seat in Ward 2. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll call votes:

Councilwoman Barrett- nay

Councilwoman Ferrari – nay

Vice President Lyle – aye

Councilman Gromling – aye

President Giandalia -aye

Motion carried with a 3-2 vote in favor of Mr. White.

Ed Sipes received no nominations.

President Giandalia then asked Mayor Slenker to swear Mr. White in and issue the Oath of Office statement, before Mayor Slenker could begin, Mr. White raised his right hand and recited the Oath on his own without any interaction with Mayor Slenker.

After the vote was taken to fill the vacancy, a few residents in attendance expressed their frustration and anger about the decision from council to have Eric fill a vacancy when he lost the November 2023 election to Councilwoman Barrett. Some remarks made were “I’m not surprised at the vote”, “vote was fixed”, “good old boys club”, “they don’t care what we want”.

Councilwoman Ferrari asked why applicants interested in filling the vacant council seat were only given 9 days and not 30 days to submit their letters of interest. President Giandalia stated, “in a ward of 424 registered votes, 9 days is fine and in some cases decisions like these are and can be made the same day”.

After the vote, Councilwoman Ferrari relayed to those in attendance that she prepared some remarks and wanted to share them with those in attendance. Councilwoman Ferrari said “a rumor circulated since the election that Landis would be appointed to the borough municipal authority, and White would replace him on council. She also said council President Joseph Giandalia asked her if she would be able to work with White. This unfolded exactly as it was promised, adding that the appointment seems shady, unethical, and premeditated since the public was only given 10 days to submit a letter of interest.”

Councilwoman Barrett also relayed to those in attendance that she prepared remarks and wanted to share them with those in attendance. A portion of Councilwoman’s Barrett remarks noted the following, “Ms. Ferrari and I had been warned immediately following the November 2023 election results that what has just happened was going to occur,” Barrett read from prepared remarks after the vote. “People talk, and the warnings we received were clear and consistent. Eric White lost the election. So, Phillip Landis would resign from council, and this would create a vacancy with a new path for Mr. White to be reinstated on the council.”

President Giandalia announced that he is hearing the word transparent a lot from Councilwoman Barrett and Councilwoman Ferrari Councilwoman Ferrari. He asked both council members to explain what they mean and what is borough council not being transparent about. Councilwoman Ferrari replied that she believes that 2 borough council meetings each month are needed. Councilwoman Barrett would like to have monthly departmental reports posted on the borough’s website along with the Municipal Authority Meeting Minutes.

BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Administration & Finance:

No report.

Public Works:

No report

Public Safety:

No report.

Community & Economic Development:

No report.

Parks & Recreation:

No report.

Personnel:

No report

Complaint Committee:

No report.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS:

No additional business.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilman Gromling made a motion to adjourn the February 19, 2024 Planning Meeting of the governing body of Wrightsville Borough. Vice President Lyle seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Tammie Hoff, Borough Secretary