

October 2, 2023

The regular meeting of Lehighton Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Monday, October 2, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7 PM by President Grant Hunsicker. Members in attendance were: Lisa Perry, Autumn Abelovsky, Ryan Saunders, Rebecca Worthy and Donnie Rehrig.

Officials in attendance were: Borough Manager Dane DeWire, Solicitor James Nanovic, Mayor Clark Ritter, Cpl. Bruce Broyles, Fire Chief Patrick Mriss, and Public Works Supervisor Kris Kunkle. Absent: Councilor Darryl Arner, Borough Secretary Brenda Kreitz, Borough Engineer Vanessa Nedrick, Light & Power Superintendent Lonny Armbruster and Recreation Director Tom Evans.

Guest Speaker : Police Chiefs Tim Kromer and Joseph Schatz – Civil Service Consortium

The Chiefs feel pooling resources will help draw a larger pool of candidates for hire. There is also a cost savings to each municipality for testing. The Sheriff's Department would do the physical agility test on all applicants. \$50 per applicant should be enough to cover the testing costs. All requirements would be listed on the website and apply accordingly to the department they qualify for.

Councilor Saunders asked what would happen with the borough's current list and was told it would stay active until it expires. Once the Consortium is formed these questions will be addressed. We are hoping to test annually. We are still figuring out the best process and will gladly answer any other questions council might have as they come up.

HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT

Ms. Bella Sundre addressed council but would not provide an address because of problems not being addressed by the police. She said there is a pedophile that goes all over Weissport and the Lehighton Parks targeting 12 year old girls. She was a witness to it in Weissport and the cops never came. This person is also a rapist, on Megan's List and is still allowed in all these parks. Also, when will the police take care of the victims instead of taking care of the dealers, drug addicts, mentally/criminally insane and the alcoholics? She got thrown out of the parks because she was there with her dogs in the stroller on a blanket with 2 bags of groceries. It is a disgrace. We have no protection. We have tent city with a guy cooking meth. There are aquariums buried in the ground. A man named Brian who lives in a camper carries a piece involved when Fegley got robbed. This person's girlfriend accuses her and her friend of being drug dealers. The police say they can't do anything. She was told her dogs were not allowed on the picnic tables at the trailhead. They are her service dogs. We need protection. Tent City needs to be closed down.

Another woman, who is a home owner and she also deaf said she is uncomfortable in her own home. She doesn't feel safe and wants more to be done to make things safer. She feels she should have the right to go in a police station and have someone help her. She will be at every meeting until things change.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of September 11, 2023

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Motion to approve new Quote from Call2Haul for \$3,250 – \$4,500—to clean up Nace property

The Borough Manager said this is the same company who provided a quote 2 years ago. The price did not change based on the photos provided to them but the company did say it could change once they go in if they find things not in the photos. Dane said in the quote there is something written about selling things. Dane assured council that anything of value will not be taken as it is not junk.

Councilor Perry asked if there is a fee if the company shows up and the property is cleaned up like happened last time. Dane said he would have to look into that. He would imagine there is a no-show fee but doesn't think it will be for the full amount of the quote. Councilor Rehrig said he would rather plan to have it done next year and budget for it as we will probably never see the money. Councilor Saunders was comfortable budgeting for it in the upcoming budget and having the process completed by the end of the 1st quarter of 2024 and council agreed.

Continued discussion on moving forward with the LERTA Ordinance – Ordinance 669–2023

Councilor Abelovsky said this was tabled at the last meeting so we had time to do more research into it. Mr. Blocker had brought up some concerns. She is advocating against it. Autumn reminded council about Mr. Blocker's comment on the taxpayers having to take on the responsibility of the tax increase until it was paid off. The initial abatement is still being paid. The only thing being deferred is the increase in the tax assessment and Councilor Saunders agreed.

Councilor Saunders is willing to spearhead a committee to research and formulate a plan and put together a LERTA District proposal for council. Councilor Abelovsky said she would be willing to be on the committee.

The gentleman from Leighton Ford said a lot of residents have commented to him that their understanding of the LERTA District is that Leighton Ford's taxes will be reduced 90% in year 1 and that is not the case. Their taxes do not change and is asking for that to be made very clear to everyone.

Continued discussion on the draft amendment to Smoking Ordinance

The solicitor said he was supposed to draft something but didn't have a chance to yet. It's a matter of just adding the Trailhead to Section 186. If council wishes, he can add it, advertise it and have it ready for adoption at the next meeting and council approved him doing so.

Continued discussion on changes to Sewer Ordinance amendment to include Fat, Oil & Grease accumulation

The solicitor said Dane reached out to the Mahoning Township and they sent their to us but we just received it today. He suggested council read over it and discuss at the next

meeting. Dane said he read over it and gave council a brief overview of what is being asked for. Council requested this be brought back next month.

Continued discussion on the draft Zoning Application Fee Schedule

Dane said he received something from Tyler late last week. Dane looked at the new schedule vs. the old schedule and it basically is only adding a non-refundable fee – both for residential \$25 and commercial \$50 – that would come off their bill if they go through with the project. Like we discussed, it will deter them from bugging Tyler for answers, especially people from out of the area and if it is someone not fully invested in a project be a deterrent from there. That being said, Tyler also suggested raising his fees. Everything went up by \$5 or \$10 except for new construction going up \$50.

Councilor Saunders said he has already had people come to him about our fees and he would hate to raise them any higher. It is absurd now. If you want to deter people from doing anything now this will do it. Councilor Rehrig agreed. Councilor Abelosky asked why the fee schedule was not provided in packets. Dane said Tyler had just given it to him and he didn't have time to review it but will see that council gets it. Autumn wanted to know if someone calls to ask a question are they going to be told they need to fill out an application first? The borough manager said no but the solicitor said yes. Solicitor Nanovic said a lot of municipalities do this and you must fill out the application and pay the fee. The problem you have is that you have a person call asking if they can sell tires on their property and it will take Tyler some time to see if they can. Council requested this item come back for more discussion

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to the Annual Snowflake 5K to be held on December 9, 2023

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

Motion to appoint Tina Henninger and Lisa Kishbaugh to the Parks & Recreation Board

Councilors Saunders/Worthy made the motions to appoint and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to award Road Materials & Aggregate Bids as presented (in yellow)

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

Motion to adopt Resolution R20-2023 State Aid

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

Motion to approve 18th Annual Pink Light Walk October 3, 2023

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

Discussion on proposals provided for Park Cameras

The borough manager said this one is tricky because it started by him reaching out to the provider from 2 years ago. That led down a rabbit hole. The same guy came back, looked at everything, said you're going to have a similar product but it will have to be dialed back because of 2 years of inflation. Dane asked the guy to rework the proposal but at the same

time the borough manager was approached by another gentleman who wanted to put in a proposal which you have from Integrated Security Solutions. They came in pretty similar in scope to the one from 2 years ago. They asked permission to reach out to our "IT" department to ask how they could integrate into the police's current system. That led to our "IT" company saying they could probably get you more than what they are getting you leading to 3 proposals with 3 drastically different scopes. Council will have to figure out what they want and most likely go out to bid.

Councilor Abelovsky asked how much time council had for this and Dane said he would have to get back to her. He knows our current timeline for the demolition project is running out of time. Councilor Saunders asked where the third bid was as he only saw two. Dane said the first guy that provided the original proposal never got back to him.

Discussion of 9/27 street sweep by Stanley Sweeping Services from Kutztown and possible future sweeps until new sweeper grant is awarded/unapproved

Dane said they were here Wednesday for 4 ½ hours on Wednesday at \$175/hr. Originally, the borough manger was under the impression that we were going with this company because they weren't charging us portal to portal but he was incorrect and we were charged round trip to/from Kutztown. He does not have the invoice yet but guesses it will be in the wheel house of \$1,200 to \$1,300. That is still in line with what we we quoted from the other companies. Dane spoke with Kris. They were both happy/disappointed with the job. Some places looked good and others looked as if they could have used 1-2 more sweeps. It is hard to tell what the problem was because of the lapse in time from when we swept last. They were able to do all the streets we requested plus another half sweep of the bypass in 4 hours. If in the future we plan to do this again we would not need to do some of the more rural areas like 9th & Cypress as much but maybe do the bypass another 2-3 times. The grant was applied for but we are still left with 6-8 months until we know if we are awarded or not. Council will have to decide if they wish to do this again.

Discussion of sale of Borough-owned empty parcels

The borough manager said in speaking to Public Works they are taking care of 6-7 properties in the summer. These are properties owned by the borough that are empty lots. One is on 1st Street, 3 on Millway and one on Bridge Street. Dane has had people come into his office asking if they are for sale. He doesn't know if it is something we would consider letting go or have Jim list. Dane thinks it would have to go out to bid and was told it does. Dane feels this is something that could help with our 2024 budget. He knows the one on 1st Street was a possible location for electrical equipment but Lonny didn't put any there. Councilor Abelovsky asked for a list of properties. The solicitor said you put it out for bid and either accept or reject the bids.

Officials Reports

President of Council

Nothing.

Borough Manager

Report provided. Nothing to report otherwise.

Borough Engineer – Active Projects and Task Report

Absent. An RVE representative was present in Vanessa's place and reported the bid documents were opened by the County for the Roof Replacement Project at the Senior Center. 2–3 bids came in under budget and they are being reviewed now.

Solicitor

He requested an executive session.

Treasurer

Approval of additional bills and \$400,000 transfer to be used as needed.

Mayor

He had items for executive session. Operation Safe Stop has to do with cars passing stopped school buses. The phantom car is back for those who are interested in it.

Police

Cpl. Broyles said Operation Safe Stop is an event that will be happening October 18th by the Highway Safety Program where you can have a police car follow the bus route and have the officer stop violators and issue citations. You can also have an officer on the bus to talk to the students about traffic safety at bus stops and proper bus behavior. They have coordinated with the school SRO's about this and the department will participate.

The key fob panels on the exterior of their building are not working due to the power outage last week. The panel inside the station is bad and cannot be replaced because it is outdated he was told. Cpl. Broyles believes Karen made the borough manager aware of it. Several of the exterior cameras are not working properly and the borough manager was made aware of that as well and being looked into. The generator, during the power outage, did not turn on. L&P looked at it and is being looking into further.

The department hosted a check point on September 28th that resulted in 7 DUI arrests, also some stops resulting in narcotics seizures and citations. Since the last council meeting a number of roving DUI patrols were done resulting in 4 DUI arrests and some stops had narcotics involved also.

Fire Chief

Chief Mriss said next week is Fire Prevention Week. His department will be out and about through all the schools and daycares throughout the week. The County Fireman's Association had a trailer down at Baer Memorial that is a maze for interior operations and they do not want that anymore and they are willing to turn it over to the department. Patrick is looking at having it moved to the old sewer plant property that council designated to the department for training purposes and getting it out of Baer Memorial.

Light & Power Superintendent

Absent.

Public Works Supervisor

Kris had nothing.

Recreation Director

Absent.

Committee Reports –

Finance and Administration – Lisa Perry, Chair; Rebecca Worthy, Co-Chair – nothing.

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

Arner, Co-Chair – Autumn reported the Spellbinding Saturday went off without a hitch. Members of the Chamber stepped up a little along with the downtown merchants and she thinks people really enjoyed the events and she hopes to see more going on in the downtown and parks.

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

Light & Power Committee – Rebecca Worthy, Chair; Ryan Saunders, Co-Chair – the L&P has their open house this week 11–1 on Wednesday.

Sewer Committee – Darryl Arner, Chair; Autumn Abelovsky, Co-Chair – absent.

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

Chair – nothing. Ms. Henninger asked when the bypass project would be starting and Dane said they will mobilize on Thursday and be completed by mid-November.

Library Board – Rebecca had nothing.

Parks & Recreation Board – Autumn welcomed the 2 new members. Application for Christmas Trees in the parks went out today for those who have had trees in the past.

Canal Commission – Ryan said they met last week. They are having trouble getting people to the meeting. He said Dane helped out quite a bit trying to get people to the meeting but it did not pan out. Only 4 members were present but at least there was a quorum. With the stepping down of the president in January, we will need to hire a part-time trail tender with the absence of volunteers. They are operating on a shoestring budget and donations are down. Look for a new per capita ask of around \$.50 in the near future. Lehighton will be the largest contributor. There will be a town hall meeting somewhere in the County to get as many people involved as possible and maybe get a volunteer to be the part-time trail tender. The Commission is also going to ask the County for help.

Acceptance of Officials Reports

Councilors Saunders/Abelovsky 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 \$9,080.70

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

Motion to go into Executive Session for Personnel

Councilors Saunders/Worthy made the motions to go into Executive Session at 8:11pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to go back into Regular Session

Councilors Perry/Worthy made the motions to go back into Regular Session at 9:20pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to Amend the Agenda to include hiring a new police officer and to address the 12 hour shift

Councilors Perry/Abelovsky made the motions to amend the agenda for the following items and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to hire Christopher Novak as a full-time police officer

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

Motion to approve the addendum to the contract to include the 12-hour shift for the balance of the contract

Councilors Perry/Rehrig made the motions to amend the contract and all were in favor. Roll call: No – Councilors Worthy, Saunders, Abelovsky; yes – Councilors Rehrig, Perry, Hunsicker. Tie broken by Mayor who voted yes. Motion carried.

Motion to amend the agenda to include Employee #302 purchasing his firearm

Councilors Saunders/Perry made the motions to amend and all were in favor with no questions or objection.

Motion to allow Employee #302 to purchase his firearm

Councilors Saunders/Worthy made the motions to allow the purchase and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

Councilors Saunders/Rehrig made the motions to adjourn the meeting at 9:25pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections. Meeting adjourned.

Brenda L. Kreitz
Borough Secretary