

**STOCKERTOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2021**

THE BOROUGH OF STOCKERTOWN HELD A COUNCIL MEETING ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2021 AT 7:30 PM AT BOROUGH HALL.

Attendance

- Council Members present were: Council President Amy Richard, Vice President, Kathleen Zdonowski, Cindy Hower, Joe Gosnell, Renee Cantwell, Pamela Davis and Rosemarie Wenzelberger.
- Solicitor Gary Asteak, Mayor Ken Zemencsik and Borough Secretary/Treasurer Anita Caughy were present.

The Meeting was called to order by Council President, Amy Richard, at 7:30 PM

Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Approval

- Amy Richard stated that the meeting is being recorded and that Council needs to approve additional items to be added to the agenda.
First Item – Approve Solicitor Asteak to represent the Borough at the Weber Zoning Hearing on December 16, 2021.
Second Item – Approval of an Accountant for the End of the Year Audit.
Third Item – to Add an Executive Session at the end of the meeting for Personnel issues.
- **Motion** by Cindy Hower, Seconded by Joe Gosnell to add the stated items to the agenda. Motion carried unopposed.

Public Comment

- Melissa Carabba of Birch Street stated she has been doing some research on the schedule for the police department and usually sees a police officer several times a day. She wanted to know who does the scheduling and why it seems to have changed. Amy Richard informed her that as of this month, the mayor is in charge of the scheduling. Previously scheduling was done by the Police Chief. Mayor Zemencsik informed Ms. Carabba that he has changed the schedule in order to have an officer on duty during the busier times of the day. There are times of the day and night when crimes are more likely to happen and that is not on a Sunday morning. She agreed.
- John Seibert of Patriot Lane asked what time police officers come on duty. Mayor Zemencsik stated that he now schedules an officer early enough to be at the bus stops to secure the safety of the children. Mr. Seibert was also asking specific questions as to the police schedule. Solicitor Asteak stated that the Borough does not want to advertise the police schedule and that it should remain confidential. He stated that he respects his request for transparency but that he needs to respect the Borough request to remain confidential for security purposes.

- Richard Daily of Patriot Lane asked if the Borough was scaling back the police coverage? Amy Richard stated No, not at all. The mayor is just moving hours around to be more effective. It is the same total hours for the same officers. He asked if the Borough was increasing hours. Amy Richard stated that the budget would not allow for additional hours.
- Melissa Carabba asked what the budget was for the police department. Solicitor Asteak stated that it is public knowledge. Ms. Carabba was informed that the budget for 2022 has not been approved yet but Amy Richard informed her that \$168,046.17 was the police budget for 2021.
- Richard Daily questioned whether the Borough finances were in the red. He was advised that the Borough has always stayed within budget. Amy Richard explained that the 2022 budget is a challenge due to the new garbage contract. She explained the situation to the individuals who were not at the previous meeting. The complete explanation is outlined in the November 3rd minutes.
- Solicitor Asteak stated that Stockertown approved the lowest bidder for the garbage contract and that we are one of the few municipalities in the State that includes garbage collection as part of your taxes and does not bill separately.
- Melissa Carabba stated that she would like to take this time to state that she would approve an additional tax increase if it meant 24 hours police coverage or if the mercantile tax could be added in the Borough. She was informed that Harrisburg would not allow that to happen. The mercantile tax was a one-time offer and the previous Council, sometime around 1985, declined it and it cannot be added now unless Harrisburg changes their rules.
- Eric Wenzelberger of Center Street commented about the garbage company taking pictures of trash cans that were not accessible to the truck. Anita Caughy informed him that they do take pictures during their pickup to show whether trash cans are out when they come by or if there are any issues with a pickup in order to have a record of their routes.
- Rebecca Goldenberg of Old Easton Road asked whether the garbage charge will be on individuals or on the house. Amy Richard informed her that it would be part of a tax increase. Solicitor Asteak stated that the Borough wishes to have its uniqueness with keeping the garbage as part of the taxes. Mrs. Goldenberg suggested breaking up the charges in accordance with how many tenants are in a building. Amy Richard stated that she doesn't believe it can be broken up that way. Gary Asteak informed them that the commercial companies in the Borough do subsidize the garbage for the residents since they have to obtain their own garbage removal.
- Amy Richard asked if there were any additional comments before continuing with the Agenda.

Secretary / Treasurer Report

- **Motion** by Joe Gosnell, seconded by Cindy Hower to approve Council Meeting Minutes of November 3, 2021, as written. Motion carried unopposed.
- **Motion** by Kathleen Zdonowski, seconded by Renee Cantwell to approve accounts payable for the General Fund and Sewer Fund through November 15, 2021. Motion carried unopposed.
- The new Borough calendar with the meeting schedules was provided to Council for their review.

Public Works

- Leaf Pickup started November 15 and will continue as weather permits. Leaves must be at the end of the property near the street or curb.
- Ken Zemencsik addressed the speed bump issue for Old Easton Road. He stated that he is waiting for information from the engineer as to the distance for signage. Additional police presence has been added to slow down the vehicles.

Solicitor

- Solicitor Asteak informed Council that he wanted to report that there was a meeting with NEWPRO to look at their new revised plan. Hopefully there will be something substantive to report within the next month or so. He requested an executive session at the end of the meeting.
- Amy Richard asked for a motion to approve Solicitor Asteak to represent the Borough at the Weber Zoning Hearing on December 16th to oppose the request of a variance.
Motion by Joe Gosnell, seconded by Cindy Hower to approve Solicitor Asteak to represent the Borough at the Weber Zoning hearing on December 16th to oppose the request for a variance.

Agenda

- The decision on which accounting firm to handle the Borough's end of the year audit was discussed. Council had asked Secretary Anita Caughy to find out the amount each firm would increase their fees over the years. Ms. Caughy informed Council that BBD's increase would generally not exceed 5% per year and that Zelenkofske Axelrod stated that their increase would never be more than 3% and that the Borough probably wouldn't see an increase in the first three years they would do the audit. After discussion, Council decided to retain Zelenkofske Axelrod.
- **Motion** by Kathleen Zdonowski, Seconded by Joe Gosnell to retain Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC as the Borough's certified accountants for 2022 to perform the end of the year audit for 2021. Motion carried unopposed.

- Amy Richard stated that in light of the fact that the Borough has not received any lottery winnings or divine intervention they unfortunately have no choice but to increase taxes. She was hoping that the assessment for next year would have gone up but it only increased the tax base by \$135.00 more than the previous year. The assessment amount is \$26,394,300. The sewer budget is balanced but the general fund budget is under water. The increase in taxes is due 100% to the new garbage contract.
Ms. Richard stated that the taxes are currently at 14 mills. She broke down the additional millage increases as follows:
 - 15 mills – the deficit would be negative \$29,199.06
 - 15 ½ mills – the deficit would be negative \$16,001.91
 - 16 mills – the deficit would be negative \$2,805.76
 - 16 ½ mills – a positive of \$10,392.39 which does not include raises for Borough employees who have done an excellent job throughout the year. Their cost of living is increasing like everyone else.
- Ms. Richard stated that we are looking at an increase of 2 ½ mills. Salary increases would have to be discussed in executive session.
- Eric Wenzelberger asked whether Council has considered cutting anything from the budget. Amy Richard answered that they have cut everything they could possibly cut from the budget.

Executive Session

- **Motion** by Cindy Hower, Seconded by Joe Gosnell to exit regular session and enter into executive session for personnel issues at 8:26 P.M. Motion carried unopposed.
- **Motion** by Kathleen Zdonowski, seconded by Cindy Hower to exit executive session and enter back into regular session at 9:25 P.M. Motion carried unopposed.
- **Motion** by Joe Gosnell, seconded by Kathleen Zdonowski to allow Mayor Zemencsik to retain special council for a personnel issue. Motion carried unopposed.
- **Motion** by Kathleen Zdonowski, seconded by Renee Cantwell to approve the changes to the personnel handbook effective January 1, 2022.
- **Motion** by Amy Richard, seconded by Renee Cantwell to approve the increase of the tax rate for 2022 from 14 mills to 16 ½ mills. Motion carried unopposed

Adjournment

- **Motion** by Cindy Hower, Seconded by Joe Gosnell to adjourn the Council Meeting at 9:30 P.M. Motion carried unopposed.

The next regular meeting of Borough Council will be held on December 6, 2021

The foregoing was approved the 6th day of **December, 2021**.

President of Council

Attest:_____