

April 3, 2023

The regular meeting of Lehighton Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Monday, April 3, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7 PM by President Grant Hunsicker. Members in attendance were: Lisa Perry, Autumn Abelovsky, Ryan Saunders and Rebecca Worthy, Darryl Arner and Donnie Rehrig,

Officials in attendance were: Borough Manager Steve Travers, Borough Secretary Brenda Kreitz, Solicitor James Nanovic, Borough Engineer Vanessa Nedrick, Police Chief Joe Sparich, Mayor Clark Ritter, L&P Superintendent Lonny Armbruster, Recreation Director Tom Evans and Public Works Supervisor Kris Kunkle. Absent: Fire Chief Patrick Mriss.

Pledge of Allegiance

Guest Speaker: Bambi Elsasser – Lehighton Main Street Manager – Updates on the Lehighton Downtown Partnership

Bambi said she will be applying for 2–3 grants over the next few weeks. She is hoping the guys will be able to get down and start cleaning out around the caboose now that the weather is nicer. She did get a grant for the landscaping that will be happening in fall. They did receive their 2nd bench and will start collecting plastic again in the next few weeks. Kilts on Wheels was a huge success. Wine–on the River is moving along but volunteers are greatly needed.

Bambi said the farmers would like to move the market down to the bypass across from the Welfare office starting May 14, 2023. Council did not feel it would be a good idea to have it in that area. They suggested using the area up near the caboose and pavilion instead as that is the recreational area of the Trailhead anyway.

Councilors Saunders/Rehrig made the motions to move the Farmer's Market to the Trailhead and all were in favor.

Bambi said they will hold a few more events in the downtown now that the farmer's market won't be in the park.

Guest Speaker: Midge Hosier – Save Carbon County Group – Presentation of approving resolution against sewage sludge application

Roy Christman, 6495 Pohopoco Drive was present to speak in Ms. Hosier's place about sewage sludge going into the watershed. He was asking all municipalities to pass a resolution that would allow the municipality to regulate sewage sludge.

Linda Christman, President of Save Carbon County spoke next. She said if they can get the support of Carbon County, they will go to Harrisburg to get the law changed. The group is wanting to have the law go back to the Right–to–Farm Act.

Councilor Rehrig said he spoke to Solicitor Nanovic before the meeting to discuss the resolution provided by the group. The solicitor suggested removing some wording as he cannot verify it and suggested proposed changes should council wish to adopt a resolution on this issue.

HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of March 6, 2023

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Continued discussion on draft Horse-Drawn Carriage Ordinance

Councilors Abelovsky/Saunders made the motions to advertise the ordinance and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

NEW BUSINESS

Consideration on appointment of Junior Councilor

Councilors Abelovsky/Worthy made the motions to appoint Adam Sebelin as a Junior Councilor and all were in favor with no objections.

Adam was present at the meeting and was seated at the table after being appointed.

Motion to approve \$250 yearly donation to the United Veteran's Organization

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

Consideration on request from Bowmanstown Borough to rent street sweeper April 6th & 7th or any other Thursday/Friday combination

Councilors Saunders/Rehrig made the motions to deny the request due to the poor condition of our sweeper and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Kris said he provided the borough manager with quotes on some new and used street sweepers for whenever he would have the answers.

Consideration on donation to Class of 2023 All-Night Party

Councilor Rehrig suggested any council person wanting to donate money to the party should give it to the borough secretary who will see the party committee receives the donation.

Discussion on renewing \$10,000 contribution for the Main Street Manager salary for 2023

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

Autumn asked for an end of year report of all she has done for the previous year.

Consideration on request from Tom Evans to increase pool staff wages

Councilors Abelovsky/Worthy made the motions to approve the request and all were in favor with no question or objections. Councilor Abelovsky asked if there was money budgeted for this and Tom said he has \$15,000 for a helper that he never used.

Approval of Baer Memorial Pool employee list for 2023 season

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

Consideration on purchase of 8 gift card/\$40 each for Administrative Professionals Day

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

Consideration on request to hire Christopher Belles as a part-time police officer pending passing the preemployment screening process

Councilors Saunders/Rehrig made the motions to approve the request and all were in favor with objections. Councilor Abelovsky had a question – what is the rate of pay? Councilor Saunders thought the solicitor came up with \$25/hour. The solicitor deferred to the borough secretary who had questioned him on this earlier in the week. Brenda commented on the memo the treasurer provided due to her not being able to come up with the numbers provided by Chief Sparich. Cathy provided \$26.71 as 72% of our full-time officer salary. There is nothing in the salary resolution for 2023 for part-time police officers.

Councilors Saunders/Perry made the motions to add part-time rate of pay for police officer to the current salary resolution as stated in past salary resolutions and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Officials Reports

President of Council

Nothing.

Borough Manager

Steve said he emailed council his weekly report and if anyone has questions, they should reach out to him.

Borough Engineer – Active Projects and Task Report

Vanessa said she had a few updates for council. She said they have been working on grant applications. They did make a submission to CCMA for the Chapter 94 report so it could be included in their report.

There are a lot of grant opportunities out there and she has been making the manager aware of them as they come out. She has been providing detailed memos to council to make them aware of the grant opportunities. Some have a match requirement and some do not. The third quarter of the year should tell if the borough has been awarded any of the ones applied for.

Solicitor

Nothing.

Treasurer

Approval of additional bills and transfer

Mayor

Mayor read the Arbor Day Proclamation

Police

Chief Sparich thanked council for hiring of Mr. Belles. He just learned about a grant this afternoon that they received a grant through Suzanne Wilds office.

Councilor Abelovsky said she is a little confused on whose responsibility it is to apply for grants for the police department. Is it part of the chief's position? Autumn was just made aware recently that Remington & Vernick have applied for grants for the police department for body cameras and computer equipment. The chief has applied for some and Remington & Vernick has assisted in applying as well. The borough manager said we use Remington &

Vernick to assist us with the grants. When the chief brought up the body camera grants, he reached out to Remington & Vernick for assistance. Autumn said it was a surprise to her about this as last time body cameras were applied for it was done in house.

Councilor Perry said for the most part Nicole had applied for most of the grants herself and she would assist the chief in applying for grants also. Nicole would sometimes use an outside grant writer depending on the type of grant itself like the bypass project. Autumn said that would be an engineering project so that would make sense but Chief Biechy did most of his grants himself for his department. Autumn told Chief Sparich that she feels he has the skills to do his own grants and the background to do some of the grant writing and she is trying to save money. Chief Sparich said he wasn't aware of the cost. Councilor Saunders said it is costly as the bills show with no guarantee of getting the grant. Doing it in house without using an outside agency for that type of funding makes more sense. Councilor Saunders said the same to the borough manager who in papers provided to council said he was able to do grant writing.

The manager said there are a lot of grants out right now and some are due in 2 weeks so he is just trying to get them out to get money back to the borough.

Fire Chief

Absent due to training class.

Light & Power Superintendent

Lonny said the delivery of the new transformer has been pushed back to April 20th. After all the scrambling to get everything ready for the March date complete, we are now down to one transformer until the end of April. Lonny did have the pleasure of speaking to the national manager from the Virginia Transformer Company. Lonny did voice his displeasure of not being notified prior to not meeting the target date. The manager promised Lonny that it will arrive on April 20th which is a Thursday and Lonny asked if his company is willing to work through the weekend but received no answer. If Lonny's department is going to pay over time due to setting up the transformer, he intends to go after Virginia Transformer for reimbursement.

Public Works Supervisor

Kris said pending L&P's availability the week of the 20th Play world promised to be here the week of the 17th and layout the play area requiring Lonny to drill some holes for the equipment or Public Works will have to rent equipment to do it.

Kris has also been getting complaints about the condition of our streets. Kris said the price of cold patch is double the price of hot patch but that doesn't start to be made until around April 15.

Recreation Director

Nothing.

Committee Reports –

Finance and Administration – Lisa Perry, Chair; Rebecca Worthy, Co-Chair – Lisa said she and Grant met with the borough manager last Wednesday to discuss the total cost of what the new engineering firm and DRC fees are. The costs are higher than we are used to. She asked

Steve to look at other companies when contract renewals come up to see if we can find cheaper companies. Autumn asked if we are able to pay the bills as of right now. President Hunsicker said yes or we wouldn't be paying them. Autumn asked if we are able to move forward with any engineering projects and was told no by Lisa and Grant. The allotment for engineering has pretty much been used. Lisa felt the only one not used yet was the sewer and Grant said we just paid Bruce \$3,500 for something. Autumn said she is not a money person and Steve having it in his head where the money is coming from isn't clear to her. When she sees engineering fees of \$72, 692 in bills for last month and this month with only \$40,000 budgeted she gets scared. Ryan said year to date we are at \$52,136 for 3 months and we can't keep running up IT bills either. Steve said things will come up with both line items but his recommendation to move forward is to move money from somewhere else to raise the amount we are spending to come back before council and say this is what we are going to have to take away from this line item and put it here to make things work. Ryan asked if we had any IT issues? The initial contract was 200 hours for \$25,000. Steve said when they got into it there was a lot. Ryan said if in 3 months we have burned through 200 hours that equates to 25 8-hour days. Lisa said the contract started in October 2022. Steve is looking at IT with DRC. The thought is separate contracts for each department. Steve said we had no threats but could have. Autumn said her concern is that if we have to start taking from other line items now, she doesn't want to have to take something necessary from another department. Autumn told Vanessa she and her firm are doing a phenomenal job and council is partially to blame because when projects are brought to them, they get excited and do not look at the full ramifications of them. Vanessa said she will provide proposals for possible projects going forward. She does understand council's concerns about the engineering. She thinks by hiring us they can do a lot more but does not want to take advantage of the borough. Moving forward she will, for the sake of transparency, provide information on any ideas Steve has and she will put in her engineer's report for council to deliberate on before taking action to make an informed decision. Her firm has an 85% success rate of procuring grants.

Economic Development, Buildings and Codes – Autumn Abelovsky, Chair; Darryl

Arner, Co-Chair – Autumn said Steve has met with Tim and Tyler and are working on the rental inspection program. She said the flower tent is having a ribbon cutting and it would be nice to have members of council there to support them.

Police, Fire and Safety – Donnie Rehrig, Chair; Lisa Perry, Co-Chair – nothing.

Light & Power Committee – Rebecca Worthy, Chair; Ryan Saunders, Co-Chair

Nothing.

Sewer Committee – Darryl Arner, Chair; Autumn Abelovsky, Co-Chair – nothing.

Streets, Public Works & Recreation – Ryan Saunders, Chair; Donnie Rehrig, Co-

Chair – Ryan said he met with Steve and a few members of Public Works for a sewer camera demonstration. They will be getting a quote for that for next month's meeting.

Library Board – Rebecca had nothing.

Parks & Recreation Board – Autumn – Autumn asked Steve if any progress was made with getting the fountain lights. The gentlemen will be getting a quote to him soon. Autumn said a new wreath is being designed for borough hall. Parks & Rec would like to buy banners for the light posts in the park similar to the hometown hero banners. The library received the story walk board grant. We will be working with them and 4 boards will be for the borough and Parks & Rec. the other 20 will be for the library. She received a letter from a woman concerned about the sidewalks and would like the borough to look into a walking trail at Baer Memorial. 4 Music in the Park events have been booked from June–September.

Canal Commission – Ryan – Ryan said they finally had a meeting since winter. They have received about \$500,000 in grant money for overflows. A historical marker is being looked at for the canal in Weissport. They are also looking into restoring the lock tender's house.

Acceptance of Officials Reports

Councilors Arner/Saunders 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, additional bills totaling \$22,850.22 and \$300,000 transfer

Councilors Perry/Saunders made the motions to accept the accounts payable plus additional bills and transfer and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to go into Executive Session

None needed.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

Councilors Rehrig/Saunders made the motions to adjourn the meeting at 8:21pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections. Meeting adjourned.

Brenda L. Kreitz
Borough Secretary