

January 23, 2017

The regular meeting of Lehighon Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Monday, January 23, 2017. The meeting was called to order at 7 PM by Pres. Grant Hunsicker. Members in attendance were: Lisa Perry, Jared McEvoy, Joe Flickinger, Helen Torok, Darryl Arner and Scott Rehrig via Skype.

Officials in attendance were: Borough Manager Nicole Beckett, Borough Secretary Brenda Koons, Solicitor James Nanovic, Mayor Tom Mase, Fire Chief Patrick Mriss, and Police Chief Brian Biechy. Absent: Councilor Darryl Arner, Borough Engineer Bruce Steigerwalt and Jr. Councilor Addison Howland.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chief Biechy introduced our new part-time patrol officer Elias Batihk to council so they could put a face to the name. Elias has been training for about a month and will be doing patrols on his own in the near future.

GUEST SPEAKER: Mr. Rod Green – Franklin Township Supervisor

He wanted council to know that Franklin Township was still very interested in contracted police services. It was discussed at a meeting some time ago but Mr. Green has heard nothing since then. He just wanted to let council know they are still hoping to move forward. The township feels with the borough's police department with the township's money helping to fund the police department could together build a strong department making the venture a win, win for all. Mahoning Township is also still interested.

HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT

Chris Nothstein of 500 North 3rd Street wanted to address his concerns regarding the proposed skate park at Skyline Park. His first concern was that it might not be a large enough area. There is a severe parking issue in that area of town already. His second main concern was policing of the area. Police can't patrol it because it sits back from the road. The park is in disarray now but kids still do use it. Mr. Nothstein understands it will be a skate park and an operational park also. He asked where the water would run off. To build this type of park a large amount of cement will need to be poured and he is concerned that there will not be adequate run off for rain water and snow. The multi functionality of the park will also be lost with all that cement. He does not feel this is a good place for a park of this type. Mr. Nothstein is not against the park. He just feels it is a bad location for it. There is already a parking problem and the skate park will only add to it because it will draw people from out of the area. The residents living on the even side of the street near Skyline use that area to turn around so they can park in front of their homes and this will create a new problem for them. The alley is in very poor condition so that will not be a helpful alternative for residents to use.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of December 19, 2016

Councilors Flickinger/Torok made the motions to approve and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to appoint Valerie Dailey to the Parks & Recreation Board

Councilors Perry/McEvoy made the motions to appoint and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to approve 4th Annual Earth Day Hippie Run/Walk as per request

Councilor Rehrig asked if the proper insurance was in place and was told yes by Nicole.

Councilors McEvoy/Flickinger made the motions to approve and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to approve the Ragnar Relay June 2-3, 2017

Nicole said this was requested before but it fell through. They want to try it again this year. Councilor Perry asked if they checked with the school district since June 2nd is a Friday and school will be in session.

Councilors Flickinger/Perry made the motions to approve provided they have insurance in place, check with the school district to be sure there are no conflicts, the police and fire police are contacted to discuss the route and any help needed by the borough for traffic control and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to approve bid for \$807 sale of 2006 Ford Crown Victoria

Solicitor Nanovic said it should be a motion to approve the resolution for the sale of the 2006 Ford Crown Victoria.

Councilors Rehrig/Torok made the motions to adopt a resolution to sell the police vehicle and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to correct 2017 salary for the Public Works Assistant Supervisor

Nicole said the salary resolution she presented in December had \$47,000 instead of \$48,000.

Councilors Rehrig/Perry made the motions to approve the correction and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to approve 2017 Fire Department Training Contract (budgeted item)

Councilors McEvoy/Rehrig made the motions approve and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Discussion/Action on the Repository for Unsold Properties – 3 Vacant Lots on Bankway

Nicole said the borough has been maintaining the properties for the past 3 years and a neighbor is now interested in buying all 3 lots.

Councilors Rehrig/Perry made the motions to sell the properties and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Discussion/Action on the use of the Lower Park for the Lehighon Downtown Initiative Farmers Market

Councilor Rehrig/Flickinger made the motions to approve and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Discussion/Action on appointment of Public Information Officer

Nicole said the need for this position became apparent on January 9, 2017. Nicole said council had never made an official appointment of this person so at this time she would like to recommend to council to make a motion to appoint a public information officer who is responsible for providing information to the media along with getting information out to the public during an event or an emergency and recommended that the borough secretary fill this position. Councilor Flickinger felt Nicole should fill the position due to her day to day dealings with the media. Councilor Flickinger also stated that Brenda had enough to do to catch up on her deputy position besides taking this on.

Councilors Flickinger/Perry made the motions to appoint the borough manager as the PIO and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Discussion/Action on the amendments to the Civil Service Rules & Regulations

Nicole said she only received this item this afternoon. The commission made a few changes. They changed the run time to 15 minutes. They changed the wording pertaining to the investigator in the promotion sections and made changes to the failed exam section. They want the borough secretary as their point of contact and clerical person. That is not the way it has been done over the years. It has been done out of the police office. They are now asking that it come back to borough hall and that the borough secretary be the administrator or clerical assistant.

Councilor Rehrig asked if this was run past the civil service solicitor for approval. Nicole said they did run some things past him but that's all she knows. Solicitor Nanovic did not look at it either.

Councilors Flickinger/Rehrig made the motions to table this item until February's meeting but Nicole said it will hold up testing if we wait but all were in favor of tabling the item with no questions or objections. The solicitor asked what sections were changed and Nicole told him sections 2.4 and 4.8., added investigator to promotion section, changed the run time, and added a backup in case the borough secretary is unavailable.

Discussion/Action on request to vacate Lentz Avenue

Nicole said this is not the first request and it has been given to the borough engineer and solicitor. Wayne Nothstein is making this request. The engineer is working on a plan based on the interest of council. We need to find out who the adjoining are before moving forward if council wishes to proceed with the vacation. Nicole will work with the engineer and solicitor and bring this item back next month.

Discussion on right turn only from Union Street onto 9th Street

The solicitor said that an ordinance is required. Councilor Rehrig made a motion to have the ordinance drafted. Safety is our main concern. There will be heavy traffic after sporting events. He feels there are 3 choices – have police there all the time, put in a traffic light or do a right turn only onto 9th Street. Councilor Flickinger asked if it was affecting Bridge Street and was told no.

Councilor Rehrig said the school district will be putting a traffic signal at 9th & Bridge eventually.

The mayor would like to table this item until other issues are discussed. Other problems have been caused by what has been done so far.

Councilors Rehrig/Torok made the motions to table this until another date and all were in favor with no questions or objections. Councilor Rehrig said we could remove the

posts and holders until voted on if that is what the mayor wants. Chief Biechy explained the problem is that there needs to be some kind of control because of the school shutting down the roadway. Councilor Rehrig agrees with Brian that there is a real safety issue at the school. Brian said people are upset with the right turn only but it is only temporary. On the flip side there is an exorbitant amount of traffic forced to use Union Street right now. Most of the school staff is not upset even though Union Street is the only way in and out of the school and is alleviating some traffic control problems for deliveries and when school is let out. Brian also said there are more changes coming that we will know nothing about until the project is complete. The “No Left Turn” sign for Grant Alley has been removed so people can use that if they need to travel south.

Solicitor Nanovic said there needs to be an ordinance in place if we wish to ticket.

Councilors Rehrig/McEvoy made the motions to draft and advertise an ordinance for enforcement only and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to adopt Employee Handbook

Nicole did turn the draft over to both unions but did not receive any comments back aside from a few word changes for the FOP.

Councilors Rehrig/Torok made the motions to adopt and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to approve purchase of Neopost Folder/Inserter for utility Billing Office

Councilors Rehrig/Perry made the motions to approve the purchase and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to the increase to electric rates

Nicole said this came in late but she did email it to council on Friday. She did an example of what bills would look like with the 8.02% rate increase and would suggest council tables this item until they have a chance to thoroughly look it over. They did present an economic development incentive program. She would like to bring this back to the February meeting for adoption.

Councilors Flickinger/Rehrig made the motions to table and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to adopt 2017 Fee Schedule

Nicole asked council to table this item as well due to the electric rate possibly changing.

Councilors Flickinger/Rehrig made the motions to table and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Unfinished Business

Continued discussion on request from Tax Collector to consider increase

Nicole provided to council all of the tax collectors income across the board which totals 2.5% commission. If an increase is to be given to this position it must be done at this meeting.

Councilors Flickinger/Perry made the motions to increase the tax collector to a 2.75% commission and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Continued discussion on ownership of “Temple Alley”

Nicole said this was brought back from last month. She will keep it on the agenda. The solicitor said the alley is in bad shape but it is up to council if they wish to do anything.

Update on request from Lehighon Fireman's Relief Association

Nicole has been speaking to Bob Rehnert on this item and she will bring it back next month.

Discussion on Gulotta Group Site Visit Report

Nicole asked if council reviewed the report and had any feedback. She said the next steps were outlined but she does not recommend following it right now. However, there was one comment that is worth considering. Finding a non-profit to redevelop these properties was suggested. Councilor Perry who is a member of the Lehighon Downtown Initiative said their group is currently working on becoming a designated trail town and if that happens it will open up grant opportunities for them to go after for redevelopment of the downtown.

Councilor Rehrig wants to keep this ball rolling. Nicole said we could adopt an ordinance to enact Act 90 for now.

Councilors Rehrig/McEvoy made the motions to have the solicitor draft an ordinance to implement Act 90 and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Officials Reports

Borough Manager

Council received her report. The Ashtown Bridge project advertisement has been delayed due to having everything in order with PennDOT. She commended the fire department for their response on North 2nd Street along with all the local departments and utilities. It was nice to see how well everyone could come together and work together in a situation like that.

Borough Engineer

Absent

Police

Chief Biechy said things are going well. They will soon be carrying Narcan in their cruisers.

Councilor Flickinger wanted to personally commend Officers Ebbert and Svetik for their above and beyond assistance at the fire January 9th. Some officers would just sit back and drink coffee while they were out there doing hose, traffic control, etc. He also thanked Mr. Green from Franklin for his department's help and Officer Lorah's, and Mahoning Township sent their chief as well to help with the incident.

Mayor

Mayor Mase would like council to have civil service get a list out because we have to find a replacement of Joe Lawrence. Solicitor Nanovic said usually you have a motion requesting civil service start the process. Nicole said we are waiting for the rules & regs to be approved. Can they move forward without them being approved? The solicitor said you have rules & regs in effect now and are considering amending some of those rules. He said you can advertise now but is not sure what affect there will be if we change these. Jim understands their concerns that they want to act on it but he has to look at the specific changes along with the civil service solicitor. We can still go forward. If need be we can hold a special meeting. jjj

Councilor Rehrig/McEvoy made the motions to have the civil service commission present council with an updated list and whatever else they need to do to hire a police officer and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Fire Chief

Patrick wanted to thank all the different agencies, EMS, community, citizens for their help during the past 2 fires. We had help from all over and we are grateful.

President of Council

Grant read a letter of thank you from Aquashicola Fire Company

Solicitor

Nothing

Treasurer

Additional list of bills totaling \$4,649.03 and a budget transfer of \$65,000 in additional to the \$20,000 for the January payroll from L&P Fund.

Councilors Rehrig/Flickinger made the motions to approve the additional bills and transfer and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Committee Reports

Finance and Administration – Darryl Arner, Chair; Lisa Perry, Co-Chair – Darryl was absent.

Streets, Buildings and Codes – Joe Flickinger, Chair; Darryl Arner, Co-Chair – Joe asked if alley repairs were on the list of projects and Nicole said Kris is working on the list.

Police, Fire and Safety – Scott Rehrig, Chair; Jared McEvoy, Co-Chair – Scott commended the fire chief and all members of the fire department, fire police and the other fire departments and fire police for the outstanding job they did dealing with the 2 recent fires. Councilor McEvoy echoed Scott's thoughts.

Light & Power Committee – Helen Torok, Chair; Joe Flickinger, Co-Chair – nothing.

Sewer Committee – Lisa Perry, Chair; Helen Torok, Co-Chair – nothing.

Public Works & Recreation – Jared McEvoy, Chair; Scott Rehrig, Co-Chair – Jared wants everyone to keep up the good work. Everything is going great.

Acceptance of Officials Reports

Councilors Rehrig/Flickinger made the motions to accept the official's reports as presented and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Acceptance of Accounts Payable

Councilors Rehrig/Torok made the motions to accept the accounts payable plus the additional list of bills and transfer and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to go into Executive Session for Personnel

None executive session required

Motion to go back into Regular Session

Action on Items from Executive Session

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

Councilors Flickinger/Rehrig made the motions to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 PM and all were in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Brenda L. Koons
Borough Secretary