

August 2, 2021

A regular meeting of Lehighton Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Monday, August 2, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 7 PM by President Grant Hunsicker. Members in attendance were: Councilors Lisa Perry, Donnie Rehrig, Ryan Saunders, Autumn Abelovsky, Joe Flickinger and Darryl Arner.

Officials in attendance were: Borough Manager Nicole Beckett, Borough Secretary Brenda Kreitz, Solicitor James Nanovic, Borough Engineer Bruce Steigerwalt, Fire Chief Patrick Mriss, Mayor Clark Ritter, Light & Power Supervisor Lonny Armbruster, and Public Works Supervisor Kris Kunkle. Absent: Police Chief Brian Biechy. Late: Recreation Director Tom Evans.

Pledge of Allegiance

HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT

David Wargo from the Summit Hill Borough Council spoke about Fair Funding for Public Schools and asked council to adopt the resolution he provided back in June.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of July 12, 2021

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Discussion on traffic control for future events

Councilor Saunders provided minutes from a meeting he had with the Mayor and Chief Biechy and a secondary meeting with the fire police of which there are only two. They have made some recommendations to amend/revamp the permit application process for holding events within the borough. They hope to include the police services contract in the new permit. The entity hosting the event will be responsible for paying the associated cost of having the police in place at their event. He is hoping to have it in place for 2022.

Councilor Flickinger questioned borough council deciding the number of officers and the number of hours they are required for each event. He felt this was better left for the police chief to decide.

Councilor Abelovsky asked if there would be a rate for the fire police as well as the officers and was told there would only be a rate for police officers. She then asked if there would be a guideline on

what types of events would require police services. Council discussed this and suggested that any event requiring a road closure or traffic control, or maybe a park being closed and they also felt the police chief should make the decision on how many officers are needed.

Follow up on the Community Project list

Nicole provided a memo to council from the June meeting where council requested a community project list to be placed on the website or social media to get the public's interest in projects.

She spoke to the Recreation Director and the Public Works Superintendent on some of our projects and brainstormed some of our other needs. The top suggestions were to join a volunteer board or commission, become a D&L Trail tender, water the downtown flower barrels, participate in or host community cleanups, adopt a planter and the Grove Stencil Project were discussed. Nicole said if council is on board with the projects mentioned she will get them publicized. She will do a news release on the website and get them out on social media and it can be put in the next newsletter.

Councilor Abelovksy asked who the point of contact would be. Nicoel said for right now it would be herself but it also could be Brenda or some other office staff could handle it.

Consideration on the request to hold the 2021 Halloween Parade on Saturday, October 2nd with a rain date of October 3rd

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

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to authorize Public Work's to remove excessive growth at property located at 136 North 2nd Street

Nicole said this has been done in the past. Code Enforcement has been through the required processes. She did have a chance to speak to the property owner today and he is willing to pay the cost for us to clean things up and will do what he can to keep it from happening again. Nicole also said there is still \$250 outstanding but he is making payments on the citation from 2019.

Councilors Saunders/Flickinger made the motions to approve and bill the property owner for the cleanup and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Consideration on the purchase of a new meter tester in the amount of \$12,689 for the Light & Power Department

Lonny said the meter testing he is currently using runs on the XP platform and needs to be upgraded.

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

Discussion on the projects for the 2021 Local Share Account Grant Application

Nicole said this is a no match grant application. Councilor Saunders asked if cameras for the upper and lower parks would be a good submission. Nicole said yes. Councilor Perry suggested playground equipment to replace what was damaged. Councilor Abelovsky said she is against purchasing new equipment until we can stop the issues at the Grove or at least have cameras installed. Nicole said Tom said he has been receiving complaints about the Grove not having equipment there. Nicole told him she can't see spending \$40,000 or \$50,000 out there knowing what is happening out there. There will be funds left over from the Iron Street project through CDBG and that will be able to be spent on playground equipment.

Nicole said part of the problem when we did this before was that all the cameras were to link to the police station for monitoring and there were issues connecting them due to logistics. If we are looking to have the cameras sustained in each location i.e., for the Grove the cameras would be linked to the Rec Center, the upper and lower parks would be linked to borough hall it might be more feasible to do.

Councilor Saunders thought this was a good way to go because of how the technology is today and was in favor of applying for funding for cameras in the upper and lower parks and possibly the Grove.

Nicole will get proposals, talk to the grant writer and bring the information back to council prior to applying for the grant.

Motion to approve Resolution R12-2021 establishing the current base purchase power cost

Nicole said at this rate the PPAC will be flat and we will continue to monitor it monthly.

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

Discussion on the Bid Opening for Sgt. Stanley Hoffman Boulevard Parking Lot

Nicole said no bids were received for the second round of bidding. At this point it can be open for future discussions as to how we want to proceed.

Consideration on the LDI request to hold Rocktoberfest in the Upper and Lower Parks from October 15th through October 17th with additional details to follow

Councilors Flickinger/Perry made the motions to approve the request pending no change to the public health directives from the State and/or the Feds and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Consideration on the approval of the permit for the consumption and/or possession of alcoholic beverages for the Rocktoberfest event

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

Approval of the annual per capita contribution payment un the amount of \$1,100 to the Lehigh Canal Recreation Commission

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

Motion to award the Substation Transformer Replacement Project to Virginia Transformer in the amount of \$619,642

Detailed information was provided by Utility Engineers.

Councilors Flickinger/Saunders made the motions to award and all were in favor with no question or objections.

Officials Reports

President of Council – Nothing.

Borough Manager – Nicole said the ARPA funds in the amount of \$278,043 were received. The Iron Street project is being closed out and the Bypass project has started.

Borough Engineer – Bruce said he is waiting for a final statement to close out the Iron Street project. The Bypass project will be 50% complete tomorrow. The North end patching is complete and they are now working at the South end. Bruce commented that he does not know how successful the Bypass Calming project is going to be as evidenced by the lane changes going on right now. Getting everyone into one lane while the other lane is being worked on does not slow traffic down at all. The only thing that might slow people down on the bypass is a large police presence. They fly by while the

guys are working. There are flaggers there to stop traffic every so often while concrete is poured. The concrete is being poured on an incline making it difficult. Nicole agreed stating the speed is horrendous down there and something needs to be done. She travels the bypass regularly and she sees how people use the lanes as if they are passing lanes. Bruce doesn't know how the calming device will keep people moving across at North Main Lane by the Trailhead safe. They just sail by and once they get past the actual work zone you can hear them punch it. Nicole suggested more police presence. Bruce suggested a police car with a dummy in it.

Councilor Rehrig said he was going to suggest if a vehicle is available even with no one sitting in it like they do on highway projects it might help till the project is finished before someone gets hurt. Bruce said it's not even the project; it is all the time. Councilor Rehrig agreed and understands we can't have a car sitting there all the time but if it's there for short periods it might help people to think.

Bruce saw a letter from Robert Walsh, the engineer for the Elementary project, saying that PennDOT no longer requires a signal at 9th & Bridge Streets. Bruce asked if the borough received any correspondence to that affect. If that is not the case, we still have an open project there with the St. Luke's facility to finish the curb and sidewalk at 9th & Bridge. That was left go and we are still holding some money for that due to a handicapped ramp needing to be installed there. At the time we put that part of the project on hold due to the proposed signal going there. The borough needs to find out from PennDOT if a signal isn't going to be put in so that we can get the other project closed out.

Bruce told everyone that this coming Monday will start his 43rd year with the borough.

Solicitor - Nothing.

Treasurer – Motion to approve additional bills

Mayor – He said the South 2nd Street Neighborhood Watch is functioning again. He has had 2 meetings with them and they got their ideas together and are meeting on their own. The mayor is working on one for the Community Grove area but the problem is getting volunteers.

Councilor Rehrig said it needs to be advertised a lot more. Meet with the newspaper and get an article in the paper that we are

starting a Crime Watch. We need to get the word out that we are interested in our community and need volunteers. The more publicized we make this Councilor Rehrig feels the better chance we will have in getting volunteers.

Councilor Abelovsky said with everything going on around the borough there has been a lot of chatter on social media. She has noticed people have been talking about neighborhood watches and things. Autumn said if the mayor could get word out to the public there might be a better response since there seems to be a push for people wanting to start to volunteer.

Police – Absent.

Fire Chief – Their Strategic Planning meeting will be held at 9 a.m. on Saturday, August 28th at the station. He invited council to attend.

Light & Power Superintendent – Lonny said he received the fit out for their chipper dump truck. It works great!

The transformer project is going to cause some property damage. He spoke to Mr. Goldberg, the neighbor, who is very nice and he understands the issue of access to our property. He doesn't care if we have to drive into his yard but does ask that we repair any damage to his property. Lonny asked the solicitor how he is making out with the property acquisition and was told he has gotten nowhere. Jim said he had written a letter in late June and heard nothing back since. Nicole said the first transformer will not need an access but the second one will.

Lonny said we had an outage last week and we searched our arena and couldn't find a thing. In his searching today, he did find a lot of carbon arching on the new wire the contractor is stringing in on 443. Lonny has a meeting scheduled with the contractor for tomorrow and he will see if they come clean or not. We can throw them off the project for doing that to our system. They also have 60-foot poles installed on 443 and his bucket trucks can only reach 47 feet. Keep that in mind because we are probably going to need bigger trucks. They needed the extra height to get across the bridge. The other problem we have poles sitting 10-12 feet behind the guiderails and to reach them from the street is going to be impossible with a short boom.

Public Works Supervisor – Kris thanked Light & Power and the Water Authority for a few projects they assisted his department with. They

are spending a lot of time on the D&L Trail cleaning up brush and fallen trees.

Recreation Director – Nothing.

Committee Reports

Finance and Administration – Lisa Perry, Chair; Joe Flickinger, Co-Chair – nothing.

Economic Development, Buildings and Codes – Joe Flickinger, Chair; Donnie Rehrig, Co-Chair – Joe reminded everyone that through the Chamber and the Pocono Visitors Bureau they will be hosting “Clean up the Pocono’s Day” September 25th from 9:30am until 12:30pm.

Last week it was pointed out to Councilor Rehrig and himself that the roof at Fire Station #1 is lifting a little and stone is cracking in the area of the chimney and it seems to all be related. Nicole said the roof inspections were completed yesterday. The reports will be back before the next council meeting.

Kris said the roof on borough hall has a lot of build up again too.

Police, Fire and Safety – Ryan Saunders, Chair; Autumn Abelovsky, Co-Chair – nothing.

Light & Power Committee – Autumn Abelovsky, Chair; Lisa Perry, Co-Chair – Autumn thanked L&P for getting everyone through the very short power outage and the extra work for cleaning up the park fountain.

Sewer Committee – Donnie Rehrig, Chair; Darryl Arner, Co-Chair – nothing.

Streets, Public Works & Recreation – Darryl Arner, Chair; Ryan Saunders, Co-Chair – nothing.

Library Board – nothing.

Parks & Recreation Board – nothing.

School Board – Autumn said everyone saw the last email on the outstanding items for the Elementary Center project. She knows Nicole was in touch with a school board member and the superintendent trying to get this all finished. Autumn said there was something with the fire lane. She believes something was sent to the Fire Chief and he took trucks out there to access the building.

Patrick said he commented to Mr. Walsh on that and has received an email with the new mark ups for signage down there.

Patrick has not had time to review it yet as he just came back from vacation.

Autumn attended the school board meeting last month and expressed the borough's concerns and basically said council is concerned with letting the school open for the next school year with this not being a completed project. Our next council meeting will be September 13th due to the Labor Day holiday and school will start on September 7th. Nicole said Solicitor Nanovic has been working with her on this and the letter that was sent did not mention the school not being allowed to open but the fees being assessed under the SALDO.

Canal Commission – nothing.

Acceptance of Officials Reports

Councilors Saunders/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

Plus, additional bills totaling \$12,360.42.

Councilors Arner/Abelovsky made the motions to approve the accounts payable, and additional bills and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to go into Executive Session for Personnel and Real Estate

Councilors Abelovsky/Saunders made the motions to go into executive session at 8:05pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to go back into Regular Session

Councilors Flickinger/Saunders made the motion to go back in at 8:42pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Action on Items from Executive Session

None.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

Councilors Flickinger/Arner made the motions to adjourn the meeting at 8:43pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections. Meeting adjourned.

Brenda L. Kreitz
Borough Secretary