

Rochester Borough Council
Regular Meeting in Council Chambers
February 18, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

Present: President Benjamin Rader, Vice-President Marjorie White, Brandy Dietrich, Howard Howe, Don Brothers, Ron Becker, Martin Knafelc, Mayor Keith Jackson, Solicitor Bernie Rabik, Police Chief Frank Mercier, Manager John Barrett

Absent: Donna Short, Code Officer Peggy Griffith

The regular meeting was called to order with the invocation, pledge of allegiance and roll call.

Persons in Attendance:

Joann Koehler, Mental Heath Association, updated Council on the progress to repair the retaining wall on their property that partially collapsed. The adjacent property owner is refusing to allow access to the wall through his property. Given the nature of the wall and the location, the engineer Mental Heath has secured for this project stated that the wall cannot be repaired without access to the back side of it. After some discussion, Solicitor Rabik asked Mrs. Koehler to have their attorney contact him if this could not get resolved.

Mike Neely, E. Park Street, stated that Chief Mercier has done a great job as Police Chief. Mr. Neely was aware of the issue involving the Mayor and asked Council to simply follow the law with respect to the duties and rights of the Mayor.

Action Items:

Mr. Becker motioned to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2019 stormwater and regular Council meetings, the minutes of the January 6, 2019 reorganization meeting and the minutes of the January 21, 2020 regular meeting as presented. Mr. Brothers seconded and the motion carried.

Mrs. Dietrich motioned to pay all approved bills as submitted. Mr. Brothers seconded and the motion carried.

BILLS:

Gen. Fund – Ck# 9498–9629 – totaling \$498,718.93.

Payroll (12/27, 1/10, 1/24, 2/7) – Ck# 4574-4619 plus Dir. Dep. and Elec. Pymts. – totaling \$175,399.91.

Council received an engagement letter from H2R (Cottrill & Arbutina) to provide auditing services for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 to audit the financial statements of the Borough and complete the DCED Annual Audit Report. After some discussion, Mr. Howe motioned to accept and approve the proposal as presented. Mr. Becker seconded and the motion carried.

Community Development Program, Block Grant application – due by March 31st. The Manager discussed projects that funds can be applied for; demolition of commercial properties, handicap ramps at various intersections, road paving and funding for the fountain park project. The Manager stated that the Code Officer had several commercial properties which need demolished but the Manager was not sure if the Code Officer has been able to secure the necessary documents. After some discussion, Mrs. White motioned to approve the application for handicap ramps. Mr. Howe seconded and the motion carried. If any commercial demolition gets secured, it can be added to the application.

The Rochester Area Baseball/Softball League is asking if Council would consider a donation to their organization to support their efforts in providing a positive and constructive recreation activity for the children of Rochester. The Manager noted that Council did donate \$300 last year. After some discussion, Mrs. Dietrich motioned to approve a \$300 donation to the group. Mr. Becker seconded and the motion carried.

Josh Collins, Coalition Against Bigger Trucks, is asking Council to send a letter to Senator Casey, Senator Toomey and Congressman Lamb asking them to oppose any proposed legislation to allow for longer and heavier commercial trucks. After some discussion, Mr. Brothers motioned to have the Manager send the requested letters to the Senators and Congressman as proposed. Mrs. White seconded and the motion carried.

Mrs. White provided a registration form naming a voting delegate from a Municipality for the purpose of electing the Officers of the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB). Mrs. White is asking that she be appointed the Voting Delegate for Rochester Borough and would like to attend the Annual Conference where the vote will be taken. The Conference is June 7-10 in Hershey, PA. After some discussion, Mr. Howe motioned to appoint Mrs. White as the Borough's Voting Delegate for the purpose of voting at the Annual Conference. Mrs. Dietrich seconded and the motion carried.

PMRS is working with all their clients to enact new retirement plan documents to ensure the clients have IRS approved, tax qualified plans under their new regulations. Attached is a draft ordinance and adoption agreement for Council's review. The Manager is asking that Council authorize the Solicitor and Manager to prepare the necessary ordinance and advertise it for adoption at the March 16th regular meeting. After some discussion, Mrs. White motioned to authorize the Solicitor and Manager to prepare the ordinance and advertisement for adoption at the March regular meeting. Mr. Howe seconded and the motion carried.

Review Items:

Council received for their review, the minutes of the December 12, 2019, January 9, 2020 and January 22, 2020 Rochester Area Joint Sewer Authority meetings.

Council received for their review, the meeting notes of the January 13, 2020 Rochester Borough Development Corporation meeting.

Council received for their review, the December 2019, Annual 2019 and January 2020 Fire Department reports.

Council received for their review, the audit reports from the State Auditor General's office for the Police and Non-Uniform Pension Plans for the years 2015 through 2018.

Committee Reports:

Public Administration – Ron Becker, Chairperson

The Expense & Revenue report covering January 1, 2019 through December 10, 2019 was presented for Council's review.

Heart & Soul Program – a recognition and kick-off meeting are scheduled for February 26th at 10:00 a.m. in the Beaver County Commissioners' meeting room. The Council, Mayor, Solicitor, Police Chief and Code Officer are all invited to attend. Ambridge and Beaver Falls were also awarded the Heart & Soul Program.

Statement of Financial Interest – All members have received the form and are required to complete it and return it to the Borough Office before May 1st. The form is to represent your interests for the year 2019.

Public Safety – Martin Knafelc, Chairperson

Mr. Knafelc noted Duquesne Light's pole replacement project and to be careful driving in those areas. Mrs. White asked if the 2 houses that recently caught fire had insurance. The Manager stated that the Code Officer did say they both had insurance coverage.

Public Works – Howard Howe, Chairperson

The Manager noted that Public Works has been working on changing signs over to the new utility poles, filling pot holes, salting and plowing as needed and various building maintenance work.

Recreation – Brandy Dietrich, Chairperson

Mrs. Dietrich had nothing to report.

Mr. Rader distributed his 2020 Committee assignments and Chairs for everyone to review. He noted that if anyone had any comments or concerns to please contact him.

Mayor's Report:

The Mayor had nothing to report.

Solicitor's Report:

Solicitor Rabik was asked about the status regarding the purchase of the Martino property. Solicitor Rabik stated that he would like to discuss this in the executive session as it involves negotiations of terms for the sale.

Code Officer's Report:

The December 2019 and January 2020 Code Officer's Reports were presented in her absence for Council's review.

Manager Barrett noted the Landlord Registration/Inspection report which was placed at everyone's seat for Council's review.

Police Chief's Report:

Chief Mercier presented the December 2019, Annual 2019 and January 2020 Police Department reports as well as his code enforcement report for Council's review. Chief Mercier reviewed several items from the reports.

Manager's/Treasurer's Report:

Manager Barrett presented the December 2019 and January 2020 Treasurer's reports for Council's review.

Manager Barrett stated that Rochester Borough was approved for the Municipal Intern Program through the Local Government Academy. The Manager will be attending a mandatory workshop on February 26th where program requirements, funding parameters, and expectations of placement sites will be reviewed.

Old Business/New Business:

Mrs. White asked if there was an update on the old Beaver Valley Bowl building. Manager Barrett stated that the DEP has completed the clean-up of the property.

There was discussion regarding the garbage billing and payments the Borough receives. It was noted that there is a significant amount of past due fees and the need to try and manage the collection of the fees. Manager Barrett stated that the office has been placing liens on properties for significant past due balances. He noted that the office has just implemented the process of writing a citation for past due fees to see if this alternative to a lien would better aid in the collection. Mrs. White asked if the Borough could partner with the Joint Sewer Authority and have the garbage fees placed on their sewer bills for collection on behalf of the Borough. This way if the bill is not paid, the Sewer Authority has the ability to shut off their water service for non-payment. The Borough might see a better response from the residents knowing their water might get shut off. The Manager stated that he had looked into partnering with the Joint Sewer Authority several years ago and that their fee for billing our customers was significantly higher than what it cost our office for billing. The Manager stated that since we just implemented the citation process, lets review it's effectiveness over the next several months and if this doesn't produce a level of collection we would like then we can approach the Joint Sewer Authority to see if they would be willing to take this on and what the cost would be. Everyone was agreeable with this course of action.

Council went into executive session at 7:37 p.m. to discuss contract negotiations for the police and public works unions and to discuss the purchase of the Martino property.

Council reconvened at 8:17 p.m.

The meeting adjourned 8:18 p.m.

Submitted by,

John M. Barrett
Borough Manager