

The Tamaqua Borough Council held its first Regular Council Meeting for the month of May on Tuesday, May 5, 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://us02web.zoom.us/j/85939240609> and by entering Meeting ID 859 3924 0609. Individuals who did not have internet access were able to participate by telephone by dialing 1-929-436-2866 and entering Meeting ID 859 3924 0609 #.

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, 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.

The reading of the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting held on April 21, 2020 was ordered suspended, and with no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved as written on motion of Bowman, seconded by Linkhorst, and unanimously approved.

Communication was received from the Tamaqua Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Jennifer Drake, President, Linda Marchalk, Vice-President and Ann Ostergaard, Secretary/Treasurer, regarding a previous request to use office space in the borough building. The intended use of the office space is as follows: not to be used as an open office to the public as they have now; as a work space for their office administrator; looking at this position as becoming a more remote position with their staff visiting businesses rather than them coming in to them; they do not plan on having office hours; and office hours will be by appointment only. What the Chamber is looking for in general is: working office space for their Outreach Administrator; they will provide their own desk, computer, copy machine and filing cabinets; they will maintain their own phone line and phone service; they will maintain their own post office box; they do ask for the public to have use of a drop box already in place in the building; the public will not have access to the office; and the staff will meet with them at an alternate location. The Chamber feels that this can help bolster a working relationship between the Chamber and Borough in the implementation of the Community Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ) program and sustainability of the downtown business community. A motion was made by Bowman and seconded by Linkhorst to grant the request by the Tamaqua Area Chamber of Commerce to have use of office space in the borough building. There was much discussion about the following: this would be in-lieu-of receiving their annual allocation of \$8,500.00; notifying the borough's insurance carrier that another agency would be using the building; it is not a very appropriate space; using the Chamber allocations for five years and giving them approximately \$40,000.00 to use towards finding an office space; preparation of a lease agreement; and to include in the lease agreement that use of the office space would be in-lieu-of the allocation. The motion and second were amended as follows: a recommendation was made to grant the request by the Tamaqua Area Chamber of Commerce to have use of office space in the borough building contingent upon the preparation of a lease

agreement with the terms to be negotiated. 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 Linkhorst, and unanimously approved.

Communication was received from the Tamaqua Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors asking council to consider offering free 15-minute pick up parking wherever there are meters. This will allow customers easier access to support local business and also less contact with public surfaces. There was some discussion about the following: the Parking and Traffic Committee had discussed all meter operations in general; and no action was taken about suspending parking meter operations. Mayor Gerace stated that the Police Department stopped ticketing vehicles for meter violations. No further action is required regarding this matter.

Manager Steigerwalt reported that County Administrator Gary Bender contacted him on behalf of the Schuylkill County Commissioners concerning the availability of the Borough Hall to be used as a voting precinct for the Primary Election on June 2nd. They are looking for an alternate location for Tamaqua's Third Precinct which is the Tamaqua High Rise Apartment building. A motion was made by Bowman and seconded by Cara to grant permission for the County to use the Borough Hall as a voting precinct for the Primary Election. There was much discussion about the following: in the past when the voting precinct was located at the Borough Hall, the office staff had election days off; during times when the office staff is off and the union employees are not, either Manager Steigerwalt and/or Public Works Director Jones would work; if the American Hose Fire Company would be available to be the alternate location for the voting precinct; leaving the alternate voting precinct at the requested location; must enter the building through the front doors for handicapped accessibility; determining a traffic flow plan for voters; costs involved with cleaning the building prior to when the staff returns to work the next day; Manager Steigerwalt would talk to County Administrator Bender regarding having the building cleaned; and Councilman Connely would like the motion to include that the County would decontaminate the area prior to the employees coming back to work. The motion and second were amended as follows: a recommendation was made to grant permission for the County to use the Borough Hall as a voting precinct for the Primary Election contingent upon the building being cleaned by the County. 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 Cara, and unanimously approved.

Manager Steigerwalt reported on the following: no other complaints were received about people going through trash cans in the middle of the night before the sanitation company picks up the trash; a Quality of Life Fact Sheet; work is being done at the pool; street sweeping; the 2020 Census; putting up Hometown Hero Banners for the Chamber of Commerce; high flows in the Owl Creek sanitary sewer system; sending a letter to Owl Creek residents not to connect sump pumps and drain pipes to the sanitary sewer system; and the Tamaqua Area School District Solar Array Project and a Zoning Hearing Board meeting scheduled for May 12th.

Under the Borough Manager's report, Councilman Connely asked Manager Steigerwalt and Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer Kurtz for an update on the garages that are collapsing on Market Street. Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer Kurtz reported that he sent new notices to the property owner but he did not receive notification back. There was some discussion about this matter and deeming it as an emergency demolition. A recommendation was made to authorize the Borough Manager to draft a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the emergency demolition of the garages located

at the rear of 21 North Greenwood Street. There was some discussion about this matter. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Connely, seconded by Bowman, and unanimously approved.

Under the Borough Manager's report, Councilwoman Linkevich asked about the purchase of cigarette receptacles for Depot Square Park, the Borough Building and the pool. Councilwoman Linkevich reported that a woman on Washington Street told her that two young men, working for the borough, were cleaning the yard next door and the men were polite and nice.

Director of Community Development Calabrese reported on the following: sending reminders about the Tamaqua Community Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ) annual reporting for businesses and tenants with businesses that is due by June 15th; the 2020 Census; the reopening of Kellner's Dam on an amended schedule; the Pool Feasibility first grant payment check request was submitted; setting a public meeting date to discuss a Pool Feasibility study; COVID-19 expense tracking for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program; a CDBG public hearing would be held on May 19th at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular council meeting; the 2020 CDBG allocation will be \$124,884.00; and due to COVID-19, the borough could receive additional CDBG funds in the amount of \$68,463.00, which is based on the borough's population of 7,107, to use for food distribution, rent assistance or economic development.

Under the Recreation and Youth Committee report, a recommendation was made to suspend the opening day for the pool indefinitely. There was some discussion about the following: the decision to suspend the opening day was made at the recommendation of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR); the borough is following DCNR guidelines; there is no guidance from the State yet; other communities have already closed for the season; even if the pool does not open for the season the borough still needs to maintain the pool; and if we can apply for a CDBG expense reimbursement to maintain the pool even though it is closed for the season. 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 open Kellner's Dam for fishing, retroactive to May 2nd, provided the safety rules established by the Kellner's Dam Association are followed. There was some discussion about the following: the safety protocols enacted to reopen Kellner's Dam to youth fishing on a limited basis; the steps taken to reduce exposure to COVID-19; and the Kellner's Dam Association was commended for doing a great job with the action plan. 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 patrons that pool pass sales are also suspended indefinitely.

Under the Railroad Committee report, Councilman Connely reported on the following: the borough is working with Reading, Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad personnel regarding the disbursement of their donation of \$10,000.00; the distribution would take place now due to the pandemic; splitting the donation amount; and making contributions to First Responders. A recommendation was made distribute the donation of \$10,000.00 as follows: \$1,500.00 to the American Hose Fire Company; \$1,500.00 to the Citizens Fire Company; \$1,500.00 to the East End Fire Company; \$1,500.00 to the South Ward Fire Company; \$1,500.00 to the Tamaqua Rescue

Squad; \$1,500.00 to the Tamaqua Ambulance; and \$1,000.00 to the Tamaqua Fire Police. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Connely, seconded by Linkevich, and unanimously approved.

Chairman Mace of the Railroad Committee reported that the tentative schedule regarding the construction of the train platform has been delayed due to the state COVID-19 restrictions. The contractor would complete the work once the state COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Mayor Gerace reported that the Tamaqua Salvation Army is delivering food packages to the Tamaqua High Rise every Tuesday and to the Majestic House every Thursday. The Tamaqua Salvation Army has an abundance of food available for those in need.

The meeting was opened to the floor.

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

Solicitor Odorizzi reported on a resolution he prepared extending real estate tax deadlines due to COVID-19 as follows: Governor Tom Wolf signed Act 15 on April 20th that enables local governments to extend real estate tax deadlines; extending the discount period to August 31st; and all penalties for 2020 real estate taxes would be waived if the taxes are paid in full by December 31st. Manager Steigerwalt stated that he prepared a tax collection history of real estate, occupation and per capita taxes. Manager Steigerwalt stated that the real estate, occupation and per capita taxes are on track with prior years and this year's trend is following the prior year. Council recognized Tax Collector Pamela McCullion who stated that the discount period did expire at the end of April. No action was taken by council.

Solicitor Odorizzi also reported that he received the signed documents from the developer of the Tamarack Square Subdivision project and he is waiting for their performance bond.

Solicitor Odorizzi also reported on the Tamaqua Area School District Solar Panel project. A Development, Improvement and Maintenance Agreement would be sent to the engineer by the end of the week.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:18 p.m. on motion of Bowman, seconded by Linkevich, to meet again at the call of the President.

ATTEST:

Georgia Depos DeWire, Borough Secretary/Treasurer