



# Allentown

435 Hamilton Street  
Allentown, Pa. 18101

## Minutes - Final

### City Council

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Wednesday, August 1, 2018

5:00 PM

Council Chambers

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#### Confirmation Hearing

#### Roll Call

**Present:** 7 - Candida Affa, Roger MacLean, Courtney Robinson, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Julio Guridy, and Ed Zucal

#### RESOLUTIONS FOR FINAL PASSAGE (To be Voted On):

[15-2448](#) Appointment of the Community and Economic Development Director

**Attachments:** [R92 CD Director Appointment](#)

[L.A. Lightner Resume](#)

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated that tonight the administration brings to you Mr. Lightner for your consideration to be named and approved as Director of Community and Economic Development. From 1994 - 2007 he was a Sales Operations Manager. From 2008 - 2014, he was the City of Allentown Housing Rehabilitation Supervisor - Building Standards and Safety. 2014 - 2017, Risk and Safety Manager, February 2017 to the present, Interim Director of Community and Economic Development. In 1987 - 2014, US Army Retired rank of Command Sergeant Major. He stated that he is outcome focused, a tackle leader in managing project, he is straight forward individual, he speaks only when he needs to speak. Don't take his quietness at times as a lack of knowledge. He is extremely knowledgeable in his field and follows all the SOPs. Plays no favoritism on his duties and responsibilities. He is a straight shooter and it is my privilege tonight to introduce Mr. Lightner.

Mr. Leonard Lightner thanked his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, his wife and his family and their support. He thanked Mayor O'Connell and Joe McMahon for their confidence in me and their recommendation for such an honor, the entire CED staff, members that are here for their support and especially his direct supports for enduring his meetings and accepting the visions and challenges that are placed before them, and those individuals in the community that understand and support me as well, and even the ones in the community that do not. He thanked City Council for the opportunity to hear me and even with the opportunity to hear this nomination. He knew it was a risk and he stepped in the role in May 2017.

There were seven changes in the position including myself, before I took over. It creates confusion, instability and no consistent leadership within the community and the city. In this position you need constancy, a leader and a visionary leader to direct and lead from the front to lead by example to plan, organize, direct and administer activities. After the position was vacant and the turmoil that was going on in the city at the time I say that the staff of CED should be commended. They showed up every day. They continue to do their work as best as they could without leadership. They took on the opportunity and moved things forward as best as they could. As any great leader you see a challenge or an issue that comes up and you step forward, you come part of the solution and not part of the problem instead of complaining about it and doing nothing. I think I did just that on February 2017, when the Director position was still vacant, I stepped in the midst of a storm. I knew there was a risk especially under the circumstances that the city was facing during that time. I knew that I could be without a job when the new Mayor came in, but there was a need for a leader at that time and I took that risk and stepped forward and took that chance. When I stepped into the role as Interim, I had approximately 15 vacant positions. Out of the 15, five were key management positions. There was no Planning Director, no Zoning Supervisor, no Director of Building Standards and Safety, no HUD Grant Manager, and no Operations Manager, but yet the staff and myself continued to move things forward. We have individuals that are occupying each and every one of those positions, who I consider specializes and experts in their field. As an Interim, we took on some challenges. I already began to show some results. We have taken on a harsh stance on Code Enforcement. I am not the most talkative Director and many may see this as a weakness, I believe I only need to speak when necessary. None the less I continue to move things forward with the team that we have. I think we can continue to move and make changes that are necessary and keep the city on a trajectory that's needed. This position is a key position, but as a leader I know when to step up and let my staff grow and shine. This position is a team effort which is why I have direct reports. My philosophy as a leader is to create and sustain leadership teams so that members invest in each other's success and who learn from one another as we work together to define and realize the organizational and the citizens objectives. As the Director of Community and Economic Development you should be assured that I would always keep the best for the community first as long as it doesn't have any short-term or long-term detriment to the city. We don't have a crystal ball, but we have historical data. As a Director I see myself as a conductor of an orchestra to help lead a master piece, to unify the players that will shape or break the city, set the temple, execute a clear plan, and directions so that when we can all stay on beat. Although I am not home grown here, I can bring a world of different and concepts and ideas that can help the trajectory of the city. Since I have been here in the Lehigh Valley

for the past 18 years, two of my daughters went to school here in Allentown, my wife is born and raised here, we both have families that live here and some have lived here 40 years plus. In my banking and finance days as I worked here I helped many Allentonians with their financial needs from loans, to financing in order to help Allentown grow. Since my occupancy in the Lehigh Valley has always been working in Allentown to help Allentown grown. As your Director, I will take the Mayor, City Council, the citizens ideas and bring them together to make a clear vision to help CED conduct that and move it forward and carry out the vision.

Mr. Roger MacLean thanked Mr. Lightner and Mayor O'Connell. He asked if there were any comments from Council.

Mr. Courtney Robinson thanked Mr. Lightner for the presentation and for his nomination for permanency. He asked about the Code Enforcement aspect and how you stepped up, taking problem property owners to court. He asked Mr. Lightner to go in depth about that.

Mr. Leonard Lightner stated that it is such a complex concept when you talk about blighted properties in the city. As you know, we have been discussing blighted in the city for some time. It is utilizing all of our resources, from our nonprofits to our Redevelopment Authority, to Code Enforcement to address these issues. We try to talk to the owners and try to gain compliance and address issues of blight. It is not a simple solution. It is long, complex and drawn out. We have to stay vigilant at it.

Mr. Courtney Robinson asked what are you doing to try to modernize policies and procedures when it comes to the entire department, specifically around inspections. He stated that he is looking at how we can change things on a technologic standpoint. How we can bring things into the 20th Century and then into the 21st Century. He said when interacting with Mr. Lightner and how he brought up several other Bill and one we have on the agenda tonight specially is great evidence that your department and you are doing your homework and justify why you want to go a particular route. He asked Mr. Lightner to talk about why you made a decision to add an economic component to the economic plan as opposed to doing a Comprehensive Land Usage Plan. Asked the different between the strategic decisions and the tactical decisions day to day. How do you see our Economic Development department fitting in the larger picture of the regional economic development in the Lehigh Valley.

Mr. Leonard Lightner stated that the way he leads is being firm and fair and being consistent. We have to utilize the resources given to us. In this process, economics come into play. We understand that people come on hard times during the time when the boom was happening and everyone

buying property and when they realized there were more costs then it became more arduous then they understand. That's why I would like to utilize the Redevelopment Authority. If they can't maintain it, then we need to do what we can to try to obtain those properties and put them in better hands. Technology is one of the things that we looked at. In Code Enforcement, we still handwrite our inspections. I am always looking at efficiency. People keep saying that we need more inspectors, more inspectors, but before I look at more inspectors I want to look at our efficiency. We can look at other municipalities and states that are doing their inspections automated. We have to understand the cost with upgrading technology. We have to work with IT and we understand there is a budget issues as well. When you look at the overall Comprehensive Plan, it has always been about land development. Once we brought Mr. Stewart on as our Planning Director he and I talked quite lengthy about doing something different. We wanted the Plan interactive. Technology is changing so fast. He stated from the Regional Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and Economic Development, we do work closely and Doug Stewart works with Becky Bradley. He stated that they are also working with the community. We are a part of a larger county so we are looking to work with the county and region to develop the Plan. From a Strategic standpoint, I look at it as we have Plans, but what is the strategy to get there.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that when he was a police officer one of his responsibility was to investigate and handle the police vehicle accident and at that time Mr. Lightner was Risk Manager and we had an outstanding working relationship. He stated that he respects him and is very honorable. You have my total respect.

Ms. Cynthia Mota congratulated Mr. Lightner on his nomination and said that is a great quality to know when to speak. You are a man of action. You have proven over and over again with all the great things you are doing in the city. We know that the community is changing. We have newcomers with many languages in the city and personally I believe we have to work on customer service in the city. What are your plans on customer service and with languages in the city?

Mr. Leonard Lightner stated that is a long-term and short-term action plan that is needed. Even with the Comprehensive Plan we talked about something that has not been done before and that is putting the entire Comprehensive Plan not only in English, but in Spanish as well. We you talk about customer service within the city I heard that a lot from many Councilmembers and the public. I am a firm, fair and consistent leader. The staff knows that I am no none sense when it comes to that. The first thing I want to do is look at training and look at the individual in that

department. Some of our staff may be a little short tempered because they are overworked. We are doing things sometimes the long way or the hard way, but it is also working with the community as well. Respect goes both ways. It goes back to training and listening to both sides.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that after the last couple of years, I have to commend all of the Directors, Managers, Supervisors and Employees. If it was up to me I would rent PPL and bring them all in and give a standing ovation for how you kept the city going through the last couple of years. I believe that the department that was hit the hardest was Economic Development and applauded the staff for stepping up and doing the work they did to keep the ship afloat. I know that I worked with you in different situations, but like Mr. Zucal said you are an honorable man and I know you will be good in this position. I have all my faith in you. She stated that she is on two boards, the Disruptive Conduct and the Blighted Property. How are you going to handle because both have been kicked to the curb.

Mr. Leonard Lightner stated that the Disruptive Conduct Board, Mr. Middlecamp ran that for some time. With the changes in the department and at that time I took over we just had to put someone in the position to take it over. When we look at things, I have to look at their skillset and their ability. Sometimes we put people on boards and positions that they may not be well suited for at that time. He stated that he knows she asked about reports. It comes to our technology and having the right person in the position. I am re-evaluating that and is something we should talk about. With the Blight Property, the Redevelopment Authority was pretty much defunct for six years. He stated that he is proud to announce Kelly McElroy who is now taking over the day to day operations of the Redevelopment Authority. We now have a full board for the Development Authority. With no board and no staff of the Redevelopment Authority there is no way we could have gotten properties to the Blight Property Review Committee. We have about 35 properties coming to the Blighted Property Review Committee. The blighted process takes a year. He talked about his discussion with the Solicitor's office about House Bill 667 that creates a land bank. We are trying to find many different tools. Right now, on our main list we have about 170 blighted properties that we are looking at and working on a consistent basis. In September, you will see the first 30 properties come through.

Ms. Candida Affa asked if it will be brought to the Blighted Property Board.

Mr. Leonard Lightner stated yes, in September is the scheduled meeting.

Ms. Candida Affa thanked Mr. Lightner and congratulated him.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks congratulated Mr. Lightner for his willingness to come forward. It has been a very difficult couple of years here and your office has been through a lot. I see that you are a Professor at Muhlenberg College at the Wescoe School. He asked if he is currently teaching there.

Mr. Leonard Lightner stated that he adjunct here and there. Yes, I do. I just ended one of my five week sessions just a week ago.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks asked what are your teaching. He are currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership. I assume it is an online course.

Mr. Leonard Lightner stated that the last one he taught was leadership. It's a hybrid. It is online and I go to Regent University and there is a hybrid portion that once a year I have to go for a residency and that is for about a week, but must of it is online.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he really appreciates that. It is very important that you are continuing to develop your skills and helping others with theirs and helping a lot. He said that he fully supports this.

Mr. Julio Guridy thanked Mr. MacLean and Mayor O'Connell for putting up an excellent candidate. He thanked Mr. Lightner for considering and leading the department forward. He stated that we always don't agree on the policies but, we are good friends. He stated that he thinks you are coming to the department will be certainly a plus for our city. He emphasized we he looks for is excellent customer service in Community and Economic Development in the inspections department, we they come to get a permit or they need to get information about the city when they want to open a business. That is the big issues that people call me about. I know you have working on technology to evaluate the property owners and business owners to evaluate with inspections and interactions. We have to be customer service friendly and business friendly and encourage more community and economic development. Hispanics are 50 percent of the population and I enjoyed hearing you have some stuff in Spanish and working with them. One of the things I would like is a little bit more diversity in the department. When I look at the city, the finance department has to have the money. They have to be safe in the city. With Pubic Safety, the Police Chief, the Fire Chief and EMS have to be up to snuff. Next is the Community and Economic Development not just because of the role you play. If they don't feel safe, they will not come to the city. Also, the Health Department, Vicky has done an excellent job in our city. Those are the roles that are so needed in the city. I heard you talk about the Comprehensive Plan with Mr. Robinson and one of the things I would like to emphasize the relationships with some of the organizations that have been

doing business in our city for a long time. I look forward to those relationships to stay and in a friendly way we continue to work together to redevelop our city. He asked about blighted properties that we have throughout the city. To take properties under eminent domain, it takes a long time. He asked Mr. Lightner is regards to everything I just said if you have any response to it.

Mr. Leonard Lightner stated that when you talk about the collaborative work and efforts with longstanding members of the community I would say that when I first came in as Interim Director I heard comments from people in the community that said that one of the things that was missing in Community and Economic Development was leadership. When I took over as Interim Director and they got to know me a little bit, they said it is good to see that there is leadership back in CED. if the city is going to be responsible and be the lead, you are the elected leaders and we are elected leaders. Being a leader sometimes we have to take charge and step up. Some organizations have been created because they felt that there was no one in the city to be able to do it. Now, that the city is back up and operational we have people that care and are here and taking the risk and the leadership roles. Some people in the city may not be happy with the direction that we are going. There is change that is happening and we talked about wanting to have change. We have been doing some of the things with the housing for 40 years. When you look at the Jordan Heights area and the Upside Allentown area and some as simple as \$1 million going to the area for the last 40 years and when we stop to look we are still talking about the same issues of low to moderate income people don't have affordable and quality housing. Where have these organizations been over the last 40 years. We can't keep doing the same thing and expecting different results. Yes, I will make some radical changes. Those individuals are looking out for their organizations. My job is to look out for the city and CED and that's what I will do. When it comes to blight again, blight is a long-term process. We will get there. I have confidence in the team. I think that we can make this change. He said this ties into Ms. Mota's question about the language and customer service with the community that is out there we are looking to reestablish our relationship with the community and with the neighborhood groups. If we can get some key leaders that speak several languages or both languages we want to work with them or have them part of these committees and have them a part as we make these decisions. In our Comprehensive Plan, that is one of our strategic plans. We are going to be out there for the committee. Internally, we look to diversify when the opportunity is here to present itself. We will be more strategic when we prepare job descriptions and look at things are far as to diversify. It is part of my plan, but it is not overnight.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that he believes it is appropriate and that Mr.

Lightner will carry them out. When I say diversify, people think when I say that or some people may misinterpret it that I mean you have to hire a Hispanic at any cost. You hire the best person you could find for the job, but if they happen to be Hispanic, it's a plus.

Mr. Roger MacLean stated that he will not belabor what he thinks is an obvious point, but I have the upmost confidence in you. He asked if there were any comments from the public.

Mr. Lou Hershman thanked Mr. Lightner for serving our country. I see you served in Desert Storm and Iraq. I have two sons that are retired as Colonels that also served there. Mr. Lightner made a heck of a presentation and answered all your questions. They guy is really qualified and can address many issues in the city. When I served on City Council we always had the contracts on the benefits. Did you discontinue that? It always came with the Resolution. Maybe it is something to look into.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that there are a lot of changing.

Mr. Lou Hershman stated that there are changes, but something to consider.

Mr. Dan Bosket, Director - Community Action Corporation in Allentown, stated that he thinks the Council and the Mayor have made an excellent choice for Director for Community and Economic Development. He stated that he had an opportunity to do some work with Leonard recently, but he knows of his work for the past several years. You can see from his resume that he has been working for the city for quite a while. It is important that we nominate and put somebody in this position who has a history of working with the city. Even though people say that you can learn on the job it is better for someone to have already learned when they get the job. I feel pretty confident that Leonard and do a great job. He already has demonstrated that he has an awareness of things that need to be done and I want to congratulate the Mayor for making this appointment at this because as Ms. Affa said earlier things have been churning for a period of time and we need to start getting permanency and moving forward. For those who don't work in government and don't work at city hall it is important to have permanent people in place so that we know who it is that we are actually working with. This helps us tremendously as well.

Mr. Roger MacLean thanked Mr. Bosket and asked if anyone else from the public had a comment.

**Yes:** 7 - Candida Affa, Roger MacLean, Courtney Robinson, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Julio Guridy, and Ed Zucal

Enactment No: 29680



**ADJOURNED: 5:49 PM**