

The Tamaqua Borough Council held its second Regular Council Meeting for the month of July on Tuesday, July 18, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Tamaqua Municipal Building, 320 East Broad Street, Tamaqua, PA.

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

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 Evans. The roll was called with six councilmembers present and one absent.

The reading of the minutes of the last Regular Council Meeting held on July 5, 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 Gayle Health of the Tamaqua Public Library thanking council for their continuing support which helps them to provide free services like early literacy programs and public access computers to the community.

Manager Steigerwalt reported that only one bid was received for the demolition of 216 Penn Street. The bid was from Northeast Industrial Service Corporation of Shamokin, PA in the amount of \$36,439. Manager Steigerwalt stated that he and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) consultant Karen Parish thought the bid was rather high. Manager Steigerwalt stated that it is a busy time of year for contractors, and suggested that Council reject the bid and then rebid the project in a few months. A recommendation was made to reject the bid in the amount of \$36,439 from Northeast Industrial Service Corporation of Shamokin, PA for the demolition of 216 Penn Street. Councilman Gursky stated that no action is required from Council to rebid 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 Cara, and unanimously approved.

Mayor Morrison reminded Council that the borough does own the property at 216 Penn Street and because the demolition is going to be delayed, trees, weeds, etc., on the property will need to be taken care of.

Manager Steigerwalt reported on a Schuylkill County Tax Claim Bureau Repository Sale of 252 West Cottage Avenue, tax parcel #65-15-0044.001, and a bid in the amount of \$1.00 was placed on the property by the borough. Manager Steigerwalt stated that the property is listed as a demolition project but that the borough has to own the property in order to participate in the county's demolition program. A recommendation was made to approve the Schuylkill County Tax Claim Bureau Repository Sale of 252 West Cottage Avenue, tax parcel #65-15-0044.001 to the Borough of Tamaqua for \$1.00. 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 Bowman, and unanimously approved.

Manager Steigerwalt reported that he had a resolution authorizing the submission of a demolition request to the county. The following resolution was presented for council's consideration:

**RESOLUTION NO. 2017-13
RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF A DEMOLITION
REQUEST TO THE COUNTY OF SCHUYLKILL**

A recommendation was made to adopt the foregoing resolution. 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 unanimous roll call vote.

Manager Steigerwalt also reported on the following: a pre-construction meeting regarding the Wabash Creek Culvert Repairs was held and Solid Wall LLC was issued the Notice-to-Proceed with work on the project as of July 31, 2017; a lot of the Wabash Creek Culvert repair work will be done in the area of the Tamaqua Public Library; advertising for bids for the Center Street Streetscape and Bridge Lighting Project; Alfred Benesch is working on the bathhouse upgrades; the next judicial sale of properties is scheduled for September 8th at 10:00 a.m; and he and Public Works Director Jones are working on potential CDBG projects which need to be submitted to the County by October.

Manager Steigerwalt also reported that in June, Council approved the transfer of Richard Miller from Street Maintenance Worker to Street Maintenance/Sweeper Operator and his probationary period is almost complete. A recommendation was made to approve the transfer of Richard Miller from Street Maintenance Worker to Street Maintenance/Sweeper Operator upon completion of his probationary period. 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 Lasky, and unanimously approved.

Manager Steigerwalt stated that the transfer of Richard Miller to the Street Maintenance/Sweeper Operator created a vacancy for a Street Maintenance Worker and there were no in-house applicants interested in applying for the position. A recommendation was made to advertise for a vacant Street Maintenance Worker position. 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 Gursky, and unanimously approved.

Under the Borough Manager's report, President Mace reported that progress is being made on the Family Dollar sidewalk. Councilman Bowman expressed his concern that the concrete curb forms may have been removed too soon.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made to deny a handicapped parking space application that was previously approved for 156 Orwigsburg Street. Councilman Cara stated that the committee and the applicant could not reach an agreement, since the original approval in 2015, as to where to place the sign and there are other requests for handicapped parking on that street. Council recognized Rich Shupp of 328 Washington Street who asked how the handicapped parking space is calculated. 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 Lasky, and unanimously approved.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made approve a handicapped parking space application for 125 Orwigsburg Street. 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.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made approve a handicapped parking space application for 215 Washington Street. 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.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a recommendation was made approve a handicapped parking space application for 142 Penn Street. 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.

Under the Neighborhoods, Downtown and Historic District Committee report, Councilman Gursky reported on a conference call held with Judd Roth of Berwick House Associates Ltd. regarding the financial situation of the Berwick House Apartments and his request to waive the \$85,000 loan granted through the borough for renovations of the property at 35 West Broad Street. Councilman Gursky stated that the loan program was made available through the Department of Community Affairs years ago, but that the loan was never paid to the borough. Councilman Gursky stated that if the loan had been paid back to the borough, the money could have been used to fund similar loans for other projects. Councilman Gursky also discussed the following: an interest in acquiring the property by Alliance for Building Communities; transferring ownership of the property; the property is still in need of repairs; other loans on the property; and the borough's option to foreclose, accept partial payment of the loan, forgive the \$85,000 note or restructure debt with new owners. Councilman Gursky stated that he recommends Council deny the request to waive the \$85,000 loan, but is requesting that a letter be sent to Berwick House Associates, Alliance for Building Communities and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency expressing an interest in working together to come up with a solution that is good for everyone. A recommendation was made to deny Judd Roth's request for a waiver of the \$85,000 loan for the Berwick House Apartments at 35 West Broad Street. 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 Bowman, and unanimously approved.

A recommendation was made to send a letter to the Berwick House Associates, Alliance for Building Communities and Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to express our concern for the condition and future of the Berwick House Apartments and to express our interest in working together with other debt holders to develop a plan to transfer ownership of the property to a responsible operator and secure the funding necessary to rehabilitate the building and units. 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 Bowman, and unanimously approved.

Chairman Mace of the Recreation and Youth Committee reported that a letter was received from Josh Schaeffer of OntheGrind Association regarding the revitalization of playground and skate parks and stated that the Recreation and Youth Committee would be discussing the matter in the near future.

Mayor Morrison requested an executive session to discuss litigation and personnel issues prior to adjournment.

The meeting was opened to the floor.

Kenny Mellor of 27 Rear Center Street complained about a neighboring property that for years has been a source of code violations including dumping of trash and high grass. Mr. Mellor stated that he had come before Council several times, including just last month, complaining about the same issue and nothing is being done about it. Mr. Mellor referenced a newspaper article from 2013 where he complained to Council about the same issues and stated that nothing has been done in four years. Manager Steigerwalt stated that code enforcement was informed of the matter, citations were issued to the property owner and fines are progressing. Mr. Mellor responded that the property owner just pays the fines and nothing gets done. Mr. Mellor requested that the property be cleaned up within a day or two stating that he couldn't even have a summer cookout because the area is so disgusting. Manager Steigerwalt and other councilmembers informed Mr. Mellor that the borough is taking action, code enforcement is following the process and although it will take some time, the property will be cleaned up.

Solicitor Greek arrived at approximately 7:45 p.m.

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

A recommendation was made to accept and file the various reports of borough officials. 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.

A recommendation was made to pay all properly approved bills and claims against the borough. Councilman Cara discussed a PA One Call bill in which the borough was charged \$.02 per email, and a PPL electric bill for the North and Middle Ward Playground showing an increase in the monthly electric usage. Manager Steigerwalt was instructed to contact Ray Sell of the North and Middle Ward Playground Association regarding electric usage at the playground. 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.

Under New Business, Councilman Evans provided an update on the Streetlight Acquisition Project as follows: the make-ready work will begin at the end of July or beginning of August and will take approximately three months to complete; PPL authorized contractors for the make-ready work will be working throughout the borough; PPL is finalizing the contract for the purchase of the lights, which should be available for council approval by July 28th; the approved contract will then move to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) for final approval which will take about three months; both the make-ready work and PUC approval will take place simultaneously and reach conclusion at about the same time (October); and authorizing requests for proposals for the conversion of the streetlights to new LED fixtures. President Mace suggested that we make residents aware via social media that PPL contractors will be working throughout the borough. A recommendation was made to advertise for Requests for Proposals (RFP's) to design a replacement of borough streetlights from high pressure sodium (HPS) to new light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures. 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.

A recommendation was made to hold an executive session to discuss personnel matters and litigation. 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.

The council meeting was recessed at approximately 8:05 p.m. while council met in executive session.

The council meeting was reconvened at approximately 8:40 p.m.

President Mace stated that an executive session was held to discuss personnel matters, real estate and litigation issues.

A recommendation was made to authorize Andy Leibenguth to repair a coal car on the North Railroad Street parking lot. 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 Bowman, and unanimously approved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45 p.m. on motion of Bowman, seconded by Evans, to meet again at the call of the President.

ATTEST:

Amy Macalush, Assistant Borough Secretary/Treasurer