

December 10, 2020

The regular meeting of the Ligonier Borough Council was held Thursday, December 10, 2020 via ZOOM amidst the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. President James St. Clair presided over the meeting.

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

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mariah Fisher and seconded by Jeff Craig to approve the minutes of both the Conditional Use Hearing and the regularly scheduled meeting of November 2020. All of Council was in favor.

BILLS PAYABLE

A motion was made by Jeff Craig and seconded by Mariah Fisher to approve the Bills Payable as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT CALENDAR

A motion was made by Jeff Craig and seconded by Matt Smith to approve the Consent Calendar. The motion carried 6-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Fort Ligonier Day’s Lease Agreement: adding Paragraph #8 a Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic provision which states both the Borough and FLD Inc. acknowledge the agreement is subject to PA pandemic requirements and that either party may cancel the event.

A motion was made by Jeff Craig and seconded by Robert Barron to adopt the **one-year lease** agreement between Ligonier Borough and Fort Ligonier Days Inc. for the 2021 festival as presented.

CORRESPONDENCE

A letter was received from the LV Library requesting financial support.

A motion was made by Jeff Craig and seconded by Nate Sylvester to make a \$1,200 contribution to the LV Library. All of Council was in favor.

Temporary sign application received from Fort Ligonier for 2 aluminum 12 sq. ft. to be placed on the 2 corners of Diamond as well as 1 of the same to be placed on the post & rail fence at Fort Ligonier from 12-11-2020 – 3-31-2021 to increase awareness that the museum is open winter weekends.

A motion was made by Robert Barron and seconded by Mariah Fisher to approve the banner and sign request from Fort Ligonier. The motion carried unanimously.

Letter of praise was received for LVPD from the Mutual Aid Ambulance Service.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PARKS & RECREATION

Chair, Mariah Fisher reported that Diamond Park has now been winterized. Friendship Park has been winterized as well but the Park itself can be opened on days it is above 50 degrees.

TOWN HALL

Chair, Judy Hoffer was absent. No report.

PUBLIC WORKS

Nothing to report.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chairman Jeff Craig brought up a request by the Ligonier Hose Co. #1 to move the barriers in Bank Alley which are preventing fire trucks from accessing two hydrants on either side of the alley if need be.

Street Supervisor Ron Ross responded that the barriers are needed for safety reasons. A structural engineer determined the barrier was necessary as bricks from the building's second floor could fall into the roadway. After the accident in September the bricks are only being held up by a few boards until the Town Hall is repaired. After discussion it was decided that the barriers will be looked at for the possibility of moving them slightly to aid the firemen.

Jeff Craig reported that the LVPD adopted its 2021 budget with no increase.

Jeff Craig thanked Fire Chief Corey Blystone for a great year with the Ligonier Hose Co. #1. It was reported that the Fire Department is in good shape in terms of leadership, commitment, membership, training etc.

Apparatus will soon need to be replaced as some are approaching 20+ years such as the Tower and Engine according to Fire Chief Corey Blystone. The Fire Department is currently having vendors bring in apparatus to view.

Jeff Craig stated that there are issues that need addressed in regards to the old Borough building (former police station) in which the fire department stores equipment and apparatus. Jeff Craig pointed out that according to Ordinance No. 187 of 1937 a \$20,000 bond issue by the Borough for the construction of the new municipal building was secured. The structure included quarters for council meetings, the Borough Fire Department and other agencies. Craig further stated a resolution in 1938 was adopted by council which gave the Ligonier Volunteer Fire Department absolute control over the second floor room.

FINANCE

Chairman Nate Sylvester reported that the **2021 Budget** was presented last month.

A motion was made by Nate Sylvester and seconded by Mariah Fisher to adopt the 2021 Budget with no tax increase. The motion carried with all in favor.

Nate Sylvester also reported that the 2019 audit report has come in with no findings.

Sylvester added that the finance committee wishes to proceed with the sale of the old Town Hall (former police station). The Borough acknowledges the value of the fire company to the community and will work with the department throughout the process.

Sylvester also stated that it is his understanding that the fire department has control over the second floor of the building, however only if the Borough still owned the building.

Repeal of Resolution:

A motion was made by Nate Sylvester and seconded by Matt Smith to repeal the Resolution and work together with the fire department to find out their needs.

A roll call vote was taken with James St. Clair, Matt Smith, Mariah Fisher, & Nate Sylvester voting to repeal the resolution and Robert Barron and Jeff Craig voting no.

The motion carried to repeal the resolution.

Nate Sylvester added for the record that by repealing the resolution it does not have any impact on the Borough's cooperation that Council wishes to have with the firemen on the sale of the building and that we will do it together as a community.

PLANNING / PERSONNEL

Chairman Matt Smith reported the Public Works crew was planting some shade trees.

NEW BUSINESS

Heather Lincoln, Chief Executive Officer - Bethlen Communities:

Updated Council on the retirement community's continuing recovery from their fragile financial position. Thanks to the assistance from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, Bethlen engaged The Hill Group of Carnegie to lead its financial, operational and governance turnaround.

Lincoln also explained how Bethlen has handled the COVID-19 outbreak with a daily coronavirus task force with no shortage of protective equipment, and is conducting regular testing of residents and staff.

ZOOM MEETINGS 2021:

Councilwoman Mariah Fisher read a statement pertaining to COVID-19.

As we are all aware, the coronavirus has been rapidly spreading throughout Westmoreland County the past several months and weeks. We are now at a point where our local hospitals are reaching capacity. This afternoon Governor Wolf and the Pennsylvania Department of Health issued new restrictions to help mitigate the spread of Covid-19. The new, limited-time mitigation orders take effect at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 12, and remain in effect until 8 a.m. on Jan. 4, 2021.

- *All in-person indoor dining at businesses in the retail food services industry is prohibited.*
- *Gatherings of more than 10 people indoors or 50 people outdoors are prohibited*
- *Indoor operations of gyms and fitness facilities are prohibited*
- *All in-person businesses in the entertainment industry, including but not limited to, theaters, museums, casinos, bowling alleys and private clubs serving the public within a building or indoor defined area are prohibited.*
- *All in-person businesses serving the public may only operate at 50% capacity.*
- *All in-person extracurricular school activities and k-12 school sports are paused.*

As a community we need to take action and make sure that we are doing our part to protect our neighbors and help slow the spread of Covid-19. Ligonier has always been able to rise to challenges and is known for being a supportive community, so I urge all residents to wear a mask any time you are in public or in the company of anyone not from your own household and continue social distancing.

I know that the last months have been long and hard, but I do believe that if we continue working together we can protect the most vulnerable in our community and help support our businesses. We all know that our merchant, restaurant and even volunteer communities have been hurting because of all of the safety precautions so I would encourage residents to continue supporting our businesses as you are able by shopping online or doing a pickup, ordering gift certificates for the holiday season and getting takeout from our local establishments.

I continue to urge residents to follow all CDC guidelines. Stay at home whenever you are able and especially if you are not feeling well, and get a test if you have any symptoms or have an exposure to someone who has tested positive for Covid 19. We need to work together to slow

the spread of this virus and keep Ligonier a healthy and vibrant community now and in the future.

A motion was made by Mariah Fisher and seconded by Nate Sylvester for the 1st quarter of 2021 to continue meetings via ZOOM. The motion carried unanimously.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT

None

COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS from OFFICER & DEPARTMENTS

Secretary-Treasurer Jan Shaw noted that a resolution is needed along with the adopted 2021 Budget stating that there is no change in tax rate.

Resolution 2020-05:

A resolution of the Borough of Ligonier, Westmoreland County, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, fixing the tax rate for the year 2021.

A motion was made by Matt Smith and seconded by Nate Sylvester to adopt Resolution 2020-05. The motion carried with all of Council in favor.

CARES GRANT:

Paperwork has been received from the County for the Cares Grant award of \$30,000. Paperwork is to be returned after signing

Street Supervisor Ron Ross reported that leaf collection is officially over. The crew collected 79 loads with 331 man hours to complete.

Fire Chief Corey Blystone clarified the Fire Department's position in regards to the old municipal building / police station. Blystone stated that the building is instrumental to the fire department's everyday function in response to emergencies. Equipment and trucks stored in the building is used every time the whistle blows. The fire department does not have an option at this point of where to go or what to do with the equipment etc. Blystone added that he is looking forward to working with Council.

President James St. Clair stated expressed the need to work together as a group and come up with a solution.

EADS Engineer Ben Faas reported having all contractors' documentation / paperwork for the gutter project and will be taken to Town Hall for signatures.

Mayor Bellas reminded all to keep their sidewalks shoveled as per the Borough ordinance.

President James St. Clair announced that an executive session is needed at the close of the meeting with no action to be taken. St. Clair wished all a Merry Christmas.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion was made by Matt Smith and seconded by Nate Sylvester to adjourn into executive session. All of Council was in favor. The motion adjourned into executive session at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janette Shaw
Secretary-Treasurer