

The regular monthly meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Sinking Spring was called to order on Monday, January 7, 2008 at 7:40 p.m., at the Sinking Spring Borough Hall by President Stewart Wenrich. After the Pledge to the Flag, Regina Shade called the roll reflecting the following Council Members present:

Stewart Wenrich
Bruce Light
Barbara Kutz
Lawrence Schmidt
George Butkus
James Zerr
Elizabeth Sloan

Other officials present were: Mayor Clarence Noecker; Charles Fitzpatrick, Borough Solicitor, Michael Hart, Public Works Director, James Oxenreider, Chief of Police, Peter Eisenbrown, Ludgate Engineering, David Schlott, ARRO Consulting, Ronald Wentzel, Fire Chief, and Regina Shade, Borough Secretary/Treasurer, who recorded the minutes of the proceedings.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Butkus requested the meeting minutes for December 6, 2007 be changed to reflect he is for the project however he has some concerns over the conditions. Mr. Light made a motion to approve the minutes pending the above noted change; seconded by Mr. Butkus. AYES – 7, NAYS - 0; motion carried.

VISITORS:

There were no visitors.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Mrs. Shade read a thank you note from Sondra Westbrook, Librarian. She thanked Council for her Christmas Bonus, the Christmas Party, and for Council's continued support. She also thanked Council for the new carpeting that was just installed. Mrs. Shade stated she had spoken with Mrs. Westbrook and there have been some issues with damaged items occurring during the move. It was decided we will hold back \$2,000.00 from the moving charges until these issues are cleared up.

Mr. Wenrich received communications to a breakfast at the Sheraton on January 16, 2008 to discuss the GASB-45. He explained what this is. He requested to send Mrs. Shade and Mr. Hart to this breakfast. Mr. Butkus made the motion; seconded by Mr. Light. AYES – 7, NAYS – 0; Motion carried.

MILLER ENVIRONMENTAL:

The gentleman from Miller was unable to attend. Everyone has their report. Mr. Wenrich questioned Mr. Butkus if there were any issues Council should be made aware of. Mr. Butkus said

MILLER ENVIRONMENTAL(cont'd):

that during the ice storm a piece of the fencing got damaged. It was mid December. The committee authorized the emergency repair as it was under \$1,000.00. Mr. Butkus also believes that the work on Broad Street has begun. Most of that section shall be slipped lined; however there will be a section that does need to be dug up where the laterals meet the main. Mr. Schmidt questioned how comes Council was not informed the work would be done prior to when the work began. Mr. Butkus stated he can't speak on timing; however Council was aware this project would be beginning. Mr. Schmidt said yes that was done, but it was done without anyone knowing about it. Mr. Wenrich stated yes, we knew the work was going to be done; however we didn't know a start date. Mr. Butkus could not answer that because as of the last Authority meeting no date was stated. Mr. Schmidt said in the future if they are going to be digging up our streets, our streets department should be aware of this. Mr. Wenrich said that our Public Works Director was not invited to the preconstruction meeting. Mr. Wenrich also questioned if the fire company was made aware of this and if a timely notification was given to the residents along Broad Street. Mr. Fitzpatrick questioned if PA American Water Company was digging up our street wouldn't they need to pull a permit. Mr. Hart stated yes. Mr. Fitzpatrick questioned if this contractor has obtained a permit. Mr. Hart said no. A lot of Borough's that do their own work don't require a permit. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated we aren't doing the work. Mr. Schlott thought the Borough had been notified but as he looked into this he found that it had not happened. Mr. Schlott has explained to his office this is not to happen again. Ms. Sloan stated she has about a half a ton of blue stone along with two (2) metal plates parked in front of her house. She feels this should be located somewhere else not in front of her driveway. Mr. Schlott will be talking with the individual who is handling this. Mr. Fitzpatrick feels the contractor should make contact with the Borough about cutting into our Borough streets. Mr. Schmidt questioned if the residents had ample notice. Mr. Butkus feels this should be part of the contractor's responsibility. Mr. Schlott said that the residents were notified on Friday. He told the individuals who were working on this project that they must notify the people who would be directly affected by this project. He said letters were hand delivered on Friday and he is aware that was short notice. Ms. Sloan received nothing. Mr. Schlott stated there are only three (3) laterals being dug up and she might not be directly affected. Mr. Wenrich said this is where communication is so important. Someone needed to give the contractor the okay to begin work there. Mr. Wenrich feels that whoever told the contractor it was okay to begin work should have let the Borough know this would be starting along with those people directly affected on Broad Street. Mr. Wenrich feels we need to have communication between Council, the Authority, and the residents. Mrs. Diane Yarger of Broad Street stated she had spoken to Bob Ludgate, Jr. of Ludgate Engineering and he feels with this ground water there could have been backing up of water into their basements. He said they might need to dig them up. The issue was deferred to Peter Eisenbrown of Ludgate. No one was able to speak about this. Mrs. Yarger did receive a phone call from ARRO about this project. Mr. Schmidt asked Mr. Eisenbrown to look into this. Mr. Eisenbrown said he would certainly do that in conjunction with Mr. Schlott as this was basically a sewer issue. Mr. Schmidt's concern and Mrs. Yarger agreed was what is the timeline regarding this project as they are beginning work there. Ms. Sloan stated it is open right now and Mrs. Yarger stated hers has not been opened yet. Mr. Fitzpatrick questioned if this was a municipal problem. Mr. Butkus said it would be for the area not just one (1) property. A discussion ensued as to infiltration and runoff into our system. Mr. Bondarchuck was hoping that when it is time to backfill everything will be brought back to the way it was before the work is done. Mr. Wenrich asked the street department, the sewer committee, and the streets committee to look at this project.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There was no unfinished business.

Mrs. Shade stated that Mrs. Lisa Lasky of the Friends of the Library is requesting the use of the basement for their book sale on April 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Mr. Butkus made a motion to allow the Friends of the Library to use the basement for their book sales; seconded by Mrs. Kutz. AYES – 7, NAYS – 0; Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mr. Wenrich called for an executive session for personnel issues at 7:55 p.m.

RECONVENE:

Council reconvened at 8:14 p.m. and no action was taken.

NEW BUSINESS:

A request for a handicap parking space was presented for 649 Vester Place, the Mayor stated. He made the recommendation. Ms. Sloan made a motion to create a handicap parking space at 649 Vester Place; seconded by Mr. Butkus. AYES – 7, NAYS – 0; Motion carried. The Safety Committee also reviewed the request and they were in agreement.

The next item was Escrow Release Number 20 for Brookfield Manor Phase I. The amount is \$15,649.60. Mr. Butkus questioned if this was the time to bring up replacing the trees. Mr. Zerr stated that when the Safety Committee looked at it due to the time frame it is recommended that we wait till spring before we do anything. Mrs. Kutz made a motion to release \$15,649.60; seconded by Mr. Zerr. AYES – 7, NAYS – 0; Motion carried.

The next issue was Escrow Release Number 12 for Brookfield Manor Phase II in the amount of \$33,973.77. Mr. Zerr made a motion to release \$33,973.77; seconded by Mr. Schmidt. AYES – 7, NAYS – 0; Motion carried.

Mr. Butkus brought up about our Task Force representative. Ms. Sloan is now on Council and he was questioning if we need to appoint a member from the community to take her place. Mr. Zerr stated we do need to do that. Mr. Wenrich is going to defer that to a later meeting or workshop.

RONALD WENTZEL – FIRE CHIEF:

Mr. Ronald Wentzel stated that over the last six (6) months his attendance has been lax due to his work. He apologized. He was working overtime and now that is over. He assumed responsibility for not having another representative here at the meetings. The fire department which is strictly volunteer has achieved two (2) records. In the month of December they did 64 calls. He explained that they had enough men during the ice storm to man all the equipment at our fire company plus supply two (2) full teams to help out in Lower and South Heidelberg Townships.

RONALD WENTZEL – FIRE CHIEF (cont'd):

The chassis for the new piece of equipment has arrived. It is having prep work done. KME has invited Council or anyone interested to tour their plant on a Saturday. They welcome everyone. The last item was the fire company received a grant for replacing some of their radios. They are going to be required to replace the radios as the County is going to narrow banding. The total project that was applied for which included radios, some lighting on the ladder, some safety head sets and some new hand units was \$38,900.00. They have been approved for \$28,000.00. He along with the other Chiefs will be meeting to see where they might be able to trim some items so it won't cost as much out of pocket.

BUSINESS:

Mrs. Shade stated that the address for the Borough's website is www.co.berks.pa.us/sinkingspring

Mr. Butkus questioned if Ms. Sloan should take Mr. Leiby's place on the Library Board till he reappoints the committees. Mr. Wenrich answered yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Biggs addressed Fire Chief Ron Wentzel. Chief Wentzel explained what the new utility vehicle will be used for. Through a grant we received breathing apparatus Chief Wentzel stated after Mr. Biggs questioned this as well. Chief Wentzel stated our equipment is up to par. Mr. Biggs questioned how many firemen does the fire company have. Chief Wentzel stated 30 to 35 people. Mr. Biggs asked him how he was so successful in having that amount of men. Chief Wentzel said they pay for their training out of the Relief Fund. They provide them with gear and a pager. There is no out of pocket money on their part. Mr. Biggs then asked how he keeps them. Chief Wentzel stated he is not sure; they all could leave at any given time. There is nothing keeping them. A discussion ensued. Mr. Biggs heard of something that is going around the Country to help keep the firemen. Chief Wentzel stated there are some financial things starting up. Chief Wentzel believes what Mr. Biggs is talking about is LOSAP. It is a retirement fund for volunteer firemen. After so many years as a volunteer fireman you receive almost the same benefits as say a Police Chief receives as an employee. Chief Wentzel stated that when their alarm goes off they become employees of the Borough. They are covered under the Borough's workman's comp. The only thing they don't receive is pay. This type of funding would allow retirement money to be paid for the volunteers. Mr. Biggs questioned if this has ever been discussed with our Council. Chief Wentzel stated it has never been discussed at a public safety meeting or Borough Council. Chief Wentzel is trying to get some information together to put in front of Council for the next budget prep. He would like to have a line item in the budget for 2009. Mr. Light stated we had talked about having some type of recognition for the firefighters. Mr. Zerr said this is not what they are talking about. It was discussed about having a banquet for them; however this was different. Mr. Biggs continued while we should institute this program. A brief discussion ensued. Chief Wentzel stated that he believes within the last six (6) months fifteen (15) people have joined our department. He continued to explain that they are a close knit family of firefighters. Mr. Biggs feels we should be looking into this further.

PUBLIC COMMENT (cont'd):

Mr. Ken Harting stated a few months ago it was discussed at a Council meeting to talk to PA American Water Company about “ripping us off” with the services they are providing. Mr. Harting stated they now what a rate increase. Mr. Fitzpatrick did send a letter to PA American Water Company. The procedure to file a complaint he stated was sent to the Borough. The procedure is to send a letter, which we did. It has been longer than a month ago. Mr. Harting supported the training for the firefighters. Mr. Francis Butkus questioned if there was anything in place within the administration of this building that if an error was made on a bill or several bills that a correction can be made to the sewer bill. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated you would need to come before Council for the correction. Mrs. Shade stated that if you get a credit on your water bill, you will get a credit on your sewer bill as well. Mrs. Shade stated if you leave your water running and you want a credit on your sewer bill, you will need to come before Council. However, if PA American Water Company issues you a credit on your bill, you will see the credit on your sewer bill as well.

Mr. Wenrich stated all Borough meetings including the Authority will now begin at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Wenrich stated no Council meeting will run past 10:00 p.m. If the meeting is going on longer it will be continued. After being in a meeting longer than three (3) hours your thought processes become clouded. Mr. Fitzpatrick agreed this can be done.

Mr. Zerr questioned if we can add two (2) citizens at large to the public safety committee. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated we can however they will not be able to vote.

Mr. Butkus questioned if we have a treasurer’s report. There was no report as that was given at the December 27, 2007 meeting.

Mr. Wenrich looked for a motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Sloan made a motion to adjourn at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Regina M. Shade
Borough Secretary/Treasurer