

**KULPMONT BOROUGH
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
SEPTEMBER 13, 2023
7:00 P.M.**

Opening Prayer by Councilman Robert Chesney
The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag by the body present,
Kulpmont Borough Council held the meeting for general purpose on
Wednesday September 13, 2023

Roll call was taken, and the following members were present: Stephen Bielskie, Robert Chesney, Robert Fanella, Marlin Hodge, and Bernard Novakoski.

ABSENT: Mayor Slaby, Stephen Motyka

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT: Solicitor Edward Greco, Treasurer Paul Niglio, Borough Supervisor Ed Begis, Code Official Heather Owens, Police Chief Stephen Mazzeo and Borough Secretary Rhonda Wilk

OTHERS PRESENT: Edwin Howerter, Joe Politza, Raymond J. Siko, Brian Yancheski, Tina Treese, Rich Hallick, Meg Beck, Rich Cooper, Lou Ann Tamborelli

OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO BE HEARD ON ANYTHING THAT IS ON THE AGENDA:

No one spoke.

PRESIDENTS REPORT – (Stephen Bielskie)

No Report

MAYORS REPORT- (Robert M. Slaby)

Rhonda Wilk announced report Trick or Treat will be held on Saturday October 28th from 5:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

Rhonda Wilk stated Mayor Slaby had said the Halloween Parade sponsored by the Lions Club will be held on Thursday October 26th with additional information forthcoming.

MOTION- Mr. Fanella made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Chesney to approve the Lions Club Halloween Parade on October 26th.

VOICE VOTE-
Unanimous

A letter was received from Dave Shinskie from the Knights of Columbus requesting to close Fir Street on October 14, 2023, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. for the wine fest.

MOTION- Mr. Dowkus made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to close Fir Street from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. for the wine fest.

VOICE VOTE –
Unanimous

SECRETARY'S REPORT- (Rhonda Wilk)

Rhonda Wilk stated a motion is needed to approve the meeting minutes from August 9th and August 23rd meeting minutes.

MOTION- Mr. Dowkus made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to approve the meeting minutes from the August 9, 2023, and August 23, 2023, meetings.

VOICE VOTE-
Unanimous

Rhonda Wilk stated correspondence was received from PSAB on the Fall Leadership Conference to be held in Erie on October 13th – October 15th, registration is due before September 29th. Copy Mayor/Council

Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce sent correspondence on the Young Americans Golf Classic to be held on Friday September 22nd at Knoebel's Three Ponds Golf Course with information on registration or for anyone wanting to sponsor. Copied Mayor/Council.

Notice was received on the Borough's 20243 Estimate of Liquid Fuels Allocation, expected to be \$85,516.73. Copied to Mayor/Council.

The Benecon Group sent correspondence on them partnering with Self Insured Reporting LLC to gain insights into Employer Plan utilization and cost drivers- Authorization to share plan data and enable this capability. Copy Mayor/Council/Solicitor.

After a brief discussion a motion was made.

MOTION- Mr. Dowkus made a motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to authorize the signing of Benecon self-reporting to LLC to gain insights into Employer Plans utilizing cost drivers.

VOICE VOTE-
Unanimous

Correspondence was received from Northumberland County Tax Claim Bureau on the 2023 Judicial Tax Sale Petition and Schedule of Distribution. Copied Mayor/Council.

TREASURERS REPORT (Paul Niglio)

Mr. Niglio stated the financial statement and bills to be paid are attached and approval is needed.

MOTION- A motion was made to pay the bills and accept the financial statement by Mr. Dowkus and seconded by Mr. Fanella.

ROLL CALL VOTE- NOVAKOSKI (yes), BIELSKIE (yes), FANELLA, (yes), CHESNEY (abstain), DOWKUS (yes), MOTYKA (absent), HODGE (yes)
5 YEAS – 0 NAYS – 1 ABSTAIN

SOLICITORS REPORT (Edward Greco)

Solicitor Greco stated there are a number of items that will be addressed through the Ordinance Committee. Solicitor Greco stated there is an executive session requested under personnel and he is also requesting an executive session to discuss possible litigation.

POLICE CHIEFS REPORT – (Stephen Mazzeo, Officer in Charge)

Report attached. Chief Mazzeo stated the Mayor is not here this evening because of an unexpected issue. Chief Mazzeo stated Francis Petrovich was hired as a part time officer and stated he is full time in Selinsgrove and part time a couple other places. Mr. Chesney questioned if this means he is certified and ready to go. Chief Mazzeo confirmed he is and has been doing this 14, 15 years and stated he will be ready to go.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT – (Kevin O’Hearn)

Report attached.

August was busier than usual for the fire department with 25 calls answered for service by volunteers. Fire Chief O’Hearn stated they are awaiting decision on a federal grant that the department applied for with 3 other fire companies to replace our SCBA that we currently have are at the end of recommended life and will need to be taken out of service and replaced at a cost of around \$300,000.00. Chief O’Hearn asked for an executive session with the council at the end of today’s meeting.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT – (Kevin O’ Hearn)

No Report

BUILDING INSPECTOR'S REPORT– (Tri County COG)

No Report

CODE/HEALTH ENFORCEMENT OFFICER'S REPORT – (Heather Owens)

Report is attached.

SERVICE AND FACILITIES – (Robert Fanella)

Mr. Fanella stated a request was received late today from the Kulpmont Football Baseball Association to hold their annual homecoming Bonfire on the West End Grounds.

MOTION- Mr. Dowkus made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Fanella to approve the KFBA to hold their annual homecoming game bonfire.

VOICE VOTE-

Unanimous

Residents enrolled in the food program are reminded of the food distribution to be held on September 21, 2023, from 8:00 a.m. until 11 a.m. at the Borough Garage.

Mr. Fanella stated Total Tree Services is offering to trim up our town park at no cost, our street department would need to just clean up the clippings and branches. He stated if the council agrees he will give them the go ahead to proceed. The council agreed.

Mr. Fanella stated Sokol was awarded the project on Wood Street and stated he has been asked when this project will start and stated he has a call out to them and is waiting to hear back from them. Mr. Fanella stated many streets that are being complained about on Facebook. The council does know about how bad some of these streets are and the cost. He stated the cost could easily be \$75,000 for one block, just so you have an idea.

Mr. Fanella stated he is looking into micro slurry seal, they used this on Rt 54 in Natalie and stated if we use it in Lamplight Acres that will seal it up and give us about five more years on the road. Mr. Dowkus stated we need to keep our eye out for the low volume grants which are released every year, adding they require a traffic study, which Mr. Novakoski did this year and stated that is basically what they require. He added that may help to take care of the more rural routes in our borough and get them taken care of.

Mr. Fanella stated the first week of October our street department is going to be getting hot stuff instead of using the cold patch. He stated they will be getting done with some of the grass cutting and have more time. The first week in October Monday we will prep, Tuesday they have collection of recyclables and stated Wednesday they will give it a shot.

Mr. Dowkus stated the UTV update, so everything is in compliance with the UTV. We are just waiting for the West End to equip the apparatus and have a total cost for that so we can move ahead with that, the total cost so we can get it insured.

MOTION- Mr. Dowkus made the motion to work on getting the total cost on the UTV so we could get it insured and was seconded by Mr. Chesney.

ROLL CALL VOTE- NOVAKOSKI (yes), BIELSKIE (yes), FANELLA, (yes), CHESNEY (yes), DOWKUS (yes), MOTYKA (absent), HODGE (yes)
6 YEAS – 0 NAYS

Mr. Dowkus stated an update on the truck room surveillance, he had put a call in to our provider that does our maintenance and all that stuff. He stated all our cameras are up to date and are working. He stated if there are other issues, he is free to come out and will take a look adding moving forward he is not going to do us any favors as in the past. Mr. Dowkus stated everywhere that a camera is, is in operation and the Chief is the only person that has the surveillance footage and so everybody is caught up to date on that.

Mr. Dowkus stated he has been getting stopped coming out of his house from people in town and has been questioned on directional parking, He stated some people are just not parking in the right direction adding we have one-way streets in town and there have been issues with parking people in their driveways, there are ordinances against that.

Mr. Dowkus stated also parking on the sidewalk, he stated there was a guy on Chestnut Street at 9:00 at night changing a tire and exhaust system. Mr. Dowkus stated that is a bozo no, no. Mr. Dowkus stated millions of safety issues with that and stated he does not want to see anyone get hurt because of sheer stupidity.

Mr. Dowkus reminded all school is in session and school buses and kids are bebopping around town going to school, getting off buses, this, that and the other thing.
Mr. Dowkus asked everyone to give yourself a little more time to get to work or move through the borough.

Chief Mazzeo addressed the concern of directional parking, stating Mayor Slaby ordered some months ago to park in direction of traffic and stated when he is not busy with investigations, and he gets out there on patrol they are ticketed.

Mr. Bielskie stated there will be a change for the wintertime.

Mr. Dowkus stated it just seems as though it has never been lifted or brought to attention in the springtime going forward, yes in the wintertime directional parking is alright against traffic, a lot of people are complaining that it is not right.

FINANCE AND PURCHASING – (Stephen Motyka)

Mr. Niglio stated for the past two months our tax collector and Luke Darrup have been searching their records to find people not on the tax rolls. Mr. Niglio stated we have come to identify over 500 people not on the tax rolls, they pay earned income tax but are not on the tax rolls for per capita or occupation. He said we received that list and forwarded it to the county. Mr. Niglio stated he has not been in touch with the County yet, they just got the information last week.

Mr. Niglio stated hopefully in the next two- or three-weeks bills are going to be going out and some people are going to be saying “ouch.” Mr. Niglio stated their occupation will be charged in the center, not the high end or the low end and so there will be some appeals adding it is going to be a pain a little bit for Luke Darrup because he is going to be the one to suffer the backlash.

Mr. Niglio stated we made some corrections last week, there were some people on Wood Street that have our zip code but are not residents of Kulpmont and some that have moved out of the area that were confirmed.

CODE HEALTH AND SAFETY- (Marlin Hodge)

No Report

ORDINANCE COMMITTEE - (Joseph Dowkus)

Mr. Dowkus stated Shamokin City, Mr. McLaughlin on the fight against blight and stated he passed on a packet to everyone to review. He stated as of 2012, there is a lot of information on there.

Mr. Dowkus said there is a lot of information on here where we could really crack down and point us in a lot of other directions and maybe get us up to a little bit better of taking care of these issues. He asked all to review and said maybe we want to get in touch with Mr. McLaughlin even if we wanted to have a meeting or some sort of presentation provided and said to please let him know.

Mr. Chesney stated that is great news and stated there was a packet that has been in our office for a number of years and stated he has read some of the information.

Mr. Chesney said he wants everyone on the council to be aware we still have county departments that are willing to help us with issues and experienced lawyers to work with our Solicitor.

Mr. Dowkus stated with the Red-X program, the county and some of this information we should be able to put forward the best cognitive attack on some of these issues.

Mr. Dowkus stated in the Excavation Ordinance we had some missing information that the Solicitor had updated and so he would like to make a motion to re-advertise with those additions.

MOTION- Mr. Dowkus made a motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to re-advertise the Excavation Ordinance with the additions.

ROLL CALL VOTE- NOVAKOSKI (yes), BIELSKIE (yes), FANELLA, (yes), CHESNEY (yes), DOWKUS (yes), MOTYKA (absent), HODGE (yes)
6 YEAS – 0 NAYS

Mr. Dowkus stated Solicitor Greco has already talked on what we are working on currently.

Mr. Dowkus stated there is a sidewalk opening ordinance that was distributed to all and asked everyone to review the ordinance. He stated it is bringing our ordinance up to par as per the state and international code. Mr. Dowkus stated as per grade and basically it is updating some of the verbiage in there so everything is proper moving forward. Mr. Dowkus asked all to review.

Mr. Dowkus stated the 2% grade, and the ADA provision has been added, the backfilling as per the and IRC the UCC whichever is most stringent at that time, so it gives us that little bit of a buffer as they update their post, basically everything from the expansion joining and sealing is in there. He stated so when any services come around and do it or if anybody is updating, we are going to have a more cohesive sidewalk, basically that everything will be up to code.

Mr. Fanella questioned Mr. Dowkus and stated when we pave the street and are using liquid fuel money, we are required to put the ramps in, but say when the water company comes in and are using their own funds, they are not required to put the ramps in. Mr. Bielskie commented and said that is right. Mr. Fanella then questioned if then we are going to have the person that lives on the corner if they put a sidewalk in require them to put that ramp in because the cost is around \$5,000.00.

Mr. Bielskie said the concrete is one thing, but those pads, ramps are about \$1500.00 and so that is where all the cost is. Mr. Bielskie stated we need to decide if we are going to make them do ADA, are we making them do a ramp or put those ramp pads in. Mr. Dowkus answered, whatever the code is. Solicitor Greco stated there is time to look at it between now and next month.

Mr. Dowkus stated the Service Electric held up their end of going around fixing and removing any of those downed wires and with that said we will be able to move forward and get that contract taken care of.

Solicitor Greco stated the one they sent us originally raised some concerns regarding the abandoned lines, they do not agree to that obviously. Solicitor Greco stated he thinks if we remove that as a requirement, we could sign an updated franchise agreement.

Mr. Dowkus stated they did go around the borough and remove low hanging wires. Mr. Dowkus stated he would make a motion to reach out to them. Solicitor Greco stated he will reach out to them and ask them to send us a revised contract for consideration. Mr. Dowkus agreed.

Mr. Bielskie asked Mr. Dowkus if there is an ordinance about ATV's adding he has received a lot of complaints about people running around with their four wheelers. Mr. Dowkus stated it is not so much an ordinance but a state law. Mr. Bielskie stated he was contacted by Keith Tamborelli and stated they are going past their house at two, three o'clock in the morning they are going past his house to the woods. Mr. Dowkus stated he lives right next to the woods and it's a thoroughfare for mountain people.

Chief Mazzeo stated to catch them, the first issue is if we have someone working and the second issue is if they stop. He said if they stop you can issue a citation. Mr. Dowkus said the side by side, dirt bikes, four wheelers most are registered and insured so we not so much give chase but get license plates.

A brief discussion with citizens occurred on their path of travel, noise, and manner of operating the off-road vehicles on streets. Citizens offered suggestions of placing boulders or blocking off areas.

Mr. Fanella stated there are some good people that come in and spend some money, obey the laws, and stop at intersections, get gas, and go.

Mr. Novakoski commented on issues known to him, stating they fly down the streets and rev engines. Mr. Novakoski stated he has also witnessed some come through with courtesy and you don't even know they are there.

The discussion continued. Keith Tamborelli of 369 Spruce Street and stated there are three concerns that have come to his attention. He stated he spoke with a councilman today and stated he expressed the concern that the UTV's and ATV's are bringing in revenues and potential tax base into this community, but stated the impact to that far out weights that because they are already bringing revenue into this community by paying their taxes with the expectation to have a place that we could put our head down and go to sleep and get a reasonable amount of sleep without hearing UTV's flying in front of their home, in the back of their home all night long.

Mr. Tamborelli stated it started out where one of our neighbors had to put no trespassing signs up and stated they put a jersey barrier at the end of Maple Street to curb that and stated it did, they haven't had any UTV's driving there for months now. Mr. Tamborelli said last week the council took the jersey barrier away, took the bulldozer loader and drove a path all the way down, through the woods, over the wetlands to what you want to consider Maple Street continuing. Mr. Tamborelli said you have no respect for the people living there.

Mr. Tamborelli said he made a comment to one of the councilmen today and said he would record the noise and play it all night long in front of their house so you could hear what they hear. He said the comment he got back was “we have a noise ordinance.” Mr. Tamborelli said you don’t have anyone to enforce the UTV, the traffic or anyone to enforce all the other regulations. He asked if this council has even passed an ordinance of any nature overriding the Pennsylvania’s Laws for utility vehicles on public streets and stated if not then the law still stands, no UTV’s, ATVs on public roadways you are allowed to traverse from corner to corner not up the street not down the street.

Mr. Tamborelli stated the elderly on the 100 block have put cameras on poles because they are constantly running up and down the street going towards the fire company with no regard for anybody. He said if you are going to pass a law allowing this traffic to do it but until then he is asking for the borough or the state police to enforce the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Laws bringing officers to this community or whatever is necessary to enforce the laws so that they could sleep.

Mr. Novakoski stated there is a law out there that you must be licensed, the state approves it. He said when he had a four-wheeler, he bought one and it gave him the right to egress to the woods at 5 miles per hour adding 90% of the guys don’t even apply for the license. He said the reason they don’t want it is because the police then write down the plate and then has the owner.

Mr. Novakoski stated if the state enforces the law, then our police have a chance to get them. Mr. Novakoski stated it also gives you the right to go to state lands. Mr. Tamborelli stated it does, but it is point of egress of the woods to point of egress to the shortest woods distance and it also requires you to be insured.

Mr. Tamborelli said at 3 o’clock in the morning it is not a reasonable time to drive down the middle of Maple Street. Mr. Chesney stated everything that was said is correct, adding there are not enough police to enforce it and not much as we as a little borough could do, you are not going to catch these people all the time. He said he is sorry for your inconvenience, but our hands are tied.

RECREATION AND GRANTS (Mr. Chesney)

Mr. Chesney stated the Wood Street project is moving forward. Mr. Chesney said also the 902-recycling grant will be granted and stated as the memo from Laurie Lewis read until we receive our copy of the fully executed grant agreement, all expenses incurred will be at your own risk.

PERSONNEL- (Joseph J. Dowkus, III)

Mr. Dowkus stated he has requested an executive session at the end of the meeting.

He stated under police hiring, he had all his questions answered and so we do not need to talk about that.

FIRE/EMA/POLICE COMMITTEE – (Bernard P. Novakoski)

No Report

OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Keith Tamborelli asked if the council has the intent to disband the police department or enhance the police department and if so, what steps are being taken to enhance the police department. He stated because rumor going around the public is the council is going to tell the police to go pound and get rid of them. Mr. Dowkus stated that is incorrect and stated the four years he has been on council they looked at regionalization and raising their rates. Mr. Dowkus stated as well as advertising and reaching out to all these training facilities to raise awareness of our need for police and replied to Mr. Tamborelli saying that is bogus.

Mr. Chesney added they have been trying for four years and whoever is starting that rumor could start it somewhere else. Mr. Chesney said it is the most ridiculous thing anyone here on the council has heard.

Mr. Tamborelli stated there is another rumor that there is an aggressive movement towards the shut-down and dismantlement of the fire department that resides within this facility. Mr. Dowkus stated that is also bogus statement and said if anyone had followed any of our meetings, he personally has been working alongside the fire department to make sure our citizens are covered, and our fireman are suited in all their necessary equipment and so on.

Mr. Dowkus asked if any of the fireman here tonight would like to say anything. Ray Siko spoke agreeing that rumor is out there. Ray Siko then said Atlas Fire Company, Brady will cover Kulpmont, we don't need the fire department, if it is up to me, we will throw them out of our station, that is the rumors going around. Ray Siko stated and guess what, now the public heard because this is what happens when we talk in public places and out of turn.

Ray Siko then said hats off to Mr. Dowkus and said from day one when he met him, he said he stepped up and came forward and he wanted to know what was going on and wanted to become educated. Ray Siko said this is the repercussions, he has twenty guys at training right now and they said say the word and we will quit now, they are volunteers, they are sick of getting shit on.

Mr. Tamborelli then said most of you know he is a police officer in the other end of this county in Sunbury and asked how much council is aware of that is really going on in this community. Mr. Tamborelli said he deals with a lot of bad people on a regular basis, and it will blow your mind on how many people he deals with their address in this community, their residence is Kulpmont.

Mr. Tamborelli said in all due respect to Chief Mazzeo he can't be everywhere 24 hours a day and said council must address this, state police are not going to it for you either, they don't have the manpower either. He said they cannot get them; the city can't get them, and they dump a lot more money into those resources than you do.

Mr. Fanella asked Mr. Tamborelli what his answer was. Mr. Tamborelli said we have got to do something, you must pay the salaries to the police if that is what it takes to make that happen and said he knows that is a hard nut because it is a hard nut in every community because it is an expensive proposition, but it is not getting any better.

Paul Niglio of 415 Spruce Street in Kulpmont said he has been a resident of this community all his life and belongs to every club in the community and does not hear any of these rumors and so he stated he thinks it is just a bunch of people that are trying to discredit this council. Mr. Niglio state you may have some neigh sayers on this side of the fence, but it is not the majority. Ray Siko stated he never said it was a majority. Mr. Niglio said he has the floor adding you point fingers and make innuendos adding he just watched him (Ray Siko) do it five minutes ago.

Mr. Niglio stated if we do not all do this together, it is not happening and stated there are rumors every day, who cares about rumors is about what we are doing to make it happen. Mr. Niglio stated we are never going to get police officers in Kulpmont, it isn't happening. Mt. Carmel Twp. is losing a police officer right now and they are going to pay upward of \$60,000.00 and he can't even get anybody to knock on the door. Mr. Niglio said everyone says we have got to do something, but nobody says what. Mr. Chesney commented saying, "very well said."

Chief Mazzeo said one option we have not looked at is to send someone to the academy, they would be dedicated to us for five years. He stated it is a solution Shamokin has done for several years, we avoided it because it is pricy. He said he talked to Hollenbush himself the other week and they are offering \$25.00 to start and stated they tried to recruit somebody from a neighboring police department, and he said he trust that guy and off the record he said they offered him \$30.00 and to reimburse them for the police academy. Mr. Bielskie commented we must pay to play.

Mr. Tamborelli stated you do know the state reimburses that money that you put out when you send someone to the academy, you get a good chunk of it back. Chief Mazzeo said the going price is about \$28.00 to \$30.00 per hour and the options are your going to pay a lot more or reimbursable part.

Rich Cooper 1025 Pine Street stated he would like the council to review and possibly rescind the campfire in the borough ordinance. He said it is dangerous and the EPA tells you of all the carcinogens and pollutants that come out of campfires. He stated he must keep his windows closed and stated this occurs at all times of the day and night. Mr. Cooper said it was so bad one night he thought his house was on fire. Mr. Cooper asked to rescind the ordinance and join the clean air act.

Mr. Cooper also stated he would like a yellow line in the alley across from the end zone. He continued to discuss parking issues and asked to consider and even give out some warnings. He then thanked the council.

Tina Treese questioned if anything was being done about the trash can issue, she spoke of last month. The Code officer addressed the issue and stated she did post the trash cans.

Ray Siko stated he just wants to address the opinion Mr. Niglio gave. Ray Siko stated what he is saying is out there, they hear it, and people hear it. Ray Siko then stated if you want the answer just ask them and stated Mr. Dowkus does.

Megan Beck of 401 Market Street in Sunbury stated she is running for county commissioner and is getting out and trying to meet as many municipalities as she can to meet folks and hear what the challenges are. She stated it was a very interesting evening because she had heard about some of the borough's challenges. Megan Beck stated she has known Chief Mazzeo and Officer Tamborelli for years and they know what she is about.

Mr. Rich Cooper stated he just wants to add one more thing stating the public needs to keep the Chief informed if they want to make him more effective.

OLD BUSINESS-

None

NEW BUSINESS-

None

Mr. Bielskie stated the council will now meet in executive session to discuss personnel matters and possible litigation.

Solicitor Greco announced the council met in executive session for approximately 45 minutes to discuss personnel and litigation matters.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT of the September 13, 2023, meeting

**Rhonda Wilk
Borough Secretary**

Approval date – October 11, 2023