

## STATED MEETING - CITY COUNCIL – MAY 26, 2015

A meeting of the Lancaster City Council was held on Tuesday, May 26, 2015 in Council Chambers, 120 North Duke Street, (Rear Annex) Lancaster, PA, at 7:30 p.m., with President Graupera presiding.

The Council led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present – Mr. Reichenbach, Mr. Roschel, Mr. Soto, Ms. Williams, Ms. Wilson, President Graupera – 6

Excused - Ms. Sorace - 1

The minutes of the meeting of Council for May 12, 2015 were approved by a roll-call vote.

### READING OF PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS & MEMORIALS

President Graupera announced that Resolution 29-2015 would be brought forward.

Councilwoman Wilson moved that the resolution, designating June 7, 2015 as Nelson M. Polite Sr. Day in the City of Lancaster, be placed on the agenda. Councilman Reichenbach seconded the motion.

City Council approved placing Resolution 29-2015 on the agenda by a unanimous roll-call vote.

A short documentary film was show about Nelson M. Polite Sr., the former City Council member and Council president.

Further action on the resolution was delayed, awaiting the arrival of Mr. Polite.

City Council considered the following application and Historical Commission recommendation for improvements to properties within the Heritage Conservation District:

1. Elias Solutions LLC, owner of 538 North Plum Street, proposes construction of a new front porch on a brick rowhouse. (Recommended for approval by the Historical Commission.)

Councilman Reichenbach made the motion to approve the Historical Commission recommendation. Councilwoman Wilson seconded the motion.

The recommendation was unanimously approved by a roll-call vote.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Rev. Edward Bailey, of Bethel AME Church, thanked City Council for honoring Mr. Polite. But he noted that Mr. Polite, in the film, refers to substandard housing and a lack of jobs

for African-Americans during his youth. Mr. Polite has worked to change that, but not enough has changed in 90 years.

Rev. Bailey then called on City Council to push for the renaming of North Street, where Mr. Polite has lived all his life, after Mr. Polite. He further called on a portrait to be painted of Mr. Polite so that he could be remembered by coming generations.

Terry Brown, 547 St. Joseph Street, complained about a letter he had received from the city advising him that he could not sleep in his garage. Mr. Brown contended he was suffering from a severe headache – the result of an earlier assault – when he went to his garage and laid down rather than walk farther to his home. He said he was later assaulted again and city police failed to address that problem.

Fran Rodriguez, 324 North Duke Street, a program officer for the Lancaster County Community Foundation, said she was proud of having arranged for the documentary film about Mr. Polite. She called him “truly the city’s godfather,” who has been such an example for so many people in the city.

Blanding Watson, president of the Lancaster Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, thanked City Council for honoring one of the greatest African-American leaders in the City of Lancaster in our time. The recognition of Nelson M. Polite Sr. Day should serve as a reminder that we should all work toward a better civil society, as Mr. Polite has.

Craig Lehman, county commissioner and city resident, recounted a story about going to Nelson and Jean Polite’s home two decades ago when he first contemplated seeking elected office. They told Lehman that a lot of politicians come into their neighborhood near election time and rarely at any other time. The message, Lehman said, was that Nelson didn’t want people coming into the neighborhood and taking without giving something back. That spoke volumes to Lehman about Nelson Polite’s expectations for people and that, like himself, he expected people to serve for the right reasons.

Pastor Kevin Brown, of the King of Life International Assembly, said Mr. Polite had helped pave the way of progress for many people in the Lancaster area. Pastor Brown said he concurred with Rev. Bailey there should be something permanent that will help future generations recognize and remember Mr. Polite.

Pam Carney, 128 Sherman Street, praised Mr. Polite for his courage to make difficult positions based on his faith and his caring for the good of everyone.

Ryan Shenk, the producer of the documentary film, said he was thankful to have been able to tell Mr. Polite’s story and called him an incredible human being.

Yvette Wood, who had recently relocated to Lancaster from Cincinnati, introduced herself to Council members. Ms. Wood said she has become involved in Lancaster Unity and will be visible in the community.

David Martin, 831½ East Orange Street, also a member of Lancaster Unity, praised Mr. Polite and said there is still social justice work to be done. He referenced the many deeds which still include language which prohibits minorities from being on a property unless they are working there. While these deed provisions are unenforceable, Mr. Martin said he wants to see them removed.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Council Resolution No. 29-2015, (the title) was read by the City Clerk as follows:

**A resolution of the Council of the City of Lancaster designating June 7, 2015 as Nelson M. Polite Sr. Day in the City of Lancaster and honoring the achievements of Nelson M. Polite Sr. and his service to the people of his city.**

Councilwoman Wilson made a motion to vote on Resolution 29-2015. Councilman Soto seconded the motion.

Mr. Reichenbach then related that Mr. Polite congratulated him the night he was elected to City Council and told him that he would be watching him. Mr. Reichenbach said the comment was not intended to be mean, but to show the seriousness of holding elected office and working for others. Mr. Reichenbach called Mr. Polite living history and “the founding father of the modern City of Lancaster.”

Ms. Wilson called Mr. Polite her “beloved Uncle Babe” and said he tells people that she took his place on City Council. She cannot begin to take his place, she said, but can hope to be a small part of what he has been to his community and family.

Mr. Roschel said the best part of being on Council is being able to meet people who are trying to make a positive impact on the neighborhoods and the community. Mr. Roschel said it had been an honor to serve for six years on Council with Mr. Polite and that he had been a role model for him.

Ms. Williams thanked Mr. Polite for all that he has done for the community, referring to his marching with Dads Against Drug Dealers in the late 1980s and 1990s. He has been a positive example for many.

Mr. Soto said he first met Mr. Polite during a DADDS march. He said that there has been a lot of change since then, but there is still more change that needs to occur. He praised Mr. Polite for being a leader who started that change and set the path for others to follow. It was Mr. Polite’s leadership that led him to service on City Council, Mr. Soto said.

President Graupera said he also first met Mr. Polite while marching with DADDS. That’s when President Graupera knew he needed to be involved in the community. Mr. Polite took him under his wing when he first ran for City Council in 1995 and has been a mentor. President Graupera said with gratitude that it has been a pleasure serving and knowing Mr. Polite.

Mayor Gray told Mr. Polite that both of them are old enough to remember what things were like but still able to hope for what things should be. He recalled Mr. Polite telling him about

how he had been treated after coming home after World War II. The mayor praised him for working to make things better. And, he recalled the night that President Obama was elected and how they both thought they would never live to see the day an African-American was elected president. Mayor Gray said Mr. Polite and his generation made it easier for President Obama to be elected.

The mayor then presented Mr. Polite with a street sign for “Nelson Polite Sr. Way” which will be posted on what has been North Street, where Mr. Polite has lived his entire life.

City Council approved Resolution No. 29-2015 a unanimous roll-call vote.

Mr. Polite said that he wears a red rose pin in his lapel because of his love for the city. He thanked Council members for the resolution and asked for their continued prayers for his recovery from surgery. He said that he loved them all.

Mr. Polite also expressed his condolences to Ms. Williams for the recent passing of her son. She is in his prayers.

#### REPORT OF THE MAYOR

Mayor Gray read the following prepared statement:

*Since our last City Council meeting, I've spent several days traveling to meetings in Harrisburg or Philadelphia. Last week, I attended the Choose Clean Water Conference in Harrisburg, a meeting of environmental groups and officials to discuss efforts to clean-up the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. I am pleased to report that Lancaster is still held in high regard by all of these environmental groups, They recognize the work that we have been doing and the fact that we continue to lead other cities in storm water management and green infrastructure.*

*Last Friday, Charlotte Katzenmoyer, our Special Legal Counsel and I met with US EPA officials in Philadelphia. Discussion centered around our mutual desire to continue a positive relationship and, at the same time, meet EPA expectations without the threat of a Consent Decree. Also attending the meeting to support this effort was John Quigley, Acting Secretary of the State Department of Environmental Protection. Secretary Quigley brought with him an advisor and DEP legal counsel. This commitment by the Wolf Administration to assist us in our negotiations with the EPA is greatly appreciated.*

*Today, I met with the Governor's Special Task Force charged with reviewing the current municipal pension system, and making recommendation for reform. This committee chaired by Auditor General Eugene D. Pasquale is expected to issue a report in the near future that will address the sustainability of public safety pension benefits and the impact of those benefits on municipal finances.*

#### REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

President Graupera reminded everyone that Council will be discussing proposals to revise the Council meeting agenda and public comment rules at Council's next committee meeting, on

June 1. Changes to public comment will be adopted by resolution and changes to the meeting agenda will be done by ordinance.

Mr. Polite, with President Graupera concurring, adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

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John E. Graupera, President

Attest:

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Bernard W. Harris Jr., City Clerk