

**STOCKERTOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 3, 2021**

THE BOROUGH OF STOCKERTOWN HELD A COUNCIL MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 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, and Rosemarie Wenzelberger. Pam Davis was absent
- Mayor Ken Zemencsik, Chief Eric Schwab and Borough Secretary/Treasurer Anita Caughy were present. Solicitor Gary Asteak arrived late.

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

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Agenda Approval**

**Public Comment**

- Eric Wenzelberger of Center Street complained about the constant noise coming from Polymer Products day and night. Several other residents also complained about the noise as well as Council members. He stated that he has attempted to contact Zoning Officer John Soloe regarding the issue. Amy Richard stated that she would get in touch with John Soloe to see what can be done.

**Secretary / Treasurer Report**

- **Motion** by Kathleen Zdonowski, Seconded by Joe Gosnell to approve Council Meeting Minutes of October 18, 2021, as written. Motion carried unopposed.
- **Motion** by Cindy Hower, Seconded by Joe Gosnell to approve Budget Meeting Minutes of October 27, 2021 as written. Motion carried unopposed.
- **Motion** by Joe Gosnell, Seconded by Cindy Hower to approve accounts payable for the General Fund and Sewer Fund through November 3, 2021. Motion carried unopposed.

**Mayor Report**

- Mayor Zemencsik stated that he met with the Game Commission and the Bushkill Stream Conservancy regarding the Bushkill Creek. He stated that they are trying to obtain Grants to stabilize the banks. Amy Richard explained the situation to residents who were not aware of what was going on. She informed them that Tropical Storm Isaias in 2020 had flooded the Bushkill Creek and collapsed parts of the bank along the creek which has blocked the flow of water with trees and rocks. The Borough has obtained an emergency permit from DEP to restore the banks and flow in the creek. The Borough contracted with the construction company, JOAO Construction who is working on the sewer plant while they are still in the Borough. While in the process of clearing the creek the construction company was

approached by the Fish & Boat Commission who is now giving the Borough a fine for supposedly working outside the permitted area and disturbing the fish. Amy Richard stated that you would think the Commission would be happy that the Borough is trying to clear the creek to have water flow freely for the fish.

### Police

- Chief Schwab read out the calls for service from October 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>. He stated that there were 3 Narcotics Arrests; 1 warrant arrest; 1 DUI; 17 Assist other Agencies; 103 Traffic Summonses; 50 Traffic Warnings; 3 Motor Vehicle Accidents plus miscellaneous calls for a total of 255 calls for the month of October, 2021.
- Chief Schwab stated that the department received a thank you letter from the Northampton County's CIT Coordinator thanking the Police Departments for their service.
- Chief Schwab informed Council that Halloween went very well this year. He stated that there were no issues. 108 Halloween bags with candy and glow sticks were given out to children by the police officers which was appreciated.
- OIC Shimer has elected to give up his work shifts to the other part-time officers for the rest of the year.

### Zoning

- Resolution No. 2021-3 was prepared by the Borough's Engineers approving the Preliminary/Final Minor Subdivision of Land for Fork's Church Cemetery Inc. with the specified waivers and deferrals. The Resolution was reviewed and approved by the Borough Solicitor and is before Council to be adopted on the record. Amy Richard asked for a Motion to adopt Resolution No. 2021-3.
- **Motion** by Joe Gosnell, Seconded by Cindy Hower to adopt **Resolution 2021-3 – A Resolution Conditionally Approving the Preliminary/Final Minor Subdivision of Land for Forks Church Cemetery Inc.** Motion carried unopposed.
- Amy Richard informed residents that Council had instructed the Borough's Engineers to survey Lincoln Street to find the Borough's right of way and stake out the area to eventually widen the street for an ingress/egress for emergencies. Ms. Richard is concerned that residents have begun to pull out the stakes. She has requested the next stage from the Engineers as well as a proposal from them of what they expected the cost to be for the street design. She has not heard back from them on this issue.

### Public Works

- Ken Zemencsik informed Council that he is almost finished repairing the left vac.
- The decommissioning of the sewer plant is progressing. Unfortunately, a substantial amount of water from the ponds has to be pumped through the sewer pipes to Easton which will affect the refund the Borough was expecting to receive from Easton for charges prior to being hooked up.

## Agenda

- The Borough has received two quotes from accountants to prepare the Borough's end of the year audit after the previous accountant had retired. Several firms were contacted and two quotes were received.  
Zelenkofske Axelrod LLC, who prepare the end of the year audits for Forks Township quoted \$5,950.00  
BBD, LLP who is a subsidiary of Palmer & Company used by Nazareth Borough & Freemansburg provided a quote of \$5,300.00  
The former accountant was charging the Borough \$6,000.00.  
Borough Secretary, Anita Caughy informed Council that the accountant for Tatamy informed her that they were not be submitting a quote since they would be higher than our previous accountant. Two other accounting firms were contact but never responded. Ms. Caughy stated that both firms who provided quotes also provided complete portfolios with references.  
Council requested Borough Secretary to inquire as to future increases in fees from both of the companies before a decision would be made. This matter would be tabled until the next Council meeting.
- Amy Richard read a letter from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission with an attached settlement agreement for an alleged violation of the Fish and Boat Code. She explained that this was in regard to the fine that the Borough was receiving for attempting to clear the debris in Bushkill Creek to improve the water flow which was mentioned earlier in the meeting. She stated that this is a fine for basically clearing a tree from the creek which the Fish & Boat Commission claims was beyond the scope of the permit. The construction company believed they were doing a good thing enabling the creek to flow. The Borough has the option of fighting the fine or just paying it to go away. The fine is in the amount of \$1,700.00. Amy Richard spoke with DEP who issued the permit to work in the creek and was advised that the permit supersedes any of the Fish and Boat people. DEP recommended that the Borough fight the issue. Amy Richard stated that she would like to go forward and fight the fine. Council agreed.
- Amy Richard then read out a letter from Michael Baker International who is performing services on behalf of PennDOT for a Structure Replacement Project for two existing deteriorating bridges that carry SR 33 Northbound and Southbound over Bushkill Creek in Palmer Township and Stockertown Borough. They are requesting to meet with local municipalities in the project area to review the elements of the Transportation Management Plan that will be implemented to manage traffic. There is no date given as to when the project will begin.

- The appraisal for the Post Office is scheduled for November 16, 2021.
- The Borough has not received the signed garbage Contract from County Waste as of this date.
- Amy Richard stated that she would like to have a short budget discussion. She stated that nothing official can be determined until we receive the 2022 real estate assessed value from Northampton County. Ms. Richard informed everyone that she did some calculating of the charges for garbage in previous years compared to the current quote.

The previous garbage contract was \$53,500.00 for the year.

The lowest bidder for the new garbage contract is \$129,117.00 per year.

“The new garbage contract puts the Borough in a deep hole with the budget”. She stated that at the last budget meeting Council reduced the expenses as much as they could from the budget and that there is nothing else to take from.

Amy Richard broke down the cost of the garbage contract per household for everyone to compare. She explained that the previous 3-year contract at \$53,500 per year was extended for two additional years at a cost of \$13.11 per month for each household.

The breakdown for the new garbage contract will be approximately \$31.63 per month for each household. This amount is still lower than most individuals pay for garbage pickup in other communities. The amount in other communities’ range between \$33 and \$39 per month. The Borough’s cost has been extremely low over the last five year due to County Waste’s buyout of LMR and then extending the contract an additional 2 years.

Amy Richard stated that she has suggested multiple times in the past years to increase the tax base by a small amount to put aside funds for situations like this. No one ever wants to increase taxes but here we are “dead in the water/underwater” and will have to raise taxes a minimum of 1 ½ mills or 2 mills but realistically 2 mills will not cover the over \$58,000 deficit. She is still hoping the new assessment will help.

Amy Richard explained that the Borough was forced into the current sewer project. She stated that we have received a Grant for a big portion of the sewer project which helped but unfortunately, we will have to eventually raise sewer fees. She explained that Stockertown was too small from day one in 1995 to support a sewer plant which is why the original construction costs were divided among the people who lived in town. This is the reason everyone pays \$50.00 a month while other towns in the area pay \$20 or \$30 a month or their sewer bills are based on their water usage. Council has agreed to absorb the additional increase from the sewer account for the first year or two so the cost could be spread to future generations who will benefit from this project. This agreement among Council was discussed last year before any of us knew what nonsense was going to hit our country with the increase of everything from gas to groceries. She said “increasing taxes is the last thing we want to do on top of everything the Federal government is doing which has caused prices to skyrocket on everything”. She stated that she does not know what else Council can do. The only good thing is we will not be raising the sewer bill this year

but we will have to raise taxes. She informed them that this increase does not include any raises for employees which she stated they might not even get. This is not fair to them because they have the same extra expenses, that everyone here has. She stated that the employees do a good job and she would like to be able to compensate them.

Joe Gosnell asked if Amy Richard could speak with the garbage company and try to get them to decrease their quote. Ms. Richard stated that she did speak with them after receiving their bid. She asked them to explain the extreme increase, and was told that the main part of the increase was because of gas and the higher wages they need to pay. Ms. Richard stated that another option would be for everyone to use their own private garbage company but that could cause other problems.

Amy Richard stated that she has reviewed the budget several times and cannot find anything else to reduce. She asked Council if anyone has come up with something. Joe Gosnell admitted that they should have listened to Ms. Richard over the years when she suggested increases in small increments. There has never been a problem balancing the budget in the past. The main problem is the new garbage amount. Amy Richard stated that if there wasn't this garbage increase, the budget would have been balanced in one meeting. She stated the Borough has been able to hold its expenses within the budget over the past 7 to 8 years.

Amy Richard asked if there were any additional comments for the betterment of the Borough.

- Rebecca Goldenberg informed Council that she owns property on Old Easton Road and was concerned with how fast traffic speeds down that road. She suggested that speed bumps be put on the road to slow down cars. She was advised that one problem with speed bumps is plowing in the winter. Ken Zemencsik, of Public Works, stated that there has to be a certain amount of feet for signage before the speed bump and he didn't believe the road was long enough to place the signs. Solicitor Gary Asteak just arrived to the meeting and stated that speed humps/bumps are an engineering question and suggested that the rules be checked with the Borough Engineers for the specific footage for signage. He stated that noise from driving over speed bumps/humps is also a consideration to the neighbors who live near them. Ms. Goldenberg asked how someone would go about donating an electronic speed sign. Solicitor Asteak stated that there might be a service contract involved with the sign which needed to be looked into. Amy Richard suggested renting an electronic sign to see if that helps. Putting a police vehicle on the road was also a suggestion which is definitely something the Borough can do. The Borough's Engineers will be contacted for additional information on the rules.

## **Adjournment**

- **Motion** by Cindy Hower, Seconded by Joe Gosnell to adjourn the Council Meeting at 8:40 PM. Motion carried unopposed.

The next scheduled Budget Meeting will be held on November 10, 2021  
The Budget Meeting for November 10, 2021 was cancelled.

The next regular meeting of Borough Council will be held on November 14, 2021

The foregoing was approved the **15<sup>th</sup>** day of **November, 2021**.

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President of Council

Attest:\_\_\_\_\_