

THE CITY OF SHAMOKIN COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, October 14, 2024
6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER:

PLEDGE TO FLAG:

PRAYER:

ROLL CALL:

PRESENTATIONS:

BIDS:

CORRESPONDENCE:

A motion is needed to approve a donation in the amount of \$1,000.00 to Artisan Alley Fine Arts Gallery to benefit the Shamokin Halloween Parade.

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

MINUTES:

Motion to accept the minutes of The City of Shamokin Council Meeting of August 19, 2024 (Special Council Meeting), and September 9, 2024 (Regular Council Meeting).

BILLS:

Motion to approve the bills from September 2024, as listed on the Bill List.

DIRECTORS' REPORTS:

*Accounts & Finance
Parks and Public Building
Street and Public Improvements
Public Safety
Controller
Treasurer
Chief of Police*

SEDA-COG:

AMERICORPS VISTA:

NEW BUSINESS:

1. *Request a motion to approve Fire Prevention Display on Independence Street between Washington and Rock on October 7, 2024 from 6:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.*
2. *Request a motion to approve Far Better Together Clothing Drive in the Municipal Parking Lot on October 26, 2024 from 11:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M.*
3. *Request a motion to approve Oliver's Grand Reopening in front of Oliver's on Independence Street on November 2, 2024 from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.*
4. *Request a motion to approve Restoration Ministries Outdoor Worship Service at Claude Kehler Park on October 12, 2024 from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M.*
5. *Request a motion to approve Trunk or Treat in the Municipal Parking Lot on October 30, 2024 from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.*
6. *Request a motion to approve Resolution 24-07 for the PennDOT Winter Maintenance Service Agreement.*

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

SOLICITOR'S REPORT:

A motion is needed to approve the second reading of Ordinance 24-06, Establishing Criteria for Obtaining Administrative Search Warrants Within the City of Shamokin.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, adjourn the meeting.

THE CITY OF SHAMOKIN COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, October 14, 2024
6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER:

PLEDGE TO FLAG:

PRAYER:

ROLL CALL: Moyer, Duganitz, Kehler, McLaughlin, Ulrich
Absent: None

MOTION BY: Duganitz to amend the agenda to add a motion needed to appoint an individual to the Battalion Chief vacancy per recommendation of the Fire Bureau.

Second by: McLaughlin

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Duganitz, McLaughlin, Moyer, Kehler, Ulrich
Nays: None
Absent: None

PRESENTATIONS:

BIDS:

CORRESPONDENCE:

MOTION BY: Moyer to approve a donation in the amount of \$1,000.00 to Artisan Alley Fine Arts Gallery to benefit the Shamokin Halloween Parade.

Councilman Duganitz asked for clarification on the donation. The City Administrator responded that this is a donation from the City to the organization, and has been approved in the past.

Second by: Kehler

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Duganitz, McLaughlin, Moyer, Kehler, Ulrich
Nays: None
Absent: None

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

Jesse Storm asked whether the RDA's letter is on the agenda. The City Administrator responded that it is not on the agenda. He added that he is aware that the RDA has asked for property appraisal invoices. Councilman McLaughlin asked for clarification as to whether the RDA wishes to pay for these appraisals invoices. The City Administrator stated that he has ordered the appraisals but they are not yet complete. Councilman McLaughlin commented that he sees no issue with the RDA paying for the appraisals. Mr. Storm clarified that the RDA was asking for a copy of the estimates because they need an amount to vote on and reimburse the City. The RDA feels that had those houses been segregated to the RDA to begin with, the RDA would have paid for them. The Council thanked the RDA for taking this action, and the Solicitor added that no item needs to be added to the agenda on this matter.

MINUTES:

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MOTION BY: Kehler to accept the minutes of the City of Shamokin Council Meeting of August 19, 2024 (Special Council Meeting), and September 9, 2024 (Regular Council Meeting).

McLaughlin abstained from the vote on the Special Council Meeting as this was the meeting when he was appointed.

Second by: Moyer

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Duganitz, Moyer, Kehler, Ulrich

Nays: None

Abstention: McLaughlin

BILLS:

MOTION BY: Ulrich to approve the bills from September 2024, as listed on the Bill List.

Second by: Moyer

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Duganitz, McLaughlin, Moyer, Kehler, Ulrich

Nays: None

DIRECTORS' REPORTS:

Accounts & Finance

Councilwoman Moyer presented the treasurer's report for the month of September. Total General Fund balance: \$1,908,682.76; total Motor License balance: \$256,214.77; total Library Balance: \$205,992.98; total Sinking Fund #1 balance: \$218,384.16; total Recreation balance: \$289,587.80; total Street Lighting balance: \$9,997.78; total American Legion balance: \$545.17; total Neighborhood Mitigation balance: \$24,066.17; total Code Department Credit Cards balance: \$4,994.00; total Police Department Credit Cards balance: \$2,048.26. Total balance in all accounts to October 1, 2024: \$2,920,513.85.

Parks and Public Buildings

Councilman Duganitz reported that the water is shut off at the pool and the meter has been taken out. Councilman Duganitz and the City Administrator also met recently with the management of the pool to review the past season. This was the first year without Larry Strausser, but the staff overcame difficulties and the season was ultimately a successful one. Councilman Duganitz thanked Kevin Richardson and his brother Daniel Richardson for stepping up and assisting with the maintenance of the pool. The next step will be a budget meeting to discuss the finances. Councilman Duganitz and Kevin Richardson have also been coordinating with Matt McMullen to explore grant opportunities and evaluate the possibility of reducing electricity costs at the pool by installing solar panels.

Councilman Duganitz also reported that he and Councilman recently had a productive meeting with the zoning officer. Councilman Duganitz advised the public to ensure they have the proper documentation before beginning any work on their property and urged them to come into City Hall for guidance. He added that he and Councilman Kehler also recently joined Tina Wilk on an informative walkthrough of Raspberry Hill.

Councilman Duganitz also thanked Kevin Richardson for his assistance in replacing the wooden park bench seats throughout the City with longer-lasting composite plastic, and praised the Street Department for their ongoing efforts in maintaining public spaces. He added, however, that trash and animal waste continue to present a problem, and asked Solicitor Greco about the legality of posting pictures of offenses online. Attorney Greco advised against that approach, saying that while these offenses may have taken place in the

public domain, the City is not in the business of publicizing those instances. He advised reporting incidents to police, adding that making evidence public may jeopardize an investigation. Chief Siko commented that although there are many complaints posted on Facebook, nothing can be done unless there is photographic evidence. Councilwoman Moyer also questioned whether there may be public shaming rules which preclude the City making such posts online. The Solicitor and Chief Siko remarked that arrests and code violations are posted in the newspaper as this is a matter of public record.

Councilman Duganitz reminded the public that the Halloween Parade and Shamokin Indians Pep Rally will take place on October 22nd. Registrations start at 4:30 P.M. at Claude Kehler Park. The parade will begin at the park at 6:00 P.M. and proceed all the way to the municipal parking lot. He also urged anyone participating on a float not to throw candy due to safety concerns.

Streets and Public Improvements

Councilman McLaughlin reported that the swimming pool is closed and fully winterized. Work will commence soon on the floors in the locker rooms to address peeling paint, hopefully before winter so that painting can begin in the spring. Councilman McLaughlin also mentioned the recent parking bench renovations and the painting of the cannon by the Hiker Monument. Due to the first coat peeling, the cannon had to be scraped and repainted. The dead trees on Market Street are also being addressed, and possibly those in the lots if time permits. Chief Siko and the Street Department are coordinating on street closures for the Halloween parade to ensure they proceed smoothly.

Public Safety

The Code Department reported \$6,338.00 in revenue for the month of September and addressed 112 complaints.

Councilman Kehler reported that he was contacted by a concerned citizen asking whether the Downtown Makeover will include wheelchair-accessible pavement cutouts. Ms. Kramer did not have final details or a date of completion for the project.

Treasurer

Treasure Scandle reported that she recently attended training and discussed a service called Jack Rabbit which allows local tax data to be made available online at no cost to the City. This will enable citizens to look up their tax information without calling the office, thus reducing the burden on tax office employees. Treasurer Scandle stated that she would like to invite the company to meet and discuss options. Councilman Duganitz asked where the company operates from and Treasurer Scandle replied that she does not have that information on hand. Treasurer Scandle also commented on the recent newspaper article concerning the police pension and clarified that she does not work with payroll or pension matters.

Treasurer Scandle also stated that a resolution will be needed on the November meeting agenda to return to the 1% EIT, which amounts to .5% collected for the City and .5% for the school district, as the City can no longer levy 2% after exiting Act 47. She added that the change will likely cause confusion as employers may continue to deduct 2% from citizens' paychecks, meaning refunds will be necessary. However, if Home Rule is voted in and the EIT returns to 2%, we will need to notify employers. The Treasurer commented that when the EIT was initially raised to 2%, some employers, especially Geisinger, did not change their deductions and citizens owed tax. City Administrator Slaby remarked that Keystone Collections did an excellent job of rectifying the situation and stressed that it was no one's personal fault. The Treasurer added that Keystone has been notified of the upcoming change. Councilman McLaughlin asked how refunds are

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processed and the Treasurer replied that they are likely done by Keystone or the state, not the City. The Treasurer stated she believes court approval is not needed for the 1%.

Chief of Police

The Police Department reported 1,437 total calls for the month of September and 4,504 miles patrolled.

Chief Siko commented that there is an emerging issue with motorized wheelchairs being used for transportation by individuals who do not have a medical need. Many of these devices have carts attached and pose a safety hazard as they are being used on sidewalks, in the streets and in traffic. They are also difficult for motorists to see due to being low to the ground. Chief Siko suggested an ordinance may be needed to address the issue. Councilman Duganitz asked whether there have been issues observed with e-bikes. Chief Siko replied that e-bike usage has increased 60% in the City and pointed out that even bikes are required to observe the laws of traffic.

Chief Siko recognized Code Officer Rogers for his assistance behind the scenes. In recognition of Fire Prevention Week, he also thanked volunteer firefighters as the unsung heroes who are available day and night and provide valuable support to the police department.

Chief Siko asked the Mayor for an executive session on contracts, personnel issues and potential litigation following the meeting.

SEDA-COG

Betsy Kramer thanked everyone who attended the Safe Streets for All public meeting, especially Councilman Duganitz, the Downtown Manager, and the Chief of Police, as well as the library for hosting the event. The suggestion board remains in place at the library for citizens to contribute their ideas.

Ms. Kramer reported that the Blight Taskforce meeting originally scheduled for Tuesday, November 5, will be rescheduled due to the election. The Downtown Manager will be emailing the new date. The Compliance Audit for the Illumination Station has been completed, and there were no findings.

The Congressional appropriations funding for the American Legion is in progress but must adhere to all federal compliance standards. Matt McMullen is currently coordinating with Envinity on their energy audit of City Hall and the Legion building as part of the DEP MORE grant.

The Independence Street Makeover project, which meets monthly, is still in the planning stage. Ms. Kramer is seeking a PennDOT multi-modal grant to cover costs, as the \$2M in funding already approved will not be enough to complete the project. The grant may call for up to a 20% match, but Ms. Kramer stated she will be asking for a waiver. Solicitor Greco stated that a resolution to approve the grant application will need to be voted on in the next council meeting.

Ms. Kramer mentioned she has also been working with Oasis on a grant which is still in progress. Councilman Duganitz asked for clarification about red Xs. Ms. Kramer advised the public that if anyone has a property with a red X, they should contact the code office for guidance. She also discussed the ALERTA tax assistance opportunity, which owners can apply for as they begin improving their properties. If approved, the property owner may be entitled to keep the current tax rate for a limited period of time even if the assessed value increases due to property improvements. Both commercial and residential properties are eligible.

In response to a question from the Solicitor, Ms. Kramer stated that the zoning book rewrite is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year, although she believes this may not be a feasible deadline. Any changes will have to be approved by the planning commissions and City Council.

Downtown Manager Bainbridge reported that Larson Design will be conducting a site survey at Volunteer Park on October 31st for the Footbridge Feasibility Study. Classes aimed at new or prospective business owners will be held at the public library on October 29th from 4-5 P.M. and 5:30-7 P.M. Mr. Bainbridge is working on a community calendar website which will replace GoShamokin's website, and is estimated to be live in January.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION BY: Kehler to approve Items #1-7 as listed under New Business on the agenda.

Councilman Duganitz asked who is organizing the Trunk or Treat event. Chief Siko responded that the Geisinger-Shamokin Area Community Hospital is the organizer. The police department will be involved. In the past, the event was held at the hospital parking lot, but due to traffic concerns has been moved to the municipal parking lot.

Councilman Duganitz asked for clarification on Item #7. Solicitor Greco replied that the resolution concerns a \$47,000.00 loan from M&T Bank for the purchase of a police vehicle. The loan will be paid out of the Debt Service Fund; however, a debt must first be incurred before Debt Service funds can be utilized. City Administrator Slaby added that the loan will be paid off in the 2024 budget and there will be no interest.

McLaughlin inquired as to voting on events which have already occurred, due to timing of the council meeting. The City Administrator and Solicitor replied that the event in question was discussed at the workshop and only requires a vote to ratify.

Second by: McLaughlin

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Duganitz, McLaughlin, Moyer, Kehler, Ulrich

Nays: None

Absent: None

MOTION BY: Kehler to appoint James Catino as Battalion Chief effective January 1, 2025.

In response to a question from Councilman Duganitz, Councilman Kehler confirmed that he has met with the fire departments and all issues have been resolved. The City Administrator added that he has spoken with the president of the Fire Bureau, who has concurred on the appointment. Councilwoman Moyer stated that she was not aware of the letter until today. The City Administrator clarified that the letter of recommendation was provided to Council during the meeting on August 8th when it was originally received. Councilwoman Moyer commented that she believes the Fire Bureau was unable to schedule a meeting with Council, possibly due to scheduling conflicts, but added that she is glad to see the issue resolved. Councilman McLaughlin commented that the City assumes the Fire Bureau has done their due diligence in making a recommendation, and the City Administrator agreed.

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Second by: McLaughlin

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Duganitz, McLaughlin, Moyer, Kehler, Ulrich

Nays: None

Absent: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

MOTION BY: Moyer to reappoint Charles Sosnoskie and Diane Serafine to the Shamokin City Planning Commission for a term of five years, effective October 14, 2024.

The Solicitor clarified the status of the City Planning Commission which Councilman McLaughlin questioned at the workshop meeting. He stated that the resolution discussed at the meeting did not eliminate the City Planning Commission, but adopted the county's ordinances concerning stormwater management and land subdivision. This action was taken because the City does not have its own SALDO (Subdivision and Land Division Ordinance). The City Planning Commission, however, still plays a vital role. Any changes are reviewed by our planning commission as well as Northumberland County's. Councilman Duganitz added that the meeting with Councilman Kehler and the building inspector Ed Fegley also helped clarify the matter.

Second by: McLaughlin

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Duganitz, McLaughlin, Moyer, Kehler, Ulrich

Nays: None

Absent: None

SOLICITOR'S REPORT:

MOTION BY: Kehler to approve the second reading of Ordinance 24-06, Establishing Criteria for Obtaining Administrative Search Warrants Within the City of Shamokin.

Second by: Duganitz

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Duganitz, McLaughlin, Moyer, Kehler, Ulrich

Nays: None

Absent: None

Councilman McLaughlin asked about the status of the ordinance concerning City residents placing household trash in municipal trash cans. Solicitor Greco replied that he will have a draft for review by next work session but added that there may be safety concerns involved in the search of trash cans, cautioning employees to be mindful of discarded needles and other hazards. The Solicitor advised amending the current rubbish ordinance under the dumping section, and changing penalty provisions, rather than to pass a new ordinance. Councilman McLaughlin referenced an earlier effort by Councilman Duganitz to seek a rubbish ordinance amendment.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Michael Warren spoke on the subject of parking in his neighborhood. He stated that there is a vehicle which has been parked for over two years on Coal Street between Walnut and Independence, and that there are

signs stating “no parking between signs,” which he believes are unnecessarily taking up space. Councilman McLaughlin clarified that these signs denote a driveway and are not handicap or restricted parking signage specific to a license plate. Chief Siko added that there is an existing garage in that location, so the signs must stay up regardless of property ownership. The Chief asked about the abandoned vehicle, and stated that he believes it is a registered vehicle. Registered, inspected vehicles in running condition are legal and may be parked indefinitely. Mr. Warren stated that these vehicles are inconvenient to the taxpayers. Chief Siko agreed but reiterated that it is not illegal.

Jesse Storm commented on the dog waste issue, referencing the RDA’s recent donation to the Shamokin Garden Club to fund the purchase of ten dog waste stations, as well as trash bags to replenish the stations. The waste stations have been ordered and will be provided to the Street Department when they arrive. Mr. Storm suggested that Council reach out to the Garden Club if they have a specific location they would like to see the stations installed. Councilman Duganitz replied that he is coordinating with Susan Ward from the Garden Club on this, and explained the delay, saying both parties agreed that Community Gardens should order the stations directly. Councilman Duganitz also thanked the RDA and Community Gardens for their contributions.

Mr. Storm referenced the recent trailer ordinance and asked how many permits have been pulled since the passing of that ordinance. The Code Officer did not have a precise figure without consulting records, but in response to a question from Mr. Storm stated it was below one hundred. Mr. Storm stated he believes he is the only person who has come in to register a trailer. He added that he believes the ordinance should be publicized through media to ensure the public is informed.

Concerning the RDA, Mr. Storm referenced a \$3.5M grant recently awarded to the city of Lancaster’s RDA for the rehabilitation of low-income properties. He asked whether SEDA-COG would be able to work with the RDA to see if they would be eligible for this grant, as he believes the grant has been under-utilized. Betsy Kramer stated that the grant in question, which is called Whole Homes, has not been funded this year. Lancaster received funding from last year’s round, which is now completed, but Ms. Kramer encouraged the RDA to bring any future opportunities to her attention. Mr. Storm asked about the weatherization grant, which is through Northumberland County, and raised the question of whether the City may also apply. He also discussed the RDA’s current financial situation and the Mill Square loan, which the president of the RDA advocates paying off with funds in the bank, while Mr. Storm prefers seeking a line of credit from First National. Mr. Storm concluded by thanking Council and praising the work done by the code office.

The Treasurer rescinded her request for an executive session. Council agreed to convene for an executive session with the Chief of Police after adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 P.M.

Minutes taken by Val Mountjoy, Administrative Accountant.