

**Borough of Somerset Council Meeting  
May 18, 2015 – 7:00 p.m.**

Meeting was called to order by Council President Ruby Miller, opening with recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**Present:**

Council Members: Ruby Miller, Judy Pyle, Sue Opp, Steve Shaulis, and Gary Thomas. Scott Walker, Mayor was present. Also present were Michele Enos, Acting Borough Manager; Brett Peters, Director of Finance; George Svirsko, Director of Public Works; Randy Cox, Chief of Police; Jack Dirienzo, Borough Solicitor; and Thomas Reilly, Borough Consulting Engineer.

A Moment of Silence was held in memory of, and in honor of, Donald E. Cassler, who served as Somerset Borough Manager during the years 1958 to 1961.

**Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Steve Shaulis moved to approve minutes of the previous Council Meeting of April 27, 2015 – motion seconded by Judy Pyle.

Unanimously Carried.

**Administrative Business**

Gary Thomas moved, Sue Opp seconded payment of the following bills:

Check Numbers: 25762 to 25866

Total Amount: \$391,228.51

Unanimously Carried.

**New Business**

(a) **Somerset County Tax Claim Bureau**

Solicitor Dirienzo asked for a decision on what we will consider for “approval to purchase property at private tax sales”. He explained that these are properties that have been through tax sales and there’s been no interest shown in purchasing them. They are unclaimed, with no taxes being paid on them.

The Tax Claim Bureau needs to know if the minimum bid for these properties does not rise to the level to pay all back taxes, will we accept any bid offered regardless of whether it covers these taxes? This is so the possibility of a buyer can continue.

Chances of recouping unpaid accumulated taxes are unlikely with a property in this condition. A possibility is, if it gets back on the tax rolls and you have to concede some of the back taxes, it's probably the best thing to do. The alternative is to say we are never going to take anything less than what is owed; then it will merely sit there.

**Motion**

Gary Thomas moved to accept "minimum bids" for Private Tax Sales.  
Motion seconded by Judy Pyle.

Unanimously Carried.

(b) **Donation of Birdhouse**

President Ruby Miller announced that the Sportsmen Club approved donating a birdhouse to Somerset Borough. This is the one that was located at the Municipal Parking Lot at Patriot Street and Edgewood Avenue. Council will be given full ownership and it will then be donated to Sally McLaughlin, whose brother will restore it and place it at his Rockwood residence.

**Motion**

Sue Opp moved to accept ownership of the birdhouse and donate it to Mrs. McLaughlin. Motion seconded by Steve Shaulis.

Unanimously Carried.

**COMMITTEE, ADMINISTRATION, SPECIAL REPORTS**

(a) **Manager's Report**

Michele Enos reported the following:

The EADS Group performed an inspection of our Salt Shed and the roof on our Public Works Garage. Estimates were received; we reviewed this with our Public Works Committee and will consult with our Finance Committee.

We will meet with the Turnpike Commission next week to discuss the North Center Avenue Bridge Replacement Project.

DEP's annual inspection of Coxes Creek is scheduled for tomorrow, handled by George Svirsko.

The Somerset Garden Club is scheduled to do their town planting Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

Our Public Works Committee met May 12<sup>th</sup> with PennDOT to discuss the Paving Projects for the year 2015.

We are continuing to move forward on our Water Leak Detection Program.

Our Annual Spring Cleanup begins tomorrow.

The Annual Water Line Flushing will continue this week. It started on Sunday.

The Somerset County Boroughs Association meeting will be held this coming Thursday at our Public Safety Building.

(b) **President's Report**

President Ruby Miller stated that a certificate will be presented to Jared Coleman at the American Legion for his work on the military cannon located across from Patriot Manor. Our Police Chief will also present a certificate to Noah Frazier at Thursday's Somerset County Boroughs Association meeting in recognition of his work on the Somerset Borough Citizens Police Academy.

(c) **Engineer's Report**

Tom Reilly, P.E. reported the following Status of Projects:

## Bakersville Water Treatment Plant

We met at the Bakersville Water Treatment Plant to review final items before structural repairs. The roof is completed except for some metal trim pieces in various places. That project will be done within the next week or so.

## Hickory Hill Reservoir

We completed the field surveying for the Hickory Hill Storage Tank Project.

### (d) **Public Works Committee**

Gary Thomas reported that they reviewed public streets with George Svirsko and Steve Shaulis and selected the worst streets needing repair. The budget shows \$88,000 and we are looking at probably eighty-three to eighty-five thousand dollars in order to keep within budget.

The Public Works Garage roofs need to be repaired - especially the one over the Police and Fire Departments section, at cost of \$31,500 dollars. Bids will be prepared, as recommended by EADS.

The roof over the Mechanics Building will need to be repaired, along with the roof over the main garage, at approximately \$225,000. Bids might be out next year.

Concerning Salt Shed repairs, the \$16,200 repair will extend the building's usefulness for another few years. If we have to increase the size, it could cost another 20 to 30 thousand dollars; therefore we will look at repairing the building at the approximate price of \$16,200.

The Committee also looked at a heavy duty 7400 Series truck at approximately \$135,000. This will be brought to the Finance Committee. A 5-year leasing program was also discussed.

### (e) **Public Safety Committee**

Chief Cox reported that the Civil Service testing will occur Saturday, to include the first two phases - the physical fitness part, and the written part.

Ruby Miller asked about the need for a handicap parking spot at Cascio's Fruit Market. Chief Cox said he received a letter requesting that Council consider installing a handicap spot at the 200 block of West Main Street.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved to place a one-space handicapped parking spot on West Main Street near Cascio's Market – motion seconded by Mr. Shaulis.

Unanimously Carried

(f) **Finance Committee**

Director of Finance, Mr. Peters provided the following year-to-date Budget Report. It was noted that the information is through April which is 33.33% of the Budget Year.

General Fund:

Revenues: 23.94%

Expenses: 31.93%

Water Fund:

Revenues: 39.49%

Expenses: 36.05%

Sewer Fund:

Revenues: 32.84%

Expenses: 44.71% (including the Lagoon Liner Project)

Mrs. Miller asked about the Somerset Daily American fireworks sponsorship donation.

## Motion

Gary Thomas moved to spend \$600 dollars to sponsor the Somerset Daily American Fireworks Display – motion seconded by Mrs. Opp.

Unanimously Carried.

### **(g) Somerset Inc. Representative**

Mrs. Pyle reported the following:

- The Beautify Somerset Committee picked up 6 or 7 bags of garbage after the uptown clean-up.
- Replacement Trees on the Diamond have been funded and current trees are being replaced.
- Somerset Trust Company is continuing the planting of the property they purchased on West Patriot Street. They ask Council's opinion on placing one or two trees in the parking lot across from Mel's Restaurant.
- They discussed placing bicycle racks uptown.
- Concerning the Sign Ordinance – the Shoe Repair shop and Mel's would like to see the sign ordinance changed to let people know where their businesses are. She said this needs to be reviewed with Somerset Inc.

### **(h) Somerset Volunteer Fire Department**

Gary Thomas reported the following:

- Two hundred thirty-one fire calls were received in October. Many are nuisance calls – pumping basements, rescuing animals, etc.
- They are preparing to order the new ladder truck. Our other truck was out of service for approximately two weeks.

(i) **Solicitor's Report**

Solicitor Dirienzo mentioned two pieces of litigation discussed at last meeting. The court dismissed the one case but left the opportunity to “re-plead”.

Concerning the Robert Bosch (Gilmour Property) tax appeal, he explained that this would result in a refund to the taxpayer. The check was previously prepared, however we were then advised by the County that a miscalculation had occurred, and now Borough's share is now up to \$15,487.35, amounting to \$1,675.51 more than last time.

The County refund is \$12,554 and the School's refund is \$35,000.

This is a product of an over-assessed valuation where the assessed value was higher than justified.

**Motion**

Mrs. Opp moved, seconded by Mrs. Pyle, to pay the Borough's share of the refund monies in the amount of \$15,487.35.

Unanimously Carried.

**Executive Session**

Council went into Executive Session for Collective Bargaining purposes.

8:18 p.m.

**Adjournment**

Steve Shaulis moved to adjourn, motion seconded by Sue Opp.

Unanimously Carried.

8:28 p.m.

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Michele Enos  
Acting Borough Manager / Secretary