

The regular meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Sinking Spring was called to order on Thursday, October 7, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., by Council President James Pachuillo. After the pledge to the flag, Elizabeth Eagelman called the roll reflecting the following Council Members present:

James Pachuillo
Tracy Peterson
H. David Miller (Absent)
Denise Stine
Lisa Gantner
Brian Hoffa
Robert Metzgar (arrived at 7:11)

Other officials present were: Mayor Gary Cirulli; Charles Haws, Barley Snyder, Borough Solicitor; Brad Smith, Engineer, ARRO Consulting; Michael Hart, Borough Manager; Police Chief James Oxenreider; and Elizabeth Eagelman, Borough Secretary, who recorded the minutes of the proceeding.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Pachuillo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 2, 2021 Council Meeting. Mrs. Stine made the motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Mrs. Peterson. AYES – 5, NAYS – 0, ABSENT – 2. Motion carried.

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no visitors signed in.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Mr. Pachuillo stated that we received correspondence from the County Commissioners inviting Council to the Municipal Officials Breakfast on October 29th at the Ontelaunee Grange at 8 a.m. He stated that if anyone is interested in going to let Mrs. Eagelman know and she will submit the reservation form. He also mentioned that we received a letter from Waste Management, who collects our recycling, apologizing for any inconsistent service and stating that they are being challenged by a shortage of drivers and truck technicians due to the pandemic.

APPROVAL OF THE BILLS:

Mr. Pachuillo asked for a motion to approve the bills for September 2021. Mrs. Stine made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Mrs. Gantner. AYES – 5, NAYS – 0, ABSENT - 2. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Mr. Pachuillo asked for a motion to approve the Treasures Report for September 2021. Mrs. Peterson made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report; seconded by Mrs. Stine. AYES – 5, NAYS – 0, ABSENT - 2. Motion carried.

WESTERN BERKS FIRE DEPARTMENT:

Mr. Pachuillo stated that their September report is in the email packet.

WESTERN BERKS AMBULANCE:

Mr. Pachuillo stated that their September report is in the email packet.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS/POSSIBLE ACTIONABLE ITEMS:

Mr. Pachuillo stated that the first item is the Wireless Update. Mr. Hart stated that there is no update for that.

Mr. Pachuillo stated that the next item is the Police Contract. Mrs. Stine stated that they are working on it and that they should have it wrapped up next month. Mr. Pachuillo mentioned that he received a letter from the Police Officers Association due to the deadline.

Mr. Pachuillo stated that the last item is the Fireworks Ordinance which can be removed since there are already State laws to cover it. He mentioned that there will be information in the newsletter about the Fireworks law.

NEW BUSINESS/POSSIBLE ACTIONABLE ITEMS:

Mr. Pachuillo stated that the first item is hire Damali Rodriguez as a part-time Substitute Library Assistant at a rate of \$9.00 per hour. Mrs. Peterson made the motion to hire Damali Rodriguez as a part-time Substitute Library Assistant at a rate of \$9.00 per hour; seconded by Mrs. Stine. AYES – 5, NAYS – 0, ABSENT - 2. Motion carried.

The next item was to adopt the new Municipal Solid Waste Ordinance. Mr. Haws stated that because of the change in the yard waste site from the Township of Spring to the Borough we had to update our Ordinance. He mentioned that Mr. Hart ran it by Mrs. Meeks the County Waste Coordinator who reviewed it and made some comments and then ran it by DEP who reviewed it and also made some comments. He stated that we incorporated their changes into the Ordinance as well which included adding a definition for leaf waste and included recyclables among the things that cannot be burned. Mrs. Gantner made a motion to adopt the new Municipal Solid Waste Ordinance; seconded by Mrs. Stine. AYES – 5, NAYS – 0, ABSENT - 2. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS/POSSIBLE ACTIONABLE ITEMS (Cont.):

The next item was to hire Devon Walls as a Maintenance Tech for the Waste Water Treatment Plant at a rate of \$20.00 per hour. Mr. Hart mentioned that Mr. Walls was a carryover from the last time we did interviews. He stated that Mr. Walls is not currently licensed but is willing to get licensed. Mrs. Gantner made a motion to hire Mr. Devon Walls as a Maintenance Tech for the WWTP; seconded by Mrs. Stine. AYES – 5, NAYS – 0, ABSENT - 2. Motion carried.

The next item was to accept the resignation of the Library Director Kim Cowell. Mrs. Peterson stated that Ms. Cowell has accepted another position and has turned in her two week notice. She stated that we hate to see her go but wish her the best. Mrs. Peterson made the motion to accept Ms. Cowell's resignation; seconded by Mrs. Gantner. AYES – 5, NAYS – 0, ABSENT - 2. Motion carried.

Mr. Metzgar arrived at 7:11 p.m. after a prior engagement.

REVITALIZATION:

Mr. Merlin Weaver addressed Council with the Revitalization update. He mentioned that BOSS was working on a preliminary application for the Pennsylvania Transportation Alternatives Grant and that Mr. Hart and Mr. Loth were on a call with PennDOT and they agreed and determined to allow the Borough's application to proceed. He mentioned that the dead line for submission is October 15th. He also mentioned that Mr. Hoffa and Mrs. Gantner have agreed to help on two teams. Mrs. Gantner will be helping with the design team and Mr. Hoffa will be helping up the promotion team getting the word out to the community and business leaders about what we are doing and the progress we are making here in the Borough. He also mentioned that he attended the Pennsylvania Downtown Center conference and that he got a lot of valuable information. Mr. Hoffa mentioned that they want to revitalize their Business Association and get the business leaders involved. Mr. Weaver mentioned that BOSS Forward will be doing a presentation for the Reading Berks Association of Realtors.

BRAD SMITH – ARRO CONSULTING – ENGINEER:

Mr. Smith stated that the last utility has finally submitted their HOP for the Phase 2 intersection so hopefully we will be able to bid that project sometime in November.

Mr. Smith stated that Senda Auto Sales submitted revised plans that were reviewed by ARRO and a letter was issued on September 22, 2021. He stated that the Planning Commission recommends conditional plan approval based on that letter. He also mentioned that the applicant has requested that in lieu of a cash escrow that the agreement state that a use and occupancy permit will not be issued until site improvements are complete and municipal costs are paid. Mr. Hoffa made a motion to grant conditional plan approval based on ARRO's review letter dated September 22, 2021; seconded by Mrs. Stine. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT - 1. Motion carried.

BRAD SMITH – ARRO CONSULTING – ENGINEER (Cont.):

Mr. Smith stated that the Borough received revised plans for the Village Greens Subdivision and Land Development and that ARRO has reviewed the plans and a letter was issued on September 27, 2021. He mentioned that there are still some items to be addressed and that they made another submission to FEMA to get their Flood Plain approved. He mentioned that they were unable to get the permit they wanted for the discharge on the north side of the Reedy Road culvert so they are going back to engineering and designing another discharge point still on the north side of the culvert where we wanted it. He stated that based on his letter the Planning Commission recommended conditional approval on that plan again. Mrs. Gantner made a motion to grant conditional plan approval based on ARRO's review letter dated September 27, 2021; seconded by Mrs. Peterson. Discussion ensued concerning the Flood Plain being approved by FEMA prior to signing the plans. Mr. Bondarchuk of 301 Broad Street asked if the review letter was available for residents to read. Mr. Pachuillo stated that he could get a copy of the letter if he submitted a right-to-know request form and paid .25 cents per page. Mr. Bondarchuk also mentioned that he has concerns about the water table and that it is just below his basement level and he has never had that problem before. He stated that he is concerned and wanted to know if the discharge from this facility will affect them on Broad Street. Mr. Pachuillo stated that he believes it will improve it. Mr. Haws stated that one of the conditions is that they get their NPDES Permit and to get that they will need to show that they are controlling storm water. Mr. Metzgar mentioned that part of the reason for the Planning Commission recommending conditional approval was based on the fact that we knew that they would have to jump through some hoops that they did not have to jump through previously. Further discussion ensued. AYES – 6, NAYS – 0, ABSENT - 1. Motion carried.

Mr. Smith mentioned that he received signed agreements back from the Borough for the Reed Bed Refurbishment and that they will be having a pre-construction meeting Tuesday of next week.

BUDGETS:

Mr. Hart mentioned that he started working on the Budgets and that they are attached to everyone's e-mail so they can review them and then discuss them further at the Workshop meeting. He mentioned that the General Fund Budget is looking pretty good and that we should not need a tax increase as long as we offset some of the Capital costs out of the Capital Fund. He stated that some of the Capital costs are; 1) Codification of Borough Ordinances, 2) Updated security system at yard waste dump site, 3) Roof of Borough Hall, 4) New police vehicle and 5) portable radar sign. He mentioned that all of these items would cost \$121,720.00 and that our normal allocation to the Capital Fund is \$105,838.00 so we would only be pulling a small figure out of the Capital account. Mr. Metzgar stated that would need Council's approval. Mr. Hart stated that he is just putting it out there as an option for Council to consider so we don't have to raise the mileage rate for 2022. He moved onto the Fire and EMS fund and stated that they both will need tax increases due to the Fire and EMS both raising their fees. He mentioned that right now the 2021 tax rate for Fire is .9 mills and the EMS is .31 mills and with the new charges that they are imposing the Fire Tax for 2022 would be 1.146 mills and the EMS Tax for 2022 would be .35 mills. He moved onto the Sewer Fund Budget and mentioned we will need a small increase on the sewer rates to balance out the budget. He stated that the flat amount would stay the same but the per gallon charge would go up

BUDGETS (Cont.):

5% so for residential it would go from \$4.50 per 1000 gallons to \$4.72 per 1000 gallons. He also mentioned that there are a few capital items listed on the budget that can be paid for from the Sewer Capital Fund. He also mentioned that the capital items for sewer are a shared cost with the other three townships as well. Mr. Hart mentioned that in total right now for 2021 our total taxes are 8.42 mills and with the proposed changes it would be 8.706 mills for 2022. Mr. Pachuilio commended Mr. Hart for his hard work on the Budgets and watching out for the Borough dollars. Mr. Metzgar noted that they did not have an Admin meeting last month so they have not vetted any of Mr. Harts work through Admin yet and they have not discussed what the needs are if any for next year so this could potentially change before the Workshop meeting.

POLICE CHIEF JAMES OXENREIDER:

Chief Oxenreider mentioned that Trick-or-Treat night will be Sunday, October 31st from 6 P.M. to 9 P.M. He went over his activity report for September. Mrs. Peterson mentioned that there have been a lot of burglaries and break-ins to cars and open garages in nearby neighborhoods in Spring Township. Chief Oxenreider stated that we had some the other month and they try to educate people on locking their cars and not leaving personal items visible in the car and closing garage doors.

CHARLES HAWS – BARLEY SNYDER –SOLICITOR:

Mr. Haws stated that the Liquor License Transfer for Lidl did not get published in the newspaper so we either do it at a Workshop Meeting this month or hold it until November Council meeting. Mr. Pachuilio stated that we will need to have a Workshop meeting this month for budgets and will probably have them until budgets get passed. Mr. Haws stated that he will make sure it gets advertised on time this time.

MICHAEL HART – BOROUGH MANAGER:

Mr. Hart mentioned that our Streets Department got hit hard with COVID and that three of them will be back on Monday and that there was one case over in the Library. Mr. Pachuilio mentioned the ARP funds we received. Mr. Hart stated that they are still not sure what we can use that money for and they still have not come out with the final rules.

Mr. Hart mentioned that Ms. Cowell from the Library brought over a letter from a gentleman that has to do Community Service and he would like to do it in the Library. He stated that the gentleman's background check came back clean and he also has the child abuse clearance. He asked if Council would be ok with it. Mr. Pachuilio asked what the Library Board thinks. Mrs. Peterson stated that they are pulling the rules and they think that is says that we would not take anyone with a background but they would be willing to change the policy because it was done so long ago. Mr. Pachuilio stated that he would be ok with it and that it would be up to the Library Board. Mr. Hart mentioned that we do have security cameras in the Library.

ELIZABETH EAGELMAN – BOROUGH SECRETARY:

Mrs. Eagelman mentioned that the Newsletter is out to print and should be out in the next week or so. She also mentioned that Mr. Binkley has moved out of the Borough so we have an open seat on the Civil Service Commission. Lisa Gantner mentioned that Mrs. Eagelman basically did the whole newsletter and that they had to strong arm a few people to get information. She stated that Ms. Cherry from the Sewer Plant wrote a really great article and that the Chief wrote a great introduction. She stated that we did not use a graphic designer and that Mrs. Eagelman did it all and that she did a really great job. She mentioned that we had so much information we had to go to twelve (12) pages.

TRACY PETERSON – LIBRARY:

Mrs. Peterson mentioned the Library Budget and that the Borough has not increased their contribution in a really long time and that it needs to be on the radar because they are getting less funding from the state. She mentioned that it is really hard to keep part-time help because they can make more elsewhere. Mr. Pachuillo stated that they should discuss it with the Library Board and come back to Council with how much they need.

JAMES PACHUILO – COUNCIL PRESIDENT:

Mr. Pachuillo mentioned that Mr. Miller is not here again because he has other commitments on the first Thursday of each month with his job. He mentioned that we had discussed last meeting about the possibility of changing our meeting nights and that he wants to talk to Mr. Miller about that because he did not run again but may be interested if the meeting date changes. Discussion ensued about what day works for everyone. Mr. Pachuillo asked all of Council to think about what day of the week would work best for them.

ROBERT METZGAR – FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION:

Mr. Metzgar mentioned that they have to schedule an Admin meeting yet and that they did not have one last month.

BRIAN HOFFA – ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Mr. Hoffa mentioned that he has been in touch with Derck & Edson and probably in the next week to two weeks they will have the second revision of our Zoning Ordinance and we will take that under review and then let Council know and see what we are going to do.

LISA GANTNER - RECREATION:

Mrs. Gantner mentioned that we are going to have our Holiday Open House on December 8th this year with Santa.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Hoffa made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Elizabeth A. Egelman
Borough Secretary