Rochester Borough Council

Regular Meeting in the Municipal Building

August 17, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

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

Absent: Donna Short

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

Persons in Attendance:

Candy Dwire, representing the residents in the 300 block of Deer Lane, presented Council with a petition, signed by the residents of the 300 block of Deer Lane, asking that this block be made a one-way street heading east towards Harmony Avenue. Cars continually use this street as a short cut and since there is no stop sign at the intersection of Harmony Avenue and Deer Lane the cars are moving at an increased speed. There are more families with children in the area and there is a concern for the safety of children who tend to bounce back and forth across the street playing with each other. Mrs. Dwire also raised a concern about the intersection of Oregon Avenue and Deer Lane just being a 2-way stop. After some discussion, Council agreed to change Deer Lane to a one-way street and add the 2 stop signs at the intersection of Deer Lane and Oregon Avenue.

Albert Ellis, 311 Deer Lane, addressed Council about the condition of 313 Deer Lane. Mr. Ellis stated that he has brought this up before and doesn’t understand why nothing is being done to resolve this problem. The Solicitor and Code Officer discussed what they have done to this point. The Code Officer stated that this house was on the County’s list for demolition and set for demolition this year. The County is behind on their demolitions due to the restrictions that have been imposed during the current pandemic. She will check with the County on the status of their program and let the Solicitor know.

Sandra Klezia, representing the Rochester Little Rams football organization, stated to Council that their Mitey Mite football team is unable to use the School District’s practice area at this time. They are asking Council if they could use the upper ballfield area off of Connecticut Avenue for their practices this year which would run approximately August through November. Mrs. Starr, the President of the Rochester Area Baseball Softball organization, stated that they are currently not using that ballfield because it needs significant improvements before it could be used. She felt football practices would not increase any work or costs to repair the field for baseball or softball use. After some discussion, Council agreed to permit the Rochester Little Rams to use the upper ballfield for their practices this year. The Manager will send a letter to both groups notifying them of Council’s decision.

Action Items:

Mrs. Dietrich motioned to approve the minutes of the July 20, 2020 regular meeting as presented. Mr. Becker seconded and the motion carried.

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

BILLS:

Gen. Fund – Ck# 9986–10035 – totaling $42,269.74.

Payroll (7/24, 8/7) – Ck# 4748-4772 plus Dir. Dep. and Elec. Pymts. – totaling $95,820.59.

Council received an email from the Ohio River Trail Council. They are working with communities along the Ohio River Trail to develop a brochure specific to each community that would highlight the trail through the community as well as identify businesses and recreation opportunities in the area. They are asking each community to contribute $1,000 towards the $3,000 cost of designing the brochure. The community would be asked to cover the printing costs which have not yet been determined. The Manager stated that the Rochester Borough Development Corporation would like to work with Council on this and would share in covering the associated costs. After some discussion, Mrs. White motioned to approve participating in the development of the brochure as presented. Mr. Becker seconded and the motion carried.

Council received a letter from The Rochester Borough Development Corporation (RBDC). The RBDC is making a recommendation to Council to consider creating a new zoning district called the Central Business District. Certain types of businesses would be directed to this new district to collect and condense these types of businesses to make a more attractive and effective shopping experience for patrons. The RBDC is also willing to participate in any meetings to review and consider this change. After some discussion, Mr. Howe motioned to forward this recommendation to the Borough’s Planning Commission and ask them to conduct a review and make recommendations to the Council for their consideration. Mrs. White seconded and the motion carried.

Review Items:

Council received for their review, the minutes of the July 9, 2020 Rochester Area Joint Sewer Authority meeting.

Council received for their review, the meeting notes of the July 14, 2020 Rochester Borough Development Corporation meeting.

Council received for their review, a draft ordinance that Rochester Township will be considering regarding the regulation of false fire alarms in the Township. The Borough and Township should look to draft similar ordinances for consistency and ease of administration. Chief Mamone discussed the purpose for this ordinance. After some discussion, Solicitor Rabik will discuss this further with the Township’s Solicitor and provide a recommendation to Council.

Committee Reports:

Public Administration – Ron Becker, Chairperson

The Expense & Revenue report covering January 1, 2020 through August 13, 2020 was presented for Council’s review.

The proposed Lease Agreement between the Borough and the Sewer & Maintenance Authority for use of the old Borough garage. The Committee met to review and discuss the proposed agreement provided by the Sewer Authority. The Committee provided their comments to Council for their review. After some discussion, Council agree upon a monthly lease amount of $800 along with the other language changes discussed. The Solicitor and Manager will draft a lease agreement with the changes for Council’s review and consideration.

Public Safety – Don Brothers, Chairperson

Police Services for Freedom Borough – The Committee met to discuss the needs and costs for providing police services to Freedom Borough. The Committee provided a draft agreement for Council to review and discuss. The draft is modeled after the East Rochester Police Services Agreement. After some discussion, Mr. Becker motioned to approve the draft agreement as presented and to have the Police Chief present it to the Freedom Council members for their consideration. Mr. Knafelc seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Brothers brought up the need to have notices sent to people not removing the grass and weeds from their sidewalks. Code Officer Griffith stated that she will drive around the Borough and issues notices as needed.

Public Works – Howard Howe, Chairperson

Mr. Howe had nothing to report.

Recreation – Brandy Dietrich, Chairperson

Mrs. Dietrich had nothing to report.

Mayor’s Report:

Mayor Jackson stated on Ohio Avenue, there was a sink hole and a yellow house that is giving off a smell. The Mayor stated that there is graffiti and high grass at the old Grauley Studio on Brighton Avenue. Code Officer Griffith stated that she was recently at a hearing with the owners and they agreed to clean the graffiti and cut the grass.

Mayor Jackson stated that he received a tow sticker on his car and asked why numerous other abandoned vehicles around town were not tag like his. Chief Mercier stated that Sargent Shane handles the abandoned vehicle violations and she has been working around town identifying and tagging these vehicles. It’s an on going process and she will continue to tag these vehicles as they are identified. The Mayor stated that he still has not received a key to the police department. The Mayor stated that he has asked for the personal files for all new hires and has not received them. The Mayor was reminded to put his requests in writing for clarification of those requests.

Mayor Jackson stated that the Police Chief is not wearing his protective vest when going on calls. The next time he sees him not wearing his vest he will suspend the Chief. Chief Mercier stated that he always wears his vest on calls. The Chief stated that the Mayor keeps bringing this up and falsely accuses him of not wearing his vest when in fact he is. The Chief feels he is now being harassed by the Mayor and will no longer accept these kinds of false statements being spoken by the Mayor. The Chief stated that he will consider all his options if this harassment continues.

Mayor Jackson requested that Officer Farmer be promoted to Sargent. It was noted that Council would have to declare an opening for a Sargent’s position and then ask the Civil Service Commission to conduct an exam and provide Council with a list of candidates who have passed the exam showing their scores, highest to lowest. Mr. Rader stated that Council would take his request under consideration.

A number of issues were brought up tonight and Mrs. Dietrich stated to the Mayor, how can these issues be resolved when you are unwilling to discuss them at a meeting. The Mayor stated he would not discuss this with the group. He told Council members to make an appointment with him if they wanted to discuss something.

Solicitor’s Report:

Solicitor Rabik noted that negotiation will begin after Labor Day with the police and public works unions for new labor agreements.

Code Officer’s Report:

Code Officer Griffith presented the July 2020 Code Officer’s Report for Council’s review.

Code Officer Griffith stated that the Borough’s Planning Commission would be meeting on August 25th at 7:00 p.m. to review and discuss the sign regulations.

Police Chief’s Report:

Chief Mercier presented the July 2020 Police Department report and code enforcement report for Council’s review. Chief Mercier reviewed several items from the reports.

Chief Mercier informed Council that Sargent Shane recently broke her ankle while she was on duty and will be off for a number of weeks.

Fire Chief’s Report:

Chief Mamone presented the July 2020 Fire Department report for Council’s review. Chief Mamone reviewed several items from the report and noted several grants they are pursuing.

Manager’s/Treasurer’s Report:

Manager Barrett presented the July 2020 Treasurer’s report for Council’s review.

Old Business/New Business:

Mr. Rader noted several communities having food truck events and asked if Rochester should look at doing something like this to bring people into the community. The Manager stated that the Development Corporation has been looking into this and would like to have this type of event as well. The Manager will pass on to the Development Corporation that Council would like to see them take place as well.

The meeting adjourned 7:55 p.m.

Submitted by,

John M. Barrett

Borough Manager