

WILSON BOROUGH
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA
January 18, 2018

The First Meeting of January 2018 of the Council of The Borough of Wilson was held in the Guy B. Tomaino Public Safety Building at 2040 Hay Terrace, Easton, PA. President Verenna called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call followed.

PRESENT:

Tony Verenna
David Jones
John Burke
Jeffrey Bracken
Russell Lipari

James McGowan
Scott Palinkas
Pamela Taylor (via speaker-phone)
Justin Woodring

ABSENT:

None

Mayor Barrett advised all in attendance that they are being recorded with both video and audio.

Also present were: Fire Chief Joseph Sipel, Police Chief Steven Parkansky, Sergeant Christian Meehan, Solicitor Stanley Margle, Code Officer Paul Corriere and Director of Public Works Gregory Drake.

READING OF THE MINUTES:

Motion by Mr. McGowan to approve the minutes from the December 11, 2017 Council meeting. Second by Mr. Lipari. Council unanimously approved the minutes, with new members Mr. Burke, Mr. Bracken and Mr. Woodring abstaining

Motion by Mr. McGowan to approve the minutes from the January 2, 2018 Reorganization meeting. Second by Mr. Lipari and Council concurred.

GUEST:

None

PRESENTATION OF MATTERS BY RESIDENTS AND TAXPAYERS:

None

COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS:

Ms. Garcia read an email from Ms. Liz Deemer a representative of Wilson Girl Scouts and Daisies. Ms. Deemer requested Council's permission to set up a cookie sale booth at the steps to Meuser Park. Sales will be mostly on the weekends, during daylight hours from January 18th through March 11th. Motion by Mr. Lipari to allow use of Meuser Park for the Girl Scout cookie sale. Second by Mr. Burke. Council unanimously agreed.

Ms. Garcia informed Council that she had received a letter from Ms. Sally Hixson requesting that Council appoint her to another three year term on the Mary Meuser Memorial Library Board. Motion by Mr. Lipari to appoint Ms. Hixson to the Library Board. Second by Mr. Jones. Council concurred.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT:

Mr. Verenna advised Council that they now had their committee appointments in front of them and can begin to meet. By the next meeting, the committees should have reports for Council when appropriate.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR:

Mayor Barrett requested use of Meuser Park on June 15th and 16th for the 2018 Warrior Weekend. Motion by Mr. Jones to approve use of the park with fees waived. Second by Mr. Lipari and Council unanimously agreed.

Mayor Barrett advised Council that he would like to bring some community spirit to the Borough Hall. He will be hanging certificates and pictures of Warriors of the month in the Borough's entrance way. This will honor kids in such areas as academics, arts and sports. He also would like to try Mayor for a day with kids to get them interested in local government.

Mr. Lipari shared with Council and the public that the Wilson Girls Field Hockey had been invited to New York City to do a commercial for Dick's Sporting Goods. The girls had a great time and will let everyone know when the commercial will air.

Mr. Barrett asked Ms. Garcia when new calendars from Waste Management will be issued. Ms. Garcia has been in contact and has requested the calendars. When they arrive they will be in Borough Hall for anyone who would like one. It will also be available on the Borough web-site.

Mayor Barrett asked Ms. Dorothy Klass to speak regarding concerns he heard about tax payments. Ms. Klass said that the new tax laws for 2018, which put a cap on deducting property taxes, will not impact any Borough residents. Some residents wanted to prepay their 2018 taxes, but Ms. Klass did not have bills and could not take those payments. Also there was confusion regarding payments in the lock box. As long as a payment is in the box on the day it is due, that payment will be considered on time by Ms. Klass.

Mayor Barrett said he has found his first two weeks of being Mayor to be overwhelming. He has been doing lots of reading and research and shared his findings and ideas with Council.

1. The Mayor said he has visited the Police Department and met with Chief Parkansky. They are in desperate need of cars, computers and a new station. Mayor Barrett recommended Council begin the eminent domain process so the Borough can take the old blighted bank building at Meuser Park and use it for a new Police Station. The Mayor said with crime going up in the Borough, Council must act to get the Police Department what they need.
2. Mayor Barrett said he is concerned with the audits and budgets from the last few years and the noted serious deficiencies. He said the office, code and the police department are all overwhelmed and recommended Council open the budget to get these departments what they need to have as opposed to the nice to haves.
3. The Mayor also commented on the Borough's over 1,600 rentals and 800 landlords. Mr. Corriere and Mr. Wamsley work hard to keep up with the code processes for these properties. Mayor Barrett would like to see the codes department get the help it needs, become streamlined and hold landlords accountable.
4. Mayor Barrett said he has been reading the code regarding committee meetings. He feels they need to be open to the public and have minutes kept. The Mayor said not doing so gives the impression that things are being hidden. Solicitor Margle advised Council that there is no appellate decision or clear direction under state law as to whether committee meetings are subject to the sunshine law. The decision is currently up to Council with the advice of the Solicitor. Mr. Margle suggested Council decide how it would like to have committee meetings run. Mr. Lipari noted that the Mayor's words "hide behind" are inflammatory and he took offense to the suggestion. Mr. Margle said this is an important decision and will be binding on all committees. Council needs to consider the ramifications of any decision. Mr. Lipari suggested tabling the discussion until February. Council agreed.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE BOROUGH MANAGER:

Ms. Garcia advised Council that they all had a packet from the grant writer at T & M of all the upcoming grant possibilities for the Borough. Also contained in the packet was a list of all grants that had been secured by T & M for the Borough. Ms. Garcia asked Council to take a look at the information and respond back to her or T & M if there is any interest.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES:

GENERAL GOVERNMENT:

None

POLICE:

Chief Parkansky spoke about the nuisance bar, Spanky's East and the recent incident that occurred. He has been in touch with the DA's office and the LCE and has begun the process to remedy this nuisance.

FIRE:

Chief Sipel advised Council of the retirement of Fire Fighter Charles Wacik. Mr. Wacik was a Fire Fighter with the Borough for 46 years and Chief Sipel thanked him for his service.

Chief Sipel requested Council's permission to re-hire Derek Gibson as a part-time fire fighter. Mr. Gibson had moved out of the area, but has returned. He is an EMT with Suburban. Motion by Mr. Lipari to re-hire Mr. Gibson. Second by Mr. Jones and Council concurred.

PUBLIC WORKS:

Mr. Drake told Council that the Borough has applied for \$150,000 in CDBG funds and is also attempting to obtain a new leaf loader through a recycling grant. T & M is assisting.

Mr. Drake is working on placement of the Billboard with LAMAR. Solicitor Margle will need to speak with the solicitor for Easton Suburban Water Authority to draw up a lease for the property. Removal of trees can begin once the lease is approved and signed.

The Borough has five AEDs that are currently obsolete and Mr. Drake will be working to replace them.

Mr. Drake requested a caucus for personnel matters.

PARKS AND RECREATION:

None

ATTORNEY:

Solicitor Margle readdressed the issue of limiting public comment. The law is clear and allows for limitations to be placed. Mr. Palinkas said he doesn't feel the public should be limited and that it should be up to the President to set the policy for each incident. Council decided no action would be taken at this time.

Mr. Margle reported that he had been made aware that the recent elections of President and Vice President may have not been done properly. The Wilson Borough Code says that this election should be done by secret ballot. No action was taken and the Solicitor will research.

COG:

None

MECAB:

None

CAUCUS:

Council entered into Caucus at 7:43 pm and exited at 8:18 pm. Personnel matters were discussed as allowed by the Sunshine Act Section 708 A-1.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Palinkas addressed Council regarding the appointment of Mr. Lipari to the Library Board of Trustees. He said that since Mr. Lipari was appointed on November 27th he should not have been able to make a motion to spend \$1,400 on the Library's roof repairs. Solicitor Margle asked when Mr. Lipari actually took his seat on the Board. Mr. Lipari said the position started on January 1, 2018. Mr. Margle said the motion was appropriate at the time it was made. As of January 1, 2018 Mr. Lipari cannot vote on matters that concern Library funding.

Mr. Palinkas said the Borough needs to have more open meetings and the public feels that too much is going on behind closed doors. He said the law should be followed as to not have potential suits. Solicitor Margle explained the law is not clear and it does not say if meetings must be open or closed. This is a decision that must be made by Council with the Solicitors input.

Mr. Palinkas questioned Mr. Verenna on how the committee chairs were chosen. Mr. Margle said the way it normally operates is the President of Council appoints the committee and the Chairman. When the committee meets, they can reappoint another Chair if they would like.

Mr. Palinkas said he would like to reopen the budget so that computers can be obtained for the Police Department and also so the new Council people can examine it. Mr. Margle explained that this request needs to come from one of the new Council people. Once the budget is reopened all Council people can participate in the discussion and amendments must be made by a majority. This must be completed by February 15, 2018. Mr. Burke made a request to reopen the 2018 budget. Mr. Verenna noted the tax bills have been printed and are ready to be mailed. Mr. Palinkas said the change in the Chief's salary line item could pay for the police computers.

ORDINANCES:

None

RESOLUTIONS:

None

BILLS AND ACCOUNTS:

Bills of \$109,172.11 were paid on a Motion by Mr. Lipari. Second by Mr. Burke. The bills were paid by a unanimous vote of Council.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Burke made a Motion to adjourn at 8:35 pm. Second by Mr. Woodring and Council concurred.

JILL A. GARCIA
BOROUGH MANAGER