

**KULPMONT BOROUGH
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
DECEMBER 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 December 13, 2023

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

ABSENT: Councilman Joseph Dowkus

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

OTHER PRESENT: Edwin P. Howerter, Raymond J. Siko and Mike Dorkoski

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

None

PRESIDENTS REPORT – (Stephen Bielskie)

No Report

MAYORS REPORT- (Robert M. Slaby)

No Report

SECRETARY'S REPORT- (Rhonda Wilk)

Rhonda Wilk stated a motion is needed to approve the meeting minutes from November 8, 2023, meeting minutes.

MOTION- Mr. Novakoski made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Fanella to approve the minutes from the November 8, 2023, meeting.

VOICE VOTE –

Unanimous

Rhonda Wilk stated a motion would be needed to advertise for the Re-Organization meeting to be held on Tuesday January 2, 2024.

MOTION- Mr. Fanella made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to advertise the re-organization meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday January 2, 2024.

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

We received correspondence from Mr. Ludwig/Project Manager Penn DOT- regarding the project expected to start spring of 2026 on State3 Route 901 – detour of traffic. Copy Mayor/Council

Correspondence was received from Tri County Cog Inspection Service – Fee Schedule effective January 1, 2024, Copy Mayor/Council

MOTION- A motion was made by Mr. Hodge and seconded by Mr. Novakoski to accept the fee schedule from Tri County Cog.

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

Statewide Tax Recovery LLC announced the reorganization and partnership with Berkheimer Tax Innovations, Copy Mayor Council Treasurer and Tax Collector.

A letter was received from ARRO Consulting Inc. Engineering Firm Civil/Municipal Engineering, Municipal Planning Services and was copied to Mayor/Council

PSAB sent information on the upcoming Boot Camp to be held in January, February and March for Municipal Official Training and Newly Elected Official Training and was copied to Mayor/Council.

Mr. Motyka questioned who our delinquent tax collector is. Rhonda Wilk replied to Statewide Tax Recovery. Mr. Motyka asked who the gentleman was that came to speak with us and where he was from. Members replied, “Keystone.” Mr. Motyka questioned what time of year you switch. Mr. Niglio stated we are not switching; Keystone does our earned income.

Mr. Motyka then stated, “So, Statewide is our delinquent tax collector.” Mr. Niglio replied, “Yes.” Solicitor Greco then stated Keystone the for delinquent; we never received a proposal from them.

TREASURERS REPORT (Paul Niglio)

Mr. Niglio stated the council received a copy of the bills to be paid and financial information and stated approval is needed to accept and pay the bills.

MOTION- Mr. Chesney made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Hodge to approve the bills to be paid and accept the financial information.

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

Mr. Niglio stated a motion is needed to advertise the tax levy ordinance for 2024, which will be approved at the January 2nd meeting.

MOTION- Mr. Fanella made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to advertise the 2024 tax levy ordinance.

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

Mr. Niglio stated the Council received a copy of the final budget; there were no changes to the tentative budget. He stated approval is needed.

MOTION- Mr. Motyka made the motion and Mr. Novakoski seconded the motion to approve the final budget.

Mr. Chesney questioned Mr. Niglio asking if it stayed the same. Mr. Niglio replied and said yes.

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

Mr. Niglio stated we will be setting up another checking account for all of our grant money, ARPA. Mr. Niglio stated so we don't have people thinking we have all this money in our general fund account, people writing letters to the editor saying we are sitting on all kind of funds, that money is committed and so he stated he just wants it in a separate account.

Mr. Niglio stated he will be working the night of re-organization and is asking for consideration to be reappointed as treasurer, 2024.

Mr. Niglio stated he has a commitment on January 2nd and will not make the reorganization meeting and is asking for consideration to be re-appointed as Treasurer.

SOLICITORS REPORT (Edward Greco)

Solicitor Greco stated the overhead wire notice was mailed again to Verizon stating he has not heard anything from them. Solicitor Greco stated he filed with Pennsylvania PUC the official complaint against PPL. He is meeting with Mike Brinkash again on an estimate for a survey on Kulp Lane as previously discussed. Solicitor Greco stated he talked with the code office, and she will be getting a list of properties for grass cutting lines to be filed.

Mr. Chesney questioned the Solicitor if anything more could be done with the property on the 1200 block of Chestnut Street. Mr. Chesney stated he spoke briefly with Heather and stated she fines that property as often as she can and questioned if anymore could be done.

Heather Owens stated a fence is going up now and stated the property owner was there today to put in post for a temporary fence until spring. She said the intention is to then put up a vinyl fence. Mayor Slaby questioned if the fence will go across the front and the sides. Heather Owens replied stating he said it would be. Heather Owens stated to him and all the debris that were collecting are unsightly and directed him to get rid of it. She said he said it will be all fenced up and stated she saw him there today putting up posts.

Mr. Motyka questioned Heather Owens about the Lamplight Acres Fire House; he stated he had been asked for several weeks about the house there. Heather Owens replied she does not have any information and stated she does not even know where the owner is at.

Solicitor Greco asked the Police Chief if he had any information. Chief Mazzeo stated the homeowner obtained an attorney out of Pottsville. Chief Mazzeo stated until the Fire Marshall changes his mind, it's not going anywhere adding unless in the interim the borough approaches to see if will sign it over. Chief Mazzeo said with arson, there is no insurance.

Mayor Slaby said he understands the law and asked every one of you here to put yourself in this situation and must live with that next to yourselves. Mayor Slaby said it with this, with grass, it always comes back to him and said people come back to him and ask if he would want this next to him. Chief Mazzeo stated if we could find funding, we could tear it down.

Mr. Bielskie replied saying someone would take it as it is; there are people that want that property. Mr. Motyka stated several months ago the state police said it was a closed case with the investigation.

Chief Mazzeo stated with an arson case, it is an open investigation at this point, following investigative leads. Chief Mazzeo stated the owner obtained an attorney out of Pottsville

and lives in Texas. Mr. Hodge questioned if we had a name. Chief Mazzeo replied answering yes.

Solicitor Greco asked the Chief to supply him with information and stated he will send a letter to the attorney and ask for a status update. Solicitor Greco spoke with an attorney at the county, and they will get information to him to file a court action of condemnation to take ownership of blighted properties. The Solicitor added with these blighted properties there is no value to the landowner, but a liability and stated that is how these properties could be approached.

Mr. Motyka stated arson or not and asked the Solicitor when he approaches the attorney for the owner of Lamplight Acre property, the owner is responsible, and they should have a deadline such as January 1st and said we can't just sit on it another year.

Mr. Chesney stated the on a positive note, the two parties up on 500 block Spruce Street seem to be getting along a little better and both parties are going to try and get that fixed, adding they need Steve Bielskie, Tri County Cog to get involved. Mr. Bielskie then stated they were up and met with them, there is no structural damage, if there was structural damage then it must come down.

Mr. Chesney stated across from him on the 700 block the owner and his son were out there cleaning up that property, there is no garbage in the entryway, the bushes have been cut and cleaned up. He stated he just wants residents to know that the council will with the New Year try their best to enforce the codes to keep property clean, neat, and pleasurable for the neighbors to keep properties from going into disrepair. He stated there was some discussion on the garbage collectors wanting the trash out in bags and out of the can; he said unfortunately it needs to be in a can with lids on it.

Mayor Slaby asked Heather Owens in regard to the property on Oak Street if the email was sent (*then spoke softly and is inaudible on the recording*) he then continues to say that is good and asked for her to "stay on them."

Mr. Fanella addressed the Mayor and stated since we are on the subject of properties if Heather could get some assistance from Chief Mazzeo on 1327 Chestnut Street property, the one with the mattress in the back yard. Mr. Fanella stated he had been asked about the mattress and stated he came in and questioned Heather about it and she provided him with the paperwork and then presented it to the Mayor.

The Mayor stated it was out front, now it is in the back. Heather Owens stated they actually use it and stated in September they were laying on it and watching a movie adding it has been out there and the neighbors are in an uproar. Mayor Slaby agreed to look at that.

Mr. Motyka then stated we do have ordinances about putting furniture or mattresses out on the front porch. Mayor Slaby stated he used to say to people you don't want to put

bales of straw outside your house or on porch at Halloween stating if someone goes by and throws a cigarette, goodbye block.

POLICE CHIEFS REPORT – (Stephen Mazzeo)

Chief Mazzeo stated the report is attached. Chief Mazzeo stated calls are down a little, investigations are up. He commented on our part timer giving us hours through the month. Chief Mazzeo stated the police addressed certain neighbors last evening and they agreed to testify and stated there were several arrests this past month.

Chief Mazzeo stated we are in the process of applying for a PCCD recruitment grant, if we could actually find anybody, we could give them a bonus for coming in and also could help pay for some of our costs, we have been working our way through the grant and said Rhonda has been helping with that. Chief Mazzeo stated after your last meeting with Mayor Permission and everything he sent stuff to the Pennsylvania Chiefs and stated he gotten responses and stated six were from current officers, only one of those six applied.

Chief Mazzeo stated all six of them stated they would be interested in the salary, unless there was a contract to back up the salary, they would probably decline it. Chief Mazzeo stated he included a copy of the prepared contract to everyone and stated it is essentially a copy the 2018 contract with the wages you requested and stated he took something out of his contract as far as grievances. He stated everyone received a copy of it and asked if everyone had a chance to go through it.

Mayor Slaby then said he is aware of this contract that he provided and stated he recommends as Mayor to his colleagues here to please approve it and stated we then are on course to accomplish what we have been trying to accomplish the past couple months to get people to work here. Solicitor Greco stated he has reviewed it, and it was also sent to the local FOP and stated they are on board for us approving it. Mayor Slaby stated he needs a motion to accept the proposed contract as provided.

Mr. Motyka asked how quickly the police grant can go in and stated if get \$5,000.00 for a police officer and we already have an officer on payroll it's not recruitment anymore. Chief Mazzeo replied and stated we can use it for costs, there is advertising cost and processing costs along with other costs.

Mr. Motyka questioned if we could take that to defray that cost. Chief Mazzeo replied stating he had to review it, sit down and read the whole thing and stated he does not want to say yes or no for sure. Mr. Motyka stated we have a re-organization meeting to re-appoint our treasurer and solicitor and such and questioned if we could take action at that meeting if council sees fit, Mr. Motyka stated so council could read the whole contract stating he has read through the police contract, but asked if we could take action at that meeting so council could read through if there are any questions.

Solicitor Greco stated it is usually for general purposes. Mr. Niglio stated it is basically the contract from 2018... Mr. Bielskie stated only the figures changed.

MOTION- Mr. Fanella made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to accept the police contract.

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

FIRE CHIEF REPORT – (Kevin O’Hearn)

Report attached.

The report comments are as follows:

We are still awaiting a decision on a federal grant that the department applied for with 3 other fire companies to replace our SCBA. The 25 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. Squad 221 (2007 Spartan) will be going out service in early January to have tool mounting and other projects completed.

Ray Siko presented an AED and a stop the bleed equipment to the borough fulfilling the promise from the fire department to provide this to the borough.

Ray Siko mentioned the rotation of Fire Chiefs will take place for 2024 and stated they just need to wait for their meeting and then the President will forward a letter to inform to the Borough. Mayor Slaby asked to provide a list with the names and spelling and what their titles will be as they will need to swear in. Ray Siko replied, “yes.”

Mr. Motyka along with Council members thanked the Fire Department for the AED.

Ray Siko recommended mounting this where it could be seen and would recommend an email be sent out to inform everyone it has been mounted and of the location.

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 Attached

She stated she is preparing for the New Year with rental registrations letters going out and coming in already.

Mr. Motyka questioned if the entertainment letters are going out for devices asking if they get sent out now. Rhonda Wilk replied they went out late last year and will be sending them out, adding we have a more accurate count now. Mr. Novakoski acknowledged an updated list has been compiled on and adjusted.

Mr. Chesney questioned Heather Owens if there is anything that could be done to help her, asking if we are getting ahead of the trouble areas we have in town. Heather Owens replied we get ahead in one and a new one pops up. Mr. Chesney stated we just need to be diligent.

Heather Owens suggested possibly an annual inspection for rentals noting the only time an inspection is done is when there is a tenant change and there is no way of knowing what may be going on inside these rentals as far as garbage.

Heather Owens stated someone mentioned to her that if tenants carried their own rental insurance, we may have a better clientele moving into the rentals. She gave an example of a dog bite which would have been covered under that. The council discussed if it is possible to make them do that. Solicitor Greco stated we can investigate it.

After a brief discussion it was agreed it is something to investigate. Heather Owens stated there are definitely landlords in town that if they can get six months cash in hand, there are no questions asked and they are the properties we have problems with.

SERVICE AND FACILITIES – (Robert Fanella)

Mr. Fanella announced the Food Surplus Distribution will be held on Thursday December 21st, 8:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. at the Borough Garage- Reminder to bring a box or bags.

We currently have a carport at the borough garage with only a roof and stated he would like to have sides put on that and receive a quote from J & S which everyone has a copy of. Also included is another quote for larger storage.

Storage issues were briefly discussed, and it was expressed storage is needed.

MOTION- Mr. Fanella made a motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to approve the purchase material and labor to enclose as quoted by J & S Landscaping, not to exceed \$2,500.00.

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

Mr. Fanella stated he would like to investigate the collection of tin and aluminum being collected the same day. Mr. Motyka stated there is \$5,000.00 for educational purposes and stated in previous year we sent out flyers and magnets. Mr. Motyka stated we could do some outreach to the community. Mr. Fanella stated he wanted to bring it up, we could talk about it and if we want to proceed, we could consider next month.

Mr. Fanella stated he was speaking with Heather Owens, and she had the idea of collections to be done on the secondary streets for garbage and recycling, it may make it easier, and you would not have all the blue containers on the front streets. He said this is just something to consider.

Mr. Fanella stated we had a couple applicants and two were interviewed today. Mr. Chesney stated approximately 25 to 27 hours and stated the hours during the winter could require more and, in the summer, may be less.

MOTION- Mr. Fanella made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to hire Jason Boyer as a part time employee with the street department at a starting rate of \$12.50 per hour.

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

FINANCE AND PURCHASING – (Stephen Motyka)

Mr. Motyka stated he talked at the last meeting about putting a paving crew together and receiving a price for a hot asphalt buggy and a skid steer. He stated after speaking with Mr. Fanella he would like to keep the idea of the hot asphalt buggy in our back pocket but would like to move forward with the milling attachment. Mr. Motyka stated this would be paid for with our liquid fuel's money.

Mr. Niglio stated you could only spend 15% of your allocation yearly on equipment and said the remainder would come out of the general fund.

MOTION- Mr. Motyka made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Novakoski to purchase as quoted a Skid Steer Milling Attachment and water kit spray bar and tank at a cost of \$37,570.00 from Medico.

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

CODE HEALTH AND SAFETY- (Stephen Bielskie)

No Report

ORDINANCE COMMITTEE - (Joseph Dowkus)

No Report

RECREATION/GRANTS COMMITTEE – (Robert Chesney)

Mr. Motyka stated two meetings ago it was discussed with PennDOT concerning the main streetscape, with curb cuts and streetlights. He stated the first week in January with our engineer we will investigate Federal grants for Street Scape, there is no match for that and will look into it.

PERSONNEL- (Joseph J. Dowkus, III)

No Report

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

No Report

OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

No one spoke.

OLD BUSINESS-

Mr. Motyka stated a committee was formed and the dog park was a big success and stated they made \$400.00 for pictures with Santa. Mr. Bielskie stated it would be nice if we could get a group to work on the signs you spoke about. Mr. Novakoski questioned if they are going to share some of the expense of that park, if they are raising money. Mr. Motyka stated they are working with the Kulpmont 100.

Mr. Motyka stated Mr. Bielskie has a great idea on the signs and stated he sent examples of signs that were installed in Watsontown. Mr. Motyka stated he thinks it is a good idea to have our guys go to the end of town and cut the old sign down, stating it is horrible. Mayor Slaby stated it may be a good idea to consider four signs, not just two. Mr. Motyka stated we are looking for grants also.

NEW BUSINESS-

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Merry Christmas
And
Happy New Year

ADJOURNMENT of the December 13, 2023

**Rhonda Wilk
Borough Secretary**

Approval date January 10, 2024