

Oakland Borough Council
380 State Street
Susquehanna, PA 18847
Regular meeting
July 15, 2020

The regular meeting of the Oakland Borough Council was called to order at 7:06 PM. Present were council members Gary Boughton, Valerie Senese, Robert Muter, Pat Gall, Brad Krayeski; Mayor Randy Glover; Solicitor John Martin; and Secretary Rhonda Parfitt. Absent were council members Ron Beavan (due to pandemic health concerns) and Debra White.

Doug and Susan Arthur were present as members of the public.

Mr. Boughton announced that the council had held executive session for contractual and litigation issues. Roy Williams, Susquehanna Borough Council President, was present for a portion of the session.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed.

After a suggestion made by Mr. Boughton and some discussion, Mr. Muter made a motion, seconded by Ms. Senese, that all additions to the agenda must occur at the beginning of the meeting and that no other business would be addressed before adjournment. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Added to the agenda were correspondence from JHA, Adams Cable Resolution, SWN lease, and street sweeping. The burn ordinance and the furnace replacement were tabled. Ms. Senese made a motion, seconded by Mr. Krayeski, to adopt the amended agenda. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Parfitt presented the treasurer's report and bill list, stating that Scott Arthur also needed to be reimbursed for gas for the amount of \$24.60. There had been some confusion about the cancellation of the WEX cards and he had purchased the gas with his own money. Mayor Glover also noted that Tim Senese had purchased gas and would need to be reimbursed. Ms. Senese made a motion, seconded by Mr. Muter, to approve the treasurer's report and bills list. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Giving the codes report, Mr. Krayeski stated that there had been nine violations, most of which were for weeds, that COG had handled. He was waiting for updates on the violations. Ms. Senese stated that the estimates for blight removal had begun and that after houses were determined, the amount of money requested would need to be entered into the resolution that was signed. Mr. Martin wondered if the solicitor fees could be counted toward a match, and Ms. Senese stated that she would inquire. Mr. Muter inquired about a forgiveness program for the blighted properties, and Ms. Senese stated that she was working on a proposal which would give property buyers incentive to flip houses or keep nice properties. Mr. Martin asked to

confirm that the program would be to forgive any municipal liens on said properties, and Ms. Senese confirmed. She stated that she would like the Community Development Committee to take over the program once it is in place. Mr. Muiter asked what would happen if someone bought a house on sheriff's sale that was slated to be removed. Mr. Krayeski responded that the codes department would tell the buyer what needed to be done to the house to be acceptable and taken off of the removal list.

There was no police report.

Mayor Glover gave the streets report, stating that the employees were doing what they could with the weeds and bamboo growing the way they were. He stated that they had also received a complaint about the speed bump on River Road but said that the speed bump had been there for forever and he couldn't imagine how it could be fixed. Council agreed. It was suggested that a "BUMP" sign be placed appropriately.

Mr. Krayeski stated that he did not have an update for the codes committee, as the burn ordinance had been put on hold. Ms. Senese stated that she had contacted the magistrate and confirmed that the person who issues a citation for a codes violation must be the person who attends the hearing should a property owner choose to fight the violation. This meant that the Borough was back to square one trying to find someone to act a codes officer. Ms. Senese also stated that she had addressed the pipe extension issue with soil and conservation and they had stated that they would not suggest entering into an informal agreement with anyone and that the DEP should be contacted. Regarding the bear-proof cans that were previously discussed, Ms. Senese stated that to purchase 10 cans would be \$5,000 and she asked Council to consider making the purchase and renting them out for a season. The money spent on the cans could be recouped after a few years and the bear problem would be mitigated.

Ms. Senese stated that the finance committee had not met, but reminded each department that budgets were due in August because the 2021 budget was in the making. She also stated that PEL had completed the report and suggestions for the Borough going forward. They had sent the finance committee a large document that would need to be reviewed by all of Council. Ms. Senese recommended a special meeting to go over the packet with PEL. Ms. Parfitt stated that she had had issues for a long time trying to obtain a credit card for the Borough. The most recent issue was that the bank was requesting documents that she didn't know how to get. She recommended that the Borough authorize the use of a debit card for online purchases only, as the sites which are used for purchases are secure sites like Amazon and Walmart. Ms. Senese made a motion, seconded by Mr. Krayeski, to open a new account to be used for online purchases; to authorize a debit card for Rhonda Parfitt's use; and to allow Gary Boughton and Rhonda Parfitt access to the account. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Senese gave the parks report, stating that new playground mulch was needed and that the parks committee was requesting to have the shed moved from the Sewer Authority property over to the park. It would cost approximately \$150.00 to move. Mr. Arthur interjected, stating

that he had learned that the truck was too large and would not fit with the shed under the underpass. There was some discussion about other moving possibilities. Ms. Senese made a motion, seconded by Mr. Muiteer, to allow the parks committee to be autonomous with their budget, so long as they stayed within budget. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Krayeski gave the volunteer committee report, stating that several individuals had met to clean off the sidewalks on State Street. Mr. Krayeski stated that in the process of doing so, Mr. Arthur had detected a sewage leak that was on the hill but not leaking onto the sidewalk. He had contacted TBMA and the issue was in their hands. The volunteer committee was given a “good job” for their hard work.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Senese gave a pantry update, stating that she had decided not to move the pantry into the middle conference room because she determined that there wasn’t going to be any more room. She also stated that a lock had been placed on the pantry door for accountability. Ms. Senese noted that the donation from Penn Can Speedway amounted to \$1,600 and she thanked Mr. Arthur again for soliciting that donation.

Mr. Martin presented a resolution to enter into a franchise agreement with Adams Cable as the agreement had been agreed upon at the previous Council meeting. Mr. Muiteer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Senese, to enact the resolution and enter into agreement with Adams Cable Service. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. It was agreed to table the NEP contract until they were able to attend a meeting and discuss the proposed agreement.

At this time, Mr. Boughton noted that the NAWSC, who was earlier on the agenda, was supposed to attend the meeting but he was notified the day before that their representatives were unable to attend due a family issue. They would be invited back at their convenience. He stated that he had been contacted by Lynn Herman, who stated that there would be a new regulation in place for water authorities and that they wanted to present what they had to offer the Borough’s water authority.

Ms. Senese addressed the employee reviews, recommending that the Council approve the presented evaluation which had been created by Mr. Muiteer. She also stated that she believed two reviewers should be present at the time of the evaluation for accountability. Mr. Krayeski concurred. Mr. Muiteer stated that he believed it was overkill but that he understood the reasoning. Ms. Senese made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gall, to approve the employee review as presented; to have two department heads in attendance at employee evaluations; for the evaluations to occur in June and January. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Senese stated that she would like to begin some positive public relations for the Borough, but stated that she knew it would be followed up with some backlash from the community. She wondered if the Council was ready for advertisement of positive things and ready to handle the

negative comments that may come. She also stated that she had recently read the PSAB magazine in which there was an article about communicating with and educating residents. She felt that it was important to show all of the positive happenings in the Borough when it is so easy to see what is unsatisfactory. Council discussed the matter and agreed that it would be a good idea to start positive publicity. Volunteer activities were discussed for publicity, along with a Yard of the Month article. Mr. Krayeski stated that the publicity should not only be in the paper but on the website, so that when people are considering moving to the area, the information is easy for them to find. He also stated that positive publicity would be really great for the volunteer committee, not only to get them some recognition, but to help the committee grow and be able to do more. Ms. Parfitt stated that the new website already appeared in Google search, so she felt that activity would be seen if someone were to search for the Borough.

Ms. Senese stated that she had the idea to get information behind each of the pictures in the Borough and have captions placed under them as a way to preserve the history of the Borough. Mr. Beavan had volunteered to help with the project, but it was going to be a lot of work to take the pictures out and scan them into a computer to send to some people who might know what the pictures portray. Ms. Senese stated that she was not up to the task but wondered if someone else may want to volunteer. There was some brief discussion about the pictures. Mr. Boughton stated that he would contact Jon Burdick to see if he would be interested in helping with captions for the photos.

Mr. Krayeski stated that he had finally been able to contact J.P. Riley regarding street sweeping and that they would sweep the Borough streets for \$85 per hour. It was estimated that the sweeping may take 8 hours to complete. Mr. Krayeski liked the sweeping option because it would just remove the cinders and dirt from the road rather than placing into the ditches where it could affect the water. He inquired where the Council would like the driver to dispose of the collected cinders and suggested that they be disposed of behind the Borough building. Mr. Muiteer wondered about dumping it at the park and clarified that he would only recommend that if it was going to be useful material as he did not want to see the park become a dump. Council agreed that the material would not be appropriate for the park's use. Mr. Krayeski wondered about offering up the used material for residents to be able to use in their driveways as he was sure there wouldn't be much trash and the material would be reusable for such a purpose. Ms. Senese stated that the streets department could make the decision about where to dump the swept road material.

Mr. Martin stated that he had been contacted by the council for SWN regarding a gas lease dated August 2015 which was between SWN and the Oakland Borough Water Authority. This lease was signed by Roger Holleran, a representative of the Water Authority. SWN stated to Mr. Martin that they had discovered that the lease should never have been set up with the Water Authority, as the Water Authority does not own the property that is leased. SWN was holding the royalty payments and was going to contact Mr. Martin regarding a new, proper lease. Mr.

Martin stated that he was concerned because SWN claims they have paid out approximately \$13,000 for the lease and he had come to the understanding that the lease was actually set up under the Borough's TIN and not the Authority's. He was also under the understanding that the checks were made payable to the Oakland Borough, and not the Authority. Mr. Martin stated that in conversation with Secretary Rhonda Parfitt, he learned that when the money was deposited in the Borough's account, it was immediately transferred to the Water Authority without Council's approval. He stated that it was not his decision whether or not the Borough should try to recoup that money, but he did say that he felt it should be reflected in the Quickbooks that the money should be shown as receivable from the Authority. Ms. Senese made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gall, to show the SWN transactions as accounts receivable from the Water Authority to the Borough for accounting purposes. Mr. Muiteer asked if the Borough would go back through the records and identify those transactions. Ms. Senese stated that yes. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. Mr. Muiteer asked what the conditions of the remainder of the lease would be. Mr. Martin stated that SWN was going to communicate with him regarding a new lease agreement which was in the proper name and the proper TIN. He would circulate it when he received it. Mr. Boughton asked how many acres the lease was for. Mr. Martin stated that it was 5 acres and some discussion was had about where the property was located. Ms. Senese suggested that the property was the old dump. Ms. Parfitt stated for the record that she was not sure if the checks were deposited into the Borough's account and then transferred to the Water Authority or if they were deposited straight to one of the Water Authority's accounts. She could not be certain that the checks would be found in the Borough's books but stated that she would look into it.

Ms. Parfitt presented a letter from JHA which stated that they had been informed that it would be a conflict of interest for them to be working on a project which also involved their SEO. The letter stated that Duane Wood had agreed to work with JHA as alternate SEO on projects which would otherwise present a conflict of interest. The Borough would need to make a motion to use Mr. Wood for such alternate. Ms. Senese wondered if there would be an increase in cost and asked Ms. Parfitt to get details before the Council made a decision.

In Mr. Boughton's momentary absence, Ms. Senese asked for public comment. Mr. Arthur stated that it was always freezing when he came into the building and wondered why the temperature was so low. Ms. Senese responded that the pantry food needed to be kept at 65-70 degrees. Mr. Arthur inquired if Mr. Boughton had ever looked into the property on State Street for the streets department to be able to dump brush because he didn't want it being dumped at the park anymore. Mr. Boughton stated that he had not. Mr. Kraveski said that he would like to see the old dump road be opened up for such a purpose. Ms. Senese agreed, saying that she wouldn't want to see brush just laying on a property on the main street. Mrs. Arthur stated that she had a problem receiving her commission check and wondered why it had not been given to her yet, since two weeks had passed since she had turned in the payment for taxes. Ms. Parfitt stated that payroll was the next day and she would be receiving the check then. Ms. Arthur also stated that nobody was ever at the Borough building so she had to put

the tax payment through the door. Ms. Senese responded that the Secretary was part-time and that Ms. Arthur could always call and make an appointment to drop off her deposit. Mr. Arthur stated that there had been a policy made at a previous meeting that bills like the electric bill and commission could be paid before being approved at a meeting. Ms. Senese stated that she did not recall such a policy and asked for approximately when he believed such a policy was created. Mrs. Arthur stated that she had received complaints that there had been children at the Borough building and inquired what the Borough's policy was regarding this. Ms. Senese stated that children were allowed at the building. Mrs. Arthur asked if the Borough would be held liable if a child ran into the road. Ms. Senese responded that it would not. Mrs. Arthur stated that she had heard there was a little boy trying to break into the door and wondered if the boy belonged to an employee. Ms. Senese stated that if Mrs. Arthur had a personnel complaint, she could email the complaint to the Borough email for it to be addressed privately.

Ms. Senese made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gall, to adjourn the meeting at 8:09pm. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote.