

# **Borough of Somerset Council Meeting**

## **March 25th, 2024 - 5:00 p.m.**

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, Jim Clark and Ian Mandichak.*

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

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

d) **Public Attendance:** *Robert Grega, Melanie Heiple, Jennie Lou Harris-Klim, Cindy Fisher, Carolyn Rascona and Sue Sube.*

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

### **Motion**

Mr. Hoffman moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Borough Council Meeting Agenda.

Motion Unanimously Carried

5. **Announcements:**

a) *None*

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

a) *February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024* – *Borough Council Meeting Minutes.*

### **Motion**

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Shaulis seconded, to approve the February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Borough Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion Unanimously Carried

**7. Award of Bids:**

a) None

**8. General Public Comments:**

a) *Melanie Heiple.*

Ms. Heiple mentioned that she was at the Council Meeting one year ago regarding this same subject about the playground. She questioned if there had been a budget approval for the playground.

Mrs. Ream said that the playground was not a part of the budget, and the last recollection she had of Ms. Heiple's conversation was that there were going to be people doing fundraising for the playground.

Mrs. Opp pointed out to Ms. Heiple that she was told one year ago that the Borough did not have the funds for the playground, and that Ms. Heiple said she was going to check with area businesses to see if she could collect donations from them. Mrs. Opp added that no information was brought back to Council regarding possible donations Ms. Heiple may have received.

Ms. Heiple said she had gone to businesses for donations. She said that she thought Borough Council would find it in their budget to fund the playground for the children and the Community. She mentioned that the Eagles had already made a donation. Other businesses said that they would also give a donation, but it would not be enough to hire someone to run the playground. She asked if Council could find the money to do it.

Mrs. Ream said that she could not answer that question until she had a clearer understanding of what the plan and expectations would be. In the past, the Borough had summer employees, who were college students, that were paid minimum wage to cover the playground, but this was done away with many years ago. To keep the playground going, there would have to potentially be 2-3 people hired, and there was always a dispute on who actually owned the playground. She added that the Borough's current budget is tight, and Council does not want to raise taxes in order to fund the playground.

Ms. Heiple stated that she had spoken to Craig Knupp who was the last Director of the playground. He told her that he was paid by the Borough. Ms. Heiple explained how much she thought it would cost to hire a Director and college students to work at the playground in the summer. She feels that the costs would be between \$8,000.00 - \$9,000.00. She asked if funds could be eliminated from something else in the Borough and used to fund the playground.

Mrs. Opp mentioned that there has not been enough money available to fix the little pool in the playground. To get it fixed and skid proofed, it was going to cost the Borough \$17,000.00.

It was pointed out that the playground itself is open, but it is not supervised, and no activities are being held.

Mr. Bailey said that the Public Works Department mows at the playground and picks the garbage up. If there are any repairs that need done to any of the equipment the children play on, we take care of fixing them. Also, the restrooms are open every day from Monday – Friday during set hours.

Ms. Enos said that when Council decided as a group to reduce budget costs, they had to decide what services were going to be taken away. The playground was a facility that could still be used, just not staffed with activities.

Ms. Heiple mentioned the problem with the playground not being staffed is the drugs and other things going on there. She said that someone overseeing the playground would stop this kind of activity.

Mrs. Ream expressed that what disappoints her is that Council hasn't heard anything regarding donations since last May, and now it is time to open the playground again. Mrs. Ream said the last thing she recalls is, what Mrs. Opp recalls, that donations were going to be found. She expressed that it is disappointing that the Borough can't do a fundraiser to help open it. She said that Council can certainly take the time to look at the budget, but added that they are very lean on funds. She noted that the Borough has just finally started replacing old vehicles that were way overdue. Also, positions have been eliminated in the Borough. The Borough is also doing a lot of infrastructure that they are trying to do without killing the residents with taxes.

Ms. Heiple stated that she knows they could raise money, but do not know how much. She asked if the Borough would help, and asked if there was anything they could eliminate. She expressed that the Borough should have funding for the playground as a top priority for the children.

Ms. Enos said the Borough has filed for Grant Applications, but it is for infrastructure changes such as ADA accessible bathrooms, new fencing, rehabilitation of the pool, things like that. She said she has never seen a grant within those perimeters for staffing and continued staffing. It is typically for infrastructure, equipment, safety upgrades or ADA compliance. She mentioned that our Engineers have helped us with project estimates on what we are looking to do at the playground. Council has supported the Grant Application even though there was a local match for the grant. She said that the Borough has reapplied again for the grants where we can save tax money, and the playground is a part of that.

Ms. Enos mentioned that the Borough has been partnering with the library, as well. The library has been holding activities at the playground in the summer where they bring in summer lunch programs and have summer reading. It is a grant funded program. Ms. Enos mentioned that a part-time Borough employee goes to the playground to supervise the pool area during these times and has child clearances. She said that the Borough has been partnering with the library to at least give up this part-time employee to make sure that the kids have the pool time when the library is holding activities over there.

Ms. Enos added that the pool wasn't open last summer because of the concrete spalling. She said that they did not want to risk any child being injured there. At that time, we were also seeking grant funding to repair the pool.

Ms. Heiple said that she has contacted and had spoken to many organizations about donations. She said that she was hoping the Borough would help.

Mrs. Ream reiterated that the Borough is very lean with funds, but also fortunate to be one of the Borough's that hasn't gone into debt. She added that they don't want to get into the situation that a lot of Boroughs are in.

*Other Borough Residents present discussed the benefits of having a fully functioning, safe playground for the children and Community.*

Lastly, Mrs. Ream said that they would look into everything and see if anything can be done.

**9. Administrative Business:**

- a) Communications – (none)
- b) Payment of Bills – Month of March 2024.

**Motion:**

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Mandichak seconded, to approve the payment of bills for the month of March 2024 numbered 41332 – 41453 totaling \$916,168.11.

Motion Unanimously Carried

- c) Department Reports – Consider approving the Departmental Reports for the month of February 2024.

**Motion**

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mr. Mandichak seconded, to approve the Departmental Reports for the month of February 2024.

Motion Unanimously Carried

**10. Policy Agenda:**

**Old Business:**

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

Ms. Enos noted that the Ordinance is almost complete and will be on the Agenda for consideration of approval at next month's Meeting.

**New Business:**

- a) Somerset Inc. – Consider authorizing membership in Somerset Inc. (non-profit Organization (\$75))

**Motion**

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Mandichak seconded, to authorize membership in Somerset Inc.  
Motion Unanimously Carried

- b) Julia O’Sullivan – Requesting the Borough to grant a refund of \$1,261.97 for her 2023 Somerset Borough Real Estate Taxes.

Ms. Enos stated that Ms. O’Sullivan is a veteran and meets the requirements to have her Real Estate Taxes refunded from 2023.

Solicitor Cascio reviewed her request, as well, and noted that she has the necessary qualifications due to an injury in combat.

**Motion**

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Clark seconded, to grant a refund of \$1,261.97 to Julia O’Sullivan for her 2023 Somerset Borough Real Estate Taxes.

Motion Carried (6 yes 0 no 1 abstention)  
(Mr. Hoffman abstained)

- c) Resolution No. 2024-04 – Consider adopting Resolution authorizing the Disposal of certain Borough records in accordance with the Commonwealth’s Records Retention and Disposition Schedule.

**Motion**

Mr. Mandichak moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to adopt a Resolution authorizing the Disposal of certain Borough records in accordance with the Commonwealth’s Records Retention and Disposition Schedule.

Motion Unanimously Carried

**RESOLUTION NO. 2024-04**

*WHEREAS, The Borough of Somerset adopted Resolution No. 87-02 on April 27, 1987 providing for the destruction of certain papers in accordance with the Retention and Disposition Schedule for Records of Pennsylvania Municipalities and;*

*WHEREAS, The Somerset Borough Administration wishes to dispose of some of its records in accordance with this Resolution;*

*NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the following items be authorized for purging:*

**WATER / SEWER DEPARTMENT:**

- ... 2015 Water / Sewer Bills
- ... 2015 Penalty Run
- ... 2015 Daily Cash Receipts Journal
- ... 2015 Payment Schedule (1)
- ... 2016 Water / Sewer Bills
- ... 2016 Penalty Run
- ... 2016 Daily Cash Receipts Journal
- ... 2016 Payment Schedule (1)

Adopted this 25<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2024

**Committee Business/Reports:**

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

Ms. Enos noted that discussions will be held with the Police Committee soon.

b) Finance Report – Given by Brett Peters.

Mr. Peters provided Council with the Financial Report through February 2024. We are 2/12<sup>th</sup>s of the way through the year or 16.67%.

**General Fund:**

Revenues – 10.78%  
Expenses – 17.6%

**Water Fund:**

Revenues – 21.64%  
Expenses – 26.31%

**Sewer Fund:**

Revenues – 17.98%  
Expenses – 17.53%

c) Municipal Authority Manager's Report – Given by Jess Sizemore.

Mrs. Sizemore said that she is reviewing the Rate Structure with the Municipal Authority Board. There seems to be some confusion with customers not understanding why there is a base rate charge, what that base rate charge is, and why we have it. She explained that this is to recover the portion of the fixed costs that we are providing for the sewer and water services and covers our debt service, as well. Our website was updated explaining the Rate Schedule. Some of the language may need to be changed to help customers understand this better. She

noted that comparing the Borough's rate to other Municipalities across the board shows that the Borough is well below the affordable rate for the median household income.

Mrs. Sizemore said that inside inventorying is at 1,100 customers out of the 2,836 for the Lead and Copper.

She mentioned that we are in an accelerated program with EPA where they provide us with a Consultant that provides us technical support. They offered to put together a Customer Public Meeting to go over the Lead and Copper Project to review what is coming next. This is being planned for May. In line with this, a Customer Notification will be going out to all Borough residents and customers to go over the Waterline Project, what's to come and when restoration is starting back up.

Lastly, we are still accepting letters of interest for the Municipal Authority Board position that is open. One stipulation is that they have to be a resident of Somerset Borough. We are hoping to have a recommendation to the Board by April's meeting.

*d) President's Report – Given by Pam Ream.*

*Mrs. Ream had no updates to report.*

*e) Somerset Inc. Report – Given by Lee Hoffman.*

Mr. Hoffman said that the "Earth Day Trail" is the next event to be held on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Twenty different businesses will be participating and having things to share about the environment with the kids.

The Brinker Building Project continues on. Our most successful volunteer day was with Somerset Trust just under two weeks ago with over 25 people there to help. Riggs Industry is coming this week with a crew to help.

The Uptown Merchants have been generally fine with construction this time around. They are pleased with the Notification that occurred and the transparency with everything. Parking is still an issue.

The Somerset Inc. Board is pleased with the Skill Games Ordinance passing. Regina Coughenour was on a conference call with other Main Street Managers and it seems like a large issue in a lot of the Communities. The Borough was somewhat on the front lines of establishing the Ordinance.

Hand-in-hand with that is the Smoke Vape shops people are having trouble with. This may be something the Borough needs to examine. The newest shop is across from Stairs Restaurant right at the end of the road where everyone leaves school. There is mention if anything can be done with limiting the amount of these types of establishments within the proximities of schools.

Lastly, Mr. Hoffman mentioned that "Chalk the Block" is right around the corner.

Mr. Shaulis mentioned that Liquor Control Enforcement is now intervening with the Skills machines following new laws being passed. He said in the last 2 weeks there has been some confiscation of illegal machines. He added that this may help with some of the problems arising from these games.

*f) PSAB Report – Given by Fred Rosemeyer.*

Mayor Rosemeyer noted that the PSAB Conference is coming up. He expressed his appreciation for the Board approving Chief Clark to go to the conference.

He also mentioned that the County Boroughs Association will be meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at the Somerset Country Club. He thanked EADS for hosting any Council Member that wants to go. The meeting starts at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Rosemeyer also wanted to make a recommendation for a Junior Council Member. Being present, the young man introduced himself to Council. His name is Robert Grega, a Junior at Somerset High School. He gave a background on himself to Borough Council and expressed his interest in the Junior Council Member position.

*g) Somerset Volunteer Fire Dept. Report – Given by Jim Clark.*

Mr. Clark said there were 39 total alarms, with 13 of them in the Township, 2 on the Turnpike, 18 in the Borough and 6 assist calls.

The Fire Department is training on a monthly basis on various activities. The next training session will be in April.

Mr. Clark mentioned that Somerset Trust will be starting their project at the Georgian Place. The facility has been opened up to the Borough's Fire Department as well as surrounding Fire Companies to train there.

The Ladies Auxiliary is going to start holding bingo four times a year.

The Fire Company will also hold bingo with dates yet to be set.

The Fire Company is purchasing a new piece of equipment. It will be painted orange & black, with an eagle decal, in the school spirit of Somerset School District. The due date for delivery is in October 2024.

*h) 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 they are focusing on restoration with the Water Project. They will be moving to East Main. They are waiting for the asphalt plants to open so work can be started. This also pairs with Columbia Gas' projects. Local asphalt plants are to open April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Waterline on East Main will either start April 1<sup>st</sup> or the April 8<sup>th</sup> which will depend on the weather.

Currently, restoration will be at Pleasant to the east, Patriot to the north, Edgewood to the west and Garrett to the south. They are moving through neighborhoods touching up yards and fixing various things. They will keep moving through that area until complete. Miscellaneous things will be restored as the weather is favorable. Restoration will continue through June/July. It will be a combination of Columbia Gas' efforts along with the Contractors efforts. They will be working throughout their respective areas to get things cleaned.

We are approximately 80% complete with the waterline. The majority left is on East Main.

The water tank is approximately 40% erected. It should be complete within 2 weeks and ready to be placed in service. Related activities at the Treatment Plant are taking place. They finally started to get their equipment shipped in.

Mr. Bolby noted that if any complaints are brought to the Council's attention, they should feel free to relay it back to Management so it can get on the schedule to be taken care of.

## **SEWER:**

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

Mr. Bolby said that we are wrapping up on some submissions of permits and documents that need signed at the Authority Meeting. Once we have that, we will be able to submit those.

We were looking at another Union Street Playground Application. It is limited to infrastructure. They exclusively prohibit funding of support staff. Unfortunately, that particular program had to provide a component that allowed 24/7, 365 internet access. The program is more aligned for library or other public facilities. Other granting opportunities will be looked for that fits the project.

## **GENERAL:**

### **1) Center Avenue Sidewalk:**

Mr. Bolby said Mrs. Sizemore led a Coordination Meeting, along with Regina from Somerset Inc., to go over the upcoming project schedule. They were provided the opportunity to relay concerns, which were relayed to the Contractor.

i) Mayor's Report – Given by Mayor Rosemeyer.  
Mayor Rosemeyer had nothing further to report.

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

**Motion**

Mr. Shaulis moved, seconded by Mrs. Opp to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.

Motion Unanimously Carried  
5:54 p.m.

**Back in Session**

6:28 p.m.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion**

Mr. Hoffman moved to adjourn, motion seconded by Mr. Mandichak.

Motion Unanimously Carried  
6:33 p.m.

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Michele A. Enos, Borough Manager/ Secretary