

**BOROUGH OF NORTHAMPTON
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
FEBRUARY 18, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER: A Regular Public Meeting of the Northampton Borough Council was called to order by President Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr. at 7:30 PM on Thursday February 18, 2021. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Council Members present at roll call were: President Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr., Vice-president Keith Piescienski, Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr., Anthony Pristash, Robert McHale, Julia Kutzler and Kenneth Hall. Thomas Gehringer was absent. Also present were Mayor Thomas Reenock, Solicitor Brian Panella, Borough Manager LeRoy Brobst, Police Chief Bryan Kadingo and recording secretary Meaghan Case.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Anthony Pristash, duly seconded by Robert McHale, and carried to approve the Minutes of the Public Workshop Meeting held on January 7, 2021; the Special Public Meeting held on January 21, 2021 and the Regular Public Meeting held on January 21, 2021.

Julia Kutzler abstained from the motion.

HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT:

Steve Lynch of Northampton was present to introduce himself and said he was running for Northampton County Executive.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Lopsonzski, Jr. had nothing to report.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Reenock had nothing to report.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT:

Solicitor Goudsouzian had nothing to report.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES:

Administration and Finance: Councilman Hall reported that Mr. Edward Pany served as a tour guide for Mr. Geoffrey Reese of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission on Saturday, February 13, 2021. Mr. Reese is very anxious to include the cement industry heritage in the various community comprehensive plans.

--On Tuesday, February 16, 2021, we collected \$115,300.50 in garbage payments, bringing the annual total to \$921,524.07.

--We received a letter from the PA One Call System that we will be receiving a refund of \$142.12.

--We received the fourth quarter distribution from Service Electric Cable TV in the amount of \$6,020.25.

--We received notification from Keystone Municipal Insurance Trust that we will be receiving a refund on our workers' compensation insurance in the amount of \$5,773.

Building, Land and Recreation: Councilman Pristash reported that in the next round of CDBG grants, Mr. Brobst has spoken with Victor about applying for a grant to build a pavilion in the area of Canal Street, commonly referred to as "the grove." Even though this is in a floodplain, an open structure could be constructed, and guests would need a permit to be there. Portable restrooms could be provided similar to the ones in use at the ballfield/football practice area.

Code and Police: Councilman Piesciensi reported that the response on the rental registrations is on pace with the last two years. Those who respond quickly always do; those who take more time always take more time.

--Mr. Brobst would like our next meeting that would be held on Thursday, March 4, 2021, to be held in Council Chambers live. At that time, he will arrange for the new police officer and the part-time police officer to be in attendance.

--Mr. Brobst took part in a virtual River Central meeting on Tuesday, February 9, 2021. Part of the plan is to incorporate people outside of mainstream government agencies to arrive at a more varied approach. With Victor 's help, Mr. Brobst has prepared a list and will be contacting these individuals by mail to see if they would be interested in participating in a Charette.

--The Planning Commission will meet on Wednesday, March 10, 2021, to consider final approval for Willow Brook Farm - Phase 2.

Fire and Health: Councilwoman Kutzler reported that enclosed in your packets are reports from the fire police and the fire department for the month of January.

--Students from Good Shepherd Catholic School sent thank you notes to the fire department for their service to the community during these difficult times.

Public Works and Sewer: Councilman McHale reported that the public works department has been hard pressed keeping up with the winter of 2021. They have done a commendable job and they are looking forward to SPRING!

--Work continues at the pump station project at the wastewater treatment plant. Head operator Steven Urban has filled in nicely for Scott Gillespie while he is convalescing.

--A crew of the public works department continues to remove snow and ice, especially at intersections. As of this date, the forecast for next 48 hours is not especially good.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS:**Consider Request of Tri-Boro Youth Soccer Club:**

We have received a request from a representative of Tri-Boro Youth Soccer Club seeking permission to use the Atlas Sports Complex for their 2021 spring soccer season. They will provide their own portable toilet facilities and they wish to occupy the facility from March 15, 2021 to June 13, 2021. In the past, we have charged them \$125 for this privilege.

Motion: A motion was made by Anthony Pristash, duly seconded by Robert McHale and unanimously carried to grant permission to Tri-Boro Youth Soccer Club to use the Atlas Sports Complex for their 2021 spring soccer season from March 15, 2021 to June 13, 2021.

Consider Continuing Exploration of Storm Water Fee:

A suggestion has been offered by Councilman McHale to create a storm water fee. The solicitor had circulated his evaluation of this process and Mr. Brobst feels it would be appropriate to have Council establish a storm water fee or not.

Julia Kutzler stated that she would like to look into this further but also continue to look at other options.

Robert McHale said there are areas that would have to be explored further. He said after in place, the fee structure could be reduced later when needed. He said one pro would be that this fee would be for everyone, not just taxed entities. He added that they would have to make sure the fees are equitable. He said he spoke with Gilmore & Associates and they have worked with other municipalities that have incorporated a fee structure. He said, we are not reinventing the wheel, this has been done before.

Kenneth Hall asked if Robert McHale had any idea of cost. He does not at this time. Robert McHale guessed it would be less than what it would be through a 2 mil tax increase. He also stated that it would be based on MS4 project costs, which is not a once and done project. It would also include costs such as storm water cleanouts and permit fees.

Solicitor Goudsouzian categorized this possible storm water fee as a “special assessment” and strongly advised against this for the borough.

Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr. said he understands the core concept but thinks this possible fee structure is premature. He said this would include entities that don't pay taxes such as the school district, however, he believes those fees would then be passed on to borough residents. Therefore, the residents possibly getting hit twice with additional fees/taxes. He said we currently have two grants secured and we would have approximately two-thirds of the MS4 project cost covered. He added that he thinks we have a pretty good handle on funding the project. He is not opposed to the research but feels we are not at a point where we need to add this fee.

Anthony Pristash was in agreement with Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr. and said he was not opposed to the research but said the storm water fee is unnecessary at this time.

Robert McHale said that if more people are against the storm water fee then why even waste the time and money setting up the program.

Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr. said with this type of fee it needs to be based on property size and asked Mr. McHale if he had an idea of a minimum number.

Solicitor Goudsouzian stated that this would be big money for the study at an unknown cost to the borough. He also said there would be significant costs for legal and engineering fees and again strongly advised against the storm water fee.

Robert McHale said that he could come up with about 10 different sample properties with no cost to the borough using the Northampton County mapping system and said he could quickly get these approximate figures.

A straw vote was taken to see who was in favor of only research on a storm water fee done by Robert McHale at no cost to the borough.

Anthony Pristash	NO	Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr.	YES
Kenneth Hall	YES	Robert McHale	YES
Julia Kutzler	YES	Keith Piescienski	YES
Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr.	YES		

With a vote of 6 to 1, council was in favor of only research on a storm water fee done by Robert McHale at no cost to the borough.

Approval to Prepare Bid Specifications for the Disposal of Dewatered Sewer Sludge:

Our current contract expires in April. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare bid specifications for a new three-year contract.

Motion: A motion was made by Robert McHale duly seconded by Kenneth Hall and unanimously carried to grant permission to prepare bid specifications for a new three-year contract.

Approval to Prepare Bid Specifications for Road Materials:

Mr. Brobst is seeking Council's permission to prepare bid specifications for road materials for the 2021 paving season. As in past years, he will invite the Northampton Borough Municipal Authority to participate in the bid.

Motion: A motion was made by Robert McHale duly seconded by Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr. and unanimously carried to grant permission to prepare bid specifications for road materials for the 2021 paving season.

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Kenneth Hall said that he was tired of the snow.

Robert McHale said that he is sure the public works department is tired of snow.

Keith Piescienski said that he hopes Mr. Brobst is keeping track of all of the streets that UGI is tearing up.

Anthony Pristash said that he hopes the public works crew gets some rest soon.

Julia Kutzler said that she spoke with Victor and he spoke with Kathy Novegratz, a member of “People Standing Up”. Their group will have a meeting on the first Monday in March at Change on Main. They will speak with Maggie and Rachael of Change on Main about how they can help in the community such as helping with the community garden.

--Mr. Brobst added that he will be attending the meeting with “People Standing Up”.

Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr. thanked Mr. Brobst for further researching fees and moving forward on finalizing permits for rental of the grove area at Canal Street Park.

--He suggested the borough start a tree program. He noticed three trees that aren’t doing well and should be replaced. He would like to see more trees planted in the parks in the borough.

--He also asked that the press report accurate information. In their last publication, information reported about the previous council meeting was incorrect. If they are going to publish information, they should make sure they are reporting accurate information.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

--Mr. Brobst said that the Exchange Club may be interested in planting trees throughout the borough.

--He said he is tired of the snow.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Motion: Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr. moved, seconded by Anthony Pristash and unanimously carried to pay the bills as listed on A/P Journal #2A, dated February 18, 2021, totaling \$474,390.07.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by Keith Piescienski, duly seconded by Kenneth Hall and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meaghan Case
Recording Secretary