

The Tamaqua Borough Council held its first Regular Council Meeting for the month of May on Tuesday, May 5, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Tamaqua Municipal Building, 320 East Broad Street, Tamaqua, PA.

Present were Councilmembers Thomas Cara, Micah Gursky, Kerry Lasky and R. Daniel Evans. Councilman Justin Startzel arrived later in the meeting. Absent were Councilmembers Brian Connely and David Mace. Officials present were Mayor Christian Morrison, Chief of Police Richard Weaver, Borough Manager Kevin Steigerwalt, Solicitor Michael S. Greek, Assistant Borough Secretary/Treasurer Amy Macalush and Fire Chief Thomas Hartz.

The meeting was called to order by President Gursky. The invocation was given by Councilman Cara followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by President Gursky. The roll was called with four councilmembers present and three absent.

The reading of the minutes of the last Regular Council Meeting held on April 21, 2015 was ordered suspended, and with no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved as written on motion of Cara, seconded by Evans, and unanimously approved.

President Gursky announced that borough council met in an executive session on May 1, 2015 to discuss a real estate matter.

Communication was received from Paul Fridirici of the Tamaqua Community Revitalization and Improvement Zone Authority (CRIZ) stating that the authority held a meeting on April 20, 2015 and approved a request from Attorney Jeff Bowe for a \$2,500 annual retainer fee and \$150.00 per hour for services as the Attorney for the CRIZ program, contingent upon approval from Tamaqua Borough Council and payable from an approved borough account. A recommendation was made to grant the request. 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 Lasky, and unanimously approved.

Manager Steigerwalt reported of the following: the demolition of 216 Pitt Street has been complete and the other demolition projects on Gay and Spruce streets would be starting soon; an individual expressed an interest in purchasing 234 Columbia Street, an ad was placed and the bid opening is set for May 14, 2015 at 2:00 p.m.; a lot of pool pass applications were received; the pool cleaning is about to start and the cleaning of the downtown fountain will take place next week.

Manager Steigerwalt stated that ads were placed for part-time seasonal employees and for the vacancy at the sewer plant and a list of applicants is being prepared and will be sent to the Finance, Wage and Salary Committee shortly.

Manager Steigerwalt provided Council with information regarding a format change on the current utility bills sent to residents. Manager Steigerwalt stated that the Utility Staff has been working on converting the format of the existing bills from post card to letter size. Manager Steigerwalt stated the bills would be printed on legal size paper, but the stub on the bottom would be removed by the staff prior to mailing and kept for record. There was some discussion regarding paper size, postage, envelopes, printing and penalties. Councilwoman Lasky asked Manager Steigerwalt why the billing format was being changed. Manager Steigerwalt explained that the format is being changed for a variety of reasons including: some post offices are no longer mailing the post cards; the post cards easily get misplaced; the software company is pushing the borough to use a laser printer rather than the dot matrix printer currently used to print the bills; and more

information can be printed on the letter size paper including a section for credit card payments. Manager Steigerwalt stated that the project is still being worked on but asked council to review the proposals and offer feedback. Manager Steigerwalt also mentioned that Rob Jones would be discussing the new billing format with the Water and Sewer Authorities.

Councilman Cara asked about a property located at the bottom of Stadium Hill across from the Tax Collector's office. Councilman Cara stated that the siding of the house is deplorable and wanted to know who is responsible for making repairs. Manager Steigerwalt stated the side of the house is a common wall that suffered fire damage. Fire Chief Thomas Hartz stated that the demolition company is responsible for covering the exposed building. Manager Steigerwalt stated the property was looked at by a structural engineer for demolition purposes, and was recommended as a rehab project, which would be a more cost effective approach than demolition. Manager Steigerwalt stated that in order to proceed with rehab, the borough would have to convince the owner to address it, which is very unlikely. Manager Steigerwalt explained that a more reasonable approach is for the borough to purchase the property and then proceed with rehab, but it is very hard to get in touch with the owner. President Gursky asked Solicitor Greek for assistance with this matter.

Councilwoman Lasky questioned the time frame on the proposal for the utility bill format change. Manager Steigerwalt stated they are taking a one step at a time approach, but hopes to have the new billing system up and running by the end of the year.

Councilman Cara asked Fire Chief Thomas Hartz for his opinion on a rental unit and whether or not an attic has to have a fire escape for people to sleep up there. Fire Chief Thomas Hartz stated that a fire escape in the attic is not required for a single family dwelling, however if the home was converted into apartments through zoning or through code, then separate means of egress would be required. There was some discussion about this matter.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made to approve a handicapped parking space application for Helen Harahus of 433 East Elm Street. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Lasky, seconded by Cara, and unanimously approved.

Under the Recreation and Youth Committee report, President Gursky stated that Councilman Mace could not attend the meeting due to a family emergency, but asked council to act on an application received from Justin Huegel for a clerk/maintenance position at the Bungalow Pool. A recommendation was made to hire Justin Huegel as clerk/maintenance at the Bungalow Pool. 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 Lasky, and unanimously approved.

Mayor Morrison stated he received an email concerning code violations on Schuylkill Avenue. Mayor Morrison asked Manager Steigerwalt to work with code enforcement and report back on the validity of the issue and what has been done. Mayor Morrison also stated that he received information from a company offering text alert messages to borough residents free of charge granted we provide the database containing cell phone numbers of the residents. Mayor Morrison feels that as society is moving forward with social media, and with more people using cell phones instead of landlines, the text alert service may be beneficial; however his primary concern is

that of privacy and not having control of where the information we provide is going. President Gursky stated we should not hesitate using the telephone system we currently have in place to notify residents of issues.

Councilman Startzel arrived at approximately 7:25 p.m.

The meeting was opened to the floor.

Council recognized Edith Trevorah of 316 N. Columbia Street who expressed her concerns about text alert notifications for people who do not have cell phones. President Gursky explained that the text alert notifications would be in addition to the landline alerts that are currently being used.

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

Under New Business, Councilman Justin Startzel announced that he would be taking a leave of absence from Council effective June 28, 2015, as he recently joined the PA Army National Guard and will be leaving for training in July. Councilman Startzel stated he hopes to be back in time for his last meeting, but that would depend on his training schedule. Councilman Startzel thanked Council for working with him and said it has been one of the best experiences in his life. President Gursky thanked Councilman Startzel for serving on Council and doing what he is doing. President Gursky also stated that he will still serve as a councilman until the end of the year and he is welcomed and encouraged to participate at any level.

A recommendation was made to hold an executive session to discuss a real estate matter. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Mace, seconded by Startzel, and unanimously approved.

The council meeting was recessed at approximately 7:40 p.m. while council met in executive session.

The council meeting was reconvened at approximately 8:35 p.m. President Gursky stated an executive session was held to discuss real estate and a personnel issue.

Councilman R. Daniel Evans questioned a vacancy on the Planning Commission that was recently filled when there was no actual vacancy to fill. After a brief discussion, it was noted that council erroneously made a motion to appoint Deb Althouse to a position which was thought to be vacant on the Planning Commission, however, the vacancy did not exist, thus making that appointment null and void. Manager Steigerwalt will send a letter to Ms. Althouse advising her of the error and offering her an opportunity to serve on one of the other committees with vacancies.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 p.m. on motion of Startzel, seconded by Evans, to meet again at the call of the President.

ATTEST:

Amy Macalush, Assistant Borough Secretary/Treasurer