

Borough of Somerset Council Meeting

September 25th, 2023 - 5:00 p.m. *(In-Person Meeting)*

1. **Meeting Called to Order** – President Ream.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

3. **Roll Call:**

a) **Borough Council Members present:** *Pam Ream; Lee Hoffman; and Steve Shaulis were physically present in Council Chambers. Ruby Miller; Sue Opp; and Ian Mandichak had “called-in” on the telephone.*

b) **Borough Council Member absent:** *Jim Clark.*

c) **Also present:** *Mayor Fred Rosemeyer.*

d) **Also present were the following:** *Borough Manager, Michele Enos; Director of Finance, Brett Peters; Administrative Assistant, Roger Bailey; Municipal Authority Manager, Jessica Sizemore; Solicitor, James Cascio; Consulting Engineers, Tom Reilly & Jake Bolby.*

e) **Public Attendance:** *Rebecca Mull; Commissioner Gerald Walker; students from Somerset High School; local business owner and residents.*

4. **General Public Comments:**

a) **Rebecca Mull & Commissioner Walker** – *Red Ribbon Week Proclamation.*

Commissioner Walker thanked Borough Council for their support and participation for Red Ribbon Week again this year.

Rebecca Mull also stated that she appreciated Borough Council’s support. She added that this is the 38th year for Red Ribbon Week in Somerset County.

Ms. Mull noted that Red Ribbon Week includes various contests open to all students in Somerset County schools from K-12. The students can prepare a poster, digital video or essay depending on their grade level. Local SADD students prepare a PSA video, as well, too. A Red Ribbon sub-committee selects the winners.

There will be a Red Ribbon Rally on Friday, October 20th at Somerset Church of the Brethren at 9:00 a.m. Local students, nominated by their administration within their school districts, will be Key-note Speakers.

They also have partnered with Somerset County businesses Uptown to do a “Spread the Red” campaign. There will be a movie night with Laurel Arts on Friday, October 6th, and a Red Ribbon 5-K on Saturday, October 7th.

Ms. Mull added that there is additional information shared on Somerset County Directory Facebook page regarding Red Ribbon Week.

Commissioner Walker mentioned that the location of Red Ribbon Week changed last year. He said that it outgrew the Courthouse, and brought a spectacular turnout of participants last year. The current location has a lot more parking and space. He encouraged all to join this year’s Red Ribbon Event.

Mrs. Ream read the “Red Ribbon Proclamation” out loud. It will be held this year from October 23rd – October 31st, 2023.

Proclamation
Red Ribbon Week
October 23rd – 31st 2023

- WHEREAS,** Communities across our nation have been plagued by the numerous problems associated with substance use; and
- WHEREAS,** Substance abuse is specifically damaging to one of our most valuable resources, our children; and
- WHEREAS,** Every year, 22,000 Pennsylvanians die from smoking and smoking-related disease; and
- WHEREAS,** The Red Ribbon Campaign is the oldest and largest drug prevention program in the nation, reaching millions of young people during Red Ribbon Week; and
- WHEREAS,** Red Ribbon Week will be celebrated in every community from October 23 through October 31, 2023; and
- WHEREAS,** UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Twin Lakes, and Somerset County Drug-Free Communities, and Adagio Health are sponsoring the Red Ribbon Week Campaign, whose mission is to present a unified and visible commitment toward the creation of a drug- and nicotine-free America, and
- WHEREAS,** The Red Ribbon symbolizes a personal commitment to a drug- and tobacco-free lifestyle; and
- WHEREAS,** Citizens of Somerset Borough are encouraged to join these efforts and unite to take a visible stand against drugs and nicotine by wearing a red ribbon and committing to quit or refusing to start using tobacco products; and

NOW, Therefore, be it resolved that we, the Council and Mayor of the Borough of Somerset, in unison with the Somerset County Drug and Alcohol prevention providers, do hereby proclaim the week of October 23 through 31, 2023 as Red Ribbon Week and encourage its citizens to participate in drug and tobacco education and prevention activities to make a visible show of support for our strong commitment to a tobacco-free community.

Be it further resolved that the Borough of Somerset encourages all citizens to pledge: The Choice For Me, Drug and Tobacco Free!

Signed this 25th day of September 2023

b) Uptown Business Owners –

An Uptown business owner voiced her concerns regarding the construction occurring around the businesses. She stated that all the business owners agree on the improvements being made for Somerset, but noted that the construction is also drastically hurting their businesses. She said that her business is losing a lot of money, and she is concerned that she is going to have to close her business if this continues.

The same owner said that the businesses received no notification, or information, on what was going to happen around their businesses. She asked whether construction company's hours could be altered to night hours, or "off" hours. She said that this would improve the foot traffic by all their businesses, which would be beneficial to them. She stated that they are losing customers because people do not want to go through the construction. She asked if there was any way the Borough can make it work to help business owners, as well as, keep the construction moving forward.

She expressed that this is ultimately going to hurt the Uptown area because small businesses will have to close their doors, and there will be more vacant buildings that cannot be taxed.

She added that if the sidewalks are open, and the roads are shutdown, the businesses will still not have any customers. She noted that with the construction, people are bypassing town.

A resident from Missoura Street also voiced his concerns about how difficult it is to get his children to school through the construction in the streets.

Ms. Enos responded by apologizing that the businesses did not receive notification.

She explained that the Borough applied for a grant for North and South Center Avenue. The project had to be scaled back to only include South Center, because the Borough did not receive the full grant application that we applied for to do anything on the North Center side.

The Borough supplemented another grant through the CDBG funding to complete South Center. The Borough has applied for additional funding to do the North Center side.

The bases of the antique street light poles needed to be done because they were disintegrating. This was going to be done on North and South Center.

No sidewalk accesses were going to be closed down in the North Center Avenue area. All the electricity underneath there is terrible, but the main feed system for the electricity, around the Somerset Trust Building on North Center, has to be accessed to enable cable to be run all the way down North and South Center. What our Engineers designed to do was, instead of being in the sidewalks for the electricity replacement, we opted to do the parking spaces so that we could keep the businesses open and have continually access to the businesses.

Ms. Enos said that utility line replacement needs done on South Center Avenue, so that is why the Borough is coordinating with Columbia Gas to come in and replace gas lines. Sewer lines, water lines and electrical lines are being replaced, too, while we are there, so we don't have to revisit that in the future. We want to get in there, do everything, and then be out to create less disruption.

Ms. Enos said that she would speak to the Borough's Engineers to see, if what was suggested from those in the audience, could be possible while construction continues. She assured the business owner and resident that she would communicate any information immediately back to them. Ms. Enos apologized, again, for not notifying North Center Avenue businesses before construction started there.

Ms. Enos also noted that the Borough is currently undergoing a \$20-million-dollar water line replacement project. She explained some of the details surrounding this project.

The Borough's grant project, which was just discussed, includes sidewalk replacement, utilities and electrical services. There was recently an emergency project on Church Street & Columbia where a culvert was replaced because it was in risk of collapsing. As a result, Ms. Enos stated that she understands the frustrations associated with all that is involved during the multiple construction contracts happening at the same time in the Borough.

Ms. Enos also noted that every time the Borough receives a schedule for the following week from our Waterline Contractor, we post it on the Borough's Facebook page and website. The schedule can change throughout the day, though, depending on if the contractor runs into problems.

She said there has been a lot going on this year between gas line replacements, waterline replacements and the additional contracts throughout the Borough.

Mr. Bailey mentioned that, regarding school drop offs, Columbia Avenue & Garrett Street from Edgewood to Columbia are the two routes that from 7:00 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. no construction is to take place. Also, from 2:45 p.m. to 3:15 there is to be no construction on these same streets. They are to be open both ways for people dropping off and picking up students at the school. These times are also posted on the Borough's Facebook page.

Residents of Missoura Street were also present to discuss, and get an update, on a public nuisance problem.

After the Proclamation was read, and discussion ensued from an Uptown business owner and various residents, the President declared the meeting “adjourned” since the Sunshine Act requires four (4) Members of Council to be present at the table to be able to conduct business.

Michele A. Enos, Borough Manager/ Secretary