

Borough of Somerset Council Meeting February 26th, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order by President Ruby Miller, opening with recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call

Council Members Present: Ruby Miller; Fred Rosemeyer; Judy Pyle; Pam Ream; Sue Opp; Steve Shaulis and Gary Thomas.

Absent was Mayor Scott Walker.

Also present was Junior Council Member Maria Weimer.

Also present were the following: Borough Manager, Michele Enos; Director of Finance, Brett Peters; Solicitor, James Cascio and Consulting Engineers, Tom Reilly and Jake Bolby.

Announcements:

(a) None

Approval of Previous Council Meeting Minutes:

(a) January 8th, 2018 – Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Thomas seconded to approve the January 8th, 2018 Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes.

Motion Unanimously Carried

(b) January 22nd, 2018 – Borough Council Meeting Minutes

Motion

Mrs. Ream moved, Mrs. Opp seconded to approve the January 22nd, 2018 Borough Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion Unanimously Carried

Award of Bids:

(a) None

General Public Comments:

(a) Somerset County Sheriff's Tactical Search Team

(The Search Team was not present)

(b) Donna Johnson – 1036 West Union Street – Basement Flooding.

Ms. Johnson thanked Council for taking the time to listen to her concerns. She spoke about the recent severe February flooding in her home. She said that the flooding has caused problems for everyone, including herself and her neighbors.

Ms. Johnson stated that due to the constant water problems, she has experienced for the past 5 years, she has unfortunately had great financial loss. This had included clean-up expenses, replacement of flooring, replacement of walls and various other items in her basement. She stated that the February flooding is not a one-time incident. It has been a constant occurrence, along with reoccurring expense.

Ms. Johnson stated, that last year, she personally spoke to personnel at the Borough office about her concerns. She stated that she was told that they would address the problem. She said that they did address the problem, at the opposite end of the street, with drain repair and placed curbing. Ms. Johnson expressed that these repairs had done nothing for her and her neighbors.

Ms. Johnson explained how the flood water makes it way down her street to her and her neighbor's properties.

She stated that she was very happy when she spoke with different personnel in the Borough, because she thought the problem was going to be addressed. But, instead, the repairs were done on the other end of her street.

Ms. Johnson stated that she already incurred over \$8,000.00 in expenses from flooding.

She stated that she has had to alter her plans, many times, when it was raining.

She has considered selling her home, but in good conscience, could not sale her home without exposing the constant and reoccurring problems with flooding, which in turn, lowers her home's value.

She stated that it's a "no win" situation for her and her neighbors. She stated that she's very discouraged, and hopes that a solution can be found.

Ms. Enos stated that they had flooding problems, at the opposite end of Ms. Johnson's, street as well. She apologized, stating that if Ms. Johnson spoke to the Borough's personnel, the personnel may have been confused as to which end of the street she was referring to. Ms. Enos stated that she was unaware of the conversation Ms. Johnson had with the Borough's personnel.

Ms. Enos stated that she met with two individuals, approximately two years ago, about flooding on this street. Ms. Enos stated that this is how the curbing took place on the opposite end of Ms. Johnson's street.

Ms. Enos stated that they have curbing plans for Ms. Johnson's area for this year. She stated that they spoke with the pastor of the church, in Ms. Johnson area, last week about the flooding there. She stated that they could see the debris in the churches yard. Ms. Enos stated that she also saw other claims come in for flooding, as well, in this area.

Ms. Enos stated that she would be more than happy to come out to Ms. Johnson's area and meet with Ms. Johnson, and her neighbors, who are being affected by flooding.

(c) Fraternal Order of Eagles – Presenting of a donation for the Borough's Holiday Lighting Fund.

Mr. Shaulis stated, on behalf of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, they know that the Borough is struggling to try to update their Christmas decorations. The Eagles are donating \$2,000.00, for the second year, towards the holiday lighting fund.

(d) Regina from Somerset, Inc. - Expression of "Thanks"

Regina, from Somerset Inc., expressed her thanks and appreciation to Council for all who helped with "Light Up Somerset" and the "Fire & Ice" events. She stated, especially during "Fire & Ice," the inclement weather altered everything. She stated that she doesn't know if she could have "pulled it off" without the Public Works Department employees and volunteers that helped during these events. She acknowledged that she understood all Council does, and appreciated helping out in spite of it all.

(e) Mrs. Suzie Sturni – Information on "Safe Exchange Zones"

Mrs. Suzie Sturni stated that she was invited to attend the Council Meeting by Mayor Walker to make a suggestion to the Borough Council. She stated that she did some research on what is called a "Safe Exchange Zone" for those engaging in online transactions. Mayor Walker had not heard of it, and suggested she come before Borough Council with the information, because this is a combination police matter.

Mrs. Sturni stated that Council probably heard about warnings of engaging in internet commerce, whether it's an eBay exchange or Facebook exchange, after making a transaction. So essentially, you're inviting a stranger to come to your home for that exchange, which is not an ideal situation.

Mrs. Sturni stated that, in Pittsburgh, they have "Safe Exchanges" in several areas. She printed out information regarding this to share with Council, and she read some of the information contained in it out loud. The information mentioned what is being done around the country, with participating Police Departments, to provide a safe spot to make these internet exchanges. It also stated that "Safe Exchange" areas add extra protection to those engaging in the exchange.

It is great for people buying and selling on Craig's List, Facebook or even for people in strained relationships who need to exchange a child.

The information brought out that the signs designating these "safe spots" are part of the nationwide trend of Police Stations becoming "Safe Exchange Zones" for online transactions.

Mrs. Sturni thanked Council, for their time, to let her share this information with them.

(f) Sally Deist – *Sewage flooding in basement.*

Ms. Deist stated that she understood the flooding from the rain that recently occurred. She stated, that the water she is getting in her house is coming out of the sewage line. Ms. Deist stated that this is the second time this happened to her in eight months. She stated that the recent flooding she experienced "wiped out" her basement. Everything in her basement was saturated. She stated that she had four (4) inches of sewage water in her basement.

Ms. Deist asked why she's getting sewage water in her basement. She stated that her neighbor only gets a little water in her basement. She's unaware if any of her other neighbors are getting sewage backup. Ms. Deist wanted to know why she's getting backup from sewage water. She stated that this is going to cost her a lot in expenses.

Ms. Enos explained that in the last flooding in Ms. Deist's area, the Borough did receive sewer line surcharge. She stated because the lines were surcharged, the water backed up the laterals. This is due to the flood waters actually entering into the sewer systems.

Ms. Enos stated that they see this happen when we have the "perfect storm", which is when we have heavy ground saturation due to melting snow and the 3" of rain that fell within a 24-hour period. She explained that the streams were already close to their flood levels in the town. So when this occurs, individuals can experience the effects by the resulting flood problems.

Ms. Enos mentioned that we are presently doing a Storm Water Study that Council authorized for the Borough, which should be completed within the next month. She stated that the study may tell us some factors, we may need to be looking at, to try to alleviate this problem.

She explained that it is difficult when we have these types of conditions, because under normal circumstances, it is very hard for any sanitary sewer system, or storm system, to handle that amount of rain under those conditions in such a short period of time. Ms. Enos stated that she hopes the study is going to help them find a solution. She cannot promise that this is going to help in every event, but she assured Ms. Deist that they are working toward a solution now. She apologized to Ms. Deist for what she went through regarding the damage to her home.

Administrative Business:

- (a) Communication – (None)*
- (b) Payment of Bills*

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the payment of bills numbered 30660 - 30845 totaling \$433,923.03.

Motion Unanimously Carried

Policy Agenda:

Old Business:

- (a) None*

New Business:

- (a) 2018 Sewer Plant Capital Projects – Authorization to appropriate budgeted funds for the Grit Chamber and Bio Tower Rotary Distributor Replacement Project.*

Ms. Enos mentioned that this was discussed at the last Committee of the Whole meeting, and asked if Council had any questions. *No questions were asked.*

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mr. Thomas seconded to authorize to appropriate budgeted funds for the Grit Chamber and Bio Tower Rotary Distributor Replacement Project.

Motion Unanimously Carried

- (b) Public Works Capital Equipment - Authorization to appropriate budgeted funds for the purchase of a 2017 Ford F-550 from Allegheny Truck through the Co-Stars Cooperative Purchasing Program in the amount of \$120,274.00.*

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Rosemeyer seconded to authorize to appropriate budgeted funds for the purchase of a 2017 Ford F-550 from Allegheny Truck through the Co-Stars Cooperative Purchasing Program in the amount of \$120,274.00.

Motion Unanimously Carried

(c) The EADS Group – Authorize the execution of the engineering agreement for services involving our 2018 Capital Water Projects.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mrs. Ream seconded to authorize the execution of the engineering agreement for services involving our 2018 Capital Water Projects.

Motion Unanimously Carried

(d) The EADS Group – Authorize the execution of the engineering agreement for services involving our 2018 Capital Sewer Projects.

Motion

Mrs. Ream moved, Mr. Rosemeyer seconded to authorize the execution of the engineering agreement for services involving our 2018 Capital Sewer Projects.

Motion Unanimously Carried

(e) Real Estate Tax Appeal – Approval of settlement agreement with Edgewood Enterprise (Weimer Blacksmith) along with the Somerset Area School District and Somerset County. The Borough's portion of the settlement loss is \$547.28.

Ms. Enos explained that this comes up from time to time. It's an assessment/adjustment. This is, if accepted, for a new valuation for the property. She stated that the County, Borough and School District all have to approve. The County and the School District have already approved their amounts. Ms. Enos asked if there were any questions from Council. There were no questions.

Motion

Mrs. Rosemeyer moved, Mrs. Opp seconded to approve the settlement agreement with Edgewood Enterprise (Weimer Blacksmith) along with the School District and Somerset County. The Borough's portion of the settlement loss is \$547.28.

Motion Unanimously Carried

(f) Somerset County Sheriff's Tactical Search Team – Requesting a donation to acquire a rapid response thermal imaging drone.

Ms. Enos stated that the Tactical Search Team were to be at the Council Meeting, to talk about the project, and they were not present.

Mrs. Miller brought out that the Tactical Search Team will be at the May County Borough's Association Meeting with a demonstration.

It is unknown by Council what they are looking for as far as a donation.

Ms. Enos stated that the only information she has on this is the correspondence she sent out to Council about the project.

It was agreed upon, by Council, to "table" this until they can get further information from the Tactical Search Team.

Motion

Mr. Thomas moved, Mr. Shaulis seconded to “table” this request, from the Somerset County Sheriff’s Tactical Search Team, until more information is received from them.

Motion Unanimously Carried

(g) *Daily American* – Requesting a donation for their annual 5k /10k / Fitness Challenge.

It was brought out that a donation of \$200.00 was approved last year for this cause.

Motion

Mrs. Ream moved, Mrs. Opp seconded to donate \$200.00 to the Daily American 5k/10/ Fitness Challenge.

Motion Unanimously Carried

Mrs. Miller thanked the Borough employees that were out taking care of the rain issues.

She also asked that her deep appreciation be passed on to the Borough crew for the wonderful reports that are received from them. She mentioned that the reports are very informative.

Mr. Rosemeyer brought out that Somerset Borough was selected by the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs to participate in an instructional video concerning Police Protection. He stated that Chief Cox put a lot of work into it. He stated it will be on this Wednesday in Harrisburg. Mr. Rosemeyer stated that there were only four (4) Boroughs selected for this. He said it was going to be taped, then televised, on the PCN network on channel 186.

Executive Session – None requested.

Adjournment

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved to adjourn, motion seconded by Mrs. Ream.

Motion Unanimously Carried.
7:28 p.m.

Michele A. Enos, Borough Manager/Secretary