

BOROUGH OF SUGARCREEK COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

January 3, 2024

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council President James Speth opened the meeting at 7:01 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted there will be no hurtful or harmful speech allowed. Mr. Speth noted the meeting would be recorded by the newspaper reporter in attendance.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (American Flag)

Council President Speth led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. MOMENT OF SILENCE

A moment of silence was observed.

IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Present at the meeting were Council members Larry Baughman, Alan Heller, Bogan Goughler, Howard Barger, James Speth and Mayor Matthew Carlson. Also, present were Maintenance Foreman Doug Freer, Chief Bob Wenner and Attorney Brian Spaid.

V. DISTRIBUTION OF AGENDA

VI. COUNCIL CHANGES TO AGENDA

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (limited to 3 minutes each)

- A. Council President James Speth addressed the Public in regards to rumors that have been circulating on Facebook that the Borough will be eliminating the Borough's Police Department. He said those rumors are false and the Borough Council is not eliminating police coverage within the Borough. He, along with the other members of Council are always working to improve the Borough Police Department, Maintenance Department, and the Administration. He also said that he and the Mayor have begun discussions with the City of Franklin in regards to the City of Franklin providing 24/7 police coverage. At this time, he said the discussions are in the early stages, with no contracts, no agreements, and no timetable in place. Mr. Speth said, if and when the time comes that the Borough enters into an agreement with the City of Franklin, all pros and cons, details and costs will be weighed and discussed and made available to the taxpaying residents of the Borough. Mr. Speth opened the meeting to the Public Participation section of the meeting and reminded the public that this time is open to Borough residents and there is a three – minute time limit to each resident. And that Council does not have to comment to each public comment.
- B. John McClelland expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.
- C. Jessica Monaco expressed her support for the Borough Police Department, as well as concerns over the R.G.V.F.D. and the Ladies' Auxiliary.
- D. Kevin Kunkel had a question about the setback requirements for his property; he will be having his property surveyed. He also asked how long the Borough keeps Zoning records and if there are any permits available for his property. Mr. Sporer recommended him call the Zoning Officer with those questions. Mr. Kunkel also said he has been trying to get ahold of someone at PennDOT in regards to flooding concerns on his road. Mr. Sporer told Mr. Kunkel to call him and he can try to help him get in contact with someone at PennDOT.
- E. Marci Montgomery expressed her support for the Borough Police Department.
- F. Justin Zacherl had a question on the street light tax for his property in Reno. Mr. Sporer told him to call in to the Borough and he can answer his questions for him.
- G. Tim Lowry expressed his support of the Borough Police Department and the State Police's response time in unacceptable.
- H. Lori Braun expressed her support for the Borough Police Department.
- I. Brenda Gourley expressed her support for the Borough Police Department.
- J. Bill Lux expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.
- K. Kyle Peasley, Venango County District Attorney's Office, expressed his support for the Borough Police Department. He also stated he felt the D.A.'s office should have been consulted about this matter.
- L. Gene Winger expressed his support for the Borough Police Department and the State Police do not respond to calls and he feels the City of Franklin will do the same thing.

- M. Jennifer Gregory expressed her support for the Borough Police Department. She also had a question in regards to getting a house condemned in Reno that has been vacant for some time.
- N. Nate Copley spoke on behalf of the Ladies' Auxiliary. He said the Ladies' Auxiliary will handle the purse bingo one way or another. He also asked the Council for support of the Ladies' Auxiliary and sign a resolution backing the Ladies' Auxiliary.
- O. Chelsie Mesa, Rocky Grove Travel Club, expressed concerns over the status of the purse bingo at the R.G.V.F.D. and the potential loss of funds due to the cancelation of the event.
- P. Stacy Conn wanted to know if there is anything the Borough could do to help with the R.G.V.F.D. and the Ladies' Auxiliary.
- Q. Ethan Knapp expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.
- R. Mary Jane Allen asked if the Borough had an update on the Reno water situation. And she feels communication is essential with the Borough Council and the public in regards to not only the Reno water but also the discussions about the Police.
- S. Nichole Sloss expressed her support for the Borough Police Department.
- T. Anthony Sloss expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.
- U. Jessica Struthers expressed her support for the Borough Police Department and asked for transparency in the discussions.
- V. Teri Lowry expressed her support for the Borough Police Department. She also wanted to commend Mr. Sporer for the job he has done with the Borough's finances. As a business owner, she would like to see 24/7 coverage. She would also like to see more officers hired. She also expressed concern over the lack of visibility of the Franklin Police Department.
- W. Jacob Saullo, principal at Sugarcreek Elementary School, expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.
- X. TJ Jakubowski expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.
- Y. Jessica Blum expressed her support for the Borough Police Department.
- Z. Ryan Heffernan presented Council with the R.G.V.F.D.'s Annual Report as well as put in his request for the fire department's annual \$25,000 donation from the Borough. Mr. Heffernan said the department responded to 209 calls in 2023, with an average of 4 people responding per call. The department paid off the 2019 brush truck, using the Borough's donation and state grant(s). He said the department is considering purchasing a rescue engine in response to dwindling manpower and an aging fleet. He said the cost will be around \$1 million, which they are hoping to receive federal funding for the purchase. He said they are also considering purchasing a pickup truck to use to respond to calls as opposed to taking one of the large engine trucks out. He also expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.
- AA. Leah Rice expressed her support for the Borough Police Department. She does not think the Franklin Police Department will give the same time and attention to the Borough. She also expressed her thoughts that the purse bingo should be held at the fire department.
- BB. Lacey Stokes expressed her support for the Borough Police Department. And she would like to see more police coverage.
- CC. Valerie Zitterbart expressed her support for the Borough Police Department. She would like to see more officers hired and given raises.
- DD. Jeremy Rankin said the fire department's and Ladies' Auxiliary's legal issues cannot be discussed, according to the fire department's attorney. He did say that when the Ladies' Auxiliary holds an event at the fire department, it violates the cease-and-desist order that is in place.
- EE. Karen Snyder wanted to express her support for the fire department, Ladies' Auxiliary, and the Borough Police Department. She wanted to see the Borough try to get the Ladies' Auxiliary and the fire department together to work out the issues. She also questioned if the City of Franklin were to take over patrolling, would residents pay taxes to both the Borough and the City of Franklin.
- FF. Joe Carulli asked if the residents could be or would be informed of what the Borough would be saving if they chose to contract with the City of Franklin. He also said there are City of Franklin officers that live within the Borough and all the Franklin officers are out doing their job and doing a great job. He also knows that they have hired three more officers.
- GG. Derek Long expressed his support for the Borough Police Department. He also wanted people to spend less time on Facebook and come and be a part of the discussions.
- HH. Ashley Baughman expressed her support for the Borough Police Department. She also expressed concerns over whether the residents would pay taxes to both Franklin and the Borough. Mr. Spaid said Borough residents would continue to pay taxes to the Borough only. The Borough would pay an agreed upon fee to the City of Franklin.
- II. Paul Swatzler expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.

JJ. Daryl Dziekciasz expressed his support for the Borough Police Department.

VIII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Maintenance Foreman:

1. No report.

B. Police Chief:

1. Chief Wenner thanked the public who came out to the meeting. He also said he has returned over \$125,000 to the Borough for 2023. He does not believe the other departments have come near that. He also said during the time that he has been Chief, he has been under budget each year and is unaware of the financial concern(s). Chief said he and his officers want to do more. Chief presented Council with a budget breakdown in Nov. and Dec. 2023 and the amount he was under budget was detailed. As well as the request for new radios. He said he did not receive a copy of the December 2023 minutes to read the breakdown. Chief then presented Council with a proposal for four (4) Brother PJ8 Printers for the police cruisers. Chief stated the department is beginning to run low on paper citations and the company no longer makes them. In order for the department to file citations, they will have to make the switch to the printers. He said the current turnaround for Wireless Communication & Electronics to provide the department with the printers is approximately 9 – 12 weeks. Chief said that is about how long they have left with the paper citations.

- a. Motion by Larry Baughman, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to approve the purchase of four (4) Brother PJ8 Printers (\$485.00 each, \$1,940.00 total), four (4) Brother PJ8 DC Power Adapters (\$25.50 each, \$102.00 total), four (4) Brother PJ8 Vehicle Mounts (\$117.00 each, \$468.00 total), four (4) Brother 6 – rolls thermal paper (\$53.00 each, \$212.00 total) and four (4) Brother PJ8 USBs (\$19.00 each, \$76.00 total), from Wireless Communications & Electronics for a total purchase price of \$2,798.00. Motion carried unanimously.

- b. Motion by Alan Heller, being duly seconded by Larry Baughman to approve the purchase of four (4) hand scanners for in the police cruisers, up to a purchase price of \$2,500.00. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Administrator/Special Projects:

1. Motion by Bogan Goughler, being duly seconded by Alan Heller to approve the payment to Rossbacher Insurance Group to provide Sugar creek Borough's 2024 Worker's Compensation and Property & Casualty Insurance at an annual cost of \$114,843.00. Motion carried unanimously.

D. Zoning Officer:

1. No report.

E. Solicitor:

1. Mr. Spaid updated the public on the Reorganization meeting held on January 2, 2024. Mr. Spaid explained that Mayor Carlson elected to continue as Mayor and turn down the Ward 3 Council seat he won during the 2023 General Election. Mr. Barger expressed interest in continuing to serve in the Ward 3 Council seat. Mr. Spaid said the Reorganization Meeting's agenda was amended to reflect the motion and Mr. Barger was appointed to the Ward 3 Council seat for two (2) years. After those two (2) years, the seat would be up for election for the final two (2) years of the seat's term. Mr. Spaid wished to thank Mr. Barger, on behalf of the Borough, Council, and the Community for continuing to serve the Borough.

2. Mr. Spaid wanted to inform the public of what he will need to discuss in Executive Session. He said the Borough has been notified of two (2) property tax assessment appeals for two (2) businesses within the Borough; Joy Chain Plant and Rural King. He explained that these businesses are appealing to lower their tax assessments. He said this directly affects the tax money coming in to the Borough.

IX. COUNCIL REPORT

A. Alan Heller wanted to thank the public for attending tonight's meeting.

B. James Speth said the Council will continue to be transparent in the continuing discussion regardless of what the outcome will be. Mr. Speth said any Borough resident may contact him or other Council members will any questions or concerns.

X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Motion by Larry Baughman, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to approve the minutes of the Dec. 6, 2023 Council Meeting and January 2, 2024 Reorganization meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

XI. FINANCIAL REPORTS

A. Motion by Bogan Goughler, being duly seconded by James Speth to approve the payment of bills/issuance of checks as presented by the Treasurer. Motion carried unanimously.

XII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Gene Winger asked if the mayor would be commenting on the Police issue. Mr. Speth said if the Mayor chooses to do so. Mayor Carlson said he does not have a comment at this time.

XIII. NEW BUSINESS

XIV. CORRESPONDENCE

XV. BOARD OF APPEALS

XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Council recessed at 8:31 pm for an executive session to discuss personnel and legal issues which, if conducted in public, would violate a lawful privilege of information or confidentiality protected by the law and any action to follow. The meeting was reconvened at 9:22 pm.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

A. Motion by Alan Heller, being duly seconded by Larry Baughman to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Joseph M. Sporer, Borough Manager

James Speth, Council President