

City of Shamokin Regular Council Meeting
December 11, 2023
6:00 PM

The Regular Monthly Meeting of Shamokin City Council was held this evening with Mayor Richard H. Ulrich presiding.

CALL TO ORDER:

PLEDGE TO FLAG:

PRAYER:

ROLL CALL: Milbrand, Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich
Absent: None

PRESENTATIONS:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

BIDS:

CORRESPONDENCE:

The City Administrator spoke about correspondence that was read to Council earlier from a person representing the Shamokin Fire Bureau.

CITIZENS COMMENTS (contingent upon business listed on the agenda):

Daniel Sessions, the president of the Shamokin Fire Bureau, was here tonight to speak on behalf of the Shamokin Fire Bureau about the open Chief position. There is talk about only having three Chiefs, which he doesn't think is a good idea as that would add more stress and abundance of tasks to the current three Chiefs. He asks that they consider a recommendation for Bruce Rogers to fulfill the position as requested by the Shamokin Fire Bureau. All personnel were asked to apply for the position if they wished to do so. Bruce was the only one to apply. The letter for Bruce's recommendation for the position was written and delivered to Mr. Slaby on November 9, 2023. He has served 20 years as a Fire Chief Officer so he is more than qualified and he is also around to make calls especially during the daytime which they need most. Stations are already low on manpower, volunteers so they feel the wrong person to get the Chief position would lose even more people which at this time they cannot afford to do.

Joe Leschinskie asked about the item under Solicitor's Report to submit again for the Government Study Commission question for the ballot. They have probably done this for about six months this year, this is the ninth vote by this Council this year on a topic similar to this. In 2019, it failed and in 2021, the Administration didn't listen to voters and it failed again in the

primary. Last year was an attempt for the third time, him and four other people put their names out there. Two other people failed to put their name on the ballot. Council voted to remove it again. In this last year, instead of what Act 47 and DCED tell them, they could have been looking at other avenues to make up somewhat of the deficit. They are a third class city, they had 20,000 people that live in this city, they had factories, probably 15,000 of the 20,000 worked. They have 8,000 people in the City and 2,000-3,000 worked according to the census. They may not fit a third class city anymore. Has anyone looked into possible reclassification to see if we would fit better as a township or borough or some other municipality where they may have different tax options. He spoke to someone at the tax assessment office. She has not received any permits from the City to the County for those reassessments in three years. It failed again, the reality is they can vote to put it on the ballot, but it failed by more votes the second time than the first time. He understands that they probably will have the candidates, but trying to get people to vote on the same topics and it keeps failing. Act 47 has been here eight years and they are involved with the Dept. of Economic Development. They have not seen any economic development here. They were promised a healthcare facility downtown, which would have brought in jobs, traffic, and revenue for businesses but they never got it. They were also promised by Mr. Twigg four years ago that they were getting two hotels, but they never got them. He thinks there were a lot of promises made to this city and the people of this city that were never delivered on. That is not Council's fault. He thinks there are other avenues. They have communication with representatives who support this. If the current ones cannot help them, then maybe the City needs to look for potentially other candidates to put on the ballot in a couple weeks for a state representative, if they don't want to help. They were elected to represent us. There are lots of things they can work on. He would like to speak with them about some things and see where it goes.

MINUTES:

MOTION BY: Milbrand to accept the minutes of the City of Shamokin Council Meeting on November 13, 2023 (Regular Council Meeting).

Second by: Moyer

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Milbrand, Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich

Nays: None

Absent: None

MOTION BY: Milbrand to accept the minutes of the City of Shamokin Council Meeting on December 4, 2023 (Special Meeting).

Second by: Leschinskie

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Milbrand, Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich

Nays: None

Absent: None

BILLS:

MOTION BY: Annis to approve the bills from November 2023, as listed on the Bill List.

Second by: Moyer

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Milbrand, Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich
Nays: None
Absent: None

DIRECTORS' REPORTS:

Accounts & Finance

General Fund \$ 281,723.09
Motor License \$ 193,266.96
Library \$ 159,454.10
Debt Service \$ 203,494.93
Recreation \$ 374,583.69
Street Lighting \$ 370.05
American Legion \$ 261.27
Neighborhood Mitigation \$ 47,816.27
Code Department Credit Cards \$ 12,098.50
Police Department Credit Cards \$ 6,067.01
Total All Funds \$ 1,279,135.87

Fund balances as of December 1, 2023 submitted by Brenda Scandle, City Treasurer.

Parks and Public Buildings

Councilwoman Moyer acknowledged all the volunteers in so many capacities that have been doing such great work all around the City, it is very evident in so many areas, especially Mike Duganitz for decorating and Mrs. Brown who decorated City Hall this time, she really appreciates that. She had asked Chief Siko to bring one of the defibrillators that the City received. The Chief and Mr. Slaby applied for grants and they were successful in doing that and they got seven total defibrillators. They will have to have a meeting and decide where exactly they are going to go.

Chief Siko provided a demonstration for using the City's new AED machines.

Streets and Public Improvements

Councilwoman Leschinskie stated she restarted with the street lighting. Market St. is dark in several sections and she is going to be going around again downtown to check it out and get pole numbers to try to get PPL back up here.

Public Safety

Code Office collected \$5,182.50 in total revenue for the month of November.

The Code Enforcement Office is busy and he hopes that in the future they can get more help for the Code Officer.

Councilman Milbrand stated he has no report from the Fire Dept.

Controller

Mr. Kinder stated he had nothing at this time.

Treasurer

The Treasurer stated she spoke to Klacik & Associates to check how things are going with the audit. The audit is done and they are just reviewing it now.

SEDA-COG

Absent.

Chief of Police

The Chief of Police reminded everyone that trailers need to be off the roadway as of November 1. Officers are out trying to get them moved. Please understand that snow is coming and they want to make it easier to get on the roads.

Police Department reported 1,352 total calls for November 2023.

The bags are on the meters and they are not tagging for the holidays. In reference to one of the agenda items, he stated himself, Officer Jenkins, and Betsy are working on a grant for the Police Dept.

The Mayor thanked Councilman Milbrand and Councilwoman Annis.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Request a motion to ratify the approval of Shamokin Area Community Cupboard's event in the City's lot on 3rd St on December 7, 2023 12pm-5pm*
- 2. Request a motion to approve Northumberland County Council of the Arts and Humanities's Anthracite Heritage Fest May 25, 2024 10am-5pm on Market St from Arch St to Spruce St, closing the street 7am-6pm.*
- 3. Request a motion to approve Friendship Fire Company's Annual Friendship Car Show August 3, 2024, rain date August 4, 2024, 11am-4pm on Independence St between Liberty and Shamokin Sts, closing Independence St from Liberty St to Shamokin St including side streets and East Parking Lot 9am-5pm.*
- 4. Request a motion to approve Northumberland County Council of the Arts and Humanities's Food Truck Frenzy Oct 26, 2024 11am-5pm on Independence St from Anthracite St to Clever St, closing the street 8am-6pm.*

5. *Request a motion to approve Northumberland County Council of the Arts and Humanities's Downtown Christmas Market December 4, 2024 11am-3pm at Claude Kehler Park, closing Arch St between 6th St and 2nd St. Including the Christmas parade starting at 10am at Mulberry and Market. Parade route down Market St to Arch St to Claude Kehler Park.*

MOTION BY: Moyer to approve agenda items # 1-5 under New Business as listed on the agenda.

Second by: Milbrand

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Milbrand, Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich
Nays: None
Absent: None

MOTION BY: Milbrand to allow the Treasurer to open a new City bank account titled 'Shamokin City DCNR Bridge Feasibility Study'.

Second by: Annis

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Milbrand, Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich
Nays: None
Absent: None

MOTION BY: Moyer to allow the Treasure to open a new City bank account titled 'Shamokin City Downtown Manager Fund'.

Second by: Milbrand

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Milbrand, Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich
Nays: None
Absent: None

MOTION BY: Annis to give Betsy Kramer permission to apply for a grant on behalf of the Shamokin Police Department.

Second by: Moyer

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Milbrand, Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich
Nays: None
Absent: None

MOTION BY: Ulrich to name and appoint someone to the vacant Battalion Chief position in the Shamokin Fire Department.

The Mayor made the motion, based on what was recommended, to recommend Bruce Rogers for the Battalion Chief position.

Second by: Moyer

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Leschinskie, Moyer, Annis, Ulrich
Nays: Milbrand
Absent: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

The City Administrator stated that Council met in Executive Session this evening an hour prior to this for personnel matters.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

SOLICITORS REPORT:

The Solicitor stated that he first had a reminder that tomorrow at 11 a.m. at the Northumberland County Courthouse in court room #3 is the hearing for the tax levy for the year to continue the existing tax schedule that the City had utilized to balance its budget. That hearing is tomorrow and they are seeking the Court's approval as the City has done in previous years. It is not a tax increase, it is just maintaining the existing tax schedule.

MOTION BY: Moyer to approve the first reading of Ordinance 23-07: Submitting the question of a government study commission to the electors as drafted in the proposed ordinance.

Second by: Annis

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Moyer, Annis, Ulrich
Nays: Milbrand, Leschinskie
Absent: None

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Robert John asked if they would like for him to speak in the open Council meeting or Executive session? He stated it is about the amount of money he needs to pay the city for his Life Insurance. There is a discrepancy in the amount of coverage that he was made aware of. When he retired, it was stated that they can keep their life insurance as long as they pay their premium. He contacted the City to ask for the amount. It was told to him that the city dropped the insurance from \$50,000 to \$10,000. This is something that he wasn't aware of. The City Administrator stated they can set up a meeting. He has been trying since October 2022, they first discussed this and he has made several calls and spoken to Mr. Slaby several times, but more times than not he calls up here and never got a phone call returned. As of today, he still doesn't know. The City Administrator stated that he doesn't know how his life insurance could have changed. Mr. John stated that the contract doesn't state that when you retire the amount is dropped from \$50,000 to \$10,000, it just says they can keep their insurance coverage as long as they pay their premium to the city. Councilwoman Annis stated they would need to get the Labor Attorney involved to look over the contract. The Treasurer stated for her, she has \$50,000 now so when she retires, hers goes down to \$10,000 if they decide to keep it. She is non-union so he would be different because he is under the Police contract; a street department worker is probably also different, she doesn't know what theirs is. It is only like that for non-union. The

Controller stated that anyone non-union goes down to \$10,000 at age 65. Councilwoman Annis stated that any retiree goes down to \$10,000. She stated if there is an issue with a contract and what he is being given right now, they need to look at the contract and get a Labor Attorney involved to look at the contract and look at what he is getting right now and whether that is what he is supposed to be getting. Mr. John stated that the Labor Attorney isn't going to be cheap and they don't need to spend money if they don't have to. It is in writing and it states he gets 50,000 and nowhere does it say once you retire, it drops down to 10,000. As long as you pay the premium, it stays the same. The City Administrator stated that if he was to make that decision, it wouldn't be fair to anyone if he makes the wrong decision. He is asking if he can share with him the contract that he is referring to. Mr. John stated that the City has a copy of it. He retired in 2007. The City Administrator stated that if he has it, if he can share it with him and they can scan it over to the Labor Attorney and get an answer. He doesn't want to see him be unjustly penalized. They asked the Chief if there is a copy of it at the Police Station. He stated he was going to check with someone.

Joe Leschinskie asked if there is going to be any publication on Boards and Committees vacancies. Mayor Ulrich stated they were working on it today. He thanked Council and Bob Slaby for them to be able to do their event. They provided over fifty meals and gave out jackets, gloves, and scarves. The City Administrator stated that the RDA and the Housing Authority have no vacancies as of December. The RDA has one upcoming in May. Mr. Leschinskie stated that he resigned to take his seat but it was never acted on. He thanked Councilwoman Annis and Councilman Milbrand.

Robert John stated that he forgot to ask but he doesn't believe he paid his insurance for this year because he didn't know what he needed to pay. From prior years, it was around \$90. It was stated that the amount is \$81.60.

Mike Duganitz asked how long is the expectancy on the batteries for the AEDs. The Chief stated that they had one where the battery lasted two years, but they were on a waiting list for a year to get a battery. Another one, the battery has been in service for six and a half years. He thinks as the batteries are changing, they last a little longer and they are more readily available now.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION BY: Milbrand to adjourn the meeting.

Second by: Annis

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting ended at 6:40 PM

Minutes taken by Aeman Kamran, Administrative Accountant