

The Borough of Somerset Council Meeting

November 25th, 2024 - 5:00 p.m.

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

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

3. **Roll Call:**

a) **Borough Council Members present:** Pam Ream, Ruby Miller, Sue Opp, Steve Shaulis, Ian Mandichak and Mario Dirienzo.

b) **Borough Council Member absent:** Lee Hoffman.

c) **Junior Council Member absent:** Robert Grega.

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

e) **Also present were the following:** Borough Manager, Michele Enos; Director of Finance, Brett Peters; Administrative Assistant, Roger Bailey; Municipal Authority Manager, Jessica Sizemore; Solicitor, James Cascio; Consulting Engineers, Tom Reilly & Jake Bolby.

f) **Public Attendance:** James Clark, Jared Rhoads, Alec Bittner, Steve Peck, Brandon Trent and Matthew Kalp.

4. **Approval of Agenda:** Consider approving the agenda as presented.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Dirienzo seconded, to approve the agenda with the change being made of Executive Session being moved after Administrative Business.

Motion Unanimously Carried

5. **Announcements:**

a) *None*

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

a) *November 6th, 2024 – Joint Council/Authority Meeting Minutes.*

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the November 6th, 2024, Joint Council/Authority Meeting Minutes.

Motion Unanimously Carried

7. Award of Bids:

a) None

8. General Public Comments:

a) Jim Clark – *To address Borough Council concerning the rental fees for their space.*

Fire Chief Jim Clark, representing the Somerset Borough Fire Department, went before Council to request reducing the Fire Department's monthly rental fees before Council had their 2025 Budget talks. The Fire Department is asking for a \$200.00 per month reduction in their rental fee so they can put money back to be able to purchase much needed fire-fighting gear, and to continue with the Fire Department's operations. He mentioned that due to the Fire Department being extremely busy with fire calls, fund raisers put a strain on the fire fighters because of lack of time.

Chief Clark said that he is grateful, and thankful, for all the support Somerset Borough and Council has given the Fire Department in the past. He mentioned that the Fire Department has not had a reduction in their rent in at least 5 years.

After discussion, Borough Council said that Chief Clark's request would be added on the agenda when budget discussions occurred.

9. Administrative Business:

a) Communications – *(none)*

b) Payment of Bills – *Month of November 2024.*

Motion:

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Mandichak seconded, to approve the payment of bills for the month of November 2024 numbered 42460 – 42588 totaling \$742,207.83.

Motion Unanimously Carried

c) Department Reports – *Consider approving the Departmental Reports for the month of October 2024.*

Motion

Mr. Mandichak moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the Departmental Reports for the month of October 2024.

Motion Unanimously Carried

10. Executive Session – To discuss matters of collective bargaining and personnel.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, seconded by Mr. Shaulis, to go into Executive Session to discuss matters of collective bargaining and personnel.

Motion Unanimously Carried
5:10 p.m.

Back in Session

5:35 p.m.

11. Policy Agenda:

Old Business:

a) None

New Business:

a) Swearing-In – Mayor Rosemeyer to swear-in Officer Justin Evans as part-time police officer and add him to the roster.

The Swearing-In of Officer Justin Evans is being postponed until December's Council Meeting.

b) Humane Society of Somerset County – Requesting a donation for year 2024.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Dirienzo seconded, to donate \$500.00 to the Humane Society of Somerset County for the year 2024.

Motion Unanimously Carried

c) Somerset Area Ambulance Association – Requesting a donation for year 2025.

Motion

Mr. Dirienzo moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to donate \$4,000.00 to the Somerset Area Ambulance Association for the year 2025, split into four quarters.

Motion Unanimously Carried

d) Meals on Wheels, Inc. – Requesting a donation for year 2025.

Motion

Mr. Dirienzo moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to donate \$250.00 to Meals on Wheels for the year 2025.

Motion Unanimously Carried

e) 2025 Tentative Budgets – Consider adopting the tentative budgets for 2025 as presented.

Mr. Peters noted that after Borough Council had budget discussions two weeks ago, the Borough has a tentative budget without any tax increases for **the General Fund**.

For **the Water Fund**, we are proposing to balance our budget and increase the minimum water rates from \$17.00 to \$18.00.

Mrs. Sizemore added that the water rate per/hundred gallon will increase from .75 cents to .82 cents.

Mrs. Sizemore stated that **the Sewer Rate** minimum will also increase from \$22.00 to \$25.00. The sewer rate will also increase from \$1.08 to \$1.18 per/hundred gallons.

Mrs. Sizemore added that there will also be a new **Stormwater Rate** fee per/ERU. There will be a base rate of \$5.00 per/parcel, and \$1.00/per ERU.

Council briefly reviewed the Capital Requests and Operating Expenses for 2025, and agreed that the Playground Committee’s request would not be included in the 2025 budget.

Mrs. Sizemore’s proposed new GIS Position was also discussed among Council Members, with questions from Council answered by Mrs. Sizemore as to its relevance. It was agreed among Council to continue this discussion at a later date.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Mandichak seconded, to adopt the tentative budgets for 2025 as presented.

Motion Unanimously Carried

Committee Business/Reports:

h) Borough Manager's Report – Given by Michele Enos.

Ms. Enos had nothing further to report.

i) Finance Report – Given by Brett Peters.

Mr. Peters provided Borough Council with the Financial Report through October 2024 earlier in the month. He mentioned that we are 10/12th of the way through the year or 83.3%.

General Fund:

Revenues – 105.16%

Expenses – 103.16%

Water Fund:

Revenues – 80.24%

Expenses – 78.22%

Sewer Fund:

Revenues – 84.17%

Expenses – 88.04%

j) Municipal Authority Manager's Report – Given by Jess Sizemore.

Mrs. Sizemore noted that the Stormwater page on the Borough website is up and running. There was also an update to the Stormwater Incident Reporter that the public can get into to report a stormwater incident.

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

Mrs. Ream mentioned that “Light Up Night” is this weekend.

She also gave a “big thanks” to the Borough workers who helped put up the Uptown holiday decorations.

Mrs. Ream said that UPMC's Social Workers have been looking at some additional resources for the homeless. She thanked the Salvation Army, Tableland and the Women's Help Center who have been very helpful in this regard.

Mrs. Ream also welcomed the new Uptown businesses.

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

Mr. Hoffman was not present. No report given.

m) PSAB Report – Given by Fred Rosemeyer.

Mayor Rosemeyer said that he had nothing to report for PSAB or the County Borough's Association at this time.

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

Mr. Shaulis noted that the Fire Department is extremely busy with 481 fire calls to date since January 2024.

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

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

WATER:

1) Water System Capital Improvement Projects:

Mr. Bolby said that they are moving through final items on Contract 1–Water Lines. The final payment was requested, and that will be released. We have three different warranty periods for this Contract that is set to expire in mid-2025, so we will be working with Public Works to make sure there are no outstanding items, or items of concern, before that warranty period lapses.

Mr. Bolby said work is still being done on minor items of the other two Contracts, and we are still holding retainage, until those final work items are resolved and before those Contracts can be closed out.

SEWER:

1) Assessment, Repair, and Abatement Plan (Hydraulic Overload):

Mr. Bolby said that the Permits and Applications continue to move forward for Phase 1–Collection System focusing on Brierwood & West areas first. This will be followed by the Central Business District, then the remaining areas north and east.

We are looking to get the Funding Application in by February 5th, 2025, for Brierwood and West.

GENERAL:

1) Center Ave. Sidewalk:

Mr. Bolby said that the work at Center Avenue is 100% complete. Public Works is going through the area to make sure that final items are being addressed. He noted that they are working through close-out and finalization. He added that Center Avenue was also a part of the Paving Contract. Both Contracts are in similar stages where final close-out documentation is being pulled together.

To summarize, Mr. Bolby stated that the Borough is in the close-out phase of several projects and minor items on the Water Project.

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

Mayor Rosemeyer mentioned that the Civil Service physicals & testing was done on November 2nd, 2024, for the Officers. On November 16th, 2024, the personal interviews were

done and went extremely well. He said that the positions will be filled as soon as they possible can be filled.

Mayor Rosemeyer mentioned that Officer Justin Evans will be “Sworn-In”, along with three additional Officers, at the next Council Meeting.

Mayor Rosemeyer mentioned that an Officer at the Department was attacked by a family’s Pitbull. Also, a woman from the County’s CART Response Team was attacked by the same family’s other Pitbull. Charges are pending.

Mayor Rosemeyer expressed that he would like Borough Council to meet with the Coordinator of the Emergency Management Plan to review the Emergency Plan.

Ms. Enos stated that the Borough is required, and has, their own Emergency Management Plan.

Mrs. Ream suggested that the Coordinator provide Council with an updated Emergency Management Plan, which Ms. Enos said she will obtain.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion

Mr. Dirienzo moved to adjourn; motion seconded by Mr. Shaulis.

Motion Unanimously Carried

6:14 p.m.

Michele A. Enos, Borough Manager/ Secretary