

The Tamaqua Borough Council held its first Regular Council Meeting for the month of April on Tuesday, April 7, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. through the Zoom video conference system. The public was able to participate in the council meeting using a computer, tablet or smart phone with an internet connection using the link <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/429632522> and by entering Meeting ID 429 632 522. Individuals who did not have internet access were able to participate by telephone by dialing 1-929-436-2866 and entering Meeting ID 429 632 522 #.

Present were Councilmembers Robert Amentler, Ronald Bowman, Thomas Cara, Brian Connely, Mary Linkevich, Ritchie Linkhorst and David Mace. Officials present were Mayor Nathan Gerace, Chief of Police Henry Woods, Borough Manager Kevin Steigerwalt, Public Works Director Robert Jones, Solicitor Anthony Odorizzi, Borough Secretary/Treasurer Georgia Depos DeWire, Assistant Borough Secretary/Treasurer Amy Macalush, Director of Community Development Ann Marie Calabrese and Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer Gregory Kurtz Jr.

The meeting was called to order by President Mace. The invocation was given by Councilman Cara. President Mace stated that since the borough is using a video conferencing platform, the Pledge of Allegiance was waived. The roll was called with all councilmembers present.

President Mace announced that an executive session was held on April 1, 2020 through the Zoom video conference system to discuss personnel matters. President Mace also announced that an Emergency Council Meeting was held on March 27, 2020 for the purpose of extending Mayor Gerace's Declaration of disaster Emergency of March 20, 2020 for a period of thirty (30) additional days.

Manager Steigerwalt explained the Zoom video conference system and protocol.

The reading of the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting held on March 17, 2020 and the Emergency Council Meeting held on March 27, 2020 were ordered suspended, and with no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved as written on motion of Cara, seconded by Bowman, and unanimously approved.

Manager Steigerwalt reported on a bid opening that was held on April 2<sup>nd</sup> for the 2020 Bituminous Seal Coat Project as follows: it is an oil and chip project on Owl Creek Road; Shiffer Bituminous Service Company of Kunkletown, PA, Asphalt Maintenance Solutions of Center Valley, PA and Pocono Spray Patch Inc. of Gouldsboro, PA were the three bidders for the project; the lowest bidder was Pocono Spray Patch Inc. with a bid amount of \$71,712.39; and the project would start at the base of the entrance of Owl Creek Road and continue to the Schuylkill/Carbon County line. A recommendation was made to award the contract for the 2020 Bituminous Seal Coat Project to the lowest bidder, Pocono Spray Patch Inc., P.O. Box 740, Gouldsboro, PA at a cost of \$71,712.39. There was much discussion about the following: hopeful the project would proceed this year; documenting the project closely as there is a little concern on the work ethic of this company; if the borough would be hiring the same consultant used for the Owl Creek Road Paving Project; this project is not within the consultant's area of expertise; Councilman Bowman would do his best to watch over the project; Public Works Director Jones is looking at Publication 408 specifications and has spoken with John Davis, our PennDOT municipal services representative, about the project and the concerns regarding the company with the lowest bid; Pocono Spray Patch Inc. is PennDOT pre-qualified; making sure the project meets all certifications and PennDOT specifications; the project would be guaranteed for one year; awarding the project to another bidder;

and rejecting all bids and rebidding the project. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Bowman, seconded by Linkevich, and unanimously approved.

Manager Steigerwalt also reported on the demolition of properties at 200-202 Pitt Street and 209-211 Lombard Street as follows: both of the projects have been completed; Code Enforcement Officer Kurtz has inspected the properties; the county is pleased with the work of the demolition contractors; the borough would be paying the invoices and then submit them to the county for reimbursement through our Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) funds; and he has received favorable comments about the demolition contractors from the people in the neighborhood.

Manager Steigerwalt also reported on the refinancing of three existing loans. The \$600,000.00 loan in 2017 to finance the acquisition of the street lights was solely financed through Mauch Chunk Trust Company (MCT). The MCT loan modification would be reducing the interest rate for this loan from 3.05% to 2.60% effective today. No formal action by council is needed. The cost of savings by reducing the rate is approximately \$14,000.00 based on the life of the loan and current payment schedule. The 2014 Water Revenue Bond in the amount of \$9.4 million obtained by the Tamaqua Area Water Authority for the Water Treatment Plant project was financed through MCT and Quakertown National Bank. MCT is waiting to hear from Quakertown National Bank and he would be providing the water loan information when he receives it. The 2012 General Obligation Bond was financed through M&T Bank and was a refinancing and consolidation of three other loans, the Owl Creek Dam Rehabilitation Project, the purchase of an aerial truck and another street light project from years ago. The borough is holding onto an A Bond rating. Manager Steigerwalt stated that he contacted Financial Solutions, who was involved with the transaction. Financial Solutions is not recommending going through the bond market but to do a Request For Proposals.

Manager Steigerwalt also reported that various operations have changed due to the public health emergency. The purchasing of street signs and property appraisals are on hold. Also, according to Pamela McCullion, the borough's tax collector, the due dates for real estate taxes have not changed at this time.

Under the Borough Manager's report, there was much discussion about the street sweeper as follows: sending a robocall to residents notifying them about which streets are being posted as some people are not going outside their homes; a complaint today from a resident; office staff procedures; tickets can be mailed in, dropped off in the borough's drop box or the police mail slot; if a ticket is not paid, it turns into a traffic citation and the cost to pay it would increase; and posting No Parking signs two days before the time of the scheduled street sweeping. Council recognized Seandra Williams of 42 Market Street who identified herself as the resident who had complained about the ticket she received. Ms. Williams expressed her concerns about the following: she was not aware of the No Parking sign post for the street sweeper since she did not leave her home due to the stay at home order; she posted her complaint on the borough's Facebook page and also called the dispatch office, the police department and the borough office; confusion about what to do; contesting the parking ticket; and enforcement issues.

Under the Borough Manager report, Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer Gregory Kurtz discussed Labor and Industry guidance and the suspension of services until further notice. There

was some discussion about this matter. The Planning Commission is planning on holding a meeting via the video conferencing.

Manager Steigerwalt also reported on the following: the borough has implemented a one employee per truck rule; following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines; obtaining masks and hand sanitizer; one Street Department employee is taking an emergency leave due to a chronic lung condition; and keeping within the health guidelines.

Under the Borough Managers report, Councilman Cara asked about the status of a code enforcement issue regarding junk cars located on East End Avenue. Code Enforcement Officer Kurtz stated that the property owner was given ample time to correct the issues and citations would be issued. Manager Steigerwalt stated that he has discussed the matter with Code Enforcement Officer Kurtz and Paul Corinchock, a resident who brought the matter to the borough's attention.

Director of Community Development Calabrese reported on the following: the Tamaqua Community Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ) annual reporting for businesses and tenants with businesses is due by June 15<sup>th</sup> and the filing date has not been extended; the 2020 Census; a public meeting to discuss a Pool Feasibility study has been put on hold; the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) has been cancelled and the next CAC meeting is scheduled for May 12<sup>th</sup>; a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) public hearing would be held on May 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.; all updates and notices are posted to the borough's website and Facebook; and the borough office would be closed on Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup> and Monday April 13<sup>th</sup>.

Chief Woods stated that Tomhicken Mountain Spring Water Company donated 30 cases of water to the Police Department. Chief Woods stated that he offered some of the water to the borough work crew. Chief Woods also stated that Dawn Yacovelli donated 25 bottles of hand sanitizer to the Police Department.

Chief Woods also reported that call volume has picked up. Chief Woods stated that the department would continue to respond to emergency calls but would continue to handle non-emergency calls by phone as the department cannot afford to have officers get sick. There was some discussion about how the Police Department is dealing with groups of people. Chief Woods stated that the calls the department receives regarding groups of children congregating is more of a parenting issue. Councilwoman Linkevich stated that there are some issues with people congregating at the playgrounds and parks such as the Willing Park and Bungalow Park. The parks were closed but the posted signs were torn down. Manager Steigerwalt stated that other parks are wide open and two are locked. There was some discussion about this matter.

Under the Neighborhoods, Downtown and Historic District Committee report, a recommendation was made to purchase new street name signs and posts from U.S. Municipal Supply in the amount of \$6,403.00 with funds designated from the Liquid Fuel/Highway Aid Fund. There was some discussion about the decorative pole signs. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Cara, seconded by Bowman, and unanimously approved.

Under the Recreation and Youth Committee report, a recommendation was made to remove basketball hoops at borough owned parks through the duration of the emergency. Councilman Bowman stated that due to the design it would be difficult to remove the basketball hoops at the South Ward Park and the North and Middle Ward Park. President Mace suggested covering those basketball hoops to make them unplayable. There was no one from the floor wishing to address

council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Linkevich, seconded by Linkhorst, and unanimously approved.

Under the Recreation and Youth Committee report, a recommendation was made to suspend the sale of pool passes until further notice. Public Works Director Jones stated that the borough is proceeding with normal work as if the pool will be opened. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Linkevich, seconded by Linkhorst, and unanimously approved.

Chairwoman Linkevich of the Recreation and Youth Committee reminded residents that all parks are closed. Councilman Linkhorst stated that the Rabbit Run Reservoir is open and Kellner's Dam is closed. Manager Steigerwalt stated that only the Owl Creek Dam area and the Rabbit Run Reservoir are open.

Mayor Gerace reported on the following: Coronavirus relief; Federal Phase 1 and 2 and small business relief; help is available; and anyone who needs information can be referred to him. Solicitor Odorizzi stated that he has information available as well.

The meeting was opened to the floor.

With no one wishing to address council, the meeting was closed to the floor.

Under the Finance, Wage and Salary Committee report, a recommendation was made to hire Scott Linkhorst as a part-time code enforcement assistant at a salary of \$1,200.00 per month. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Cara, seconded by Bowman, and approved by a 6-0-1 roll call vote with Councilman Ritchie Linkhorst abstaining.

A recommendation was made to hold an executive session to discuss litigation issues. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Bowman, seconded by Linkevich, and unanimously approved.

The council meeting was recessed at approximately 8:00 p.m. while council met in executive session.

The council meeting was reconvened at approximately 8:12 p.m.

President Mace announced that an executive session was held to discuss litigation issues. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:12 p.m. on motion of Bowman, seconded by Linkhorst, to meet again at the call of the President.

ATTEST:

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Georgia Depos DeWire, Borough Secretary/Treasurer