

**BOROUGH OF SUGARCREEK  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

February 4, 2026

- I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**  
Council President Alan Heller opened the meeting at 7:03 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted there will be no hurtful or harmful speech allowed.
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (American Flag)**  
Mayor Craig Westover 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 Alan Heller, John McClelland, Bogan Goughler, Larry Baughman, Matthew Carlson, and Mayor Craig Westover. Also, present were Maintenance Foreman Doug Freer, Chief Robert Wenner, Attorneys Brian Spaid and Alex Spaid.
- V. DISTRIBUTION OF AGENDA**
- VI. COUNCIL CHANGES TO AGENDA**
- VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (*limited to 3 minutes each*)**
- A. Linda Turner expressed support for the Police Department.
- B. Laurie Snow expressed support for the Police Department.
- C. Sara Saullo expressed support for the Police Department.
- D. Mr. Spaid wanted to clarify that the Public Participation Section is a time for public comment and not a question-and-answer time with the Council. Mr. Spaid reminded the public they are welcome to call and discuss any questions with their representative.
- E. Roland Braun wished to defer his time to Officer Wilson. Mr. Spaid said that is not allowed.
- F. Amber Everett expressed support for the Police Department.
- G. Dave Wilson, Sugarcreek Borough Police Officer, read a prepared statement in regards to recent social media posts about the Council having an agenda and getting rid of the Police Department. His statement continued that the officers know there is an agenda by Council to put the officers in an untenable situation to continue employment with the Borough. The officers have witnessed several overt acts by the Council and others to place the officers in a position where they have no recourse or appeal process in a furtherance of a hostile work environment, which Council has been previously advised of. Mr. Wilson thanked the community, fire department, Community Ambulance Service, local businesses, Mr. McClelland and Mr. Carlson for their support. Mr. Wilson continued that Council was approached on multiple occasions and told of wide spread threats and retaliation and attempts to retaliate for past official actions that were happening. And requests to protect the individual being retaliated against. He stated Council chose to ignore the threats and "gave their King the keys to the castle." And the person with the most influence over Council is the Police Department's biggest danger. Because of this, Mr. Wilson said their careers are in jeopardy. Mr. Wilson said they are left with no choice but to resign their positions, not their decision, but a decision Council made for them. He concluded by saying that he hopes Council can protect the community better than they protected them.
- H. Lori Braun, Sugarcreek Borough Police Clerk, read a prepared statement resigning her position as Police Clerk, effective February 6, 2026. Ms. Braun said she took a \$5.00/hour pay cut to come work for Chief Wenner and came to the Borough in good faith and commitment to the community. Her statement continued that she cannot continue to work in an environment characterized by hostility, unsafe conditions within the Borough building and persistent internal practices that operate behind closed doors. She continued that her resignation is not a reflection of the officers, but the Borough leaders and elected officials. She concluded by saying she leaves with disappointment.
- I. Lara Phillips expressed support for the Police Department.
- J. Richard Cook expressed support for the Police Department.
- K. Jessica Blum expressed support for the Police Department.
- L. Tim Lowry wanted to thank the Maintenance Department for their work and expressed support for the Police Department.
- M. Kelly Hart expressed support for the Police Department.

- N. Suzanne O'Neil expressed support for the Police Department.
- O. Floyd O'Neil expressed support for the Police Department.
- P. Mark Berringer expressed support for the Police Department.
- Q. Danielle Laverdure expressed support for the Police Department, Maintenance Department, and the R.G.V.F.D.
- R. Joane Beach expressed support for the Police Department.
- S. Sam Leta expressed support for the Police Department.
- T. Jennifer Riley expressed support for the Police Department.
- U. TJ Jakubowski expressed support for the Police Department.
- V. Cheri Schiffer expressed support for the Police Department. Ms. Schiffer asked if it was a conflict of interest with the Borough Manager breaking the law and being arrested by a Borough Police Officer and showing disrespect for that department. Mr. Speth declined comment. Ms. Schiffer asked if the Police Department deserves to know if they will be heckled or not by the Borough Manager. She asked if there was a probationary period for Mr. Speth. Mr. Spaid reminded the public that the Council will not be responding. Ms. Schiffer asked what the by – laws were. Mr. Spaid asked for clarification on what by – laws she is referring to. She said for a Borough Council meeting. Mr. Spaid explained there is a resolution that was passed in 2025 and the Borough also operates under the Borough Code. Ms. Schiffer asked if the Council knew Sugarcreek Borough is the largest Borough in the State and how do they expect Franklin to respond. Mr. Spaid wanted to clarify that he has not been notified at all by the Council to take any action, as the Solicitor, to terminate the Police Department. He said that is not happening. He said he does not know where the rumor started.
- W. Peter Fitzpatrick expressed support for the Police Department.
- X. Terri Lowry said they are back in the same place they were in back in 2022 and 2024, where the Council was negotiating with Franklin. She said they were told back then that they were not getting rid of the Police Department. And Council told them they would have coverage, but it would be getting rid of the Borough's Police force and getting Franklin's coverage. She said there are deceitful movements by some members of Council and there are some who are pro-people and like the police force. Ms. Lowry asked Council if there is a hostile work environment. She said she feels there is a hostile work environment. Ms. Lowry stated she got a bad deal when Mr. Spaid decided to remove her from the Civil Service because Council forgot to have her take an oath. She then stated all of the members were removed, had to reapply and then have Council reappoint the members. Ms. Lowry said she was able to make the cut, along with two (2) other people who are not pro – police and she knows people on Council will admit that it is true. She questioned what would happen if one of the police get written up and it goes to a hearing; she and the police are the losers because it would be a 2 – 1 vote. Ms. Lowry said she feels the person who used to be on Civil Service with her for 30 years, was not reappointed because she was pro – police and a woman. She also said Council needs to have more women and the schools need more police.
- Y. Tim Engles thanked the Maintenance Department for their quick responses. He also thanked the R.G.V.F.D. and the Police Department.
- Z. Jeremy Rankin, R. G. V. F.D. expressed support for the Police Department.
- AA. Dee Hanna expressed support for the Police Department as well as the Maintenance Department.

## VIII. STAFF REPORTS

- A. Maintenance Foreman:
  - 1. Mr. Freer said they have ordered 600 more tons of antiskid and are continuing to plow and work on minor repairs to their equipment. Mr. McClelland thanked the department for the job they have been doing.
- B. Police Chief:
  - 1. Chief Wenner thanked the public for attending. He stated that the current Borough Manager and former Council President wanted to get rid of the Police Department two (2) years ago. He also said he was aware of everything that was going on before they spoke with Franklin. He was glad Council did not succumb to the pressure, but instead voted to raise the hours to 176 patrol hours per week for approximately seven (7) to eight (8) months. And he came in under budget that year. He stated the next year, the budget was cut so that the approved 160 patrol hours could not work. He stated Council succumb to the pressure that there was no money. He said with his years of municipal budget experience, he knew he could do more with less, which is what Council wanted. But it was taken away. Chief said he informed Council of accounts that were unreasonable and what would happen. He said there were contract negotiations with

Council where they asked the part – time officers, one of which was threatened, to work a minimum number of hours per month. Chief said that was an overt attempt by Council and he thanked Mr. Spaid for taking care of the issue. He stated there is not one person on Council who has not been told of the retaliation and threats made and what has been happening. He said Civil Service was a back up for him since he is not part of the contract, but it and Council is now stacked against him and the department. Chief said he begged Council to protect him and about the hostile environment years ago. He also stated the budget is so screwed and they are way over. Chief says Mr. Westover then comes in and hears half of the story and will be the Chief Law Enforcement Officer soon. Chief said it was a title the Mayor knew before coming in. Chief said after then – Mayor Charlie McDaniels's passing, Mayor Westover applied back then, but thankfully Matt Carlson stepped into the position. He said if Mr. Carlson had not taken it, they would have been gone over two (2) years ago. Chief said his job is currently untenable and the officers, three (3) part – time officers, and the Police Clerk are leaving tonight. He said the Borough Police Department is the lowest paid Police Department around. He said Council did not expect him to resign, but he spoke with his department and children prior to resigning. He also stated he spoke with Mr. McClelland prior to his resignation and he had his totes to pack his office up. Chief asked Mr. McClelland if he was wrong when he stated that he hunts men for a living and he knows when men do evil things. He told the Mayor he knows he was asking his cops friends to come join the department and they told him no and he knows everything that goes on. Chief said he was excited to rejoin the Borough, even with everything that has gone on over the years. But he has not been part of such a hostile environment and it is vindictive with official actions.

2. Motion by John McClelland, with regret, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to accept Police Chief Robert Wenner's resignation effective February 13, 2026. A roll call was taken. Mr. Carlson and Mr. McClelland opposed the motion. Mr. Goughler, Mr. Baughman, and Mr. Heller voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

C. Administrator/Special Projects:

1. No report.

D. Zoning Officer:

1. No report.

E. Solicitor:

1. Mr. Spaid wanted to address some concerns and questions that have been brought up recently. He said he was asked by Mayor Westover about opening the meeting with a prayer. Mr. Spaid said he researched it and it is allowed, but it has to be a non – denominational prayer. The examples of prayers Mayor Westover gave to Mr. Spaid are allowable. Mr. Spaid also addressed a question raised about a probationary period for Mr. Speth. He stated there was no probationary period. Mr. Spaid explained in regards to speed enforcement on Rt. 8, the Borough would have to get permission from the Pennsylvania State Police to run speed enforcement on a state road. He said he has worked with Chief Wenner in resolving the dispute with the Borough running speed along Rt. 8 between the Franklin City Limits to the divided section of Rt. 8 in Reno. Mr. Spaid said he wanted to clarify comments made about appointing civil service members. He said he thought it was the fairest way for the Council to vacate the Civil Service Commission seats and reappoint members to the commission and stagger the terms. He stated that Chief Wenner has expressed his disagreement with this and he feels he is not protected with Mr. Sporer and Mr. Goughler being on the commission. Mr. Spaid went on to explain that one of the full – time officers resigned from his position at the Borough during the October 2025 Council meeting, in order to accept a full – time job with the Oil City Police Department. At the November 2025 Council meeting, Council voted to begin the process of hiring a 4<sup>th</sup> full – time officer. Mr. Spaid said he does not know why the Civil Service Commission did not meet. He also said when Chief Wenner made Council aware of his resignation at the January 7, 2026 Council meeting, Council expressed that they wanted both positions filled and directed the Civil Service Commission to begin the process. Because of that, Mr. Spaid said the new members of the Civil Service Commission had to be sworn in and organize. He stated they met on January 15, 2026 and selected their chairs for the commission. But Ms. Lowry wished to have the Civil Service Committee Solicitor, Richard Winkler, attend their meeting. The committee recessed the meeting after organizing, until January 27, 2026. Mr. Spaid said there must have been a communication issue because Mr.

Winkler was not aware that he was to attend the January 27, 2026 Civil Service Committee meeting. The committee has scheduled a continuation of that meeting for February 5, 2026, at 4:00 PM. Mr. Spaid explained that the purpose of this meeting is for the committee to meet and direct how to start the process of hiring new full – time officers and how they want that to happen; where they want the applications to go, etc. Mr. Spaid said the Borough cannot do anything else with the hiring process until the Civil Service Committee meets first. Mr. Spaid said part – time officers are not hired under Civil Service and Council may begin that process whenever they choose to do so. He also explained that if a part – time officer is hired, meets the threshold for qualifying for full – time and Council would want to make them a full – time officer, they could do so without starting the Civil Service process. Once the Civil Service Committee receives applicants, those applicants will then have to go through various examinations, including physical, mental and agility tests. Mr. Spaid asked Chief Wenner how many months that process can take. Chief said it can take up to 3 – 4 months. Mr. Spaid said the department is not going away and the Borough is working on hiring more officers. He then wanted to explain that with Chief Wenner resigning, the Mayor has full power and authority over the Police Department and runs the department. Council sets the patrol hours and the budget. He explained, for example, the Mayor has the power to suspend an officer and Council would then vote whether or not to agree with that decision at the next meeting. And as far as the Civil Service Committee, for example, if an officer was disciplined and they did not feel they could follow the grievance procedure in the Union contract, then they would go through the Civil Service Commission to have a hearing. Mr. Spaid said he hopes that answers most of the questions people had about what was going on and he will not discuss personnel matters. Ms. Lowry stated she felt Mayor Westover breaking the tie when voting in new members to the Civil Service Committee was a conflict of interest due to his work with Mr. Goughler at the Coon and Fox Club. Mr. Spaid said he does not feel it is a conflict of interest and it is the same club the Police Department uses for training purposes. Ms. Lowry said she felt the Mayor should have recused himself from the vote. Mr. Spaid said someone only needs to recuse themselves from a vote if they would financially benefit from it.

## IX. COUNCIL REPORT

- A. Matthew Carlson expressed sorrow for the resignation of Chief Wenner.
- B. Larry Baughman praised the Maintenance Department for the work they are doing and people are noticing their work like the Police Department.
- C. John McClelland wanted to thank Chief Wenner for his years of services before and after his time in Oil City.
- D. Alan Heller thanked Chief Wenner for his service and wished him luck in his future. Mr. Heller said he was shocked to receive phone calls referencing the Council is getting rid of the Police Department. He said there is no one on Council who discussed it. Mr. Heller said the Council voted to raise the Police Department's budget for 2026 and purchased a new cruiser; he said they are invested in them. He said he is unaware where the rumor came from and it was spread on social media. Mr. Heller said Chief Wenner made the decision to resign. Mr. Heller also thanked the Maintenance Department for their work. As well as the fire departments and the Police department for going out in the cold weather. He also thanked the public for attending.
- E. Mayor Westover thanked the public for attending tonight's meeting. He stated that the information that was spread on social media was not accurate. But he is glad to see people respond and turn out to the meeting in response to the information that was put out. He wanted to give the public an update on what he has been working on. He said he was sworn in on Jan. 5, 2026 and had a meeting the next day with Chief Wenner and asked Chief where he would like to see the department in the next 4 – 5 years. Wenner responded he would like to see six officers and more patrol hours. The Mayor said there was no indication that Chief was going to resign during that meeting. Then at the Mayor's first Council meeting on Jan. 7, 2026, Chief resigned. He said he has been researching since Jan. 7, 2026, the numbers in regards to the Police Department. The cost to the Borough for one officer is approximately \$80,000, which included wages, benefits, and pension, per year. He also reminded the public on the issues he ran for when he was campaigning for the Mayor seat; which included fiscal accountability and economic development of Rt. 8. He also reminded the public that he was constable for over 30 years with 40,000 arrests prior to becoming the Mayor and for anyone to think he is anti – police or against law enforcement is upsetting to him. The Mayor wanted to make it clear that when he

saw the posts on social media about getting rid of the Police department, it upset him. And he understands, with being a grandparent, the importance of having officers at or around the schools. Dave Wilson yelled and interrupted the Mayor asking him what he has done to address the harassment they had advised him of. Mr. Spaid said personnel issues will not be discussed. The Mayor then wanted to present his plans as the Mayor to the Council and the public. He said that he had some requests to have a traffic study done at the intersection of Front Street and Rocky Grove Avenue and see if installing a 4 – way traffic light is an option. He has also been in contact with an individual about having banner displays for local veterans. The Mayor then addressed upgrades to the Police Department's technology and the possibility of adding body cameras. He said more departments are beginning to use them. He will also be implementing a tow rotation policy for police requested tows. He encourages tow companies that are interested to submit a letter of interest to him and send it to the Borough building. The letters should include a list of equipment, GVW rating and towing capabilities. The Mayor stated he will monitor the tow policy for the rest of this year and will then determine if a resolution would be necessary. He also reported that the Police Department currently has three (3) vehicles in rotation, with the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) vehicle coming shortly. He has reached out to Deb Sobina at the ORA to begin the process of applying for any grants available. Chief said they are currently working on an LSA grant for another cruiser. The Mayor then addressed past budgets for the department. He said for 2023 the Police Department budget was \$497,000, with \$75,000 paid to the Police pension, leaving \$422,000 for the budget. In 2024, the budget was \$476,000, with \$5,000 paid to the Police pension, leaving \$471,000 for the budget. In 2025, \$454,000 was budgeted for the Police and the Police pension is fully funding, meaning there was no money due from the Borough to the Police pension. In 2026, the budget was \$471,500 for the Police Department and the Police pension is fully funded for 2026. He said since he was sworn in, he has begun looking at the costs to run the department, get an inventory of equipment and begin to start a rotation for the equipment and vehicles. He said he wants to work with the Council and the Borough Manager with the budget and his plans. For the 2025 Police budget, \$454,000 was budgeted and the final number was approximately \$530,000. The Mayor said he wants to look at the capital expenses, such as cars, radios and computers that are not budgeted. Chief said the computers were an unexpected expense. The Mayor said his goal is to increase the tax base, not increase taxes. He also encouraged the public to contact him with any questions or concerns they may have. Ms. Lowry questioned if there is such a surplus, why does the Council constantly vote to not increase hours, but instead cuts hours. Mayor Westover said this is one of the numbers he is working on now and said the department has been approved for 160 patrol hours per week. He said he understands some weeks are higher and some are lower with hours worked, for example one week in December 2025, there was only 48 out of the 160 hours worked. But he is looking for the overall average for the year and why the department was over budget 206% for regular overtime and 283% for A.G. (Attorney General) overtime. Chief said A.G. is reimbursed. The Mayor said the Borough is still waiting to be reimbursed for A.G. money from last year; in part due to the State budget not being signed until October and the Attorney Generals' office was having computer issues that took some time to correct. He said during that time, some departments chose to suspend their A.G. work until the issue was resolved. He reported the last reimbursement the Borough received was in July 14, 2025. He said the Borough just received another check within the last two weeks for the A.G. reimbursement. He reminded the public that he is about transparency and economic development. He is also a member of the Board at the ORA (Oil Region Alliance) and is working to bring manufacturing and commercial businesses to the Borough.

**X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. Motion by Bogan Goughler, being duly seconded by Larry Baughman to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2026 Council meeting. A roll call was taken. Mr. Carlson opposed the motion. Mr. Goughler, Mr. Heller, Mr. McClelland, and Mr. Baughman voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

**XI. FINANCIAL REPORTS**

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

**XII. OLD BUSINESS**

**XIII. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Larry Baughman wanted to make a note that the Council received the year – end report from the Zoning Officer.

**XIV. CORRESPONDENCE**

**XV. BOARD OF APPEALS**

**XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Council recessed at 9:08 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 10:14 pm.

**XVII. NEW BUSINESS CON'T.**

- A. Motion by Bogan Goughler, being duly seconded by Larry Baughman to accept the verbal resignation of Sugarcreek Borough Police Clerk Lori Braun, effective February 6, 2026. Motion carried unanimously.
- B. Motion by John McClelland, being duly seconded by Larry Baughman to authorize the Borough Manager and the Mayor to proceed with advertising the position of the police clerk. Motion carried unanimously.

**XVIII. ADJOURNMENT**

- A. Motion by Larry Baughman being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to adjourn the meeting at 10:18 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Jim Speth, Borough Manager

Alan Heller, Council President