

December 3, 2020

The special meeting of Lehighon Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Thursday, December 3, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 6 PM by Pres. Grant Hunsicker. Members in attendance were: Autumn Abelovsky, Joe Flickinger, Ryan Saunders, Lisa Perry and Donald Rehrig. Absent: Darryl Arner.

Officials in attendance were: Borough Manager Nicole Beckett and Borough Secretary Brenda Kreitz.

Pledge of Allegiance

Presentation of the General Fund Budget

Nicole said she will try to keep the meeting brief. She will present the other funds at next week's meeting. There is no proposed tax increase in the budget. The value of our mill did go down some. Nicole said any line item impacted by COVID was noted. She also said that when the budget modifications were done in May the transfer from L&P to the General Fund was reduced to \$900,000 but we are able to make that \$1 million dollars helping us to balance everything. However, in 2021 council will need to look at the electric rates. We have been putting it off for years and we need to plan for that. Our revenues are listed to come in at \$750,000 under budget which is \$300,000 from the L&P transfer. The other \$450,000 is the big impact for the year.

Expenses - non-union salaries can be discussed somewhat on Monday. Nicole said there was an impact to the revenues for the police but the expenses were under too.

Payments will start for the Fire Department's ladder truck in 2021.

Zoning & Code had a decent revenue year. In 2020 Nicole noted we paid fees with contractors to secure buildings along First Street. We can continue to expect to incur costs for that and there is no funding in the budget for that.

The garbage contract will have an annual increase of \$67,000. There was discussion on what the rate increase will look like. Nicole will not recommend an increase because we are already pulling in above our costs. We are doing fine with garbage.

Councilor Abelovsky said she knows we don't like to increase rates but feels the residents were expecting it especially with switching companies and hoping for better service. She thinks a minute increase would not be bad. Councilor Saunders felt it would be a good place to generate revenue as expected. The people in the community he spoke to are expecting it and it has been in the paper. He does not think making a small adjustment to absorb the increase in the garbage contract is a bad idea even though we are making over and above. That pigeon holes us for the future as we continue to do it and the reason we are in the situation we are in. Nicole said she can bring that back so council can see what it looks like. Rates have not been raised in a long time so it is on council but she wanted to give council her thoughts. She cannot see herself being able to justify this line item.

Councilor Flickinger felt Nicole should come up with the numbers and potential numbers for what the increase might be on the electric side before making a decision.

Nicole said she can do that and possibly have it for council in January. She would like council to address this separately and not as a budget item as it will take her a bit to run the numbers.

Nicole brought up the roof replacement and all the issues with all our buildings. Her recommendation coming back is to look at doing a roof replacement for all the buildings vs. piecemealing them. She feels professionals need to be brought in who handles. She thinks Carlisle Roof came in a few years ago and did an assessment of borough hall and the Annex and found that the borough roof was worse than the Annex roof. If we focus on the big picture, we will get a better cost on all the buildings than if done separately. Affording that cost is another story. Bruce was given approval to proceed but she does not see him lasting more than a few months into 2021 from what he told her a few months ago. She has not talked to him since she returned.

Nicole said as far as Economic Development goes, she hopes council will continue to allocate funds toward Main Street and discuss the civil proceeding on the blighted properties on First Street. We have an order to demo 209 North 1st Street. We can do it at any time. It is a matter of engineering, construction and total cost but we are legally prepared. We are getting legally prepared to do the same with 135-139 too but it is a matter of funding it. There is grant funding but that could take years.

Nicole said Tom is recommending we look at the concrete decking in the front of the Annex building and getting that filled in. She has not allocated anything for that.

Nicole said if council had questions between now and next week to ask. She provided council with a list of projects and purchases not funded by the budget. She went over the items and asked about the Fire Training Tower and if it is something she needs to be planning for. Councilor Perry said council did say there was no money this year but can look at doing something for them in 2022. If we raise enough money in 2021 to make the down payment, we could start making payments on it in 2022 if there is money. The department was asked to fundraise for it. Lisa said we would go to organizations that are usually very generous like the Orioles, Beaver Run, the social quarters of the fire company and see if they would want to contribute any money towards it.

Nicole said the substation transformers is like a \$1.5 million project until it is all said and done. We will need to be looking at financing to do the project but also at the rates for electric.

Nicole asked about the discussion on the train mural that occurred in her absence. She did get a price to get the mural updated by the artist for around \$1,000. The intended purpose was to catch your attention and keep you from looking at the blight on the other side.

Council did not care if the mural remained or not but was trying to find an alternative location. Nicole said the artist would remove the mural in pieces and restore it at home.

Nicole will talk to Public Works to see what could be done to make it presentable over the winter and council will continue to brainstorm till next month.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

Councilors Saunders/Abelovsky made the motions to adjourn the meeting at 6:30pm and all were in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Brenda L. Kreitz
Borough Secretary