

# The Borough of Somerset Council Meeting January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 - 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), Sue Opp, Steve Shaulis, Ian Mandichak and Mario Dirienzo.

b) **Borough Council Members absent:** Lee Hoffman.

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 Engineer, Jake Bolby.

e) **Public Attendance:** Steve Peck, Mary Tressler, Doug Tressler, Melanie Heiple, Mike Riggs, Jennie Harris, Barb Lynch, Katie Hutzel, Beth Maul, Alec Bittner, Brandon Trent.

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

## **Motion**

Mr. Mandichak moved, Mrs. Opp seconded, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion Unanimously Carried

5. **Announcements:**

a) None

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

a) December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Borough Council Meeting Minutes.

## **Motion**

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Dirienzo seconded, to approve the December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Borough Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion Unanimously Carried

## **7. Award of Bids:**

a) None

## **8. General Public Comments:**

a) Mary Tressler – *Concerning handi-cap parking.*

Ms. Tressler explained that she was representing two Borough residents who are requesting a handi-cap parking space in front of their residence for their personal use. Ms. Tressler said that the request is due to their handi-cap issues, along with some harassment issues from a few neighbors living in their neighborhood.

Ms. Tressler detailed the individual's handi-cap problems. She also explained the harassment issues that they are experiencing.

Borough Council agreed to look into the matter further and determine whether the request is even an option that can be done on a public street. It was noted that there are different guidelines for handi-cap and ADA parking spaces.

b) Union Street Playground Committee – *To present a playground plan with cost estimates and discuss grant opportunities.*

Michael Riggs, who is experienced with funding major grants, spoke on behalf of the Union Street Playground Committee, reviewing the details of the proposed playground renovations, estimated costs of the project, and the Playground Committee's funding strategy for the renovations. Also in attendance was Katie Hutzel from Apex Engineering, where concept engineering and cost estimates were developed for the Playground Project.

Mr. Riggs added that after reviewing the information with Borough Council, the Playground Committee was requesting Borough Council to approve the renovation project for the playground. Also, the Playground Committee is requesting Borough Council to consider the approval of the Borough's \$100,000.00 CDBG Block Grant to be used towards the playground's renovation project for the next 3 years. The grant monies would be used as the primary matching funds for various grants, if awarded, to complete the work. If successful, the primary grant that could be received for renovations is the DCNR Grant totaling \$500,000.00. To get the full grant, the Borough would need \$250,000.00 of matching funds.

Mr. Riggs next detailed the planned strategy to have the full amount of funds required for the playground renovations.

*Discussion followed between Borough Council and the Playground Committee.*

Ms. Enos explained how specific things the Borough's annual Community Development Block Grant fund monies can be utilized. One of the things it can be used for is ADA accessible projects, like the playground, where ADA sidewalks, bathrooms and such would be an allowable project.

*It was agreed upon that all collective information received will be reviewed by Borough Council and discussed at a later date.*

**9. Administrative Business:**

- a) Communications – (none)
- b) Payment of Bills – Month of January 2025.

**Motion:**

Mr. Mandichak moved, Mr. Shaulis seconded, to approve the payment of bills for the month of January 2025 numbered 42679 – 42832 totaling \$732,007.04.

Motion Unanimously Carried

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

**Motion**

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mr. Dirienzo seconded, to approve the Departmental Reports for the month of December 2024.

Motion Unanimously Carried

**10. Policy Agenda:**

**Old Business:**

- a) None

**New Business:**

- a) Sewage Enforcement Officer – Consider approving EADS Group as our Sewage Enforcement Officer and adopting the 2025 Rate Structure for those services.

Ms. Enos noted that the rate is \$100.00 an hour. Five of their Engineers are certified to perform this task, if necessary.

Mrs. Ream added that this is something done every year, and is a requirement for Council to do so.

**Motion**

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Shaulis seconded, to approve EADS Group as our Sewage Enforcement Officer, and adopting the 2025 Rate Structure for those services.

Motion Unanimously Carried

b) Somerset County General Authority – Consider authorizing the agreement with Somerset County General Authority to provide contract services for water treatment plant operators to assist the County’s Quemahoning Water System.

Ms. Enos explained that the Somerset County General Authority was struggling to have water treatment plant operators. The Municipal Authority Chair, also the President, met with the County and the Quemahoning Water System’s Chief Operator.

Mrs. Sizemore, as Manager of the system, had submitted a proposal that the County has agreed to. This agreement would be between Somerset Borough and the Somerset County General Authority.

Mrs. Sizemore read the agreement to Council.

**Motion**

Mr. Mandichak moved, Mrs. Ream seconded, to authorize the agreement with Somerset County General Authority to provide contract services for water treatment plant operators to assist the County’s Quemahoning Water System.

Motion Unanimously Carried

c) Somerset Borough Tax Collector – Discussion concerning the request of Althea Brown to review the salary for the position of Somerset Borough Tax Collector.

Ms. Enos noted that this is something that is done routinely every four years. The deadline to set the salary for the position of Tax Collector is on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. She is asking for Council to increase this, if they desire, for the next 4-year term.

Previously, for the years 2022-2025, Council approved an increase of 3%, 2.5 %, 2% and 1%. This is what she collects on the taxes that she receives, and that is what her salary equates to, because everything she collects is based on a percentage. If Council would agree to do something similar, the cost would be \$13,592.85 for just collecting the Borough taxes.

Borough Council agreed to give Ms. Brown an increase of 3%, 2.5 %, 2% and 1% for the next 4-year term.

**Motion**

Mr. Shaulis moved, Mr. Dirienzo seconded, to increase the salary of the position of Tax Collector as follows: 3%, 2.5 %, 2% and 1% over the next 4-year term.

Motion Unanimously Carried

d) Rules & Regulations – Consider adopting the Municipal Authority’s Rules and Regulations as it pertains to Water, Waste Water and Storm Water.

Ms. Enos mentioned that Mrs. Sizemore has been working with the Staff on the Rules & Regulations and changes that will be made in light of the Sewer Project that lies ahead. This is something that the Municipal Authority will be acting upon during their Authority meeting following the Council Meeting.

Mrs. Sizemore said that the Municipal Authority approved the Rules & Regulations in December 2024, effective January 1, 2025. She added that at the Authority meeting to follow, the Rules & Regulations will be official adopted by Resolution.

Ms. Enos explained that the Municipal Authority sets the Rules & Regulations. Since the Borough manages the system for the Authority, Council is being asked to adopt the Municipal Authorities Rules & Regulations, as well.

**Motion**

Mrs. Ream moved, Mrs. Miller seconded, to adopt the Municipal Authority's Rules and Regulations for the Water, Waste Water and Storm Water.

Motion Unanimously Carried

- e) *Act 172 Tax Credit for Firefighters – Consider approving the list of eligibles that were submitted by the Somerset Volunteer Fire Department who qualified for a tax credit under the Act 172.*

**Motion**

Mrs. Opp moved, Mr. Mandichak seconded, to approve the list of eligibles that were submitted by the Somerset Volunteer Fire Department who qualified for a tax credit under the Act 172.

Motion Carried (5 (Yes) 0 (no) 1 abstention)  
(Mr. Shaulis abstained)

**Committee Business/Reports:**

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

Ms. Enos noted that the Playground Committee's information will be given to Borough Council for their review.

There will also be a special meeting scheduled where Council can have further discussion regarding the Committee's request for the Borough's annual CDBG monies to fund their proposed Playground Project.

*g) Finance Report – Given by Brett Peters.*

Mr. Peters provided Borough Council with the Financial Report through December 2024. He mentioned that we are 12/12<sup>th</sup>s of the way through the year or 100%.

**General Fund:**

*Revenues – 112.03%*

*Expenses - 117.94%*

**Water Fund:**

*Revenues – 86.13%*

*Expenses – 84.28%*

**Sewer Fund:**

*Revenues – 104.11 %*

*Expenses – 105.81%*

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

Mrs. Sizemore mentioned that the stormwater billing software, where new accounts will be added, is still being worked on. The goal is to start billing for stormwater in the March 2025 cycle. Notification will be sent out to the public prior to the stormwater fee being added to their bill.

Sewer lateral testing inspection will start to be enforced April 1, 2025. It was approved effective January 1, 2025. Information regarding testing requirements, and why we are testing, can be viewed on our website.

Letters were sent out to local plumbers and contractors to let them know about the testing requirements. This information will also be sent out to local realtors.

An addendum, that includes stormwater, will also be added to the Management Agreement between Somerset Borough and its Municipal Authority. Presently, it only includes sewer and water.

*i) President’s Report – Given by Pam Ream.*

Mrs. Ream mentioned that the “Fire & Ice” Festival was very nice and well attended.

She thanked the Borough employees for their hard work in removing snow, clearing the roads, and for their efforts in getting everything cleaned up.

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

*Mr. Hoffman was not in attendance. No report given.*

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

*Mayor Rosemeyer had nothing new to report for the PSAB or the County Borough’s Association.*

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

Mr. Shaulis said that the Fire Department is approximately a month into the merger and everything is going well.

He said that since January 1, 2025, there have been 42 fire calls for the Somerset Fire Department. Friedens Fire Department had 18 fire calls.

m) 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 there is warranty work happening on the waterline portion.

On the treatment side, the Contractor is working on resolving a few items that are still open, and working to close those contracts out.

**SEWER:**

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

Mr. Bolby said we received the last permit that was needed before being able to make the application. The application for PennVEST is due February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The funding application will formerly be considered at their next meeting on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025.

The Interest Rates for PennVEST are still the same, and haven't changed since the Borough's Water Project was considered.

**GENERAL:**

**1) Center Ave. Sidewalk Project:**

Mr. Bolby said that this project has been completely closed out. All money has been paid, and all contract documents have been submitted. There are some warranty items on that contract that will be handled whenever the weather is more favorable.

n) Mayor's Report – Given by Mayor Rosemeyer.

Mayor Rosemeyer again mentioned that Officer Kevin Huzsek is receiving the "Carnegie Hero Award." 20 of these prestigious awards are given out throughout the whole country.

Mayor Rosemeyer noted that Officer Huzsek's medals will be presented to him and his family by the Police Department.

Mayor Rosemeyer requested Council's approval for the Police Department to work toward getting Public Safety Grant funding for a Canine Officer. The approximate cost will be \$40,000.00, and fully funded only through grant award monies.

Mayor Rosemeyer mentioned the many personnel changes within the Somerset Borough Police Department due to retirement. He also noted that there is interest in the five Police Officer positions that are available. He said that a cadet was recently interviewed for one of the Police Officer positions. More interviews are being conducted, and there are Officers who worked in the Borough in the past who want to come back.

Mayor Rosemeyer also mentioned the drone at the Police Department. One Officer is certified to use it. Two other Officers will also be receiving training.

Mayor Rosemeyer also mentioned a man who is posing as a Humane Society Officer. He noted that he has no affiliation with the Human Society.

Mayor Rosemeyer also pointed out that the Police Department was under budget with the close of 2024. He added that the Police Department returned \$55,586.00 back to the Borough.

**11. Executive Session: To discuss matters of collective bargaining and potential litigation.**

**Motion**

Mr. Shaulis moved, seconded by Mr. Dirienzo, to go into Executive Session to discuss matters of collective bargaining and potential litigation.

Motion Unanimously Carried  
6:17 p.m.

**Back in Session**

7:00 p.m.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion**

Mr. Dirienzo moved to adjourn; motion seconded by Mr. Shaulis.

Motion Unanimously Carried  
7:01 p.m.

---

Michele A. Enos, Borough Manager/ Secretary