CITY OF MONESSEN

COUNCIL MEETING WORK SESSION MINUTES

January 8, 2026

City of Monessen Council Chambers

6:30 PM

Call to Order

Mayor Ron Mozer called the January 8, 2026 City Council Work Session to order at approximately 6:32 PM.

Roll Call

Roll call was taken. Councilperson Karen Cosner, Councilman John Nestor, Councilman Anthony Orzechowski, and Mayor Ron Mozer were present. Councilperson Lois Thomas was absent. Four members were present, and a quorum was established.

Opening Prayer

Pastor John Custer of The Orchard Christian Fellowship, 721 Schoonmaker Avenue, Monessen, offered the opening prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance

Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

Earnie Telegraphis, 29 Rex Avenue, addressed Council regarding the LERTA tax incentive discussion and the proposed policy for applications to City boards and commissions. He asked Council to clarify the LERTA procedure, including what would occur if the school district did not participate. He also asked which applicants or positions would be affected by the proposed board and commission protocols and whether the requirements would have enforceable consequences if they were not followed.

Old Business

No old business was presented.

Mayor's Discussion Items

Mon Valley Sewage Authority: Marion/Hilltop Sewer Separation Project

Mayor Mozer introduced representatives of the Mon Valley Sewage Authority to present an update on the long-running effort to address excessive sanitary sewer flows associated with the Grand Boulevard and Marion/Hilltop area. Jason McBride, engineer for the Authority, explained that an equalization tank had originally been contemplated to address high flows, but the projected cost of that facility had increased substantially over time. The Authority and City therefore evaluated sewer-separation alternatives intended to reduce the volume of flow reaching the Authority treatment system.

Mr. McBride reported that the Authority recommended constructing new sanitary sewer lines in the Marion/Hilltop area. The current project estimate was approximately $3.8 million. He stated that approximately $4 million had previously been borrowed for the original project and that an additional $750,000 grant was available, providing approximately $4.75 million in project funding. The grant funds were required to be expended by the end of September 2026, creating an accelerated design and construction schedule. Survey and preliminary investigation work were underway, with construction anticipated to begin in the middle of 2026.

Councilman Orzechowski and Councilman Nestor questioned the length of time the project had been under consideration and the increase in estimated costs. Discussion included the earlier equalization-tank concept,

changes in City and Authority leadership, title and property issues, and a parcel that could not readily be identified through assessment records. Authority representatives stated that the sewer-separation alternative avoided the much higher estimated cost of the equalization tank and was within available project funding based on the current estimate.

Council discussed potential cost overruns and change orders. Mr. McBride stated that bids would be received before construction proceeded and that, if bids exceeded available funding, the Authority would need to reject the bids or reconsider the project. He stated that a five-percent change-order allowance is generally recommended for a sewer project of this type and that substantial change orders are expected to require prior Authority approval except in an emergency. Councilman Orzechowski emphasized that he did not want the City to be presented later with an unplanned requirement to provide additional Line Usage funds for a project overrun.

Mayor Mozer requested periodic project updates. Councilperson Cosner offered to serve as Council liaison to the Authority. Solicitor Joseph Dalfonso requested that approved requisitions and pay applications be provided to Council, and Authority representatives agreed that project payment information and upcoming requisition items could be shared with the City. Discussion also established that the existing 2021 intergovernmental cooperation agreement, which specifically referenced the equalization tank, would require amendment for the sewer-separation project, and related bond documents may also require revisions.

Council expressed general support for moving the sewer-separation project forward as the more financially practical alternative to the equalization-tank concept. No formal action was taken on the project during this portion of the work session.

Mon Valley Sewage Authority Rate Increase

Authority representatives also discussed an upcoming wastewater rate increase. The Authority reported that its base rate would increase from $51.00 per month to $60.65 per month, an increase of $9.65. The base rate includes an allowance of 8,000 gallons per quarter, with additional usage billed separately. Authority representatives stated that operating costs, required capital projects, declining investment income, and major equipment failures contributed to the increase. The Authority also reported that it would use approximately $366,000 of available funds to reduce the size of the required rate increase.

Authority representatives explained that the City of Monessen Line Usage charge is separate from the Authority sewer rate. Based on the discussion, the combined minimum monthly amount for a Monessen customer was described as $87.65 when the City Line Usage charge was added to the Authority base rate. Questions were raised regarding water usage, the 8,000-gallon allowance, delinquent accounts, and the relationship between water-meter readings and sewer billing. Authority representatives stated that sewer usage is based on water readings obtained from the water provider and encouraged residents to attend Authority meetings when they have questions.

Tax Anticipation Note and EMS Update

Mayor Mozer reported that the City had received closing information from CFS Bank concerning the Tax Anticipation Note and that, after the remaining requested information was provided, the City expected to have access to the funds shortly.

Mayor Mozer also discussed a preliminary review of Monessen EMS call data obtained from 911 Services for July through December 2025. He stated that the preliminary analysis showed 97 EMS incidents originating in Monessen and indicated that Mon Valley EMS handled 95 of the 97 incidents, or approximately 97.9 percent. Mayor Mozer emphasized that the figures were preliminary and that he was awaiting a formal summary from 911 Services before relying on the analysis. He noted that the preliminary numbers, if confirmed, represented significant improvement over earlier performance concerns.

LERTA Tax Incentive Program

Mayor Mozer stated that economic development was becoming a greater City focus as the blight-demolition and sewer-rehabilitation programs moved forward. He described LERTA as one of several tools intended to encourage private investment and new construction in Monessen.

Solicitor Dalfonso explained that LERTA can provide a temporary real-estate tax exemption on the assessed value of qualifying improvements rather than on the pre-existing value of the property. The concept being developed for Monessen was a ten-year schedule, with qualifying improvements exempt during the first five years and taxes on the improvement phased in beginning in year six until reaching full taxation in year ten. The purpose is to provide an incentive for a property owner or developer to build, repair, or substantially improve property that otherwise may remain vacant or blighted.

The Solicitor stated that an ordinance would need to be drafted and that the City should work with the Monessen City School District because the incentive would be much less effective if only the City participated. A public hearing would also be required to define the LERTA area. Mayor Mozer proposed making the entire City eligible based on the extent of blight and redevelopment needs. Solicitor Dalfonso stated that a draft ordinance was expected for the February work session, after which the City could continue discussions with the school district before final Council action.

Mayor Mozer described the proposal as a long-term economic-development strategy rather than a short-term revenue measure. He discussed the potential for development to generate earned-income and other economic activity even before the real-estate tax abatement period expires. He also discussed a proposed limited application window so that projects would have a defined period in which to enter the program and proceed with plans, permits, and construction.

Super Nova Services, LLC Contract

Council discussed development of a Contract for Services with Super Nova Services, LLC for light-industrial, janitorial, cleaning, and related services. Solicitor Dalfonso reported that he had revised the contract submitted by the company and that Council had not yet formally approved the revised agreement. Mayor Mozer stated that the item would return for additional discussion and a vote at a later meeting.

Mayor Mozer discussed the potential use of the proposed labor resource in connection with the City's broader street, parks, and maintenance plans, including grass cutting, litter collection, and other appropriate work. Solicitor Dalfonso recommended that the City coordinate with its union regarding the specific tasks that contract labor would perform. Mayor Mozer stated that those discussions had begun.

Streetlight and Electrical Pole Issues

Mayor Mozer discussed streetlight outages on the east end of Schoonmaker Avenue near Eastgate and Keystone Bakery following damage to a streetlight pole. He stated that the affected lighting system is connected through underground electrical service and that the pole failure resulted in multiple lights on both sides of the roadway being out of service. West Penn Power had advised the City that, under an older agreement, the City is responsible for the poles and electric costs while West Penn Power maintains the light fixtures themselves.

Council discussed possible grant assistance, including Safe Streets for All funding, and the need to continue pressing West Penn Power to repair other non-functioning streetlights. Additional outages were discussed near Third Street, the Boat Launch, Rostraver Street, McKee Avenue, and the bridge area. Mayor Mozer asked that service-ticket numbers and dates be compiled so unresolved requests could be escalated through the West Penn Power liaison.

Board and Commission Application Policy

City Administrator Mike Korpash presented the existing City board and commission application materials and asked Council to clarify a uniform procedure. The form available on the City website instructed applicants to submit a cover letter and resume, while past practice had often consisted of a letter or email expressing interest. Council discussed whether the existing form imposed unnecessary barriers or whether requiring an application demonstrated a meaningful commitment by prospective board members.

Councilperson Cosner favored retaining a more complete application process, stating that individuals seeking appointment should be willing to invest the time necessary to provide basic information and demonstrate their willingness to participate actively. Councilman Nestor and Councilman Orzechowski noted that past practice had often accepted a simple letter or email of interest and that Council had not consistently required a resume.

The discussion concluded with general agreement that the procedure needed to be made uniform and clearly stated on City materials. Mayor Mozer and Solicitor Dalfonso agreed that a final policy should be placed on a future agenda for formal Council action. Solicitor Dalfonso suggested a simple motion establishing a letter-of-interest procedure for open authorities and boards.

Councilman Anthony Orzechowski, Director of Accounts and Finance

Councilman Orzechowski presented the Accounts and Finance motions.

Motion by Councilman Anthony Orzechowski to pay the following invoices from the General Fund in the amount of $60,084.27, with invoices attached to the agenda as Attachment A.

The motion was seconded by Councilman John Nestor.

Roll Call Vote

Karen Cosner	Yes
John Nestor	Aye
Lois Thomas	Absent
Anthony Orzechowski	Yes
Ron Mozer	Yes

Motion Passed 4-0

Motion by Councilman Anthony Orzechowski to pay the following invoices from the Recreation Account in the amount of $1,034.56, with invoices attached to the agenda as Attachment B.

The motion was seconded by Councilman John Nestor.

Roll Call Vote

Karen Cosner	Yes
John Nestor	Aye
Lois Thomas	Absent
Anthony Orzechowski	Yes
Ron Mozer	Yes

Motion Passed 4-0

Motion by Councilman Anthony Orzechowski to pay the following invoices from the Line Usage Fund in the amount of $2,300.00, with invoices attached to the agenda as Attachment C.

The motion was seconded by Councilman John Nestor.

Roll Call Vote

Karen Cosner	Yes
John Nestor	Aye
Lois Thomas	Absent
Anthony Orzechowski	Yes
Ron Mozer	Yes

Motion Passed 4-0

Motion by Councilman Anthony Orzechowski to pay the following invoices from the Parks Fund in the amount of $1,442.87, with invoices attached to the agenda as Attachment D.

The motion was seconded by Councilman John Nestor.

Roll Call Vote

Karen Cosner	Yes
John Nestor	Aye
Lois Thomas	Absent
Anthony Orzechowski	Yes
Ron Mozer	Yes

Motion Passed 4-0

Motion by Councilman Anthony Orzechowski to pay the following invoices from the Liquid Fuels Fund in the amount of $3,473.43, with invoices attached to the agenda as Attachment E.

The motion was seconded by Councilman John Nestor.

Roll Call Vote

Karen Cosner	Yes
John Nestor	Aye
Lois Thomas	Absent
Anthony Orzechowski	Yes
Ron Mozer	Yes

Motion Passed 4-0

Motion by Councilman Anthony Orzechowski to approve the transfer of $76,267.43 from the General Fund to the Payroll Account for payroll expenses for December 4, 2025.

The motion was seconded by Councilman John Nestor.

Review Note: *The Otter transcript clearly captures affirmative votes by Councilperson Cosner and Mayor Mozer but does not clearly transcribe the individual verbal responses of Councilman Nestor or Councilman Orzechowski. Do not finalize the vote count until the audio is checked.*

Roll Call Vote

Karen Cosner	Yes
John Nestor	[VERIFY]
Lois Thomas	Absent
Anthony Orzechowski	[VERIFY]
Ron Mozer	Yes

Motion Result: [VERIFY FROM AUDIO]

Motion by Councilman Anthony Orzechowski to approve Sewer Rehabilitation Project Phase 3, Payment Requisition and Certificate No. 39, in the amount of $657,970.64, consisting of $64,660.90 for W.E.C. Engineers, Inc. for work performed from November 29, 2025 through December 31, 2025; $150,203.81 for Insight Pipe Contracting, LLC for work performed from November 19, 2025 through December 31, 2025; and $443,105.93 for MCSP, Inc. for work performed from December 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025.

The motion was seconded by Councilman John Nestor.

Roll Call Vote

Karen Cosner	Yes
John Nestor	Aye
Lois Thomas	Absent
Anthony Orzechowski	Yes
Ron Mozer	Yes

Motion Passed 4-0

Accounts and Finance Report

Councilman Orzechowski reported fund balances including: Debt Service, $521,745.98; Fire Escrow, $95,282.09; Grant Fund, $215,458.95; Healthcare Fund, $4,019.85; Line Usage Fund, $720,066.44; Liquid Fuels Fund, $1,526.57; Parks Fund, $84,184.93; Paving Escrow, $177,362.95; Recreation Fund, $648.06; and Refuse Fund, $161,070.16.

Review Note: *The Otter transcript appears to contain garbled leading digits for the General Fund and Payroll balances. It most plausibly renders the General Fund as $319,469.14 and Payroll as $30,389.23, but those two balances should be checked against the written finance report before inclusion in final approved minutes.*

Councilperson Lois Thomas, Director of Streets and Public Improvements

No report was presented because Councilperson Lois Thomas was absent.

Councilman John Nestor, Director of Public Safety

Councilman Nestor deferred his report to the next stated meeting.

Councilperson Karen Cosner, Director of Parks and Public Property

Councilperson Cosner did not present a formal departmental report but discussed snow and ice operations. She stated that City crews prioritize bus routes and hills first, then secondary streets, with alleys addressed last. She noted that the City was operating with fewer trucks than normal and asked residents to be patient during future snow events. She commended the City crews for their efforts in keeping streets passable.

Mayor's Closing and Additional Discussion

Sewer Rehabilitation Work at Cleveland-Cliffs / Fifth Street

Mayor Mozer reported progress on sewer-rehabilitation work involving lines that cross the railroad tracks and Cleveland-Cliffs property before reaching the river. He discussed a 36-inch brick sewer line extending from the Fifth Street area and stated that the contractor had made repeated entries into the line while attempting to locate an access manhole that had been covered at the surface. The access point had recently been located approximately one foot below the surface. Mayor Mozer stated that the City and project team planned to expose the access point and meet with the contractor regarding completion of the lining work.

Grant Contract and Equipment Updates

Councilman Orzechowski requested an update regarding approved grant funding, including LSA-related projects and funding associated with police vehicles. City Administrator Korpash reported that certain grant contracts had been received and returned and that other LSA contracts were still pending. He stated that funding was expected to become available after the contractual process was completed.

Solicitor Dalfonso asked specifically about the LSA contract associated with the asphalt machine. He stated that the proposed vendor did not appear to be a COSTARS vendor and that he wanted to review the grant procurement language to ensure that the City follows the required purchasing procedure before the equipment is acquired.

Public Works Truck Status

Councilman Orzechowski requested an update on Public Works trucks after Councilperson Cosner noted that the City was operating with reduced equipment. Discussion established that two trucks were out of service, leaving three trucks available for snow operations. Truck No. 5 had been sent to C. Harper for power-steering issues. A separate truck that had been involved in an accident was also out of service pending inspection and repair.

Mayor Mozer stated that the accident-related repair was expected to be covered by insurance subject to a deductible, which was discussed as approximately $2,500. Councilman Orzechowski emphasized that Council members should receive timely updates when major Public Works equipment is unavailable so that they can accurately explain service limitations to residents during snow events and other emergencies.

Draft Review Notes

These minutes were reconstructed from the January 8, 2026 work-session agenda and the available Otter transcript. The agenda was used for meeting structure and formal agenda wording, while the transcript was used for discussion flow, speakers, motions, seconds, and votes. The following items require verification before final adoption:

- Payroll transfer roll call does not clearly capture the individual responses of Councilman Nestor and Councilman Orzechowski.
- General Fund and Payroll balances in the finance report contain garbled leading digits in the Otter transcript.
- Adjournment seconder is not identified, and the vote was conducted by voice rather than individual roll call.

Adjournment

Councilman John Nestor made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded, but the available transcript does not identify the seconder. Mayor Mozer called for a voice vote, and audible ayes were recorded with no opposition. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:56 PM.

Review Note: *The adjournment was not taken by individual roll-call vote in the transcript. The seconder should be verified from audio if identification is required for the final record.*

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Ron Mozer, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Terry Taylor, City Clerk