

November 12, 2020

The regular meeting of the Ligonier Borough Council was held Thursday, November 12, 2020 via ZOOM due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. President James St. Clair presided over the meeting.

Members Present: James St. Clair, Matt Smith, Robert Barron, Mariah Fisher, Judy Hoffer, Jeff Craig, Nate Sylvester.

Others Present: Secretary-Treasurer Jan Shaw, Street Supervisor Ron Ross, Mayor Ormond "Butch" Bellas, Engineer Ben Faas, Solicitor George Welty, Police Chief John Berger, Fire Chief Corey Blystone, Zoning Officer Rick Schwab. Absent was Code Enforcement Officer Shawn Knepper.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mariah Fisher and seconded by Matt Smith to approve the minutes of October 2, 2020 and October 5, 2020 as presented. All of Council was in favor.

BILLS PAYABLE

A motion was made by Matt Smith and seconded by Robert Barron to approve the Bills Payable as also presented. The motion carried with all in favor.

CONSENT CALENDAR

A motion was made by Jeff Craig and seconded by Matt Smith to approve the Consent Calendar. The motion carried 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Interim Director of the Ligonier Valley Chamber of Commerce, Joyce McIntire introduced Amy Beitel of Ligonier as the new Executive Director.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Former Police Station Building:

Finance Committee Chairman Nate Sylvester reported that the Professional Real Estate Appraisal Services, Inc. of Greensburg appraised the building for \$275,000 in August. The Finance Committee feels that selling the former police station building is in the best interest of the borough and its taxpayers, given the challenges of preparing the 2021 budget.

Solicitor Welty explained that council must pass a resolution to sell the building and follow a specific process under the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs code involving rounds of bids or public auctions before a private sale with full disclosure could occur.

A motion was made by Matt Smith and seconded by Nate Sylvester to sale the building in the first quarter of 2021. The motion carried with all in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE

Temporary sign Permit Application was received from the Ligonier Pharmacy for a 2'x6' vinyl banner to be displayed on the pharmacy at 113 S. Fairfield St. reminding community of Flu Shots. The banner is to be hung from now until January 2021.

A motion was made by Mariah Fisher and seconded by Jeff Craig to approve the banner request. The motion carried with all of Council in favor.

Letter received from Ginny Fitzner of Ligonier Hose Co. #1 requesting a parking consideration. Fitzner asks that Council allow vehicles with a LVHC#1 front plate to park for free on the block

of Fairfield Street, from Church Street to Bank Alley – no matter if they are performing LVHC#1 business or not. Fitzner feels this would be a small gesture of thanks to these men and women who give so much to the community.

It was decided to turn the request over to the Public Safety Committee and table until next month's meeting with a response.

A letter was received from the LV Chamber of Commerce requesting permission to use the Diamond Park area for its 30th Annual Ice Fest Saturday, January 23, 2021 and Sunday, January 24, 2021.

It was noted that there will not be any onsite or speed carving. All ice sculptures will be carved offsite and delivered to the Diamond for display. The large chair ice sculpture will not be on display.

LV Chamber of Commerce further asks if the Borough would consider turning off the sidewalk heat for the event or permit the sculptures to be placed on top of the Diamond Park walls. Also requested is consideration in bagging 2 meters in front of the Library for Hanson's Original Kettle Korn from 5pm Friday until Sunday at 5pm. Requested as well is to bag the first 4 meters on Fairfield Street beside the YMCA from 8am-4pm Saturday and Sunday for Misty Haven Carriage to park their horse trailer and truck.

A discussion ensued and it was determined that the heated sidewalks will not be turned off nor will ice sculptures be permitted to be placed on the walls for safety concerns. The ice sculptures may be placed on the grass, on blocks or in front of sponsoring businesses.

The event is permitted to occur while following all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention pandemic guidelines for social distancing and masks.

A motion was made by Nate Sylvester and seconded by Judy Hoffer to approve the event and the bagged meters for kettle corn and carriage rides. All of Council was in favor.

Letter received from the LV Chamber of Commerce requesting Council to consider free parking on four Saturdays beginning November 28-December 19, 2020.

A motion was made by Mariah Fisher and seconded by Judy Hoffer to approve free parking at metered lots during the four consecutive Saturdays between Thanksgiving and Christmas subject to the LV Chamber contributing \$1,200 for two of the Saturdays. The motion carried unanimously.

Letter received from the Weeders and Seeders requesting permission to present an outdoor flower show on the Ligonier Diamond July 24, 2021 with social distancing guidelines to be followed for all displays and presentations.

The Weeders and Seeders Garden Club of Ligonier is collaborating with the Loyalhanna Watershed Assoc., Penguin Court – A Preserve of the Brandywine Conservancy, DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, PA Master Naturalist, Penn State Master Gardeners of Westmoreland County, and First Energy on a season-long adventure to explore our native wildflowers and plants. As part of this education program an outdoor flower show is proposed for the participation and enjoyment of Ligonier residents, as well as summer visitors to downtown Ligonier.

The show will be "open to the public".

A motion was made by Mariah Fisher and seconded by Robert Barron to approve suggesting all CDC guidelines for social distancing are followed if we should be under any restricted guidelines at that point. The motion carried with all in favor.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PARKS & RECREATION

Mariah Fisher, Chair of Parks & Recreation reported that Friendship Park restrooms have been winterized and therefore closed for the winter season. Friendship Park will open on days the temperature reaches up to 50 degrees or above. The Diamond will also be winterized within the next few days.

The Borough is still accepting ideas for renovating the tennis courts by Friendship Park. The Parks & Recreation Committee still hopes to schedule a public forum to discuss the project maybe in January.

It was also reported that Council's Fort Ligonier Days Committee plans to launch a community survey to solicit input on the annual festival, although it will not make any recommendation to Fort Ligonier Days Inc. for the 2021 event.

TOWN HALL

Judy Hoffer, Chair of Town Hall Committee reported that a complete cleaning of the Town Hall basement was conducted after the Election.

Hoffer reported that the new door was put on the Town Hall on East Main Street side thanks to the Public Works Department.

The Town Hall elevator will need some work done on it to bring it up to date. The committee will discuss the needs and bring a recommendation to council.

A motion was made by Judy Hoffer and seconded by Mariah Fisher to keep the Town Hall Auditorium, Community Room and second floor meeting rooms closed to the public for the month. All visitors to Town Hall must wear masks and social distance when in the building. All of Council was in favor.

Rental second floor:

It is hoped to move forward in the New Year with rental of the recently vacated office space upstairs in Town Hall. The rooms are painted and carpets have been cleaned. The Town Hall has many restrictions as to who can rent the rooms, but the Town Hall Committee has a few fillers out to different governing bodies to see if there is any interest.

PUBLIC WORKS

Nothing

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chairman Jeff Craig reported that the LVPD just completed its first full year of operation and finished the year with a slight surplus and will maintain a flat budget for 2021.

Craig commended Chief John Berger and Assistant Chief Mike Matrunics for their management of the department and their dedication and willingness to take on additional shifts and reduce overtime.

FINANCE

Chairman Nate Sylvester reported that Ligonier Borough is looking at balanced budget of more than \$1.4 million for 2021 with no tax increase. A copy of the draft budget will be available in the Borough office for review. Sylvester reported that the proposed budget should be ready for approval at next month's meeting.

The loss of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau as a Town Hall tenant left a big hole in the budget and the Borough hopes to soon fill.

Sylvester reported that both income and expenses increased about \$89,000 leaving a small surplus of about \$300 for next year.

The property tax rate will stay at 24.5 mills.

Sylvester noted that one positive trend he noticed was that the amount of earned income taxes the Borough collects has increased over time at about 8% from 2018 to 2019 and about 5% from 2019 to what is projected for 2020.

A motion was made by Nate Sylvester and seconded by Robert Barron to review the proposed 2021 budget. All of Council was in favor.

PLANNING / PERSONNEL

Chairman Matt Smith reported that some trees have been cut down in the Borough with new trees to come in.

An executive meeting was called by Matt Smith for personnel at the close of the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Nothing

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Joyce McIntire, interim director of the LV Chamber of Commerce noted that at a recent Fort Ligonier Days board meeting in October an interest was expressed for a joint meeting with a few of the Borough representatives, police, FLD, the Fort, merchants and restaurants to see the status of Fort Ligonier Days.

COMMENDATIONS & COMMENTS from OFFICERS and DEPARTMENTS

Ron Ross, Street Supervisor reminded everyone to please keep their leaves off the streets and rake them to the curb.

President Sam St. Clair asked everyone to be patient regarding leaf pick up.

Zoning Officer Rick Schwab reminded all that political signs should be removed within two weeks after the election.

Police Chief John Berger thanked the LV Endowment for a generous donation of \$3600 that will be used to buy ballistic vests.

Engineer Ben Faas reported Darr Construction is finishing up an estimate for the Town Hall repair work after the September garbage truck accident into Council Chambers.

Mayor Butch Bellas also thanked Chief John Berger and Assistant Chief Mike Matrunic for taking on the extra hours at the LVPD to save on overtime.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion was made by Matt Smith and seconded by Nate Sylvester to adjourn into executive session for personnel with no action to be taken after. All of Council was in favor. The meeting adjourned into executive session at 8:10PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janette Shaw
Secretary-Treasurer