

Borough of Somerset Council Meeting
January 23rd, 2023 - 5:00 p.m. *(In-Person Meeting)*

1. **Meeting Called to Order** – President Ream.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

3. **Roll Call:**

a) **Borough Council Members present:** *Pam Ream; Ruby Miller; Lee Hoffman; Sue Opp; Steve Shaulis; Jim Clark and Ian Mandichak.*

b) **Also present:** *Mayor Fred Rosemeyer.*

c) **Also present were the following:** *Borough Manager, Michele Enos; Director of Finance, Brett Peters; Randy Cox, Chief of Police; Administrative Assistant, Roger Bailey; Solicitor, James Cascio; Consulting Engineers, Tom Reilly and Jake Bolby.*

d) **Public Attendance:** *Boy Scouts; Dave Ditzler.*

4. **Approval of Agenda:** *Consider approving the Agenda with the additional requests of the Next Step Center.*

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Hoffman seconded, to approve the January 23rd, 2023 Borough Council Meeting Agenda with the additional requests of the Next Step Center.

Motion Unanimously Carried

5. **Announcements:**

a) *None*

6. **Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)**

a) **December 19th, 2022** – *Borough Council Meeting Minutes.*

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the December 19th, 2022 Borough Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion Unanimously Carried

7. Award of Bids:

a) *S. Center Avenue Project – Review of bids received and a recommendation from our Engineers.*

Ms. Enos mentioned that the South Center Avenue Project was bid with the assistance of the Borough’s Engineers. The Project will include the sidewalk replacement on South Center Avenue and utility replacement at South Center & North Center Avenue.

It has been publically advertised, and the bids have been administratively opened.

Mr. Bolby said that there were 19 Plan Holders and 4 formal bids submitted. The lowest responsive bidder was Center Masonry & Excavation. We asked for some additional Contractor documents and clarifications. We had the Redevelopment Authority review the bid packet because some CDBG monies are tied to this project. We received their approval.

Mr. Bolby noted that, also discussed with Management, were some of the pending grant applications and projects. The North Center Application is in to DCED, the East Main DCED Application as well as the Patriot Manor Loop Application. He said that they would like to revisit the scope of all four Projects to see if there is anything to accommodate all four Projects.

A formal recommendation from Management for those bids will be discussed at the February 2023 Meeting.

Mr. Bolby said that they are expecting to hear on the grant for the North Center section in March 2023. He added that the original scope on South Center Avenue, and the Streetscape portion of that, looks good.

8. General Public Comments:

a) Each member of Borough Council introduced themselves to the Boy Scouts, who were present, and welcomed them to the Council Meeting.

9. Administrative Business:

a) *Communications – (none)*

b) *Payment of Bills – Month of January 2023.*

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mrs. Miller seconded, to approve the payment of bills for January 2023 numbered 39362 – 39517 totaling \$666,644.94.

Motion Unanimously Carried

c) *Department Reports – Consider approving the Departmental Reports for the month of December 2022.*

Motion

Mr. Mandichak moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the Departmental Reports for the month of December 2022.

Motion Unanimously Carried

10. Policy Agenda:

Old Business:

a) None

New Business:

a) Part-time Police Roster – Consider authorizing the addition of Nathaniel Cochran and Andrew Hoover to the list of part-time police officers.

Chief Cox mentioned that some Police Officers are in the process of separating from the Department, and others have limited the number of hours they are available to be scheduled to work, so the Department began searching for new Officers.

Chief Cox said that two Officers were hired from a pool of two. He expressed that he is very confident, and his expectations are high, for these two Officers.

One is Nathaniel Cochran. He is a graduate of the Westmoreland County Community College Police Academy. He is a member of the U.S. Marine Corp Reserve and, by the age of 20, was promoted to Lance Corporal.

The second is Andrew Hoover. He is a graduate of the IUP's Police Academy. At the age of 20 he was promoted to Sargent in the Pennsylvania National Guard. They are both responsible individuals with a Military background.

Chief Cox said that they have started in the **FTO** Program, and by mid-February, they will be in uniform and on the street. By March-April they will be brought into a Council Meeting for their "Swearing-In" Ceremony.

He added that the Police Department is still "looking" because they have more vacancies to fill.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Mandichak seconded, to authorize the addition of Nathaniel Cochran and Andrew Hoover to the list of part-time police officers.

Motion Unanimously Carried

b) 2020 Ford Police Interceptor Utility Vehicle – Discussion concerning the availability to purchase a used cruiser from One Stop. Chief Cox will update Council on the cost associated with this vehicle.

Chief Cox mentioned that late last winter, Council approved a \$50,000.00 allotment for purchasing a new 2023 Ford Police Interceptor Hybrid SUV Cruiser. We were expecting delivery of that vehicle early this year, so Tri-Star was contacted last week. Chief Cox said that the Hybrid vehicle is still not in, Tri-Star has no idea when the vehicle could be delivered, and it may not be delivered at all due to the national supply chain issue. Chief Cox added that Tri-Star has a Non-hybrid Explorer available, which would save approximately \$5,000.00 in acquisition costs.

Chief Cox discovered last week that One Stop has a 2020 Ford Police Interceptor Utility SUV for sale that is \$23,900.00. He said that the existence of this vehicle could alleviate pressing fleet needs, and save a little bit of money in the future.

Chief Cox concluded that the Borough should anticipate that the 2023 Ford Hybrid will not be delivered in a timely fashion in 2023. In light of this, he is recommending that we shift the acquisition from the 2023 Hybrid to a 2023 Non-hybrid. He added that the 2023 Ford Hybrid can be cancelled should it come in. They can also let this order "ride" so that when it does come in, it may be a different calendar year, so we can purchase it if we want it. He added that the Purchase Order he put in for the 2023 Hybrid can be revoked, so we are not committed to its purchase if it comes in.

If the 2023 Non-hybrid is purchased, we can expect to save \$5,000.00. The Departments Unit 92, a 2014 Dodge Charger, is not in a safe condition to operate so it can be used as a trade-in. He said that there are some benefits to his recommendations. If we acquire the 2023 Ford Non-hybrid, it will allow us to adhere to our vehicle acquisition schedule.

Chief Cox also said that the purchase of the 2020 Ford Police Interceptor would be introduced as a non-patrol usage vehicle, so this would cut-down on the up-fitting costs. It would also avoid future replacement costs for Unit 83 & Unit 86, both of which have a service expectancy of two years or less. It would allow Unit 82 to be moved into a non-patrol status vehicle when either of those units need to be retired.

The addition of the 2020 will add more flexibility of Management, fleet and use of the various vehicles in the fleet, and has a great potential to save us from not having to replace one of the 2 cars that have a service expectancy of 2 years or less. The purchase of the 2020 also offers the possibility that another vehicle will not need purchased 2 years from now if we bring the 2020 into the fleet now.

Dave Ditzler, the owner of One Stop, was in the audience and spoke with Council about the 2020 Ford Police Interceptor Utility SUV and its "R" Title. Pricing was also mentioned and discussed briefly.

Borough Council also discussed this purchase, and questioned Chief Cox on how the Police Department would use this vehicle.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Hoffman seconded to authorize Chief Cox to move ahead to purchase the vehicle from One Stop if it meets the conditions that are set forth and soliciting the bids.

Motion Unanimously Carried

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mr. Clark seconded to authorize cancelling the purchase of the 2023 Ford Hybrid that was ordered, without penalty.

Motion Unanimously Carried

c) *Surplus Police Equipment – Discussion concerning a surplus gun vault and weapons and the values of each item for potential sale based upon our Surplus Equipment Policy.*

Chief Cox pointed out that the Police Station has a large gun safe that was crucial to the operation prior to the renovation. Since then, it is only being used as a storage cabinet.

The Police Department also has AR-15 rifles that are 20 years old. He said that these rifles are being moved in and out of cruisers on a bi-shift, 3 times a day, which causes aging and weaknesses within the guns. He added that they are in the process of transitioning over to new rifles.

Chief Cox brought out that the Johnstown Police Academy has switched affiliations from the Vo-Tech Center to Penn Highlands Community College. They need to have weapons for the Academy and a safe place to keep them, so the Department has entered into negotiations with the College and the Johnstown F.O.P., because the College is going to be using the F.O.P. range in Johnstown.

Chief Cox also mentioned that he is in the process of gathering appraisals for the gun safe, 2 AR-15's and 2 shotguns. The proceeds from the sale will then be used toward the transition for the new rifles for the Police Department.

Ms. Enos mentioned that the sale will have to be put into Resolution form stating that the guns are being sold for the value of the property. Borough Council will have to officially approve this Resolution once Chief Cox has the information.

Chief Cox added that his goal is to replace the rifles with monies from outside the budget.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mrs. Miller seconded to authorize Chief Cox to move forward with obtaining the values of the additional equipment.

Motion Unanimously Carried

d) Next Step Center – Requesting leased parking spaces or sale of lot across from the Mel’s Restaurant.

Ms. Enos brought out that the Next Step Center purchased the Law & Finance Building and are doing renovations there. They are requesting to lease or purchase the lot across from Mel’s Restaurant. They indicated by letter, received by Ms. Enos, what their intentions are for the building, and area parking, with the Community in mind. One item they are missing is parking spaces close enough to their facility for those who are older or handicapped and are in need of a parking space that is closer to the Law & Finance building.

Ms. Enos mentioned that The Next Step Center’s first inquiry was to see if Borough Council had any interest in selling the parking lot to them across from Mel’s restaurant. However, they were told that sale of any Borough equipment or public property has to go through a public bidding process where proposals are requested from the Borough. The equipment or public property then goes to the highest bidder.

Ms. Enos said there are options. The individuals who currently lease in that parking lot could be moved to an alternative location, the Borough could enter into a long-term lease with The Next Step Center, or we could enter into an Agreement with them, that if any improvements need to be made, it would be at their cost. They are looking for at least 30 spaces and the Borough has 33 there.

Ms. Enos communicated to the Next Step Center that she would have to receive direction from Borough Council regarding their request.

Discussion and concerns regarding this request was held among Borough Council Members.

This request was “tabled” until additional information can be retrieved from the Administration.

Committee Business/Reports:

d) Manager’s Report – Given by Michele Enos.

Ms. Enos had nothing further to report.

e) Finance Report – Given by Brett Peters.

Mr. Peters disclosed that at the end of the year for 2022:

General Fund:

Revenues – 110.00%

Expenses – 104.8%

Water Fund:

Revenues – 91.77%

Expenses – 100.16%

Sewer Fund:

Revenues – 106.69%

Expenses – 85.34%

f) President's Report – Given by Pam Ream.

Mrs. Ream asked if the snow removal for 2022 helped the Borough budget out since there wasn't much snow so far this winter.

Mr. Peters said that 85% of the General Fund budget was spent for Public Works areas, which includes street cleaning, snow removal costs and its wages. He said that overall, Public Works was below their budget amount for the year.

Mrs. Ream also expressed that the "Fire & Ice" Festival was really nice and a great time.

She also said that a comment from a business Uptown stated that her business is doing much better since she moved there from the Georgian Place. She said "Thank You" to Somerset Inc. for working to get some of the businesses to come here.

g) Somerset Inc. Report – Given by Lee Hoffman.

Mr. Hoffman stated that the "Fire & Ice" Festival went really well. The streets were packed with people. The pins were sold out by Saturday afternoon.

He thanked the Public Works Department for all their help keeping everyone safe.

Mr. Hoffman said that the building across from Cascio's is still in progress, but ran into some weather delays.

He brought out that at Somerset Inc.'s next Board Meeting, they are going to have a half-day retreat to do some strategic planning and different things.

Mr. Hoffman added that Somerset Inc.'s Volunteer base keeps growing, and it's great to have so many people involved.

h) PSAB Report – Given by Fred Rosemeyer.

Mayor Rosemeyer mentioned that at the PSAB's Spring Conference Chief Cox will be doing 3 presentations.

Chief Cox said that he will be participating in a Round Table on different Police Services, and also giving a presentation on the subject "Handle With Care". The other presentation will be about the partnership Somerset Police Department developed with Somerset Area School District.

i) Somerset Volunteer Fire Dept. Report – Given by Steve Shaulis.

Mr. Shaulis said that the Fire Department had a total of 52 calls since the last Council Meeting in December. 23 were in Somerset Borough, 5 assists to other companies, 3 on the PA Turnpike and 21 in Somerset Township.

Mr. Shaulis also mentioned that the Fire Department took in 1 senior department member and 3 new junior members.

The Fire Department assisted with the "Fire & Ice" Festival in traffic control, and was a "stand-by" for the fireworks.

For the month of December 2022, there was a total of 44 fire calls.

The Fire Department's Banquet for installation of Officers was held on January 6th, 2023. There were approximately 150 in attendance.

Chief Cox thanked the Fire Department for their traffic control efforts. He said that it really makes it less expensive for the Borough, and gives the Police Department more man power to keep things safer and more efficient.

Mayor Rosemeyer noted that Jim Clark was awarded with the Mayor's Award this year for his hours of service and training with the Fire Department.

j) Engineer's Report – Given by Jake Bolby.

Mr. Bolby presented the Updates to the Engineer's Report.

WATER & SEWER:

Mr. Bolby said that the large Water & Sewer Projects are moving along as scheduled.

He noted that it is going to be a busy construction season throughout Somerset. There are 3 projects scheduled. The Borough's water, Columbia Gas with their gas utility lines and PennDOT paving. All 3 will be going on at the same time. There will be a lot of construction and a lot of construction traffic. There will also be sidewalks and road closings everywhere.

k) Mayor's Report – Given by Mayor Rosemeyer.

Mayor Rosemeyer noted that he officially wanted to thank Chief Cox, 2 Sergeants and the Officers. He said that they are working shifts that they normally wouldn't be working because of the shortage. He said it is a lot of sacrifice for all the Officers in the Police Department.

He also mentioned that David Mrozowski of Tableland is retiring as the Executive Director.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved to adjourn; motion seconded by Mrs. Opp.

Motion Unanimously Carried

6:06 p.m.

Michele A. Enos, Borough Manager/ Secretary