

**BOROUGH OF SUGARCREEK  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

November 1, 2023

**I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Council President James Speth opened the meeting at 7:00 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted there will be no hurtful or harmful speech allowed.

**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 Bogan Goughler, Howard Barger, James Speth, Larry Baughman, Alan Heller, and Mayor Matt Carlson. Also present was Chief Bob Wenner, Maintenance Foreman Doug Freer and Attorney Brian Spaid.

**V. DISTRIBUTION OF AGENDA**

**VI. COUNCIL CHANGES TO AGENDA**

**VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (*limited to 3 minutes each*)**

- A. Scott Sanderson, Rocky Grove V.F.D., updated Council that the department responded to 21 calls in the previous month and the department could use more volunteers.
- B. Dan Marvin, Reno V.F.D., wanted to thank the newspaper for attending the department's Trick – or – Treat event on Halloween night. Mr. Marvin also said the department has responded to 180 calls so far in 2023; 17 so far in Oct and 11 of those were ambulance calls. He said they have also applied for State Fire grants.
- C. Laurie Piehl, Palmer Ave. resident, wanted to thank the Borough for helping address a noise complaint she had about a neighbor running a generator all day, every day. She said it took some time, but she is very happy the problem is being resolved and they love living in Rocky Grove.

**VIII. STAFF REPORTS**

A. Maintenance Foreman:

- 1. Mr. Freer said they went to look at the Front Street Playground and they would be able to get about 6 – 7 parking spaces in the 80' x 23' area. He said the Borough could dig out the curb and grass area. He estimated that it would take approximately 180 ton of limestone and 10 ton of blacktop. Mr. Freer said the Borough has the limestone and the equipment to do it. The Borough would only need to purchase the blacktop and it would cost approximately \$1,000 - \$1,500. Mr. Freer said the dugouts at the ballfield need to be removed before they fall and cause injury. Mr. Baughman asked if anything could be salvaged. Mr. Freer said there are two layers of metal roofing and nothing can be salvaged. He spoke with Whalen Contracting and they estimated the rebuilding cost to be around \$51,000. They did suggest the Borough consider purchasing a temporary canvas covering that could go up in the dugouts and taken down at the end of the season. Mr. Sporer recommended authorizing the Maintenance Department to install the parking spaces at the Front Street Playground and to remove the dugouts at the ballfield. And the Council can discuss over the winter what they would want to do about them.
- 2. Motion by Alan Heller, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to authorize the Maintenance Department to install the parking spots and removal of the dugouts at the Front Street Playground, as recommended by the Maintenance Foreman. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Police Chief:

- 1. Chief Wenner presented Council with upcoming training schedules for the officers, as recommended by the Chief. Chief also presented Council with a training being offered in Cranberry Township for Act 44 and Grant Initiatives, scheduled for Nov. 2, 2023. He said the training would be at no cost to the Borough and would be during his normal

work day. Chief said the training scheduled for Dec. 12 – 13, 2023, in Butler, is in partnership with the County District Attorney's Offices, where the D.A.'s office would pay for the training. He said there would be little to no overtime for the officers, depending on how long the classes lasted and how long it would take them to drive back. The officers would drive down and back each day. Chief also informed Council on the training that Officer Wilson is scheduled for. It is a one – day training on criminal activity associated with cell phones. The cost of the class is \$498 and paid for through the D.A.'s office. Chief said there is such a backlog in the computer labs and evidence/responses are not received in a timely manner. Mr. Heller asked if either of the full – time officers have attended this training and would it be more beneficial to have one of them attend the training. Chief thought if Officer Wilson had the training, it would be straight time, as opposed to bringing in a full – time officer. Chief said Officer Wilson has been cleared to return to work 16 – 20 hours/week. And he is in the process of getting the full clearance; he has an appointment scheduled for Nov. 2, 2023 for his review.

2. Motion by Howard Barger, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to approve the officers' training schedules as presented by the Chief. A roll call was taken. Mr. Barger, Mr. Goughler, Mr. Speth and Mr. Baughman voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Heller opposed the motion. Motion carried.
3. Mark Seigworth, Director of Public Safety for the County, updated Council on the upgrades to the 911 radio system that the County will be doing. He said the current radio system is 28 years old and needs to be replaced/updated. He said the County is installing the P25 system, at a cost of \$5,000,000. In doing so, local Police, Fire and EMS departments will need to upgrade their radio systems in order to be compatible with 911's new system. Mr. Seigworth said there are grants available for the local municipalities and departments to apply for. And one in particular that awards up to \$1,000,000 for one project. Chief said the grants are currently closed at this time and may not be available again until next year. Mr. Seigworth said the County has hired a consultant to help municipalities and organizations applying for the grants. Chief presented Council with a quote he received from Mobilcom. The quote was for a total cost of \$46,076.88, which included a 20% discount and was valid for 14 days. Chief said Mobilcom does anticipate an increase after the first of the year. Chief also said he has approximately \$80,000 left over in the department's 2023 budget, which could be used to purchase the radios and still have funds left over. He said that number includes his estimate for the remaining two months of the year. He said he spoke with the Mayor and Chief suggested requesting a line transfer in his budget to "Operating Supplies" or "Radio Equipment/Maintenance." Mr. Baughman asked how long until the old radios are obsolete. Mr. Seigworth said it will be 18 – 24 months, depending on parts availability. Mr. Seigworth also said the repeater located on Point Hill has reached the end of its life and has been repaired twice. But it will no longer be needed for the new system. Mr. Seigworth said the new system would be encrypted as well and scanners will no longer pick up the frequency. Mayor Carlson asked Mr. Seigworth if the Maintenance Dept.'s radios will need replaced as well. Mr. Seigworth said the Maintenance Dept. uses a different repeater and he is not aware of its condition and/or age. Chief Wenner said he was under the understanding that the radio upgrades only affected the Police, Fire and EMS frequencies. Commissioner Abramovich said there may be a discussion down the road where the County may purchase the Maintenance Dept.'s radio frequency from the Borough. Mayor Carlson said the Maintenance Dept. needs to be kept informed, being such a large Borough. Mr. Seigworth said there could be a Maintenance Group added in order for the Borough, City of Franklin and Oil City departments to be able to communicate with each other, if necessary. Or they may choose to stay on their own system. Dan Marvin, Reno VFD, said he works for PennDOT and they have begun the update to the new system and they are pleased with it. They can use their radios across the State. Commissioner Abramovich said once the new system is in place, approximately 98% of the County will be fully covered versus the 67% - 73% that is covered now. Mr. Spaid asked why Mobilcom was presented and not bid out since the quote exceeds the bid threshold. Mr. Seigworth said Mobilcom is the manufacturer of the system that the County will be installing. Commissioner Abramovich said Mobilcom is under COSTARS and the County will be purchasing radios in bulk and they offer bulk pricing. Mr. Spaid asked if this is a specialized item that must be purchased through Mobilcom, but there may be other manufacturers that make compatible radios.

Mr. Seigworth said if another manufacturer was purchased, then the encryption would not work with the County system. Mr. Spaid asked for clarification that it is a specialized item. Mr. Seigworth said it is and since they are being purchased under COSTARS, the County did not have to bid them out. Mr. Seigworth said the County did get a quote from Motorola for the new system and they quoted around \$14,000,000 for it. Mr. Baughman asked Mr. Sporer if he agreed with the budget prospective as suggested by the Chief. Mr. Sporer asked if this was something that needed to be approved and purchased tonight. Mayor Carlson said the only problem is that the price will increase after the beginning of the year. Mr. Sporer said there is still another meeting before the end of the year to discuss it. Mayor Carlson said Mr. Seigworth and Commissioner Abramovich are available now for any questions. Chief said he has attended several of the 911 Advisory Board meetings where they have discussed and looked at other manufacturers before Mobilcom was chosen. Mr. Baughman asked who all in the County has purchased the Mobilcom system. Mr. Seigworth said the County is building the infrastructure and the departments can join on with Mobilcom or they may choose to go with another manufacturer. Mr. Seigworth also said if there are issues with the Mobilcom radio and they need to be reprogrammed, it can be done at the 911 center. But not with another manufacturer. Commissioner Abramovich said Oil City P.D. just purchased radios through Mobilcom and Cherrytree is in the process. Mr. Baughman said that was what he was asking. Mr. Seigworth also said Cornplanter and Seneca fire departments have received grants and purchased the radios. He said he has also seen the prices continue to go up and once the contract is signed, the price is locked in. Chief said the current quote given by Mobilcom is only good for 14 days. Commissioner Abramovich said Mobilcom was approved because they are a part of COSTARS and they can do everything that needs done for the upgrades. Mr. Spaid said he understands. He said his concern is that this type of problem seems to be a recurring issue with Council, that large purchases are brought before the board and everyone is asked to pay for it. He knows that there have been comments made that the members do not have time to think about it. He said the quote should have been locked in through the December meeting in order to allow the Council to think about it and review the information. Mr. Baughman said he agrees with Mr. Spaid. Mr. Spaid wanted to be clear that he means this should be for all the Borough departments. He said he believes it is unfair to expect the Council to make such decisions when spending tax payers' money. Mr. Speth requested that the request be tabled until the December meeting. Mr. Baughman said the Council still has time to vote before prices would go up in January. Chief said he will give an updated price in time for the December meeting. Mr. Baughman said he understands emergencies happen, but he would like to see these large ticket items or equipment be a part of the budget process. And he would like to have some more time with these types of financial decisions. Mr. Speth said his first concern is to the tax payers. Mr. Spaid asked then if Council is asking for this request to be on the December meeting's agenda. Mr. Baughman and Mr. Speth said they would. Mr. Spaid said it should be placed under the Police section of the agenda for December's meeting. Mr. Seigworth messaged the representative from Mobilcom and they would honor the Borough's quote through the end of December. Council and Chief thanked Mr. Seigworth for doing that. Mayor Carlson wanted to thank Mr. Seigworth and Commissioner Abramovich for coming to the meeting and explaining more of what is going on and to Dan Marvin for his experience with the new system.

3. Chief Wenner also approved Scott Sanderson for the Rock y Grove VFD Fire Police.
4. Motion by Larry Baughman, being duly seconded by James Speth to approve a \$300 donation to the Venango County Coon & Fox Club for use of the facility for the Police Department's training. Mr. Goughler abstained. Motion carried.

C. Administrator/Special Projects:

1. Motion by Alan Heller, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to approve and advertise the 2024 Council meetings to be held at 7:00 PM on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month, except for the July meeting which will be held on Wed., July 10, 2024 at 7:00 PM. And Planning Commission meetings to be held at 6:00 PM on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of each month. The Reorganization Meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 2, 2024, at 6:00 PM. Motion carried unanimously.
2. Motion by Alan Heller, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to approve and advertise the proposed 2024 Budget and that it is available for public inspection and to

advertise Ordinance No. 301 of 2023, which fixes expenditures for Fiscal Year 2024 at \$3,377,039.00 with a tax rate of 6.0 mills and a tax rate of 0.55 cents on each front foot assessment for street lights in Rocky Grove and Reno. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Mr. Baughman wanted to thank the Borough Manager for working on the budget and having no tax increase for the 7<sup>th</sup> year in a row.

- D. Zoning Officer:
  1. No report.
- E. Solicitor:
  1. No report.

**IX. COUNCIL REPORT**

- A. Howard Barger said he was approached by two residents of Sugarcreek Village asking why the siren does not go off anymore. Chief Wenner said they were given a price to have it repaired, but no further action has been taken. Mr. Seigworth said he was working with Mayor McDaniel on it. He said the County had approved a Code Red System to send alerts to residents' cell phones, home phones and emails. This is to address the issue that local fire departments are having in regards to the cost of running the sirens and repair costs. He stated they hope to have the system active soon and sign ups beginning in November or December. He also said this technology would allow 911 to send the alerts to the specific areas affected or a specific location, such as Sugarcreek Station.
- B. Mayor Carlson said he would like to look at having a memorial bench placed in McClelland Park, in honor of the late Mayor McDaniel. Mayor said the Police Department has been receiving numerous complaints that may or may not fall under their jurisdiction or tend to be in a grey area. He said the department will begin a "Request for Action" form to possibly help sort out any confusion and to make sure the department is acting within their guidelines.

**X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. Motion by Bogan Goughler, being duly seconded by James Speth to approve the minutes of the October 4, 2023 Council Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

**XI. FINANCIAL REPORTS**

- A. Motion by Larry Baughman, being duly seconded by Alan Heller to approve the payment of bills/issuance of checks as presented by the Treasurer. Motion carried unanimously.

**XII. OLD BUSINESS**

**XIII. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Mayor Carlson swore in Scott Sanderson to the Rocky Grove VFD Fire Police.

**XIV. CORRESPONDENCE**

**XV. BOARD OF APPEALS**

**XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Council recessed at 7:52 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 8:55 pm.

**XVIII. ADJOURNMENT**

- A. Motion by Larry Baughman, being duly seconded by Alan Heller to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 PM.

Joseph M. Sporer, Borough Manager

James Speth, Council President