

The Tamaqua Borough Council held its first Regular Council Meeting for the month of February on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Tamaqua Municipal Building, 320 East Broad Street, Tamaqua, PA.

Present were Councilmembers Robert Amentler, Ronald Bowman, Brian Connely, Jay Hollenbach Jr., Kathy Kunkel, Mary Linkevich and Ritchie Linkhorst. Officials present were Mayor Nathan Gerace, Chief of Police Michael Hobbs, Borough Manager Kevin Steigerwalt, Public Works Director Jay Stidham and Borough Secretary/Treasurer Trainee Timothy M. Ziegler. Solicitor Anthony Odorizzi was excused.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by President Connely. The invocation was given by Councilwoman Linkevich followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilman Hollenbach. The roll was called with all council members present.

President Connely reported that executive sessions were held on Monday, January 22, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. and Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 6 p.m. for personnel and legal matters.

The reading of the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting held on January 16, 2024 was ordered suspended, and with no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved as written on motion of Bowman, seconded by Amentler, and unanimously approved.

Communication was received from Robert D. Jones resigning as a member of the Employee Pension Committee, effective immediately. 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 Hollenbach, and unanimously approved.

Communication was received from Frank Morris requesting to fill a vacant position on the Employee Pension Committee. 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.

Communication was received from Albert Gricoski, director of Schuylkill County Election Bureau, requesting to use the Tamaqua Municipal Building for the upcoming Presidential Primary Election on Tuesday, April 23, 2024 and for the Presidential General Election on Tuesday, November 5, 2024. 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.

Communication was received from Judy Hoppes, Tamaqua Railfest committee member, requesting permission to use Depot Square Park for the 2nd Annual Tamaqua Railfest on Saturday, August 24, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The committee is also requesting use of the gazebo for musical entertainment and requesting assistance from 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 Bowman, seconded by Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

Communication was received from Lucy Pearson, secretary of the East End Fire Company, requesting permission to block both sides of the 500 block of East Broad Street on June 8 for a fire truck parade, and also requesting closure of South Columbia Street from East Broad Street to East End Avenue on June 5 through June 10 as well as each side of the East End Avenue and South Columbia Street intersection for their annual block party. 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 Hollenbach, and unanimously approved. Communication was received from Roxanne Harvilla of 403 Willing Street regarding the property located at 401 Willing Street which is attached to her home. The vacant home has smashed windows, a huge hole in the roof, falling pieces of debris, and high grass and weeds. There was some discussion regarding this property. Code enforcement is aware of the situation, and the property is on the borough's demolition list.

Communication was received from Tamaqua Fire Police Captain Brent Confer reporting that the Tamaqua Fire Police have responded to a total of 226 calls consisting of 2,235-man hours for the year of 2023. A Tamaqua Fire Police report will be issued to the borough on an annual basis going forward.

Manager Steigerwalt reported on the following: The plans and specifications for the North Ward and South Ward playground improvement projects are almost completed. Manager Steigerwalt stated that he plans to advertise for bids soon and have the bid results by the April council meeting. Manager Steigerwalt stated that he is currently working with the Recreation Committee on the grant for rehabilitation of the pool. There was some discussion with DCNR regarding this and the first step would be requesting proposals for a pool consultant. The borough's franchise agreement with Service Electric is due to expire in October 2024. President Connely assigned this to the committee that worked on the franchise agreement with Comcast. The county's real estate tax reassessment team has been in the borough doing reassessments on properties. They are allowed on residents' properties, but homeowners do not have to let them in their house. The reassessment workers have badges and marked vehicles. Residents are reminded to keep their sidewalks clear of snow and ice. Code officials have been ticketing residents for not clearing sidewalks. Residents must keep a three-foot-wide path clear of snow and ice within 24 hours after a snowstorm. Residents will also be cited if they throw snow on the streets.

Chief of Police Michael Hobbs acknowledged Public Works Director Jay Stidham for helping to obtain eight body cameras and a charging station on the Municibid auction site at a cost of \$807.09. The body cameras were paid for with donations from the Tamaqua Fire Police. Chief Hobbs reported that there have been several complaints of stores selling nicotine and tobacco products to minors which prompted the formation of a vape task force to stop illegal sales. Officer Christopher Cordes and Officer Andrew Seip were assigned to this task force. During the investigation it was found that stores were selling nicotine and tobacco to minors. The police worked with special agents from the Pennsylvania State Police, Department of Health, Food and Drug administration and the Health Promotion Council during the investigations. In January of 2024 compliance checks were completed and six businesses failed the tobacco compliance checks and were cited under Title 18 for tobacco sales to minors.

Under the Public Safety Committee report, a motion was made to send Patrolman Douglas Springer to Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE) training in Pottsville on February 29 and March 1 2024. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Linkhorst, seconded by Linkevich, and unanimously approved.

Under the Parking and Traffic Committee report, a motion was made to approve a handicapped parking space application for 243 Spruce Street, noting that the parking spot will be

on Oak Street. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Kunkel, seconded by Hollenbach, and unanimously approved.

Under the Neighborhoods, Downtown and Historic District Committee report, a motion was made by Hollenbach to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness to Harold Hill at 39 North Railroad Street for construction of a deck on the rear of the home. The motion died for lack of a second.

Under the Neighborhoods, Downtown and Historic District Committee report, a recommendation was made to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness to Jesus Guerrero at 421 West Broad Street to replace all existing windows with new windows, install a new front door, replace any rotten wood, install all new siding around the house, replace the roofline cornice rotted wood with new wrapping and replace the front porch and steps along with new vinyl railing and also to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness to Yousef Ali at 124 East Broad Street to replace the current business sign with a new sign. There was no one from the floor wishing to address council about this matter. The recommendation was so ordered on motion of Hollenbach, seconded by Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

Under the Recreation and Youth Committee report, a motion was made to hire Beth Jones as pool manager for the 2024 season at a pay rate of \$17.50 per hour. 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 Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

A motion was made to advertise for an assistant pool manager and part-time lifeguards and clerks for the 2024 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 Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

A motion was made to open the pool on Saturday, May 25, 2024 and close the pool on Sunday August 18, 2024 with both contingent on the school district schedule and lifeguard availability. 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 Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

A motion was made to maintain pool hours of 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily with hours subject to change based on weather and number of patrons and/or lifeguard availability. 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 Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

A motion was made to advertise for a concession stand vendor. 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 Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

A motion was made to approve the season and daily pool rate schedule for the 2024 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 Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

Under the Finance, Wage & Salary Committee report, a motion was made to hire Frank Staines as a full-time building custodian at the pay rate of \$19.57 effective February 7, 2024.

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 Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

Mayor Nathan Grace reported that he was contacted by the owner of 30 Hunter Street who stated that the Street Department blocks his parking space when they are plowing snow on Mahanoy and Bowe streets. There was some discussion about this matter. Public Works Director Stidham said the resident has been told that he should not park there, and that he is illegally parked. Mayor Gerace stated that the owner of 398 West Cottage Avenue told him that water is running down from the corner of Coal and Mahanoy streets and flooding her basement. Sandbags will be placed at the curb to make it higher, and a project to replace the catch basin will begin in Spring of 2024.

The meeting was opened to the floor with no one wishing to address council.

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 Bowman, seconded by Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

A recommendation was made to pay all properly approved bills and claims against the borough. 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 Kunkel, and unanimously approved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:31 p.m. on motion of Bowman, seconded by Kunkel, to meet again at the call of the President.

ATTEST:

Timothy M. Ziegler, Borough Secretary/Treasurer Trainee