

The Tamaqua Borough Council held its first Regular Council Meeting for the month of July on Wednesday, July 5, 2017 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, Brian Connely, R. Daniel Evans, Micah Gursky and David Mace. Absent were Councilmembers Ronald Bowman and Kerry Lasky. Officials present were Public Works Director Robert Jones, Solicitor Michael S. Greek, Borough Secretary/Treasurer Georgia Depos DeWire and Director of Community Development Mary Linkevich.

The meeting was called to order by President Mace. The invocation was given by Councilman Cara followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilman Connely. The roll was called with five councilmembers present and two absent.

The reading of the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting held on June 20, 2017 was ordered suspended, and with no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved as written on motion of Cara, seconded by Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Communication was received from Mary Linkevich stating that she is resigning as Director of Community Development and her last physical day in the office will be July 14, 2017. Ms. Linkevich also stated that she notified President Mace and Manager Steigerwalt on June 13<sup>th</sup> and had provided a one month's notice. Councilmembers commended Ms. Linkevich for her accomplishments during her one-year employment at the borough. A recommendation was made to accept the resignation of Mary Linkevich as Director of Community Development. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Communication was received from Marina R. Kuchar, center director/teacher/owner of Tree of Life Music Together, requesting permission to host a free of charge educational music event on July 8, 2017 at the Tamaqua Bungalow Pool. The communication also stated that she would be collecting donations from the event to support the Tamaqua Community Art Center. Ms. Kuchar stated that she would provide proof of liability insurance coverage, educational credits, background clearances and credentials. There was some discussion about the following: she does have background clearances as she has provided them to the Tamaqua Community Art Center; asking her to provide the borough with copies of her clearances; and she must contact the various playground associations to request holding an event there. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Gursky, seconded by Cara, and unanimously approved.

Public Works Director Jones reported on the following: the Family Dollar Store sidewalk replacement would begin on July 10<sup>th</sup>; an in-house job vacancy notice was posted for the Street Maintenance position; Solid Wall LLC would tentatively begin work on July 24<sup>th</sup> on the Wabash Creek Culvert Repair Project contingent upon receiving the required signed documentation; and re-advertising for a bid opening for the demolition of 216 Penn Street. There was some discussion about the Family Dollar Store sidewalk replacement project as follows: what recourse there is should there be a weather delay or if the project does not begin as scheduled; revoking the occupancy permit if the project does not begin on July 10<sup>th</sup>; having Solicitor Greek prepare a letter

revoking the occupancy permit; and if the project does not begin, the Public Works Director Jones would telephone Solicitor Greek.

Director of Community Development Linkevich reported on the following: a follow-up to the Cops Hiring Grant opportunity and stated that upon review with Chief Weaver, the grant is not a good match for Tamaqua due to the 2017 focus areas; she is working to finalize a TreeVitalize grant; and 252 West Cottage Avenue was purchased for \$1.00 and the borough can move forward with the demolition.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made to approve a handicapped parking space application for 652 East Broad Street. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made to approve a handicapped parking space application for 123 Gay Street. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made to approve a handicapped parking space application for 332 Pine Street. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made to approve a handicapped parking space application for 246 Mauch Chunk Street. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made to approve a handicapped parking space application for 122 Gay Street. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made to approve a 10-minute parking during business hours sign at 6 South Lehigh Street as requested by Pamela McCullion, the Tamaqua Borough Tax Collector. 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 Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Under the Finance, Wage and Salary Committee report, Councilman Cara reported that he wanted someone else's opinion regarding the Rehabilitation Program and he contacted Maillie of Oaks, PA, which is the borough's appointed auditors to audit the current and delinquent loans. A recommendation was made to audit the Rehabilitation Program. There was much discussion about this matter. The discussion included, but was not limited to, the following: Maillie audits the program but not each individual loan; the program was funded by federal tax payer dollars; the scope of the audit; asking Maillie to determine if the program is worthy; the program is currently suspended; if the program should be reinstated; there are 39 loans and approximately 15 are currently delinquent; spending borough money to audit a loan does not make sense; the cost to audit the program would be approximately \$2,500-\$3,000; an auditor may not provide a decision as to

whether the program is worthy of being reinstated; the program helps people address property issues; clarify what Maillie would be auditing; speaking with people in the community; discussing the program with members of the Citizens Advisory Commission (CAC); the CAC is in favor of the program; addressing the collection of loans; and the auditors would be giving a list of best practices. Council recognized John Handler, a member of the CAC, who discussed the following: the program comes from the federal government and follows federal guidelines; Margaret Marino did an excellent job of collecting delinquent loans; the people who received loans under this program did not have to be bankable to get these types of loans; CAC did make sure there were no municipal liens, delinquent water/sewer/garbage payments, delinquent taxes and the homeowner had homeowner's insurance; recommended keeping the program; an audit was performed by Mike Carpenter's group; and approximately five percent or less of loans are chronic delinquents. Council recognized John Sienkiewicz of 215 Bowe Street stating the audit should show guidelines and structure, recommended outsourcing the loan collections to a third party, does not want to see the program suspended, and guidelines are needed. There was no one else from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Cara, seconded by Gursky, and approved by a 4-1 roll call vote with Councilman Evans opposed.

Councilman Evans requested an executive session to discuss real estate matters prior to adjournment.

Under the Recreation and Youth Committee report, a recommendation was made to hire Emma Coccio as a lifeguard for the 2017 pool season. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Connely, and unanimously approved.

Under the Recreation and Youth Committee report, a recommendation was made to send a letter to the North and Middle Ward Playground Association recommending that the timer be set to turn off the lights at 10:00 p.m. for the summertime. 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 Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Chairman Mace of the Recreation and Youth Committee reported that the Eastern Schuylkill Recreation Commission (ESRC) received a letter of resignation from Sarah Connely who serves as the Executive Director. The ESRC would be meeting to discuss the future of the program.

Under the Public Safety Committee report, a recommendation was made to hire Raymond J. Tonkinson III as a part-time police officer. 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 Evans, and unanimously approved.

The meeting was opened to the floor.

John McCormick of 122 Gay Street asked about a starting date to install a handicapped parking space sign that was approved tonight. Public Works Director Jones stated that a work order would go out tomorrow to install the sign.

John Sienkiewicz of 215 Bowe Street stated that the Out of Darkness into the Light, Overdose Awareness 2017 Candle Light Walk would be held at 6:30 p.m. on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, with a rain date of July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Sienkiewicz stated that council approved the request to hold the walk at its February council meeting. Mr. Sienkiewicz stated that he is also requesting that the Bungalow Pool

close at 6:00 p.m. and to use the borough's two portable generated lights that would be set up at the former CVS parking lot. Mr. Sienkiewicz stated that Safer Streets for Tamaqua's Little Feet would secure the lights with a chain and be responsible for any damages to the two portable generated lights. Mr. Sienkiewicz is also requesting permission to use a building at the South Ward Playground as a storage facility. There was some discussion about this matter. Mr. Sienkiewicz was advised to contact the South Ward Playground Association to coordinate the use of a building as a storage facility. A recommendation was made to close the Bungalow Pool at 6:00 p.m. on July 22<sup>nd</sup> and to supply two of the borough's portable lighting to be set up at the former CVS parking lot and that Safer Streets for Tamaqua's Little Feet would secure the lights. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Cara, and unanimously approved.

Nathan Gerace of 716 East Broad Street is requesting the use of the Willing Street Park on July 15<sup>th</sup> starting at 1:00 p.m. to hold a Community Picnic event. 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 Gursky, seconded by Cara, and unanimously approved.

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

Under Unfinished Business, Councilman Evans discussed the Sidewalk Repair Loan Program, and gave an update on additional revisions made to the program since the last meeting. The revisions included removing the wording regarding the removal of a tree and removing a lien question in the Frequently Asked Questions segment. Councilman Evans also stated that the budget contains a specific line item in the Old Revolving Fund in the amount of \$10,000.00 for sidewalk loans. A recommendation was made to adopt the updated guidelines for the Sidewalk Repair Loan Program. There was much discussion about this matter. The discussion included, but was not limited to, the following: the loan monthly payback amount of \$100.00; where is the interest reflected in the payback amount as the guidelines differ from the Frequently Asked Questions segment; a promissory note; judgments; contractor's payment by residents; not looking at income limit; requesting financial information from applicants; applications are reviewed by CAC; this is no longer a federal loan program; most customers are generated through code enforcement; and having the borough look at a person's credit rating before making the loan. Council recognized John Handler who stated that the CAC does look into the financials of an applicant but does not check their debt service ratio or credit rating. There was no one else from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Evans, seconded by Gursky, and approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Under New Business, a recommendation was made to advertise for the position of Director of Community Development. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation so ordered on motion of Gursky, seconded by Cara, and unanimously approved.

Councilman Connely requested an executive session to discuss personnel issues prior to adjournment.

A recommendation was made to hold an executive session to discuss real estate and personnel matters. 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 Evans, and unanimously approved.

The council meeting was recessed at approximately 8:27 p.m. while council met in executive session.

The council meeting was reconvened at approximately 8:57 p.m.

President Mace announced that an executive session was held to discuss real estate, personnel and legal matters.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:57 p.m. on motion of Connely, seconded by Cara, to meet again at the call of the President.

ATTEST:

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Georgia Depos DeWire, Borough Secretary/Treasurer