



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, June 1, 2022

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Special Confirmation Hearing - Public Works Director

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Candida Affa, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Joshua Siegel, and Natalie Santos

RESOLUTIONS FOR FINAL PASSAGE (To be Voted On):

[15-5094](#)

R84

Appointment of the Public Works Director

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R84 Public Works Director](#)

[Mark Shahda Resume](#)

[Memo from Mayor](#)

[Resolution #30443](#)

Mayor Matt Tuerk stated that is who we wanted to bring forward to Council to asked them to confirm Mr. Shahda for the Department of Public Works. He stated that he wants to give Mark a chance to speak to you all to tell you a little about himself and his vision and answer any questions that you might have.

Mr. Mark Shahda thanked Mayor Tuerk and stated good evening City Council. He thanked them for given him an opportunity to speak to them this evening. He thanked Mayor Tuerk and Mr. Lightner for affording him the opportunity for him to serve as Acting Public Works Director for the past three months. He stated that mayor's confidence in his ability is truly humbling. He expressed his deepest appreciation to his incredible family, his community, colleagues and employees within the city of Allentown for their continued support. He stated that he is bilingual Syrian American, born and raised in the city of Allentown. Growing up in the sixth ward, his two siblings and he were raised by a loving mother and father. As an Allentown School District student, he attended Sheridan Elementary School, Harrison Morton Middle School, before finally graduating from Dieruff High School in 1994. He briefly highlighted his career with the city of Allentown. He dedicated the last 24 years of his life to our beautiful city and more specifically the Public Works Department. He started his career as a Maintenance Worker I in 1998. He diligently worked his way up through the rank and file in the union. In 2008, through his dedication and commitment to the job he earned a position within the management team. He was then promoted through every level of management within the Streets Department which provided me the opportunity to engage with many facets of management. In 2012, he became the Streets Superintendent, in 2013, most notably the Stormwater Program was integrated into the Streets Department as per the

Concession Lease Agreement with LCA. During the transitional period, his team and him were able to successfully integrate and unify a new program with 20 new employees into the Streets Department. They established key internal functions and outlined scope of positions for the newly created program. In 2019, he became the Director of Public Works and as you can see from the Confirmation memo, he had an opportunity to learn more in-depth about the Public Works Department and this evening he is truly honored and enthusiastic to step into the role of Director. He looks forward to leading and working side by side with our talented managers and more importantly our hardworking employees.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that he would just like to say that there is no question in his mind that he is the best person for the job. As long as he has known him he has been a standup guy and always has taken your job seriously. He is very honored to be able to vote yes.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he has known Mark Shahda since he has been on the job here. He stated that he has been with the city for almost 45 years. He always found him to be responsible, competent, and has always conducted himself in a professional manner. He stated that many times that he has reached out to him for information or things that needed to get done and he was always spot on and very confident about them and they will get done. He stated that he had a pothole in front of his house and sent Mr. Shahda an email on a Sunday night and on Monday morning a crew was there taking care of it. No matter what it is. Just today, he had to get in touch with him. One of the signs were knocked down at one of our high schools. That was at 2:00 o'clock. Tonight, he advised me that it is taken care of and replaced. That is the kind of leadership and professionalism he has been all the time that he has known him. He hoped that and is pleased that he is the final product as you are. He stated that he is very pleased. He certainly encouraged his colleagues to vote for him also.

Mr. Joshua Siegel congratulated Mr. Shahda and stated that he intends to vote for him. He commended the administration for selecting a lifelong Allentonian, born and bread here. Educated here in the city. You are on the eastside as well which is nice.

Mayor Matt Tuerk stated that if he could add to that, the administration made a commitment to diversity in the cabinet. That is to geographical diversity. He is very proud that his cabinet has an eastsider, born and bread eastside in Vicky Kistler, we are going to add someone from the wards in Mark Shahda, and our Chief Roca is from the southside. We have people working in our cabinet representing all geographic aspects of our city. He added that they have been very proud of their ethnic diversity that is present in our city by cabinet. We have two African Americans members of the cabinet. He have two members of the cabinet that have Latino heritage. We are proud and he does not know if this is the case, maybe one of our Council historians can confirm that. He believes that this is the first Syrian American member of the City of Allentown cabinet which is a tremendous accomplishment for a community that is so important to this city's history. You are right to point out the Mark is a born and bread Allentonian and is somebody that came from the wards and represents a truly importance of our city's population.

Mr. Joshua Siegel thanked the mayor for stealing some of his thunder. He stated that he wanted to point some of that out, but the mayor said it very studiously. He stated that he is glad to see the Syrian community in Allentown has somebody that they could look into, who came from the ranks and helping out in the summer in the parks and worked their way to the top of the cabinet. That is an inspiration. It is a testament of what the city can be for so many of our residents. It is an opportunity to grow our own and provide

family sustaining jobs to our residents, good benefits and an opportunity for professional advancement, help people fulfill their passion and public service. he stated that he hopes that they can work with Council and the administration to make that a model of the department and throughout the city. It affords us an opportunity. He stated that he dreams of a day when every person in Allentown can fulfill every job in Allentown. We can be a city that is lead and governed and guided by people who cherish the city and loves the city and live in the city. From a professional standpoint there is not a better pick. The mayor made a good decision and Mr. Shahda has been extraordinarily responsible to him at the time that he reached out and would continue your excellent here in terms of constituent service and making sure the city serves its taxpayers and is responsive and receptive. He stated that he looks forward to working with him on his time on Council. He stated to make sure the city is innovative in the city when it comes to Public Works, in terms of sustainability, how we make our infrastructure cutting edge and new age whether it is our stormwater management and making sure we are prepping for climate change and the effects of change and change in weather patterns and increase in waterfalls. He stated that he knows that they will bring the ingenuity in the spirit of innovation to that. You stated that Mr. Shahda will be hard and dedicated in making sure that we are a topnotch city and cutting edge leading the way. He stated that he definitely looks forward to not only casting his vote for him, but working with him.

Mr. Mark Shahda thanked Mr. Siegel and stated likewise.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated well said Mr. Siegel.

Ms. Candida Affa congratulated Mr. Shahda. She stated that all of the directors make Council look good. When the residents call and Council calls the directors and it is taken care of immediately. It wasn't her. She stated that has happened many times with Mr. Shahda and Mr. Messinger. She stated that she has to echo Mr. Hendricks comments because they are all very true. You make a phone call and out of all the departments, all the phone calls we get are for Public Works for pothole and sweep. There are so many departments. She stated that she has known Mr. Shahda since she has been on Council and have seen each other at so many meetings with Mr. Messinger. She stated to Mayor Tuerk, good choice and congratulations. She stated that she will be happy to work with him.

Mr. Mark Shahda stated likewise. He looks forward to it.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated that she agrees with her fellow Councilmembers. She stated that Mr. Shahda is reliable and very respectable. She stated that someone can county on him all the time. One of the things she liked the most is when he mentioned he went to Harrison Morton and he went to Dieruff. She also went to Harrison Morton and Dieruff. She stated that she is glad that they are picking Allentonians. Ever since she became a Councilmember she has been asking for that. We have to grow our own. Seeing this happen makes her very happy. She stated that her vote will be yes and congratulations.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that everybody else did. She stated that she does not have a speech planned. She stated congratulations, everything has already been said. She looks forward to working with him.

Mr. Mark Shahda stated likewise Ms. Gerlach. Thank you.

Ms. Natalie Santos stated that she has not gotten the pleasure to formally meet Mr. Shahda yet, but she is excited to work with him. Congratulations.

Mr. Mark Shahda thanked Ms. Santos. He stated that he wants to take a quick minute to thank his team, his family that came out to support him this evening. Thank you.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that he did not see anything about a salary.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that he has the Resolution and asked do you want me to read it. Mr. Hanlon read the Resolution.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked Mr. Shahda if he is satisfied with that.

Mr. Mark Shahda stated that he is happy with that.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that is all that counts. He asked what was the salary of the former Public Works Director.

Mayor Matt Zucal stated that he does not have that at his immediate disposal. He stated that it probably can be answered pretty quickly. It was north of \$125,000.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that if you are comfortable with that, we can always address it at budget time. He asked if there were any comments from the public.

Mr. Ryan Hunsicker, Chapter Leader SEIU, echoed all seven members of Council for their support for Mr. Shahda. He thinks it is a wonderful choice. He stated that he supports Mr. Shahda 100 percent. He looks forward to meeting with him and continue to do business as they have always done and move forward for the best of the city.

Yes: 7 - Candida Affa, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Joshua Siegel, and Natalie Santos

Enactment No: 30443

ADJOURNED: 6:13 PM