

December 21, 2023

The special meeting of Lehighon Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Thursday, December 21, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 6 PM by President Grant Hunsicker. Members in attendance were: Lisa Perry, Autumn Abelovsky, Rebecca Worthy, Ryan Saunders and Donnie Rehrig.

Officials in attendance were: Borough Manager Dane DeWire, Borough Secretary Brenda Kreitz, Mayor Clark Ritter and Police Chief Troy Abelovsky. Absent: Councilor Darryl Arner.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to adopt the 2024 Budget

Councilors Saunders/Worthy made the motions to adopt the 2024 budget and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to award the 2023 Residential Christmas Light Contest Winners

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

Discussion on Public Works Pickup and Loader Bucket Purchases

The Borough Manager said he had some prices/quotes from Lehighon Ford and one competing quote from Rottet in Tamaqua. Rottet's is for an order now, receive when complete truck that could be ready anywhere between March through September 2024. Lehighon Ford has one in stock. It was for their dealership is with out a plow would be \$51,700. Dane had financing available through 1st National Community Bank, the same one Nicole used to go through at 5.99% for 3 yrs. Paid quarterly. Our 1st payment would be due April 2024. Dane was told he will get the best deal with the least paperwork using the \$9,300 insurance pay out to buy the plow separately through Kovatch with the financing just for the truck.

There is currently a 20 yr. old bucket on the Volvo excavator with a dinner plate size crack in it. It has been repaired in the past but getting more substantial. There is one in Drums that is exactly what we need for \$800. It is being held for us and Cathy said if this goes into the 2024 budget we would need them to hold it, send us an invoice dated January 2nd or 3rd and we could pay for it immediately. Dane thinks this is the best option so our mechanic could work on something else. This is all Public Works has asked for and feels they should have it.

Councilor Rehrig asked if it was a used one and Dane said he was under the impression it was new but found out he was wrong and not sure how old it is either. Councilor Abelovsky asked how much a new one costs and Dane wasn't sure of that either. Everyone was looking up information on the cost of a new bucket on their phones. He agrees that finding out what new one costs would be a good idea. Dane said he could go up with Public Works to look at it but doesn't know that he would know what he is looking at either. Donnie felt that pictures could hide a lot of things so seeing it in person is best. Dane is to get prices on a new one and will go look at the used one.

Dane said we need a motion to purchase the pickup truck in January. Council was ok with the purchase of the truck. Councilor Perry said to be sure that there is no prepayment penalty if you pay it off within that year and Dane said there wasn't. Councilors Rehrig/Saunders made the motions to purchase a new Ford pickup truck from Lehighton Ford.

Discussion on locked receptacle usage at the Trailhead for Caboose Restoration

Councilor Saunders said he and Dane met with a very concerned volunteer on the Caboose project. They do need electricity for some of the restoration work. Ryan is of the understanding that there is a receptacle down there. Dane said he spoke to Lonny and that is not our power. At this point we will need to table it for a 2024 meeting to discuss allocating money or using L&P Fund money to do the trench he and Ryan discussed. A generator is now needed to continue the work down there.

Councilor Saunders said when he spoke to Lonny about this 3 years ago it would cost about \$4,000 in equipment rental and L&P's time to put power down there. Dane said Lonny said the cost would be more like \$6,000 – \$10,000 now for the same project.

Councilor Abelovsky asked what the agreement is for the caboose. Ryan said the Chamber owns the caboose and we lease them the land the caboose sits on. Autumn asked if that is the case would the Chamber want to go half on the cost to provide electricity to the caboose. Ryan said that is a good idea and thinks it's a conversation worth having with the Chamber.

Discussion on the 2024 Residential Rental Inspection Fee Schedule

The Borough Manager included a basically 99% done copy of the letter, affidavit and application on 1 piece of paper that will go out with the bills in January. It had to be short and sweet for the billing ladies to do. So, the affidavit is what people will fill out if they do not own a rental property. This didn't go out with December billing because we never decided on a fee schedule. Originally we had decided on \$150 that included 1 reinspection. When Dane joined the team here it was set at \$75 for the first inspection and \$50 for every reinspection. No one ever came up with a fee schedule for multiple similar units like the hi-rise. Dane and Tyler feel if you own 40 houses in a row that are all different it should be \$75 each but if you go to something like the hi-rise with 50 units the same that's a little different. We have to come up with some sort of fee schedule for that. So, a base fee, reinspection fee and if we are going to provide any breaks for similar multi-unit fee is needed to send this out in the January billing.

Council discussed this for a bit. Ryan thinks the \$75 per yearly inspection is fair. Dane felt that we could leave out the discount for the similar multi units at this time and let those property owners come back and ask for a discount or something like that as there are only a few of those in town and Tyler agreed with Dane on this.

Autumn said she understands the reason for the inspections but feels it will be a little ambitious for us to think we will get through the entire borough in a year. She has felt every other year was just as good but others felt differently. She also knows we don't want to go into details in this letter however, in 4th paragraph it says "a property owner, or a representative other than a tenant must be present during the rental inspection" she thinks in

that paragraph we need to point out that they need a property manager living within so many miles of the borough. Dane said what he provided was honestly what he could fit on the paper. Ryan suggested having it read owner/property manager instead and council agreed. Lisa said everyone would need to have their fees in by February 8, 2024. They then discussed when the fee is due and who receives/collects the fees. Dane suggested changing it to "you must have your application submitted and have check ready the day of the inspection." Autumn said so if we show up for the inspection and they don't have the money they fail? Ryan said yes so then you would have to also pay for a reinspection or some other fee. Autumn said but now we have someone else collecting the fee for the borough. Donnie asked how we are going to collect it if we can't collect it in the first place? Autumn said then what happens next year if the send in the payments. Dane said BIA will be collecting the money for the borough. Autumn said she does not think that was ever the plan. Dane disagreed. Autumn said she isn't sure if BIA would be willing to do that. Dane said that is probably why we landed on submit your payment to the borough. Donnie asked if the fee goes entirely to BIA with nothing coming back to the borough. Dane said he believes all the money will come into the borough and BIA will charge us hourly for the work. That is what Tyler keeps saying. Donnie asked what we are paying them an hour to be here an hour. Dane said it is going up to \$65/hr. Donnie said then we are walking away with \$10. Dane said it is supposed to be a wash with out making any money. Donnie said he understands that but we will have administration work and is \$10 enough to cover our part? BIA is going to do the town in quadrants so if they don't run into any issues the can knock out a few at a time. If they run into an issue?

Donnie asked if the property owner was going to be given our check list of what the inspectors are looking for. Dane didn't know other than we are looking for quality of life and safety items. The fire chief asked the same thing. Should things he is looking for be included on the inspection. Dane said it feels like Tyler doesn't want to hand the list out because they don't want the landlords that are getting away with things now to quick modge podge things together to look good for an inspection. At the same time, our land lords that are taking care of their tenants maybe should know. Donnie and Ryan agreed the list should be provided.

Autumn said when she was involved in the meetings in the beginning stages she had asked the same questions and what code we are following on the home page of our website so people could go there and look at things. Tyler was very against having the check list made public incase they came across something that wasn't on the check list giving the landlords a reason to argue the inspection. Autumn said if one is provided it must say it is only a guide but you need to follow the entire code.

Autumn then said it says to send it back in but who is going to do the scheduling? Who is going to contact them? It doesn't say that. Is it through us? Is it through BIA? She would want to know who to expect a phone call from. She wouldn't want a call from a random person saying they wanted to come and check out my house. Dane said BIA is going to do the scheduling. He then asked about the list being provided. Autumn said she thinks Tyler or Tim should be at council to do a presentation to council. Dane said billing starts January 8, 2024.

Dane said every time it is discussed they would say we were to this point or that point and Dane is picking up the pieces of it and that is when the fees were not decided upon. Dane will request a member of BIA to be present at the January meeting.

Motion to go into Executive Session for Personnel

Councilors Perry/Saunders made the motions to go into Executive Session at 6:35pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to go back into Regular Session

Councilors Perry/Rehrig made the motions to go back into Regular Session at 7:40pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

Councilors Perry/Rehrig made the motions to adjourn the meeting at 7:41pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections. Meeting adjourned.

Brenda L. Kreitz
Borough Secretary