

Borough of Susquehanna Depot
Minutes October 12, 2016

Present: John Hendrickson, Barbara Larsen, Roy Williams and Deborah Zayas

Absent: Susan Crawford, Dana Rockwell, Joseph Varsik

Also Present: Margaret Biegert, Attorney Michael Briechele, John Cramer

Guests: John Sholtiss, Chris Vinsko, John and Ruth Benedict, Lisa Bednarz, Emerson Whitehead, C. Jason Larsen, Lillian Senko

MOTION: By John Hendrickson seconded by Roy Williams to approve the agenda. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

MOTION: By Barbara Larsen seconded by Roy Williams to approve the minutes of September 14, 2016 as amended. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

MOTION: By John Hendrickson seconded by Roy Williams to approved the minutes of September 26, 2016 as presented. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

MOTION: By Roy Williams seconded by John Hendrickson to approve the bill list. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

MOTION: By Barbara Larsen seconded by Roy Williams to have J.J. Landscaping plant hostas under six of the downtown trees for \$450. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

MOTION: By Barbara Larsen seconded by John Hendrickson to advertise for bids for demolition of the Haynes Building. All present voted yes. Motion carried.

Councilwomen Zayas opened the meeting at 6:00 PM. Council approved the agenda and minutes of September 14, 2016 and September 26, 2016.

Public Comment:

John Benedict requested an update on the drug problem that he and a number of Franklin Ave residents had come to discuss during September council meeting. He said the residents were told that there would be increased police coverage, but collectively, the residents have only seen three patrols since the last meeting, two from the local police, and one from the state. He said the drug addicts continue to come back to Franklin Ave.

The Mayor apologized for not being able to attend the last meeting. She advised Mr. Benedict that an investigation on Franklin Ave had been done, an arrest had been made, charges filed and they are waiting for a court date. She said that a statement was not required as the person who fired the gun had confessed. The mayor advised Mr. Benedict that people do not always go directly to jail. She said that she would like to see things tighten up in the future. She told Mr. Benedict and guest that if anything happens in the future they can call her. Her number is in the book and she would provide it to Mr. Benedict.

John Benedict said he and his neighbors would like to see more patrols. The Mayor said that there have been increased patrols and that Drug Task force is also patrolling. She advised council and guests that she and Chief Sweet will be holding monthly meetings where residents can come and speak about their concerns.

Chris Vinsko said that it had taken a lot of courage for the residents to approach council with the ongoing police problem. She was threatened by a neighbor about her attendance of the last meeting before the article of the meeting had even made the newspaper. She said that the neighbors will continue to keep watch, but it feels like the issues are being swept under the rug.

Mayor Hurley said to call the police and they will get back to you.

John Benedict said when he calls the local police, he's told to call 911 so it can go on record. He thought 911 were for emergencies.

Mayor Hurley advised Mr. Benedict that calling 911 is proper procedure. Besides being on record, the dispatcher will know when someone locally is on duty and decide if it's an emergency. She had an incident in her neighborhood. She called 911 despite having the local numbers.

Mr. Benedict said that he had called 911 one to let them know some of the people who use to live at the condemned house were back and the state police came right away. Barbara Larsen said that was one time out of many calls.

Nancy asked if anyone was on duty. Barbara Larsen said that messages have been left at the police office, but they have never been contacted back. Mayor Hurley said that one time someone called for a statement, but didn't leave a name or number.

John Sholtiss suggested calling District Attorney Bob Klein to investigate.

Chris Vinsko said they have made numerous calls to the DA's tip line.

Nancy Hurley said that investigations can take a long time and need to follow the law.

John Benedict said that it took 45 minutes for police to respond to the shooting at the condemned house and asked why only a misdemeanor was given for the incident.

Nancy explained that the two officers on duty were in Scranton.

Barbara Larsen repeated the question and asked why the shooter was only given a misdemeanor.

Mayor Hurley said that the borough has four officers and two live a distance away. She will be keep council and the community informed about the monthly meetings.

DPW:

Councilwoman Zayas opened the following bids for the East Street Wall project: EBI LLC \$29,140.00, Bruce Woodmansee and Son's Construction \$34,700, Ken Rauch Excavating \$44,210.00. Deborah Zayas stated that the bid from Ken Rauch's came with 10% certified check. The secretary explained that the bid required 10% certified check or bid bond. She would check with the borough's association to see if the other bids could be considered if the contractor produced it after being awarded or if it had to be included by the bid deadline. Council decided to postpone voting on the bids until the secretary got clarification on the legalities of accepting bids with or without 10% check or bid bond.

Treasurer's Report

Council reviewed the treasurer's report and approved the bill list. Council discussed and approved planting hostas under six of the Main Street trees for \$450.00 from the community development line item.

Mayor's Report

The Mayor, Chief Sweet and Councilmen Williams met with a representative from Trehab to discuss growing drug concerns in the community and the need for additional help with the drug recovery process. She and the Trehab representative would like partner Superintendent Bronson Stone to set up a Town Hall meeting to address the problem. Parents, business owners and general members of the community will be invited. They Mayor will advise council members of a date after she speaks with Bronson Stone. The third "Walk Back in Time" program is scheduled for December 16, 2016 at 6:00 PM. The police are still working on estimates for rust repair for the Durango from Ray's Auto and Tim Cavanaugh. She advised council that the police have come up with an estimate on vests for \$750.00. The Treasurer asked why there was nothing about vests included in the 2017 budget request. The Mayor said it was because the police did not have the quote. The Treasurer asked if the neighboring municipalities were asked to share in the costs, as the vest are measured to fit only one officer and will likely be used when our officers are working at the other municipalities. No response.

Codes

Roy Williams reported forty five vacant homes in the borough and has concerns about the increasing number of neglected vacant properties that the borough is becoming responsible for. He will begin to enforce ordinances #451 that requires owners of vacant buildings to register their buildings once a year. The annual registration fee is \$50.00 for vacancies more than thirty days and \$500.00 for vacancies after six months. He advised council that a representative from NEPA had inspected the Haynes building and found the condition a threat to the surrounding buildings and public. He asked council to consider advertising for bids to demolish the building using impact fees, if the building owner would turn the property over to the municipality. Councilwoman Larsen had concerns about setting a precedence of having building owners walk away and leaving the borough to pay for demolition of these buildings. Roy Williams explained legal cost to go after the owner could well exceed the fines. The building owners also have the option of not paying taxes and have the property go to tax sale, where the process would begin again. Councilmen Hendrickson asked if the building is salvageable and would like to see an organization like Trehab rehabilitate the building. The secretary had contacted Trehab. They are not interested. The owners have tried to give the building away. Because of the extensive damage, no one is interested. Mayor Hurley had mentioned that the borough was looking into taking ownership the water tower at one point, but decided not to because they were quoted \$70,000 to have it painted. Councilmen Hendrickson asked if the building would have to be taken down manually. Roy Williams said it would due to the proximity of the neighboring buildings. Council voted to advertise for bids for demolition of the Haynes building.

Old Business:

Roy Williams advised council that he has received the easement for the community board and hopes to meet with the land owners the following day.

New Business:

Sue Crawford advised council that the Lion's Club Halloween Parade at the high school the follow Saturday at 4:00 PM with "Trunk or Treat" from 5-7 pm. Council scheduled Trick-or-Treating October 31, 2016 from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Meeting Adjourned: 7:49 PM