

## **Borough of Somerset Committee of the Whole**

### **May 14th, 2018 5:00 p.m.**

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

#### **Roll Call:**

Council Members present: Ruby Miller; Fred Rosemeyer; Judy Pyle; Pam Ream; Steve Shaulis and Gary Thomas. Mayor Scott Walker also present.

Absent was Council Member Sue Opp.

Also absent was Junior Council Member Maria Weimer.

Also present were the following: Borough Manager, Michele Enos; Director of Finance, Brett Peters; Chief of Police, Randy Cox; Solicitor James Cascio and Consulting Engineers, Tom Reilly and Jake Bolby.

#### **Announcements:**

*(a) None*

#### **Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

*(a) All minutes are approved at the regular Council Meeting.*

#### **General Public Comments:**

*(a) None Registered.*

#### **Policy Agenda:**

#### **Old Business:**

*(a) None*

#### **New Business:**

*(a) Somerset Inc. – Regina Coughenour will be discussing Somerset Inc.'s development of a Long Range Plan.*

Mrs. Coughenour, the Executive Director of Somerset Inc., thanked Council for everything that they do in the Borough, and for all the help and support she has received from them in the last 18 months that she's been in her position at Somerset Inc.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that for the last two months, she's been working on Somerset Inc.'s vision and focus for the future of the Borough. She mentioned that she has been learning of the struggles that the town faces, but also the potential that the

town offers. She's also been learning about "best practices" from other communities, and "Main Street" Communities, outside of the area. She mentioned that there is so much potential for Somerset Inc. to be doing even more, and to allocate their time effectively, in partnership with the Borough.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that her goal before Council was to present an early draft of Somerset Inc.'s. "Long Range Vision" for the next 2-5, and 5-10 years. She stated that she is also interested in discovering what each Council Member's individual future hopes are for Somerset, and especially, Uptown Somerset. She stated that she wanted to make sure that Somerset Inc.'s visions align with the Council's visions, as well.

Mrs. Coughenour distributed a shortened version of Somerset Inc.'s "Vision Packet" for Council to review.

She stated that she has been learning more about the "National Main Street Center Approach" to Economic Development in small towns. Mrs. Coughenour stated that Main Street Communities are supposed to be a lot more than promotion and events. She said that they have been focusing in some areas outside of events, like Trinity Park. She stated that events sometimes do not have the long term investment in changing the community.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that she's been looking at other towns that have a successful Main Street Program, and trying to learn from their best practices. She mentioned some of these ideas, as examples, to Council. She stated that she is exploring options, from these examples, to see what would work in Somerset.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that she is trying to discover what is stopping the Borough from reaching success. She mentioned that our community is well situated, being close to the turnpike, and has all the beauty and rich history as other communities, such as Bedford. Mrs. Coughenour rhetorically asked "What is stopping us from being as bustling and driving, like Bedford, like we once were?"

Mrs. Coughenour then reviewed the "National Main Street Approach" packet she distributed to Council, which discussed ideas and suggestions from Somerset Inc., other individuals and other Main Street Communities, as well.

She mentioned that the "National Main Street Approach" includes Organization, Design, Economic Development and Promotion.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that one of our biggest issues is the population decline in the Borough. She also stated that our homeowner's are aging. We're losing more people to death, and migration, than we're gaining. She stated that we also have a skilled workforce shortage.

Mrs. Coughenour expressed that she feels we should be focusing on Uptown Somerset improvements as that "first impression." She stated that she thinks it's our job to make sure that our Uptown represents who we are. She feels that we have such a strong community, and such a community of amazing people and recreation potential.

Mrs. Coughenour also reviewed what Somerset Inc. has done for community improvements in the last 18 months. She mentioned that two new events were added, they resurrected their Design Committee, are in the process of window decorating, tried to strengthen their partnerships, added a “Spruce Up” Event to clean-up the town, and have been recruiting businesses to the community, among other things.

Mrs. Coughenour mentioned that Facade and Micro Grants would greatly help with design, and public art, to beautify our community. She mentioned that other communities are benefiting greatly from these types of grant funding.

She also discussed what Somerset Inc.’s long term goals were in the community. Mrs. Coughenour stated that to do all of it, organizationally, they will need some extra help. So one of the goals for Somerset Inc. is to become a sustainable organization. They are hoping to be able to maintain one full-time person, and one part-time person, to be the most successful.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that she knows we all have dreams for Uptown Somerset, and she knows that Uptown Somerset has so much potential. She stated that they want to be pro-active, and thereby need to get people into the vacant homes there to take care of them. She stated that we need to get real estate values to rise so that people want to invest their properties. Mrs. Coughenour feels it’s really important to focus and be partners.

She invited all individual Council Members to meet with her, personally, so she could discuss what Somerset Inc.’s dreams and ideas are. She commented that she feels, together, we could come up with a really solid vision with all our combined ideas.

Ideas and discussions were held regarding the information packet Mrs. Coughenour presented.

Ms. Enos also mentioned funding alternatives to help in Somerset Inc.’s goals.

Ms. Coughenour mentioned that businesses don’t stay without people. We have to have them both. She stated that if we can figure out what our catalyst can be, we can build on that. She mentioned that we have all the right pieces to the puzzle, we just have to chase it.

Blight issues were discussed amongst Council, and what can be done to enforce it legally.

Mrs. Ream posed a question on how to find that “catalyst” for the Borough to have people want to have shops in Uptown. She rhetorically asked “What is going to attract people”? She discussed what Lancaster County does to attract people into their community.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that we technically have the people here to support Uptown Somerset with 40,000 people getting off the turnpike exit every day. She mentioned some examples of what other counties have accomplished with their Main Street Program. She stated that she doesn't feel that one thing is going to change it all, but feels it is going to be a series of little things that happen very quickly.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that she really believes in the "National Main Street Approach" Program, but stated that Somerset Inc. hasn't been doing it because of financial constraints.

She stated that if we focus in all the different areas, we should come up with positive results. Mrs. Coughenour stated that, overall, the vision is that Uptown Somerset represents who we are in Somerset County. She feels that people are just unaware of what we have to offer here.

Mr. Rosemeyer mentioned that we do not have any signage down by the turnpike to attract people into Uptown Somerset.

Mrs. Coughenour mentioned that Somerset Inc. is working with Verizon to get permission to paint the telephone poles, up the hill, on North Center Avenue to attract people from the turnpike area to Uptown Somerset.

Mrs. Coughenour also mentioned that a lot of times our Uptown businesses are not open, which causes another problem with the influx of people.

This problem was discussed among Council.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that there are so many things Somerset Inc. could put their energy into. But right now her idea is to get Council Members suggestions and ideas to see where she needs to focus her attention, and what will be most impactful. She feels that "design" is one of the biggest things, because the curb appeal in Uptown Somerset is missing, although she feels it has all the potential.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that it's "trendy" now to visit a small town and a small business, so if there's ever going to be a time, now is the time to make the changes and make it happen. She commented that there's so much to look forward to.

**(b) Request Form Submitted by Manager Enos:**

1. *Water/Sewer Rate Structure – Update*  
**(Discussed in Executive Session)**
2. *Stormwater System/Stormwater Authority – Update*  
**(Discussed in Executive Session)**
3. *Building Inspection Services – Update*  
**(Discussed in Executive Session)**

*(c) Mary S. Biesecker Library - Requesting the Borough to be the applicant for a Keystone Public Library Grant.*

Ms. Enos stated that the library is asking us to be the grant applicant under the Keystone Public Library Grant Program. She stated that we have done this in the past when their HVAC system needed to be replaced. Ms. Enos stated that one thing they wanted to make us aware of is that they are funding the entire thing, and do not expect anything of us except to be the “pass through.” She said they would also handle all of administrative paper work associated with it. Ms. Enos stated that she wants to get clarification on everything, first, before this is put on the Agenda for the next Council Meeting.

*(d) Donation Requests: No requests.*

*(e) Year to Date Financial Report - Provided through the month of April 2018.*

Mr. Peters distributed the Year-to-Date Financial Statements through April 2018 to members of Council. He mentioned that we are 4/12<sup>th</sup>'s, or 33.33% of the way through the year.

<u>General Fund</u> :	Revenues – 22.18%;	Expenses – 32.97%
<u>Water Revenue Fund</u> :	Revenues – 30.77%;	Expenses – 27.41%
<u>Sewer System Operating Fund</u> :	Revenues – 30.70%;	Expenses – 18.95%

Mr. Peters stated that if there were any questions about any of the details in the reports, to get in touch with him, and he would do his best to answer them.

*(f) Manager's Report - Reports distributed to Council for all departments for the Month of April 2018.*

Ms. Enos stated that if there were any questions on any of the Departmental Reports, to call and let her know, and she'd be glad to answer them.

*(g) President's Report - Given by Ruby Miller.*

Mrs. Miller reminded all in attendance about the County Borough's Association Banquet being held at the Fire Hall on Thursday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 6:00 pm.

Mrs. Miller reminded all to vote on Tuesday May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Mrs. Miller also thanked everyone who was involved with the PSAB video.

*(h) Somerset Inc. Report - Given by Judy Pyle.*

Mrs. Pyle stated that Ms. Coughenour gave a good update on all that Somerset Inc. is doing.

Mrs. Pyle also mentioned that “Earth Day” was a great success. She stated that they had 30-150 kids participate.

She mentioned that “Chalk the Block” is coming soon on May 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Coughenour explained that, last year, they applied for a PA Laurel Arts Alliance Grant with Laurel Arts and Laurel Hill State Park Complex for a project called “Art in Motion.” This project involves taking old bicycles to refurbish, then placing them in various places all over the County. The bicycles will be an interactive, art installation. She stated that Laurel Arts is going to have Somerset Inc.’s web page for this project on their website. This web page will include a map indicating where you can find the location of these different painted bicycles. Mrs. Coughenour stated that, long-term, they would like to have a bike friendly lane that starts at the Court House and travels down to Somerset Lake, so people could explore Somerset.

Mrs. Coughenour stated that, to date, they have 17 bicycles, and they are planning to use extra grant money to purchase additional bikes. She mentioned that businesses who participate can have a welding business in the area make their bike stand. After they have their bicycle painted, they can then submit pictures of it to Laurel Arts to have them put the bike on the map, so individuals can locate its placement in the area.

Chief Cox mentioned to Mrs. Coughenour that the Police Department would be able to donate bicycles to Somerset Inc. that are stored in their garage bay.

Mrs. Coughenour also mentioned that Somerset Inc. has been working on a “Holiday Design Scholarship” Project with the goal of having art and technical school students work together in making large scale Christmas decorations. This past spring, letters were sent out to teachers, in the surrounding counties, asking if their school would be interested in participating in this project. Four schools have committed to getting involved in this program. Each school will make a large scale Christmas decoration which will be placed on the Diamond during “Light-Up Somerset.” People will then vote for their favorite decoration, and the winner will receive \$1,000.00 in scholarship money for their school’s art and technical programs. At the conclusion of “Light-Up Somerset”, the schools will then be able to take their decorations back to their hometown for use at their school or home community.

(i) PSAB Report – Given by Fred Rosemeyer.

Mr. Rosemeyer thanked everyone who was involved in the PSAB video. He mentioned that the film should be complete sometime in June, and then PSAB would like to have a showing and invite the town to view it together.

Mr. Rosemeyer also reminded everyone that the County Borough’s Association Banquet being held on Thursday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

He also mentioned that the PSAB Conference is being held in Hershey, PA in June.

*(j) Somerset Volunteer Fire Dept. Report - Given by Steve Shaulis.*

Mr. Shaulis mentioned that the Fire Department had 34 fire calls during the month of April 2018.

He mentioned that their 75-foot ladder truck is back in service after being damaged from an accident last fall. Lighting was also updated on it.

Mr. Shaulis also stated that their 100-foot aerial truck platform is out. Lighting will be updated on this truck, as well.

Mr. Shaulis spoke about the "Recruitment and Retention" Program that they are trying to start. Recruits usually spend approximately 180-200 hours in fire training. He stated that 200 hours is *required* if someone wants to train for their Fire Fighters I Certification. Mr. Shaulis asked the Chairman of the Committee whether training hours could be reduced. He stated that an individual can determine their own requirements for training as long as the insurance companies do not object. Mr. Shaulis feels that if the training hours could be cut back, there would be more recruits.

He stated that, to his understanding, a lot of grant money is dependent on how many Fire Fighter I and Fire Fighter II Certifications a department has. Mr. Shaulis stated that the grant money does not do any good if you do not have the firemen there to provide the service. He expressed his concerns stating, "There has to be an answer out there, somewhere, to recruit more Fire Fighters."

*(k) Engineer's Report – Given by Jake Bolby.*

Mr. Bolby mentioned that construction will start on the Water Treatment Plant Project within a month.

He also mentioned that there is going to be some delay on the Sewer Treatment Plant Project until the materials get here. He stated that it will be the end of July, or beginning of August, until things will start to happen at the Sewage Plant.

Mr. Bolby also mentioned that the Flow Meters are on order, and should be in within 2 to 3 weeks.

*(l) Mayor's Report – Given by Mayor Walker.*

Mayor Walker mentioned that everyone should have received an invitation to the Open House at the new McDonalds on Thursday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from 5:00 pm-7:00 pm.

Mayor Walker also mentioned the new "LEAD." (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) Program that was announced at the "We Will Recover" Night at the school by Attorney General Shapiro.

Chief Cox explained that the Attorney General's Office came in February. Their plan was to go into all of the 67 counties to seek out a county that would be willing to

participate in this LEAD Program, because as Chief Cox explained, this program is “out of the box” type thinking when it comes to opioid addiction.

He mentioned that the Attorney General’s Office came into Somerset first. Chief Cox stated that the Office got absolutely no “push back”, especially from law enforcement, who was very supportive of the program. As a result, they decided to bring this program into Somerset, because as they expressed, “They can probably find counties that need the program more than Somerset does, but they will never find another county that is as open to this program as Somerset is.”

He explained that this LEAD Program affords an addicted person the chance to approach law enforcement, without the threat of arrest, to get help for their addiction. He explained that a phone call would be made to Twin Lakes, and a certified Recovery Specialist would come to the Police Officer’s location, and they would take the person into treatment that same day.

Chief Cox explained that when someone is addicted, and is agreeable to entering treatment, if you don’t take advantage of this right away, the small window of opportunity can close. Chief Cox gave an example of helping someone, through this program, just last weekend. He mentioned that this program is for the low level, street-level type user.

He mentioned that individuals who used this program were benefited by getting the addicted person into treatment. He brought out that the other benefit of having this program in Somerset is that it costs nothing. Chief Cox stated that it is actually saving us money by not having to pay Officers for additional working hours. He stated that the beds already exist, and are paid for, through the funding that is already in place. So there’s very little, if any costs, to the program for us.

Chief Cox also mentioned that the Attorney General’s Office is going to bring training in for the Officer’s in Somerset County in regards to characteristics of the addicted personality, pharmacology, and how the program works. He mentioned that Somerset is the model, or pilot, for the entire State.

Mrs. Ream stated that they also started a program in Somerset Hospital’s ER, as well, for anyone who comes into the hospital due to an overdose, or anything like that. They also make an automatic referral to aid in recovery for the addicted individual. She stated that there are failures along the way, but you cannot discount that person. She stated that *every time* needs to be the time that we call, and try to get that person into treatment, because that may be the time that they succeed.

Solicitor Cascio stated that, in summary, addiction is not a crime.

Chief Cox stated that there is still criminal activity that they *will* make arrests for. He stated that they are not backing off from that.



Chief Cox expressed that he felt like the LEAD Program was a very positive way to deal with people's problems, community's problems and with criminal justice systems. He stated that we will never, never arrest our way out of the addiction problem, but feels that this represents the potential for positive change.

Chief Cox stated that, right now, there are two LEAD designed agencies in the County. He mentioned that our Police Department offered to assist other smaller Police Departments in helping get an addicted person into treatment, if they can get the addicted person to Somerset.

**Executive Session – *To discuss personnel issues and matters of potential litigation.***

**Motion**

Mr. Thomas moved to go into Executive Session, motion seconded by Mrs. Ream.

Motion Unanimously Carried  
6:10 p.m.

**Public Meeting Back in Session at 7:10 pm.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion**

Mrs. Ream moved to adjourn, motion seconded by Mr. Shaulis.

Motion Unanimously Carried  
7:11 p.m.

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Michele A. Enos, Borough Secretary