

Borough Council Workshop Meeting
Minutes – January 11, 2023

Call to Order – Mr. Gillette called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Roll Call – The following members of the Borough Council were present; Cori Belles, Jessie Dekar, Gabriel Felt, Irene Slocum, James Daly, and Patrick Gillette. Excused: Jessica Meyer. Also Present; Henry Farley, Mayor; Gil Crossett, Fire Chief; Jonathan Foster, Jr., Solicitor; Christopher Kaiden, Code Enforcement Director; Blane Lathrop, DPW Foreman; Daniel Reynolds, Police Chief; and David Jarrett, Borough Manager. Excused: Robert Repasky.

Citizens to be Heard – Mrs. Dekar asked if property owners can place a tiny house style structure on a property where there is already a house. Mr. Kaiden explained that only home could be placed on property.

2023 Goals & Objectives – Mr. Gillette asked the Department Heads for their goals & objectives for the year;

Administration – Mr. Jarrett stated that the Department's primary goal is to hire a new Borough Treasurer within the next 60-90 days. Additional goals include selecting an architect to develop a scope of work for exterior improvements to the Borough Hall, and submission of grant reimbursement documentation for recently completed projects. Proposed improvements to the Borough Hall include re-pointing the bricks, new windows, and new front doors.

Police Department – Chief Reynolds stated that the Department has several goals including getting back to full staff, completion of unfunded mandated training for officers, continue to promote training for the County SWAT team. Chief Reynolds reported that the SWAT team received a \$9,000 grant that will cover the cost of upcoming training in April. The Department also received a new SWAT vehicle that was donated by a police department near Pittsburgh in Allegany County. Mr. Gillette asked if there were any plans to increase public relation activities, and Chief Reynolds stated that he is in favor of public relation activities and that there are several officers who are volunteer coaches with local sports programs. Chief Reynolds explained that the Department's computer reporting system will be phased out by the vendor and that he is looking into available options for a new system. Chief Reynolds stated that the current system is utilized by all of the municipal police departments in the County in addition to the County Sheriff Department, the District Attorney's office, and more than 300 law enforcement agencies throughout the country. Chief Reynolds stated that the cost of the new system that the vendor is developing could be in excess of \$50,000.00 per department.

Lastly, Chief Reynolds asked that he and Sergeant Hoffman be included in the upcoming discussions regarding police consolidation with Athens Township.

Code Enforcement – Mr. Kaiden stated that his primary goal in 2023 is to continue to address blighted properties and property maintenance issues. Mr. Kaiden also stated that bids for streetscape improvements in the 100 and 200 block of West Lockhart Street could begin as soon as April if bids for the project are reasonable. Mr. Kaiden explained that it became necessary to undertake the project in smaller sections to get the project started, and improvements to the 200 block of Desmond Street may also be completed in 2023.

Public Works Department - Mr. Lathrop explained that the Department will continue to work with PennDOT as they continue their improvement project on PA199 (South Keystone Avenue). Mr. Lathrop stated that he would like to make improvements in the Borough's parks such as resurfacing the basketball courts.

Fire Department – Chief Crossett asked that a committee be formed to design a new fire engine to replace Engine 2 which was placed in service in June 2000. Chief Crossett explained that the normal life of a fire engine is 20 years and that he is concerned that waiting too long to replace it could result in difficulties in finding parts like it was for the old aerial truck. Chief Crossett also asked that an incentive program be offered to volunteer firefighters to increase volunteerism. Mrs. Belles stated that consolidation of Valley fire departments may eliminate the need to replace the truck. Chief Crossett stated that reducing the number of fire apparatus in the Borough will change the Borough's ISO rating and result in an increase in home owner's insurance.

2023 Borough Council Goals & Objectives – Mr. Gillette asked the members of the Borough Council for their suggestions for goals and objectives.

2023/2024 Budgets - Mrs. Dekar stated that she would like to see 2023 budget amounts be maintained and that there not be an increase in the millage rate in 2024. Mrs. Dekar asked that a 3-5 year plan be developed that outlines large expenses. Mrs. Belles stated that the Borough should explore other revenue opportunities.

Shared Services Committee – Mrs. Dekar stated that she would like to see the committee in place by the end of the year. Mr. Jarrett stated that the Athens Township Supervisors are considering the Borough's proposal for trash collection services.

Historic District Boundary – Mrs. Belles asked that the Borough proceed with addressing the Borough's historic district boundary and Mayor Farley stated that a meeting with the Pennsylvania Historic & Museum Commission would be the first step in the process, and that he would like to see the Borough pursue a designation on the National Historic Registry.

Diversity Training – Mrs. Belles stated that she would like the Borough to implement a diversity training program for employees and elected officials.

Junior Councilmember & Internships – Mrs. Belles stated that she would like the Borough to proceed with implementing a Junior Councilmember program and consider working with local colleges and universities on internship programs. Mr. Gillette stated that every student at Elmira College is required to complete 120 hour internship in their major.

Route 17 Exit 61 Ramp – Mr. Gillette stated that he would like to see the grass area around Exit 61 off of Route 17 eastbound improved to promote the area as the gateway to the Borough.

Marijuana Legislation - Mayor Farley stated that the Pennsylvania legislature is considering the legalization of marijuana stores and that the Borough needs to speak with Representative Pickett about the issue. Mayor Farley stated that he would not like to see marijuana stores in the downtown area.

Department Reports – The following reports were presented to the Borough Council;

Borough Manager – Mr. Jarrett reported that Ms. Ferguson continues to do an outstanding job as the interim Borough Treasurer/Assistant Borough Secretary but she is not interested in the position full-time. Mr. Jarrett asked the Borough Council to begin moving forward with the hiring of a new Borough Treasurer and asked for two members of the Borough Council to serve on the interview committee. Mr. Jarrett also asked the Borough Council to consider hiring a per diem office assistant to help alleviate some of the workload until the new Treasurer is hired and settled into the position. Mr. Jarrett asked for approval to attend the annual PELRAS conference in March and explained that a Resolution needs to be approved to be part of PennDOT's traffic signal maintenance agreement. Mr. Jarrett asked the Borough Council to approve a park use request for an event in September.

Code Enforcement – Mr. Kaiden reported that the floor in the fire truck bay has been repaired and that the epoxy coating process can be completed in 30 days. Mr. Kaiden stated that a section of the wall in the truck bay will need to be repaired and that he is getting a quote to repaint the entire truck bay once the wall is repaired. Mr. Kaiden also reported that the bump out area in front of Yanuzzi's Restaurant was completed including the fencing.

Emergency Management – Mr. Daly reported that he was informed by the County Emergency Management Office that the FEMA will be revising the flood plain maps, and that property owners will have an opportunity to appeal the new maps when they are completed.

Mrs. Belles asked for clarification on decertification process of the levee, and Mr. Daly explained that three (3') feet is needed above the highest water level. Mr. Kaiden explained that the levee has been decertified for the 100 year flood and that the area is now classified as natural valley protection.

Fire Chief – There were no questions.

Police Chief – Chief Reynolds reported that officers will complete 12 hours of mandatory training this month, and explained that the increase in mandatory training has a negative impact on the department's budget and schedule.

Public Works – There were no questions.

Recess – Mr. Gillette recessed the meeting at 6:45pm.

Executive Session – The Borough Council went into executive session at 6:50pm to discuss a personnel issue regarding the hiring of a new Borough Treasurer and real estate issue regarding the a portion of Borough property that the owner of Camco would like to purchase. The session ended at 7:15pm.

Adjourn – A motion was made by Mr. Gillette and seconded by Mrs. Dekar to adjourn the meeting at 7:15pm.