

Council takes up housing, health care and taxes

October 18, 2012

By MARK MARONEY - mmaroney@sungazette.com , Williamsport Sun-Gazette
City Council is to take up issues such as senior citizen and mixed-income housing projects, neighborhood revitalization, a new tax collection agency proposal and presentations on health care at its meeting tonight.

Health care costs, which are anticipated to rise by 11 percent next year for city employees, will be presented by Benecon Health Insurance, the city's administrator.

Mayor Gabriel J. Campana has indicated the expected \$500,000 increase is less than it would have been if Benecon were not working on behalf of the city.

Council also will be expected to vote on a sales agreement offered by Fortus Group, a Fort Wayne, Ind., housing developer that wants to buy a parking lot at Via Bella and Mulberry Street to build a 38- to 40-unit residential complex for senior citizens. The \$6 million project is contingent upon Fortus receiving tax credits through the Pennsylvania Finance Housing Agency.

Council expects to vote on resolutions regarding the application by Lycoming County of money it has identified as available in the state that can go toward housing projects.

The local match for the city, which is not to be taken from general fund or city taxpayers, but rather, Community Development Block Grants and other grant sources, is \$100,000 over three years, said John Grado, city engineer and director of community and economic development.

The money would be used for Brodart Commons, a project to level that building on Memorial Avenue to create multiple mixed-income residences, improve the surrounding neighborhood near that site and tie into a senior housing project development on Grove Street.

In tax collection updates, city Treasurer Tom O'Connor plans to introduce Berkheimer, of Bangor, a new collection agency that replaces Centax, of Berwick, to collect local services, business privilege and mercantile taxes.