

**WARREN CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 24, 2025 – 7:00 PM**

Amended 3/17/2025

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor David Wortman presided over the February 24, 2025, special meeting of Warren City Council in Council Chambers of the Municipal Building and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Members present and responding to roll call were: Mayor David Wortman, John Barbera, Maurice Cashman, Danielle Flasher, Philip Gilbert (via Zoom), Wendy McCain, Jared Villella, and Junior Council Member Lexi Paris. Members of City Staff present were Michael Holtz, City Manager; Teena Leary, Assistant City Clerk; Randall Rossey, Codes and Planning Director; and Andrea Stapleford, City Solicitor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Mayor Wortman announced that Council met in executive session immediately prior to this meeting. The purpose of the session was for discussion of a land use appeal filed against the City at Warren County Docket No. 29-2025.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mayor Wortman welcomed all visitors. Present were:

Brian Hagberg – YourDailyLocal	Pat Evans
Gracie Tomassoni – Your Daily Local	Ron Peterson
Heather Cathcart-Norris – Times Observer	Danny Ristau
Jackie Palmer – Erie News Now	David Winans

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Winans, Pat Evans, and Ron Peterson addressed Council individually with each indicating that the legal notice for this meeting was not clear as to the subject property. *David Winans stated that the notice was “cryptic” and all three asked for details.* Amended 3/17/2025.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Upon motion by Mr. Villella and second by Miss Flasher, Council members voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

Upon motion by Mr. Cashman and second by Miss Flasher, Council members voted unanimously not to amend the agenda.

PROPOSED CONSENT ORDER: ZONING OF PARCEL NO. WN-499-86100

Mr. Holtz stated that John D. Branch, appellant, filed a land use appeal in the Court of Common Pleas of the 37th Judicial District of Pennsylvania in regard to Parcel No. WN-499-86100. The City's Solicitor, Andrea L. Stapleford, researched this matter extensively and, following discussions with Mr. Branch's legal counsel, advised that it is in the best interest of the City to settle the matter by way of the proposed consent order.

Mrs. Stapleford stated that in 1976, Parcel No. WN-499-861 was affected by a zoning change. The entire parcel was previously zoned as Industrial and was rezoned to Commercial to allow for the development of a hotel (Holiday Inn). When the zoning change was made, the City's zoning map was not updated to encompass the entire parcel; therefore, two tenths (0.20) of an acre of Parcel

WN-499-861 remained showing on the City's zoning map as Industrial and remained that way until the current Zoning Ordinance was approved and the map updated in May, 2024. The City's Zoning Ordinance only permits oil and gas operations in Industrial districts. In May of 2024, the City's Zoning Ordinance was revised, as was the map and, for the first time since 1976, all of Parcel WN-499-861 is shown as being in a Commercial district. Prior to May of 2024 and in reliance on the City's zoning map in existence at the time showing the 0.20 acre portion of Parcel No. WN-499-86100 being zoned Industrial, Mr. Branch proceeded with a drilling project.

Mayor Wortman stated that Mr. Branch and his company entered into a lawsuit against the City based on the fact that Parcel WN-499-861 was inaccurately depicted on the City's Zoning Map and he proceeded, at significant cost to his business, to acquire the ability to produce oil and gas on Parcel WN-499-861. The Mayor indicated that, if approved by Council, the Consent Order would go before a judge for approval.

Mr. Villella made the motion to authorize Andrea L. Stapleford, on behalf of the City of Warren, to execute the Consent Order pertaining to the zoning designation of Parcel No. WN-499-861 with "for this use or instance only" being added to the end of the first sentence of the order. The motion was seconded by Miss Flasher.

Following discussion, Mrs. McCain made the motion to table this matter to allow the public to gain more information. There was not a second to the motion.

Upon roll call vote, Mr. Villella's motion carried with six votes in the affirmative; Mrs. McCain declined to vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Miss Flasher and second by Mr. Villella, Mayor Wortman declared the meeting adjourned.