

THE CITY OF SHAMOKIN COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, November 18, 2024
6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER:

PLEDGE TO FLAG:

PRAYER:

ROLL CALL:

PRESENTATIONS:

BIDS:

CORRESPONDENCE:

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

MINUTES:

*Motion to accept the minutes of The City of Shamokin Council Meeting of October 14, 2024
(Regular Council Meeting).*

BILLS:

Motion to approve the bills from October 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:

Request a motion to ratify SEDA-COG's application on behalf of the City of Shamokin for the PennDOT Multi-Modal Grant in the amount of \$1,150,000, to fund the Independence Street Downtown Makeover Project.

AMERICORPS VISTA:**NEW BUSINESS:****UNFINISHED BUSINESS:****BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:**

Request a motion to reappoint Joseph Wightman to the Shamokin-Coal Township Joint Sewer Authority.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT:

- 1. Request a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2024-07, Ordinance to Levy Taxes for 2025.*
- 2. Request a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2024-08, Regulating the Conduct and Advertising of Yard Sales, Garage Sales and Similar Types of Sales Within the City of Shamokin.*
- 3. Request a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2024-09, amending Ordinance 450, the Solid Waste Ordinance.*

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

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

THE CITY OF SHAMOKIN COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, November 18, 2024
6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER:

PLEDGE TO FLAG:

PRAYER:

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

PRESENTATIONS:

BIDS:

CORRESPONDENCE:

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

MINUTES:

MOTION BY: Moyer to accept the minutes of the City of Shamokin Council Meeting of October 14, 2024 (Regular Council Meeting).

Second by: Kehler

Councilman McLaughlin inquired as to whether Council can receive the minutes and bill list with the agenda on the Friday before the meeting. The City Administrator agreed. The Solicitor pointed out that the minutes are not official until adopted at the meeting.

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

BILLS:

MOTION BY: McLaughlin to approve the bills from October 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 October. Total General Fund balance: \$869,207.85; total Motor License balance: \$243,521.00; total Library Balance: \$206,425.99; total

November 18, 2024

Sinking Fund #1 balance: \$221,109.23; total Recreation balance: \$282,762.86; total Street Lighting balance: \$9,217.73; total American Legion balance: \$545.17; total Neighborhood Mitigation balance: \$26,452.26; total Code Department Credit Cards balance: \$5,294.00; total Police Department Credit Cards balance: \$2,304.26. Total balance in all accounts to October 1, 2024: \$1,866,840.35.

Parks and Public Buildings

Councilman Duganitz thanked the Mayor for holding up his end of the bargain and getting a shave from the high school students. The councilman also congratulated the high school football team, as well as the soccer and volleyball teams and other local teams, on their victories this year. He also recognized the high school bands for their support. Holiday decoration of the downtown will commence next week. The Christmas Parade Festival is December 7th from 11-3, organized by Jeanne Shaffer. Mrs. Brown will be bringing back the awards for best-decorated houses this year. Councilman Duganitz also thanked the SABER organization and volunteers for placing the statue on the 99 steps on a pedestal. The statue, called Pillars, will be enhanced with lighting and the Kallaway Center has offered to provide the necessary electricity.

Councilman Duganitz thanked Kevin and the street department for installing the dog waste stations. Ten stations were donated by the RDA and Far Better Together, and were quickly installed. Councilman Duganitz commented that the stations are a great asset and he has seen them being used by the public. Councilman Duganitz also recognized Community Gardens for their work on Sunbury Street across from Dunkin Donuts.

Councilman Duganitz stated that he recently met with Matt McMullen to discuss installing solar panels at the pool. He also thanked the Treasurer and the administrative accountant for their assistance in getting the necessary grants processed, and wished the City a Happy Thanksgiving.

Streets and Public Improvements

Councilman McLaughlin reported that Claude Kehler Park and the playgrounds have been winterized. Two blocks of Commerce Street have been paved this week, while another paving project has been postponed due to excavation slated for spring. Leaf cleanup is still in progress and the Christmas decorations are expected to be completed in the next two weeks. Street department trucks, spreaders and plows are ready to go in the event of snowfall.

Councilman McLaughlin reported that he attended the 8th Street Bridge meeting and noted there were more comments about traffic accidents at 8th and Water Streets than about the bridge itself, but the possibility of adding small traffic signs was discussed. Councilman McLaughlin stated that “Traffic Does Not Stop” signs were recommended and are already on order. Another concern was the need for a stop sign coming from 8th Street on Independence, but would need a traffic study. Councilman Duganitz asked if a timeline had been established and Councilman McLaughlin stated the project has been described as a one-season project. He added that there will be coordination with other projects in the area, such as the Independence Street Makeover Project.

Councilman McLaughlin recognized local citizens and businesses for their support of the Shamokin team this year, and going above and beyond with the decorations.

Public Safety

The Fire Department reported 44 calls for the month of September. The Code Department reported \$4,318.00 in revenue for the month of September and addressed 141 complaints.

Councilman Kehler reported that he has been working to address the matter of the fire truck. The cleanup on 6th Street is nearly complete.

Treasurer

Treasure Scandle had nothing to report.

The City Administrator reported that the Controller is out of town.

Chief of Police

The Police Department reported 1,442 total calls for the month of September and 3,404 miles patrolled.

Chief Siko reported that one of the new police vehicles is in service, and that he is working with Zimmerman's to address the other vehicles.

Councilman McLaughlin asked the Chief to explain the timeframe for processing code violations. The Chief replied that code violations brought to the police department are filed as criminal charges and then directed to the magistrate. The Solicitor added that there is no definite timeline as the county processes a large volume of criminal cases and has been experiencing backlog since COVID, and the Chief agreed.

Councilman McLaughlin stated that citizens have asked him why the process takes so long. The Chief pointed out that officers are responsible for filing charges as well as their patrol work, and the process is extremely time-consuming. Officers seen at the station are likely processing paperwork or addressing in-person complaints. The Chief added that Judge Zalinski is the busiest magistrate in the county, and that we are the busiest police department in his district. Investigations take time, and a dramatic arrest is not the solution to every problem. Councilman McLaughlin and the Chief stressed that nothing can be resolved if people do not call and notify the police, but added that many calls received are disputes between neighbors without an actual crime committed. The public may not always be aware of the distinction between civil, criminal, and code complaints. Council agreed that it is important for the public to educate themselves by consulting the appropriate authorities.

SEDA-COG

MOTION BY: Moyer to ratify SEDA-COG's application on behalf of the City of Shamokin for the PennDOT Multi-Modal Grant in the amount of \$1,150,000, to fund the Independence Street Downtown Makeover Project.

Second by: Kehler

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Betsy Kramer reminded Council that this new grant application is for the second phase of the project. Ms. Kramer reported that there have been ongoing 8th Street Bridge project meetings, including another scheduled for this Friday. Safety continues to be a focus going forward. Ms. Kramer discussed the timeline

for the comprehensive plan/zoning book rewrite, with which SEDA-COG is not directly involved. Ms. Kramer clarified that the project is not just a comprehensive plan, but also includes a rewrite of the zoning book, which has not been updated since 1964. The zoning book cannot be rewritten until first completing a new 10-year comprehensive plan. According to Michelle Brummer, who is directing the project, the drafted comprehensive plan should be available next Wednesday and formal adoption of the plan should be achieved by next March. County and local planning commissions must approve the plan before it comes to Council for a final vote. Ordinance review and adoption of the zoning rewrite is planned for late summer 2025.

Ms. Kramer reported that a public meeting is scheduled for January 30th from 6:00 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. at the public library to discuss the Independence Street Makeover Project. This meeting will be combined with the next Safe Streets for All meeting, and the public is encouraged to attend.

Ms. Kramer reminded the public that façade grants are still available for property owners in the Shamokin downtown. Interested parties should contact Downtown Manager Justin Bainbridge.

Ms. Kramer provided an update on a grant application for the fire department. The application was for a grant to fund the purchase of a new fire pumper in the amount of \$882,835, but only \$150,000 was approved. Ms. Kramer stated that she made inquiries as to whether the \$150,000 could be used to fund any other urgently needed fire equipment, but was informed that the grant could only be applied toward the fire pumper as originally stated on the application. Ms. Kramer and Mr. Bainbridge are currently researching a FEMA grant to make up the deficit in the purchase of the pumper. Councilman Kehler inquired as to whether the \$150,000 grant could be used for the purchase of a used pumper rather than a new one. Ms. Kramer stated she would look into the question.

Ms. Kramer thanked Council as well as the Treasurer and accountant for their assistance, as November is a busy time with many grant applications due. Ms. Kramer also reported that approximately \$200,000 remaining in COVID ARPA funds will be used to reimburse the City for police and fire expenses, as is allowed by the grant.

Councilman Duganitz asked whether the team working on the 8th Street Bridge project will be attending the January 30th meeting as well. Ms. Kramer replied that they may be, as there will be several representatives attending either in-person or on the call from PennDOT, Stromberg/Garrigan and other groups which are involved in all three projects.

Justin Bainbridge discussed a recent meeting concerning the Volunteer Park and Footbridge plan. A survey has been prepared for the public to provide their input and is currently available through GoShamokin. The News-Item also ran a story to help get the word out. The Community Calendar website is under construction and will feature a full local business directory. Mr. Bainbridge also reminded the public that the Blight Task Force meeting will be held tomorrow, having been rescheduled due to election night.

NEW BUSINESS:

Councilman McLaughlin asked Code Officer Rogers whether he received the citation history worksheet discussed at the last workshop. The Code Officer replied that he already has an Excel sheet and four other places where that information is recorded. Councilman McLaughlin then asked whether the citation history

can be printed out if Council provides a specific address, and the Code Officer replied that he would prefer to get the Solicitor's opinion as to whether that information can be released. The Solicitor replied that he would have to consider the specific circumstances but added that citations are public record. Council McLaughlin stated that he does not have any preference as to what type of worksheet is used to collect the information. The Code Officer commented that there are questions on the Councilman's worksheet which he may not be able to answer. Councilman McLaughlin added that he is more concerned with fines charged than fines paid, and asked whether the City or the judge sets those fines. Council and the City Administrator agreed that the judge sets the fine. Councilman McLaughlin then asked about the process for dealing with multiple citations on the same property. The Code Officer replied that he keeps track of multiple citations. In response to a question from Councilman Duganitz, the Solicitor stated that a code offense would become a misdemeanor after the third conviction, not just the third citation. The Solicitor also pointed out that fines often go unpaid, not only locally but throughout the county.

The Code Officer asked why Councilman McLaughlin needs the form when the Code Office already reports to his direct supervisor, Councilman Kehler and to the City Administrator. Councilman McLaughlin replied that he began working on the form with the Blight Task Force as a tool to help correct ongoing code issues in the City. The Chief pointed out that many individuals continually pay their fines but do not correct the offense, and unsafe or collapsing structures remain an issue. He stated that changing the law to allow, for example, demolition of such properties instead of repeated fines could constitute a violation of the owner's rights. The Solicitor stated that the courts sometimes allow cases to be continued so that owners can complete necessary repairs in exchange for some charges being dropped, as the goal is to correct the problem rather than to collect fines. The Code Officer agreed that working with owners helps compliance. Councilman Duganitz stated that ordinances are being passed but not enforced and that he believes fines should continue for habitual code offenders. The Chief explained the process for addressing issues such as abandoned vehicles, stressing that private property must be respected and the letter of the law must be followed before vehicles can be towed, even though the process can take time. McLaughlin advocated taking a nearly zero-tolerance policy, especially concerning repeat offenders. The Solicitor added that in the event of a lawsuit, the City is responsible for a \$5,000 insurance deductible even if there was no wrongdoing on the part of the City. He added that it is important to carry insurance, or else the City would be liable in the event of a judgment for the defendant.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

The City Administrator requested an executive session on litigation and personnel.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

MOTION BY: McLaughlin to reappoint Joseph Wightman to the Shamokin-Coal Township Joint Sewer Authority Advisory Board for a term of 5 years starting January 2025.

Second by: Moyer

Councilman Duganitz asked whether the other board members made the recommendation, and the City Administrator replied that the recommendation did go before the Joint Sewer Authority board.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

November 18, 2024

SOLICITOR'S REPORT:

MOTION BY: Duganitz to approve the City's petition to the Court for approval to levy the additional five mills of real estate tax.

Second by: Moyer

The Solicitor stated that the tentative court date is scheduled for December 17.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

MOTION BY: Ulrich to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2024-08, Regulating the Conduct and Advertising of Yard Sales, Garage Sales and Similar Types of Sales Within the City of Shamokin.

Second by: Kehler

Councilman McLaughlin asked the Chief and the Code Officer whether they had reviewed the ordinance or had any issues with it. The City Administrator stated that the ordinance will be on public display and will be advertised in the paper before it reaches a final vote. The Solicitor commented that he feels the ordinance closes some gaps in the City's existing ordinances. The Code Officer agreed but questioned whether it will be feasible to enforce. Councilwoman Moyer and Councilman McLaughlin remarked that having the ordinance on the books at least gives the City the ability to take action.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

MOTION BY: Kehler to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2024-09, amending Ordinance 450, the Solid Waste Ordinance.

Second by: McLaughlin

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

There were no citizens' comments.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 P.M. Council retired to executive session.

Minutes taken by Val Mountjoy, Administrative Accountant.