

The workshop meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Sinking Spring was called to order on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sinking Spring Borough Hall by President James Pachuillo. After the Pledge to the Flag, Elizabeth Eagelman called the roll reflecting the following Council Members present:

James Pachuillo
TJ Huckleberry
George Butkus
Denise Stine (absent)
Lisa Gantner
Tracy Peterson
Brian Hoffa

Other officials present were: Mayor Gary Cirulli, Charles Haws, Borough Solicitor; Brad Smith, ARRO Consulting; Michael Hart, Public Works Director; Police Chief Lee Schweyer, and Elizabeth Eagelman who recorded the minutes of the proceeding.

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no visitors or public comment.

REVITALIZATION:

Mr. Pachuillo stated that we invited the Revitalization BOSS 2020 with Fourth Economy to give a presentation on the Market Study. He turned the meeting over to Mr. Loth to give a brief explanation and he asked if we could hold questions until after the presentation.

Mr. Loth introduced himself to the audience and explained that Fourth Economy has been working with the Revitalization Committee and members of the Borough Council Economic Development Committee for the past four (4) months to gather information that is relevant to the proposal to build a new Town Center in the Borough of Sinking Spring. He mentioned that the Borough has a flat income for taxes that come into the Borough but prices for the services that the Borough delivers to the residents continue to rise which is a recipe for failure. He stated that there are only two ways for the Borough to receive additional money; either continue to raise property taxes, which they don't want to happen, or find another stream of income from somewhere else.

Mr. Loth stated that they looked at the Borough, which is essentially built up, and realized that there are twenty acres of land between Columbia Avenue and Shillington Road that is not built upon. He also mentioned that the traffic is the cause of not having a lot of businesses located in the Downtown. He stated that they looked for a way to eliminate all the traffic congestion so they created a plan for new roadways and to change the intersections that don't line up and improve the traffic flow through the central part of the Borough. He stated that they proposed to build a new roadway that would go from Columbia Avenue to Shillington Road and would serve as a new Downtown Main Street for a new Downtown Center.

REVITALIZATION (Cont.):

Mr. Loth stated that the intersection at Cacoosing and Columbia is pretty much ready. He stated that we have the funding and we are getting the final permits and the construction could begin either this year or next year. He mentioned that the other big intersection at Shillington Road and Mull Avenue is bigger and the Borough can't afford to do that on their own so they have been talking with Regional Area Transportation Study (RATS) Committee to see if they would put it on their twelve-year plan so that it would be funded mostly by funding through that committee.

Mr. Loth stated that they have two gentlemen here from Fourth Economy Consulting that the Borough hired to take a look at the proposal for the new Town Center and give us hard data through research and development that would tell us if the project can succeed.

Mr. Loth asked the audience to leave their names and e-mail addresses so that he can send them information on the progress of the project.

Mr. Loth introduced Steve McKnight and Jerry Paytas of Fourth Economy Consulting who are going to give a presentation by slide. Mr. McKnight and Mr. Paytas thanked Mr. Loth, the community and Council for working with them on this project.

Mr. McKnight stated that he was going to start off with the conclusion so everyone knows what they did discover. He stated that there is evidence of a market demand for the space allocation that is envisioned for the new development. He stated that they see this as a unique project relative to the size and to the size of the Borough and that it is a bold vision. He mentioned that it isn't something that they as consultants often see and that it could be a potential game changer for the tax base and the culture of the community. He stated that he feels that it is important to convey not to discount the size and impact of what this idea is for the community and that is it something that if it is developed and if the funding is there and these things can move forward that the Borough would have something special here relative to the market overall.

Mr. McKnight went over the objectives and reviewed the Market Study concerning the key demographic trends. He turned it over to Mr. Paytas to go over the market analysis key findings concerning retail and what fits, commercial/office market and residential sector. Mr. McKnight mentioned that there are a few success factors for the programmatic planning; 1) Engage a Master Developer for these specialty projects; 2) Ensure transit access and active transportation options; 3) Open Space for outdoor events and gatherings; 4) Form a working partnership with the Greater Reading Economic Partnership; 5) Marketing and Asset Promotion.

Mr. Loth mentioned that they printed copies of the report for the residents and if there aren't enough he can get a copy to those who want them. He stated that they talked about the notion of marketing and promotion of this process right away. He stated that they have been speaking with members of Council's Economic Development Committee and they agree that we should form a team including members of the community and members of the business sector, as volunteers, to sit down and work out an Action Plan to take this process forward so that we can begin to interest developers and start attracting new businesses to the Borough. Mr. Hoffa also spoke about the Action Plan and scheduling meetings.

REVITALIZATION (Cont.):

Mr. Pachuillo opened the meeting up for questions from the audience. One gentleman spoke concerning the traffic issues and businesses not staying in the Borough. Mr. Adams had questions on the Retail Sector and the ten-mile radius and how they got the figures. Mr. Paytas stated that they used a retail gravity model. A few residents from Krick Avenue questioned if and when their properties would be taken. Mr. Pachuillo stated that the retail street, which the Borough would like to have done by private development, hinges on getting the intersections done. He stated that the Borough decided to go ahead and build this intersection here at Columbia and Cacoosing. He stated that was the whole start of the process, where we put money into the game and garnished funds elsewhere through state funds. He stated that we did have to take property for that so if the ball keeps rolling and we want to finish this project, then yes, the properties on Krick Avenue will need to be taken for the development but stated that there is no time frame for that. The residents on Krick stated that it is so frustrating because their lives are on hold and they can't move or do any home improvements. Residents from Shillington Road also asked the same questions as to when their homes would be taken. Mr. Loth stated that next month at the County they will have a meeting of the Regional Area Transportation Study who represent all the different levels of Government in Berks County. He stated that they will vote to decide if they want to place this project, Shillington Road Intersection, on their list of projects. He stated that when that happens, if we get voted on, that means that we are taking a step forward to get that intersection changed. Mr. Hoffa mentioned that the vote in February will probably be limited to engineering expenses and we won't get the full funding for a few years.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mr. Pachuillo stated that they needed to go into Executive Session for a personnel issue and possible litigation. Council went into Executive Session at 8:10 p.m.

RECONVENE:

Council reconvened at 9:00 p.m.

BUSINESS:

Mr. Pachuillo stated that the first item is appointing Mr. Paul Roth to the Civil Service Commission. Mr. Butkus made a motion to appoint Mr. Paul Roth to the Civil Service Commission; seconded by Mr. Hoffa. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried.

Mr. Pachuillo stated that the second item is appointing Mrs. Charmaine Beck as the Deputy Tax Collector. Mrs. Gantner made a motion to appoint Mrs. Charmaine Beck as Deputy Tax Collector; seconded by Mrs. Peterson. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried.

BUSINESS (Cont.):

Mr. Butkus mentioned that they had talked briefly at the Council meeting at the beginning of the month about reducing the trash rate. He recommended that Council approve lowering the trash rate by 10% across the board per Mrs. Egelman's double checking of the rough numbers. Mr. Butkus made the motion to reduce the trash rate 10% from last year; seconded by Mrs. Peterson. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried. Mr. Pachuillo stated that we will need to get the new rates for the commercial businesses to the Tax Collector so he can get the bills out in the mail. Mr. Pachuillo mentioned that he received a list from Mrs. Beck from last year containing about thirty businesses that have not paid their trash bills. Mrs. Egelman mentioned that is something you have to think about when you reduce the trash rate because not everyone pays and you have to collect enough to pay the bills from the hauler. Mr. Pachuillo suggested that if they don't pay then we should stop collecting their trash. He stated that he will work on it and talk to Mrs. Beck.

Mr. Pachuillo stated that the next item is from their executive session. Mr. Butkus made a motion to increase Mr. Zohner's pay rate by 3% as a raise for 2016 retroactive to January 1, 2016; seconded by Mrs. Peterson. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried. Mr. Butkus made a motion to increase Mr. Hart's pay rate by 3% as a raise for 2016 retroactive to January 1, 2016; seconded by Mr. Huckleberry. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried.

CHIEF SCHWEYER:

Chief Schweyer mentioned that it has been a busy three (3) months of serious crime in the Borough. He mentioned that we had a home invasion on Penn Avenue, a shooting on Woodrow Avenue, we had three (3) rapes and the latest was a burglary on January 13th at a new store located at 3868 Penn Avenue.

MICHAEL HART – PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR:

Mr. Hart stated that last year when we did the classification for the Public Works Employees, the Class 2 we had bumped that up an additional \$.79 for 2015 but we should have done it for 2015 and 2016. He stated that he is asking for Council's approval for the middle range for 2016 to bump that from \$16.41 to \$17.04 and just the same increase. Mr. Butkus made the motion retroactive to January 1, 2016 to close out their contract which ends the end of this year; seconded by Mr. Hoffa. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried.

Mr. Hart mentioned that he got prices for the Note Pads from Lynx through the Costars. He stated that it will be about \$20,000.00 and he believes \$10,000.00 was already figured in the budget for some of us because of the Smart Search System. Mr. Huckleberry suggested looking to see if there are any Grants that may help cover the cost. Mr. Butkus made a motion to authorize Mr. Hart to order the Note Pads awhile; seconded by Mrs. Peterson. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried.

MICHAEL HART – PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR (cont.):

Mr. Hart mentioned that the snow removal is going well and that he has a contractor helping out for the week. He mentioned that the contractor costs \$4,000.00 per day.

MRS. EAGELMAN – ASSISTANT BOROUGH SECRETARY:

Mrs. Eagelman mentioned that the Borough has a checking account with BB&T which had to be opened because of a Line of Credit that we have with them. She mentioned that they have begun charging us Dormant Account Fees because there is no activity on the account. She stated that the bank suggested depositing the semiannual interest payment into the account to be auto debited on the due date to avoid the fees. Council agreed to have the interest deposited and set up the auto debit. Mrs. Eagelman also questioned why we are not paying any principal on the loan. Mr. Pachuillo stated that it is a draw down loan and we haven't drawn anything out. Mrs. Eagelman stated that there is a balance of \$40,398.98 which she believes is to cover the loan fees. Discussion ensued. Mrs. Eagelman also mentioned that the maturity date is March 2017 so we will probably have to redo it again next year. Mr. Pachuillo stated that they will talk to Mr. Ludgate concerning this project next week.

CHARLES HAWS – BOROUGH SOLICITOR:

Mr. Haws mentioned that the Binder property is going through the condemnation process but that is the only one that is a sticking point with the acquisitions.

MAYOR GARY CIRULLI:

Mayor Cirulli mentioned that the Contract went into effect for the Full-Time Police Officers and that the Part-Time Officers, in past practice, received the same rate increase which is 3%. He stated that the current rate is \$19.45 per hour and the new rate would be \$20.03 per hour. Mr. Butkus made a motion to approve the 3% increase for the Part Time Police officers retroactive to January 1, 2016; seconded by Mrs. Gantner. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried.

Mayor Cirulli stated that he would like Council to approve a Criminal Investigator for the Borough at no extra charge. He stated that they would like to appoint Officer Oxenreider to that position because of the increased crime in the Borough. Mr. Hoffa made the motion to approve making Officer Oxenreider the Borough Criminal Investigator; seconded by Mr. Butkus. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 1. Motion carried.

TRACY PETERSON – LIBRARY:

Mrs. Peterson mentioned they had to fire a gentleman at the Library.

LISA GANTNER – RECREATION:

Mrs. Gantner mentioned that they received a donation in the amount of \$3,500.00 from the Fritztown Fire Company. She stated that she already sent a thank you letter.

Mr. Pachulo asked if they started talking about the Community Breakfast and dates yet. Mrs. Gantner stated that it is the Saturday before Palm Sunday.


GEORGE BUTKUS – SEWER AND SANITATION:

Mr. Butkus mentioned that the Sewer Committee will be meeting this coming Monday.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Butkus made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Elizabeth A. Egelman
Asst. Borough Secretary