

Borough of Somerset Council Meeting
December 18th, 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; Ruby Miller (via telephone); Lee Hoffman; Sue Opp; Steve Shaulis and Ian Mandichak.*

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; Randy Cox, Chief of Police; Solicitors, James Cascio & Allyson Lonas; Consulting Engineers, Tom Reilly & Jake Bolby.*

e) **Public Attendance:** *None.*

4. **Approval of Agenda:** *Consider approving the Agenda as presented.*

Motion

Mr. Mandichak moved, Mr. Shaulis seconded, to approve the December 18th, 2023 Borough Council Meeting Agenda.

Motion Unanimously Carried

5. **Announcements:**

a) *None*

6. **Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)**

a) **November 13th, 2023 – Budget Meeting Minutes.**

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Hoffman seconded, to approve the November 13th, 2023 Budget Meeting Minutes.

Motion Unanimously Carried

b) November 20th, 2023 – Borough Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Shaulis seconded, to approve the November 20th, 2023 Borough Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion Unanimously Carried

7. Award of Bids:

a) None

8. General Public Comments:

a) None

9. Administrative Business:

a) Communications – (none)

b) Payment of Bills – Month of December 2023.

Motion:

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the payment of bills for the month of December 2023 numbered 40892 - 41016 totaling \$1,504,523.75.

Motion Unanimously Carried

c) Department Reports – Consider approving the Departmental Reports for the month of November 2023.

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Mandichak seconded, to approve the Departmental Reports for the month of November 2023.

Motion Unanimously Carried

10. Policy Agenda:

Old Business:

a) Somerset Vol. Fire Department – Update from Manager.

Ms. Enos said that the Ordinances will be advertised shortly, and it will be on the January Borough Council Meeting Agenda.

New Business:

a) 2024 Final Budgets – Consider adopting the 2024 Final Budgets as presented for all funds.

On behalf of Borough Council, Mrs. Ream thanked the Management team and all the Supervisors for making the budget process extremely easy this year. She added that it is much appreciated.

Motion

Mr. Mandichak moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to adopt the 2024 Final Budgets as presented for all funds.

Motion Unanimously Carried

b) Resolution No. 2023-14 – Consider approving the Resolution to set the Real Estate Tax Rate for 2024.

Ms. Enos said that we have to set the tax millage every year, only by Ordinance if it has changed or by Resolution if it has not. She said that the millage is staying the same and that is why it is in Resolution form. The total mills are 19.4 with no mill change in the tax base. This is a formal Resolution to adopt that rate.

Motion

Mrs. Miller moved, Mr. Hoffman seconded, to approve the Resolution to set the Real Estate Tax Rate for 2024 at 19.4 mills.

Motion Unanimously Carried

c) Donation Request – Laurel Arts has requested a donation for 2024.

Ms. Enos said that this is an allowable donation, based on the Borough Code, if Council wants to consider it one way or the other.

Discussion occurred among Borough Council regarding this requested donation.

Motion

Mr. Hoffman moved, Mrs. Ream seconded, to provide a donation to Laurel Arts in the amount of \$100.00 for the year 2024.

Motion Unanimously Carried

d) Proposed Zoning Amendments – Consider approving the recommendation of our Planning Commission concerning prohibiting chickens and farm animals in all zoning districts and allowing skills games within the M-2 Zoning District.

Motion

Mrs. Miller moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the recommendation of our Planning Commission concerning prohibiting chickens and farm animals in all zoning districts and allowing skills games within the M-2 Zoning District.

Motion Unanimously Carried

e) *Comcast Franchise Renewal Agreement – Consider executing the Franchise Renewal Agreement with Comcast.*

Ms. Enos said that the renewal happened to be this year, and it has been approved in the past. She added that she doesn't see a reason not to consider it again. She noted that we do receive franchise fees from Comcast, as well.

Motion

Mrs. Miller moved, Mrs. Ream seconded, to execute the Franchise Renewal Agreement with Comcast.

Motion Unanimously Carried

f) *Resolution No. 2023-15 – Consider approving the appointment of a Certified Public Accountant to audit the Borough's 2023 accounts.*

Mrs. Ream stated that Friedline, Pison & Co. has been the Borough's auditor in the past, and added that it is a requirement that the Borough has a CPA firm audit its accounts.

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to appoint the CPA Firm Friedline, Pison & Co. to audit the Borough's 2023 accounts.

Motion Unanimously Carried

Committee Business/Reports:

g) *Borough Manager's Report – Given by Michele Enos.*

Ms. Enos reminded Borough Council that there will be the Organizational Meeting of Borough Council on January 2nd, 2024 at 5:00 p.m., which is required. The Mayor will be Chairing the Meeting until a President, Vice-President & President Pro-Tem is picked. Then the President will assume the Chair following that.

A packet of information regarding the Organizational meeting will be sent to Council before the meeting. The Swearing-In and the Oath of Office will be done by the Mayor at the January 2nd meeting unless those newly elected members choose to go to the Court House when they have the Swearing-In of other officials.

Also, it was decided among Borough Council that the date for the Police Committee Meeting will be held on January 4th, 2024 at 8:00 a.m.

h) Finance Report – Given by Brett Peters.

Mr. Peters reviewed the Financial Statements Summary through November 2023 with Borough Council.

General Fund:

Revenues – 100.00%

Expenses – 90.00%

Water Fund:

Revenues – 287.00%

Expenses – 301.00%

Sewer Fund:

Revenues – 106.18%

Expenses – 104.48%

i) Municipal Authority Manager’s Report – Given by Jess Sizemore.

Mrs. Sizemore noted that the Lead & Copper inventorying started on the service lines approximately 2 weeks ago. Two Borough employees are out getting the service lines inventoried inside of customers’ homes.

She also said that there have been some updates on the Borough’s Website Water & Sewer tab for Council and Customers to review. The information there can also help customers identify what kind of service line materials are being identified inside their homes by the Lead & Copper inventory currently being done by the Borough.

j) President’s Report – Given by Pam Ream.

Mrs. Ream requested information about the current construction being done in her neighborhood that was asked by her neighbors.

She also noted that there will be an Executive Session at the end of the meeting to discuss employee matters and management salary.

k) Somerset Inc. Report – Given by Lee Hoffman.

Mr. Hoffman thanked the Borough’s Public Works & Police Departments for everything that’s been done for the decorations and help with all the events. He added that it is all very much appreciated.

He also thanked Council for the action on the Zoning District games of skills, and added that it was a large concern for many.

Mr. Hoffman noted that the 29th Annual “Fire & Ice” event is right around the corner. He expressed hope that everyone can come out and enjoy this event and be a part of that great weekend.

Mr. Hoffman lastly, said that Somerset Inc. has another new part-time employee that will heading-up the social media end of things. They also have an intern from the high school.

l) PSAB Report – Given by Fred Rosemeyer.

Mayor Rosemeyer said that he had nothing to report at this time.

m) Somerset Volunteer Fire Dept. Report – Given by Steve Shaulis.

Mr. Shaulis said that no updates were received this month from the Fire Department.

n) Engineer's Report – Given by Jake Bolby.

Mr. Bolby presented the Updates to the Engineer's Report.

WATER:

1) Water System Capital Improvement Projects:

Mr. Bolby said that, with the Water Project, some money is going to come back into the account. We do have a PennVEST Pay Request that is going to be processed, but that budget is going to continue to grow beyond this most recent Pay Request. Approximately \$1.3 million dollars is to go back into the account when received. That is why these numbers are so far above the budget of 100%, because this project is definitely inflated compared to what the normal operating numbers are.

Mr. Bolby mentioned that construction continues in the Borough. He noted that construction is in the Davis Avenue area, what is being called Area 3. They are also going to be by East Main Sheetz for a while, which is being called Area 1.

SEWER:

1) Assessment, Repair, and Abatement Plan (Hydraulic Overload):

Mr. Bolby said that the 6-Month Status Report will be submitted by January 15th, 2024. This is part of the Corrective Action Plan, and is submitted in July & January of each year. He added that there haven't been any comments back from DEP on that, and if there are any received, it will be shared with Council.

On the Sewer Project itself, we have the Permit Applications collected and the Permit Fees collected, so we are looking to submit the 1st phase of Permits for the 1st round of Sewer Projects. The next steps will be obtaining the PennVEST financing, or maybe other financing if it becomes available, once the permits are in-hand. At this point, it is slated for a PennVEST application and that type of funding.

GENERAL:

1) Parsons Run – Bank Stabilization:

Mr. Bolby said a Contractor was in to help out Borough staff stabilize a stream bank on Parsons Run, down by Luther P. Miller, that was falling in, causing the road to be in danger of collapsing. He added that it has been stabilized and taken care of.

2) Center Avenue Sidewalk:

Mr. Bolby said this project is still “on hold” until at least January 15th, 2024, and there is a possibility to discuss until February 14th, 2024. The final date will be confirmed.

When asked about the status on the playground, Mr. Bolby said that it was being considered for a grant, which was not awarded, so it went dormant.

o) Mayor’s Report – Given by Mayor Rosemeyer.

Mayor Rosemeyer said that he chairs Somerset County’s Local Emergency Planning Committee. He expressed that this is something that he, Ms. Enos and Mrs. Ream should look at in order to put something together for the Borough’s “readiness” for an emergency. He added that if something would happen, it would be very important to discuss this in order for the Borough to be ready for an emergency.

Ms. Enos noted that the current Emergency Management Plan for the Borough is structured so that the Mayor declares an emergency, Council is notified of the Emergency Management Plan, the Staff is the contact people, depending on what the emergency is, and the command center set up at Public Safety because they have the emergency generator.

Mrs. Ream suggested that Borough Council have a yearly review of the Borough’s current Emergency Management Plan’s contents.

11. Executive Session – *To discuss personnel matters.*

Motion

Mrs. Opp moved, seconded by Mr. Shaulis to go into Executive Session to discuss contract negotiations.

Motion Unanimously Carried
5:52 p.m.

Back in Session

6:19 p.m.

Motion

Mr. Shaulis moved, seconded by Mrs. Opp, to approve a raise increase of 3.5% for the Management Team for the year 2024.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion

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

Motion Unanimously Carried

6:21 p.m.

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Michele A. Enos, Borough Manager/ Secretary