

**CITY OF SAINT MARYS COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING**

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**DECEMBER 20, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular monthly Council meeting of the City of Saint Marys was called to order by Mayor Christopher Pletcher on Monday, December 20, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. Notice of this meeting was sent to Council on December 16, 2021, posted at City Hall and published in the Daily Press.

**PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**

**ROLL CALL**

Mayor Christopher Pletcher, Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts, Andrew Mohny, Margie Brown, Gina Vrobel, Shane Schneider, Solicitor Tom Wagner, Manager Joseph Fleming, and Recording Secretary, Lorrie Levenduski.

City Staff: Tom Nicklas, Chief of Police, Tina Gradizzi, Community Development Director, Dani Schneider, Parks and Recreation Director, Carol Muhitch, Finance Director, and Kristi Wendel, Deputy Finance Director.

**VISITORS**

Jerry Sorg, Lyle Garner, Brian Gallagher, Devin Brock, Mike Stauffer, Sara Welsh, Faith Ruehle, Marty Kim, Keith VanHorn, Lucas Schreiber, Faisal El Awar, Sally Geyer, Jacqueline El Awar, Stephen Bagley, Amy Cherry, Richard Sadley, and Kurt Nesbitt.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**  
November 15, 2021 – Regular  
meeting  
Motion Passed

Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts made a motion to approve the November 15, 2021 minutes, seconded by Gina Vrobel and all were in favor.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF  
LIFE SAVING EFFORTS BY  
EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Chief of Police Tom Nicklas provided the following presentation:

“Mr. Mayor, members of Council, Mr. Manager; thank you for providing a few moments today in order to commend three members of the City of St. Marys Police Department, personnel of the St. Marys Area Ambulance Service and dispatchers from the Elk County Office of Emergency Services for recent lifesaving efforts. I am honored to provide you with a brief summary of two incidents where police officers of your City of St. Marys Police Department teamed with St. Marys Ambulance and Elk County 911 and were able to use their experience and training to help keep two citizens of St. Marys with their families this holiday season.

On August 17, 2021 at 11:40 a.m., Ptlm. Derrick Welsh, Ptlm. Chris Smith and Ptlm. DJ Marconi responded to Pfaff's Market on Atlantic St. for a reported 57-year-old man who was not conscious and not breathing. Ptlm. Welsh arrived to find CPR in progress on John Fox. Ptlm. Welsh encouraged continued chest compressions while he prepared and applied an automated external defibrillator, or AED, to the patient. AED's have been carried in all SMPD patrol vehicles for a number of years. In this case, the AED did not recognize a heart rhythm requiring intervention. The ambulance then arrived and Ptlm. Welsh continued to assist St. Marys Ambulance personnel as part of the team continuing CPR. The patient was stabilized and transported for additional care by the following St. Marys Area Ambulance personnel:

Kirk Orton, Jeff Reeser, Matthew Wachob, Lucas Schreiber, RonFingado, Faisal El-awar, Marty Kim, Greg Gebauer

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Thanks to their efforts Mr. Fox recovered and is here with us tonight.

On November 11, 2021 at 3:30 a.m., Ptlm. Shawn Kronenwetter and Ptlm. Mitchell Klender responded to a residence on Dippold Ave. for an unknown medical problem. On arrival, Officers Kronenwetter and Klender encountered the patient, Kentaro Azuma, with CPR already in progress by a resident. The officers assessed the circumstances and continued CPR. An AED was prepared and applied to the patient. The AED applied a shock to the patient three times due to his condition. St. Marys Area Ambulance personnel then arrived, took over care and transported the patient for further treatment. Later that day, SMPD received a request from UPMC Muncy for a download of the data contained within the AED to aid in the patient's care. Officers on duty found no local resource for obtaining the data from the device, so arrangements were made to transport the AED to Pittsburgh where it could be processed. The AED was flown to UPMC Muncy via a Stat Medivac helicopter from Penn Highlands Elk. UPMC later reported the data was vital in treating the patient.

The St. Marys Area Ambulance personnel on this call were:

Jonathan Suarez, Tom Tomaski, Keith Vanhorn, Cathy Zimmerman, Jackie Fingado, Brian Gallagher, Greg Gebauer

Mr. Azuma is also able to be here tonight due to your emergency responders' prompt care.

In both cases, the quick and continuous care by your police officers and the personnel of the St. Marys Ambulance, Penn Highlands and all subsequent healthcare facilities and personnel resulted in a positive outcome for both men.

We cannot omit the emergency dispatchers of the Elk County Office of Emergency Services for their professionalism when receiving and processing these and all critical calls: Paul Handza II and Jenna Gabor who dispatched the Pfaff's call, and Debra Beck and Jackie Solic who handled the Dippold Ave. call.

On behalf of the City of St. Marys Police Department, I would like to take this opportunity to personally commend Officers Welsh, Kronenwetter and Klender for their quick response and actions which undoubtedly help save these men's lives. I also thank the numerous personnel of the St. Marys Area Ambulance Service and the Elk County Office of Emergency Services for their continued excellent work for St. Marys and the surrounding area."

Greg Gebauer, Station Manager of the St. Marys Ambulance Service, explained these types of incidents receive a response from on and off duty Ambulance Service personnel. He wanted Council and the public to be aware that our police officers are sometimes the first to arrive to the scene and how fortunate we are that they provide crucial life savings efforts.

**PRESENTATION OF YEARS  
OF SERVICE PLAQUES TO  
POLICE OFFICERS CHRIS  
SMITH AND BRAD  
HARSHBARGER**

Mayor Chris Pletcher and Chief Tom Nicklas presented plaques to officers Chris Smith and Brad Harshbarger for their years of service.

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**PRESENTATION OF  
PLAQUES TO OUTGOING  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
MEMBERS**

Manager Joe Fleming presented plaques to outgoing Councilwoman Margie Brown and Councilwoman Gina Vrobel. He then presented a duplicate of the entrance sign to City Hall which listed the current Council members to Mayor Chris Pletcher.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS ON  
AGENDA TOPICS**

There were no citizen comments on agenda topics.

**MANAGERS REPORT**

Manager Fleming provided the following report:

- “We have outstanding Emergency Services in our community, and I thank you all.
- I want to thank everyone involved in making Light Up Night a success downtown. Great crowd on hand.
- The new City of St. Marys App. had over 600 devices download the app so far, with the weather camera being the most visited tab. Another great feature of the app is the push notifications, which we will be utilizing to inform citizens of important situations in the city. We are receiving resident complaints on the app and wanted to advise residents to submit non-emergency complaints through the app and all emergencies should be directed to respected agencies especially after normal office hours.
- I want to congratulate Patrolman Brad Harshbarger and Patrolman Chris Smith on their retirement from the St. Marys Police Department. Thank you for all your years of service to the community of Saint Marys and good luck to you both. Enjoy as your lives move forward.
- Saint Marys Police Department has selected 2 new full time patrolmen to replace the outgoing officers. The individuals selected were Patrolman Brett Herzing who will move from part-time to full-time and Patrolman Alexander Nester. These officers will begin their full time status next month and will be presented to City Council in January.
- Street projects have wrapped up their major projects for the year. Main focus will be on clearing of the roadways for the winter but with the nice weather we are receiving they have been performing smaller projects throughout the city.
- We are currently working with Zito media to link the City TV channel to the City Website so anyone can view the content, and not just Zito customers.
- The campaign for the Parks Sponsorship Initiative is underway and we have been receiving positive feedback which runs until January 31<sup>st</sup> 2022. I will give a more detailed report at the January Regular Council Meeting.
- A tentative agreement has been reached with regards to Non-Uniform Union contract. The contract now goes to a union membership vote and if accepted, the incoming council will be presented the contract for ratification at the next regular council meeting in January. Of course, the new council will be given time to review the contract

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prior to their vote.

- In part of promoting community engagement between City Hall and Saint Marys, we are doing a drawing of Christmas gift baskets through our City Facebook page. City staff went to local businesses to see if they would be interested in sponsoring items for these baskets, in turn, the response was so great we are able to give away 3 baskets due to the generosity of the local businesses. I want to thank all the businesses for their contributions. The drawing will be done as a live event tomorrow December 21<sup>st</sup>. Please go to City of Saint Marys Facebook page for more details.
- A reminder that City offices will be closed on December 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> in observance of Christmas and New Years.
- For members of Council who will be departing next year, I thank you all and you will be missed. You have created a path forward into the future. There have many accomplishments during your time on Council and I am truly honored and grateful to have worked with you.
- Lastly, I want to wish the city a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Manager Fleming provided the following November, 2021 Treasurer's Report:

The revenue collected for the General fund was at 94% of budget. For 2020 revenue was at 86%; for 2019 it was 88% and for 2018 revenue was at 94% of budget. The expenditures for the General Fund were at 87% of budget and in 2020 expenditures were 81%; for 2019 they were 82% and for 2018 expenditures compared to budget was 86%. Benchmark would be at 91.6%. The Sewage Treatment Fund billed 91% of the budgeted revenue and had expenditures of 82% of budget. For 2020 - Revenue was 89% - Expenditures 84% Earned Income tax collected as of the end of November was 98% of budget; for 2020 - 93%; for 2019 - 90% and for 2018 EIT collections compared to budget was 99%. Total Real Estate taxes collected as of the end of November was 100% of budget; for 2020 - 98%; for 2019 - 96% and for 2018 total real estate tax collection compared to budget was 98%. Market value of the pension plans decreased in November but had increased from last November.

**PUBLIC HEARING: 2022  
City Budget**

Mayor Pletcher opened the 2022 City Budget hearing at 7:30 p.m.

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Mayor Pletcher closed the public hearing at 7:31 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE ACTION:**

**Consider for adoption:**

Ordinance No. 327, amending Chapter 18 Part 3 by adding a definition and allowing for consumption-based charges for Residential Properties

Ordinance No. 327 amending Chapter 18 Part 3 by adding a definition and allowing for consumption-based charges for Residential Properties was presented for adoption.

Manager Fleming noted this ordinance will change the sewer rate structure to allow for residential flat rate and consumption-based billing.

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Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 327, seconded by Andrew Mohney.

Shane Schneider asked the Manager if he had received any feedback on the ordinance change and he responded no.

Motion Passed

All were in favor of the motion to adopt Ordinance 327.

Resolution 21-07 – Setting monthly sewer rental rates for residential and nonresidential service

Motion Passed

Resolution No. 21-07, setting monthly sewer rental rate for residential and nonresidential service was presented for adoption.

Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 21-07, seconded by Shane schneider and all were in favor.

Ordinance No. 328, providing for the levy and assessment of taxes for the fiscal year 2022

Motion Passed

Ordinance No. 328 providing for the levy and assessment of taxes for the fiscal year 2022 was presented for adoption.

Mayor Pletcher made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 328, providing for the levy and assessment of taxes for the fiscal year 2022, seconded by Gina Vrobel and all were in favor.

Resolution No, 2021-08, the 2022 City Budget for various funds

Resolution No. 21-08, the 2022 City Budget for various funds was presented for adoption.

Andrew Mohney made motion to adopt Resolution No, 21-08, the 2022 City Budget for various funds, seconded by Shane Schneider.

Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts commented due to the .5 millage increase in taxes for the Recreation Fund, he encouraged residents to complete the Parks and Recreation survey. He also requested the Recreation Board members investigate additional revenue sources for the Recreation Fund instead of requesting additional tax increases.

Mayor Pletcher encouraged donations to the sponsorship initiative program for the parks.

Motion Passed

All were in favor of the motion.

Resolution 21-09: Strategic Management Planning Grant Application

Resolution 21-09, Strategic Management Planning Grant Application was presented for adoption.

Tina Gradizzi explained in 2015 the City participated in an Early Intervention Plan which provided recommendations for government fiscal and operational efficiency. This was based on a 5-year plan and numerous recommendations had already been implemented. The new program is called the Strategic Management Plan. This resolution would approve the submission of the grant application which commits 25 percent of the costs.

Manager Fleming confirmed the committed costs would come from capital funds.

Andrew Mohney made a motion to approve Resolution No. 21-09, seconded by Margie Brown.

Solicitor Wagner explained this planning became necessary when numerous municipalities were having financial difficulties, and some entered into bankruptcy. The purpose of these plans was to help municipalities avoid those difficulties.

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Motion Passed	All were in favor of the motion.
Management Employees 2022 Wage Schedule	<p>Management Employees 2022 Wage Schedule was presented for approval.</p> <p>Manager Fleming explained the schedule reflected a 2 percent increase across the board.</p> <p>Andrew Mohny made a motion to approve the 2022 Management Employee Wage Schedule, seconded by Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts and all were in favor.</p>
Airport Lot Bid	<p>Manager Fleming explained Steve's Lawnmower Sales and Service submitted a bid for Lot 12 in the Airport Industrial Park to add additional space and options for their existing business. After discovering the utility access costs, they withdrew their original bid and submitted a revised bid. The revised bid was substantially lower. He suggested the item be tabled until he could review the situation with the bidders.</p>
Motion to Table Passed	<p>Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts made a motion to table the Airport lot bid, seconded by Andrew Mohny and all were in favor.</p>
Recommendation for appointment to the Elk County Solid Waste Advisory Committee	<p>Recommendation for appointment to the Elk County Solid Waste Advisory Committee was presented for approval.</p> <p>Manager Fleming stated a letter of interest was received from Robert Bauer II.</p>
Motion Passed	<p>Shane Schneider made a motion to recommend Robert Bauer II for appointment to the Elk County Solid Waste Advisory Committee, seconded by Andrew Mohny and all were in favor.</p>
<b>TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:</b> Sewer Rate Committee Recommendation	<p>Mayor Pletcher announced Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts requested an item to be added for Topics for Discussion.</p> <p>Deputy Mayor Roberts explained as the Chairman of the Sewer Rate Committee he was presenting the recommendation of the committee that the Council authorize the City Manager to discuss forming a full operating Municipal Authority.</p> <p>Deputy Mayor Roberts made a motion to authorize the City Manager to discuss forming a full operating Municipal Authority, seconded by Andrew Mohny.</p> <p>Mayor Pletcher clarified the motion was to investigate forming an operating authority.</p> <p>Solicitor Wagner clarified the authority would only be for the sewage system. He then explained the first legal step would be to create the authority by ordinance, but before that occurred the structure of finances (bond issues and outstanding debt) any current agreement of lease and status of City employees would need to be reviewed. He recommended to consult with someone that has municipal finance background.</p>
Motion Passed	All were in favor of the motion.
<b>CITIZEN COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA TOPICS</b>	<p>Jerry Sorg stated his reasons why he was in favor of the operating municipal authority format.</p>

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Devin Brock thanked Council for the Recreation Fund increase.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Shane Schneider wished everyone a Merry Christmas. He thanked the outgoing Council members and Mayor and wished them the best of luck.

Gina Vrobel wished everyone a happy holiday. She thanked the Emergency Services for their dedicated service along with the retiring police officers for their service.

Margie Brown it was her privilege to serve on Council and thanked all of her current and former Council members, City Managers, and City staff, committees and boards, along with the residents.

Andrew Mohny thanked those leaving Council for their service.

Deputy Mayor Roberts wished outgoing member well.

Mayor Pletcher provided the following parting comments:

“It has been an honor and a privilege to serve on City Council and as Mayor for the City of Saint Marys. I’d like to once again thank the citizens of this fine City for placing their trust in me by electing me to City Council. I am also grateful to the members of Council for appointing me Mayor during this most recent year. It’s been a wonderful term of service and we’ve come a long way together as a Council and as a City these past four years. Saint Marys is in a terrific position and is poised to meet its full potential in the decades ahead.

I’m grateful for the experiences I’ve had, colleagues and residents I’ve worked alongside, projects which have been initiated and completed, and problems that were addressed through thoughtful governance. We also have a tremendously talented and committed City staff, which is a huge asset to the City and has driven the success we’ve achieved. I am extremely proud of the work which has been accomplished for our residents over the last four years by the City staff and City Council.

As I was reflecting on our accomplishments, I compiled a brief list of some of the noteworthy initiatives we’ve accomplished together over the past four years, in no particular order:

- Establishment of a 10-year strategic vision/plan
- Establishment of a full-time park director
- Creation of the new Downtown Event Park, fitness park, and walking bridge to connect the downtown footprint
- Signed a contract for fiberoptic internet installation City-wide at no cost to the City
- Petitioned for and won a \$5M grant for the Route-120 connector project to reduce truck traffic on the Diamond
- Completed numerous local road improvement projects
- Enhanced downtown development; many bars, coffeeshops, restaurants, stores, etc. have since opened
- Establishment of a new department director (Economic Development)
- Numerous events and gatherings to bring together the community and promote the City’s cultural heritage
- Increased involvement and presence with municipal associations, other local municipalities, State government, and other elected officials

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- Achieved fully-funded pensions and significantly improved total value enhancement for both non-uniformed and uniformed pension funds
- Provided Golf Authority support during economic difficulty to maintain the local municipal golf course for the City
- Provided Airport Authority support during economic difficulty to maintain local airport amenities
- Passed multi-staged traffic pattern and parking rate reform
- Established quality of life ticketing to encourage beneficial pro-city behavior amongst residents
- Passed tax reform measures to ensure the future fiscal position of the City
- Passed sewer rate reform for current and future investment in wastewater treatment services
- Accomplished City municipal code cleanup efforts to simplify City governance and enforcement
- Accomplished successful union contract negotiations, benefitting both the City and its employees
- Established the Sponsorship Initiative for private-sector support of parks and programs
- Successfully hired a new City Manager to lead the City into its next chapter

I likely have not mentioned a number of other items which have been achieved over the past four years. To the incoming City Council, I charge you with leading thoughtfully and in servitude to the residents who have trustfully elected you. This is a wonderful city and we have built up great momentum as we look to the future. At the conclusion of this meeting, we pass on the torch of leadership to you. I am excited to see your progress in the years to come.

I've often said that I'm an unlikely Mayor for Saint Marys: I don't hunt, I'm not Catholic, and I'm not from around here! Yet I've received nothing but warm and friendly support during my time here. This is a very special community and I'm grateful to have been a part of its storied history. I thank you all, again, for the privilege to serve the City of Saint Marys in this office. May God Bless the City of Saint Marys!"

He then provided a lighthearted and humbling personal story.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**


Mayor Pletcher made the following announcements:

- Council's reorganizational meeting will be held on Monday, January 3, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.
- Council's next regular meeting will be held on Monday, January 17, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Gina Vrobel made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Margie Brown. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Recording Secretary

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor