CITY OF MONESSEN

COUNCIL MEETING WORK SESSION MINUTES

APRIL 9, 2026

6:30 PM

Call to Order

Mayor Ron Mozer called the April 9, 2026 City Council Work Session to order at 6:30 PM in the City of Monessen Council Chambers.

Roll Call

Roll call was taken. The following members were present:

- Councilwoman Karen Cosner
- Councilman John Nestor
- Councilman Anthony Orzechowski
- Mayor Ron Mozer

Four members were present and a quorum was declared.

Opening Prayer

An opening prayer was offered by Pastor John Custer of The Orchard Christian Fellowship, 721 Schoonmaker Avenue, Monessen, Pennsylvania.

Pledge of Allegiance

Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

Ernie Telegraphis offered public comment regarding the agenda and the City's strategic planning discussion. He stated that Monessen must consider its current realities, including population decline, an aging community, poor road conditions, school district challenges, and the need to attract industry and families. He urged that any planning discussion address how Monessen can move from its present conditions toward a more successful future.

Old Business

No old business was reported.

Correspondence

No correspondence was reported.

Mayor's Discussion Items

Strategic Foresight Workshop: Positive Futures for the City of Monessen

Dr. Larson provided an overview of the Strategic Foresight Workshop and explained that the purpose of the process was not to predict one future, but to help the City prepare for multiple plausible futures. He stated that the team had reviewed Monessen's history, land, current challenges, and potential, and had found a positive attitude among those participating in the workshop.

Dr. Larson explained that the workshop encouraged participants to challenge assumptions, examine possible future disruptions, and consider how Monessen might position itself for long-term success. Topics included the future of work, artificial intelligence, social services, possible future uses of civic assets such as the library, and development opportunities. He noted that the process was only beginning, but that progress had been made in helping City officials think differently about the future.

Mayor Mozer introduced Dr. Hardy and Dr. Joel Mozer. Dr. Hardy summarized his background in future space strategy and technology planning. Dr. Joel Mozer summarized his background with the United States Air Force and as Chief Scientist for the United States Space Force. The Mayor thanked the team for participating and noted that the workshop was provided at no cost to the City.

Vacant City Council Position: Applicant Presentations and Discussion

Mayor Mozer stated that three applicants had applied for the vacant City Council position created by the resignation of former Councilperson Lois Thomas. The Mayor stated that applicants would be heard in randomly selected order and would be given up to ten minutes to introduce themselves and explain their interest in serving.

Ernest Telegraphis

Ernest Telegraphis stated that he had attended City Council meetings for approximately 18 years and had gained experience observing several mayors and council members. He said he would bring his own research, perspective, and willingness to question assumptions. He expressed concern about population decline, aging infrastructure, roads, the school district, the need for industry, the importance of local employment, and the use of grants. He stated that if appointed, he would seek to bring a different perspective to Council.

Council discussion included questions about how he would attract business, whether he could work collaboratively with Council, whether his public manner would be helpful to Council, and how he would approach the Streets Department role. Mr. Telegraphis stated that he travels extensively through the City, is familiar with street and pothole issues, and would use that knowledge to help identify problems and communicate resident concerns. Discussion also addressed the difference between speaking as a citizen and serving as a member of Council.

John McGee

John McGee stated that he is a lifelong resident and wants Monessen to thrive, not merely survive. He discussed the need to continue addressing blight, enforce follow-through on tax forgiveness and rehabilitation agreements, encourage entrepreneurship, promote development of vacant properties such as the former Rite Aid, and make Monessen a destination through cultural heritage, music, events, and use of the amphitheater. He emphasized that Monessen has assets and opportunities and stated that he would work with Council and the Mayor in a cooperative manner.

Council discussion included questions about how to retain young people and families, whether Mr. McGee would have the temperament and thick skin required for public office, his availability for the Streets Department role, and his views on tools such as LERTA. Mr. McGee stated that he would be available, would communicate with the Streets Department, would prioritize work within available resources, and would support tools that may help attract investment if they produce lasting benefit.

Bishop William Bass

Bishop William Bass stated that he wanted to be someone who helps solve problems, not simply identify them. He emphasized respect for elected officials, cooperation among City boards and departments, continuing blight removal, public safety, valuing all residents, addressing street issues, pursuing grants, supporting the LERTA effort, and working toward senior housing and redevelopment opportunities. He stated that if appointed to the Streets role, he would meet with Rodney and the street workers, communicate with them, and bring issues back to Council and the Mayor.

Bishop Bass discussed his background, including work with the Planning Commission, the Monessen Redevelopment Authority, education, management experience, and community leadership. Council discussion included questions about his availability, time management, separation of church and City responsibilities, and whether he could respond to street-related issues and emergencies. Bishop Bass stated that he had support systems in place, could manage his time, and would be available when needed.

Mayor Mozer stated that Council would consider the applicant presentations and that the position would be voted on at the April 23, 2026 Council meeting.

Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority Discussion

A representative of the Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority, identified in the transcript as Nancy Basil, addressed Council regarding the increase in the City's local match obligation. She stated that the City's contribution had increased from a little over $3,200 to approximately $13,000, due next year, because county contributions had fallen short and the local match requirement must be met by municipalities and counties.

The representative stated that failure to collect sufficient local match could result in a permanent reduction of state operating funding, which makes up a significant portion of the Authority's operating budget. She reported that, based on the last audited fiscal year, service in Monessen included approximately 52,593 miles and 30,493 riders. Discussion followed regarding the importance of transit service to Monessen residents, use of GPS and tracking technology by the Authority, the distinction between capital and operating funding, county support, possible legislative remedies, and the need for a resolution to support the state operating grant process.

Councilman Orzechowski expressed concern about the future budget impact if the required local match continues to increase. Council requested that the Authority provide notice before budget preparation so that the City can plan for the obligation. The representative stated that a resolution would be needed in the current year for the Authority's state operating grant submission.

Streets Department and Code Officer Resumes

Mayor Mozer stated that Council had received resumes for both the Streets Department position and the Code Officer position. He stated that no decision was expected at the work session, but that interviews needed to be scheduled. Discussion followed regarding the need to fill the Streets Department vacancy, the approaching summer workload, and the need to determine whether the Code Officer position should be full-time or part-time based on the available budget. Interviews were to be scheduled beginning Tuesday at 5:30 PM for both positions.

Tax Exoneration and Tax Forgiveness Discussion

Mayor Mozer discussed three City-owned properties for which prior taxes had not yet been exonerated: 544 Donner Avenue, parcel number 20-02-03-0-040; 920/922 Knox Avenue, parcel number 20-02-06-0-181; and Knox Avenue, parcel number 20-02-06-0-816. The Mayor stated that because the properties are City-owned and non-taxable, the prior taxes need to be exonerated and placed on an agenda for formal action. He also stated that additional Tax Forgiveness Board recommendations would be circulated to Council for review.

Advertising for Full-Time Police Officer Position

Review Note: The agenda included discussion to approve advertising for a full-time officer position within the City of Monessen. The provided transcript does not show discussion of this item before the transcript ends.

The supplemental recording continues with Councilman Nestor noting that the City had been able to hire only two of the three officers sought. Council discussed that no additional candidates remained on the current Civil Service list. Mayor Mozer stated that the City should move immediately to advertise for the remaining full-time officer position and directed that the necessary requisition be entered so the advertisement could proceed.

Accounts and Finance

Review Note: The agenda included the following Accounts and Finance items. The provided transcript does not capture discussion or action on these items. They are listed here for review against the audio or any supplemental record.

a. Payment of General Fund invoices in the amount of $61,908.64, with invoices attached as Attachment A.

b. Payment of Recreation Account invoices in the amount of $690.57, with invoices attached as Attachment B.

c. Payment of Line Usage Fund invoices in the amount of $7,705.72, with invoices attached as Attachment C.

d. Payment of Parks Fund invoices in the amount of $5,323.33, with invoices attached as Attachment D.

e. Payment of Grant Fund invoices in the amount of $1,461.99, with invoices attached as Attachment E.

f. Transfer of $86,706.19 from the General Fund to the Payroll Account for payroll expenses for the April 9 payroll allocation.

g. Sewer Rehabilitation Project Phase 3 Payment Requisition and Certificate No. 42 in the amount of $341,179.03.

h. Change Order No. 7 for final quantity adjustments to the original contract and Change Orders 3 and 5 for project closeout.

i. Removal of Linda Matthews as an authorized signature/account user and addition of Terry Taylor, City Clerk of the City of Monessen.

j. Change of deposit banks for the USDA Grant from PNC to CFS Bank and request to USDA to use the new bank for future deposits.

The supplemental recording shows that each of the Accounts and Finance items listed above, items a through j, was presented as a separate motion, seconded, and approved unanimously by roll-call vote of the four Council members present: Councilwoman Cosner, Councilman Nestor, Councilman Orzechowski, and Mayor Mozer.

During discussion of Sewer Rehabilitation Project Phase 3 Payment Requisition and Certificate No. 42, Mayor Mozer stated that work associated with the sewer problem along Fifth Street toward the river had been completed and that the project had addressed a significant problem in that area. During discussion of Change Order No. 7, the Mayor clarified that the change order represented a reduction in project cost rather than an additional cost to the City.

Following approval of the USDA banking change, Council members were advised that related bank paperwork was available for signature.

Asphalt Zipper and Supporting Street Equipment

Councilman Orzechowski asked whether the City was prepared for delivery and use of the asphalt zipper, including secure storage, the condition of the John Deere high lift, operator training, and the availability of employees qualified to transport the equipment. Mayor Mozer stated that the asphalt zipper was expected to arrive within the next several days and that the John Deere high lift was awaiting repair parts. Council discussed the need for the high lift, appropriate trailer transport, CDL-qualified personnel, operator training, a roller, asphalt availability, and a top coat as part of using the equipment effectively. City Administrator Korpash agreed to contact the repair facility directly for an updated status on the John Deere parts and repair schedule.

Police Vehicle Funding and Delivery

Councilman Orzechowski asked about the status of LSA funding associated with two police vehicles. Mayor Mozer stated that the LSA matter had progressed through the process and was in legal review with DCED. The Mayor further stated that funding for two other police vehicles had already been received and that the City could proceed with taking delivery. Council discussed completing licensing, related paperwork, and vehicle detailing so the vehicles would be ready for service.

Check Processing and Supporting Invoices

Council discussed a temporary check-printing problem that required CFS Bank to print replacement checks on the City account. Councilman Orzechowski raised the need for supporting invoices to be attached to checks presented for signature so that each payment could be verified. Discussion indicated that this had been the City's prior practice, and Council agreed that invoices should accompany checks presented for review and signature.

Public Safety

Review Note: The agenda included items for discussion and report by Councilman John Nestor, Director of Public Safety. The provided transcript does not capture a Public Safety report before the transcript ends.

Councilman Nestor stated that he would defer his formal Public Safety report until the next stated meeting. He then raised concerns regarding animal control, including reports of dogs running loose near the river and in City Park and questions regarding the responsiveness of the City's current animal-control arrangement. Council discussed the need to review the service arrangement and questioned charges associated with stray cats to determine which expenses were properly the responsibility of the City. Mayor Mozer recommended that the operational concerns also be reviewed with the Police Chief.

Councilman Nestor also asked about continuing complaints involving ducks, geese, and chickens. Mayor Mozer stated that Wildlife Specialties had been contacted regarding the matter. Council discussed whether costs resulting from repeated violations should be recovered from the responsible party rather than borne by

the City. City Administrator Korpash stated that he would check the current status, determine whether additional incidents had occurred, and report back.

Parks and Public Property

The agenda included items for discussion and report by Councilperson Karen Cosner, Director of Parks and Public Property, including playground equipment grant recommendations and memorial benches in the park.

Councilwoman Cosner stated that she would defer her formal departmental report until the end-of-month meeting. She recognized Ricky Dick, owner of Castle Blood, for receiving a 2026 OSCARES Special Recognition Award from the Haunted Attraction Association. Councilman Orzechowski noted that the award was presented in connection with the TransWorld industry event in St. Louis and described it as a significant peer recognition within the haunted-attraction industry.

Councilwoman Cosner reminded residents of the Mon-Yough River Valley Rotary electronics recycling event scheduled for Saturday, April 11, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Herman Mihalich Boat Launch, and of a drive-through food distribution scheduled for Monday, April 13, from 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM at the boat launch in cooperation with the Westmoreland County Food Bank and Highmark Wholecare. She also mentioned Monessen Public Library fundraising merchandise and the Friends of the Library spaghetti dinner, with tickets available for $16.

Playground Equipment Grant

Councilwoman Cosner discussed the condition and safety of City playground equipment and reported that she was working on an application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program (GTRP). The proposed project would seek approximately $100,000 to $125,000 for new playground equipment at City Park, potentially creating two new playground areas near the upper portion of the park. She stated that she had substantially completed the project narrative, was scheduled to meet with DCED regarding the application process, and intended to have the application prepared well ahead of the May 31 deadline. She also reiterated the need for appropriate mulch or safety surfacing at City playgrounds.

Councilman Nestor noted that orange safety fencing near the river had become damaged and should be repaired before the playground season. Councilwoman Cosner stated that she would follow up on the matter.

Memorial Benches

Councilwoman Cosner reported receiving several inquiries regarding memorial benches following recent publicity. She stated that she had provided Kristen Joseph with an inventory and status of benches throughout the City. Discussion included removing or replacing older deteriorated benches, considering memorial picnic tables or replacement benches in locations outside City Park, and avoiding additional benches in City Park where sufficient benches already exist. Councilwoman Cosner recommended that future benches use a consistent, neutral appearance so park furnishings present a coordinated look. Councilman Nestor expressed support for a neutral and consistent approach.

Adjournment

On motion duly made and seconded, Council voted unanimously to adjourn. Mayor Mozer declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

_____

City Clerk. Terry Taylor

Signature: _____
Ron Mozer, Mayor