

BOROUGH OF SOUTHMONT
148 WONDER STREET
JOHNSTOWN, PA 15905

MINUTES FOR JANUARY 21, 2025

The pledge of allegiance was conducted, and the scheduled January 21, 2025 Council meeting was called to order by President Doug Beri at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Council Members Doug Beri, Sheree Speicher, Herb Ewald, Bob Morgan, Eugene Kupchella, Matthew McVicker; Borough Manager Amanda Layton; Mayor Anthony Keiper; Police Chief William “B.J.” Newman; Solicitor Eric Hochfeld; Asst. Sec Debra Riek

Absent: Council Member Richard Burkert, Street Commissioner Sam McAdams, Engineer Todd Banks, Fire Chief Steve Costic

Visitors: John A. Klanchar (104 Dahlia St.), Robert Forcey (174 Floyd St.)

Public Comment:

Mr. Klanchar stated his father could not attend the meeting due to not feeling well and requested council table their decision on his request from the previous meeting until his father could be present at the February meeting.

Mr. Forcey stated he has reached out to JRA and at this time they are not interested in his sewer lateral replacement project due to the high estimated cost and Mr. Forcey is requesting that decision in writing so that it has been documented. Mr. Forcey stated he is trying to find a solution that will work for everyone.

Minutes

A motion was made by Mrs. Speicher to approve the January 21, 2025 minutes. Motion seconded by Mr. Morgan. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor, motion carried (6 -0).

Police Chief’s Report

The January 2025 Police Chief’s Report was received. Chief Newman stated that 337 calls were received in the month of December for a grand total of 4,858 calls for the year. Chief Newman stated 55 of the calls received were for the Southmont Borough area and there were 951 calls for Southmont Borough for the year. Chief Newman reported there were 4 traffic citations, and 6 warrants issued for the month of December with a grand total of 845 for the year.

Fire Company Report

The December 2024 Fire Chief’s Report was received. Chief Costic absent.

Engineer’s Report

The December 2024 report was received. The semi-annual Corrective Action Plan report was received and is on file.

Zoning Officer’s Report

The December 2024 Zoning Officer’s Report was received. Mr. Ewald asked Solicitor Hochfeld to investigate a number of properties that Laurel Municipal Inspection Agency has been working on for over a year. Mr. Ewald questioned what Laurel Municipal Inspection Agency means by “closed cannot pursue” on their reports. Solicitor Hochfeld stated that because the property is owned by a company or LLC they cannot be pursued at that time due to the requirement of having to file against a person and not a company or LLC. Solicitor Hochfeld stated he does not necessarily agree with that statement and believes that an individual or a company can be pursued, possibly by filing a complaint with the District Magistrate instead of a citation and that he would speak with the solicitor for Laurel Municipal Inspection Agency to determine how they came to that decision. Mrs. Speicher requested Mrs. Layton investigate other options for property maintenance and code enforcement.

Solicitor’s Report

Solicitor Hochfeld stated that the appeal from Stefan Hanevig and Christina Shaw regarding the fence at 201 Leila Street was reviewed by Judge Kiniry noting the Judge issued an order for the Zoning Hearing Board to hear additional evidence noting the evidence hearing was held on January 7, 2025. Solicitor Hochfeld stated the hearing included claims from Mr. Hanevig and Ms. Shaw that the ordinance is not evenly enforced and also included testimony from Mark Walker and Laurel Municipal Inspection Agency regarding denials of similar fences and approvals for preexisting fences, which wouldn’t be required to comply with the current ordinance. Solicitor Hochfeld stated the transcription will be send to Judge Kiniry for him to make a final decision noting it could take a few months before there is a ruling.

Street Commissioner’s Report

Mr. McAdams absent. The January Street Commissioner report was received and is on file.

Borough Manager Report

Mrs. Layton reported that the borough was given the approval to move forward with the bidding process for the roof and building upgrade project under the LSA grant and there is a letter of intent on the agenda for approval that will be sent to the City of Johnstown stating the borough’s intent to reimburse them for our share of paving Langhorne Avenue.

Mayor’s Report

Nothing to report.

Committees:

Administration: Nothing to report.

Community Planning & Improvement: Nothing to report.

Emergency Management: Nothing to report.

Finance: Mrs. Speicher stated there are four grants being worked on for the roof and building upgrades, the stabilization of the streambank along Shady Lane, an application for a new street sweeper, and an application for a shade tree inventory. Mrs. Speicher stated the committee will begin working on the 2026 budget in July 2025.

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GJWA: Mr. Kupchella reported that Greater Johnstown Water Authority has assumed the responsibility to replace the water lines from the street to the house with no cost to the customers over the next 10 years noting they are currently hiring new crews, buying necessary equipment and deciding which areas to begin in first. Mr. Kupchella stated the authority will be working in partnership with the Peoples Natural Gas Company wherever possible to lower costs of digging up streets and are also pursuing Pennvest grants.

MS4/Stormwater: Mrs. Speicher stated Stiffler McGraw is working on new maps for the stormwater system.

Personnel: Nothing to report.

Police: Mrs. Speicher asked if Southmont should start looking at the current agreement since Westmont Borough sent a letter stating their intent to terminate its membership and jointly review a new cost allocation among the participating municipalities. An administrative/borough services committee meeting will be scheduled to review.

Property Maintenance and Streets: Nothing to report.

Shade Trees: Mr. Beri stated the committee is applying for a grant through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies for \$7,500 as match for a larger grant to have a shade tree study done. A motion was made by Mrs. Speicher to approve applying for a Community Foundation for the Alleghenies grant for a tree study in the amount of \$7,500.00. Motion seconded by Mr. Morgan. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor motion carried (6-0).

New Business

A motion was made by Mrs. Speicher to approve the Letter of Intent to the City of Johnstown for paving Langhorne Avenue in 2025. Motion seconded by Mr. Kupchella. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor motion carried (6-0). Mr. Ewald asked if the borough will be paying for only the portion located in Southmont. Mrs. Layton confirmed the borough will only pay for the portion of road located in the borough and that Pennsylvania Department of Transportation will determine the amount to be paid by each municipality.

Business Items

A motion was made by Mr. Morgan to approve ratification of payroll from December 10, 2024 through January 21, 2025 in the amount of \$26,162.17. Motion seconded by Mrs. Speicher. Roll call: Mr. Beri, Mrs. Speicher, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Ewald, Mr. Kupchella, and Mr. McVicker. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor. Motion carried (6 -0).

A motion was made by Mrs. Speicher to approve payment of bills December 10, 2024, through January 21, 2025, in the amount of \$144,143.02. Motion seconded by Mr. Kupchella. Roll call: Mr. Beri, Mrs. Speicher, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Ewald, Mr. Kupchella and Mr. McVicker. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor. Motion carried (6 -0).

A motion was made by Mr. Morgan to approve transfers from December 10, 2024, through January 21, 2025, in the amount of \$492,888.16. Motion seconded by Mrs. Speicher. Mr. Burkert absent. Roll call: Mr. Beri, Mrs. Speicher, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Ewald, Mr. Kupchella and Mr. McVicker. All in favor. Motion carried (6 -0).

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A motion was made by Mrs. Speicher to approve the December 2024 Treasurer's Report. Motion seconded by Mr. Morgan. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor. Motion carried (6 -0).

A motion was made by Mrs. Speicher to accept the November 2024 and December 2024 Tax Collector's Reports. Motion seconded by Mr. Morgan. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor. Motion carried (6 -0).

A motion was made by Mrs. Speicher to table the request of Mr. John G. Klanchar until the next meeting. Motion seconded by Mr. Morgan. All in favor, motion carried (6-0). Mr. Burkert absent

A motion was made by Mrs. Speicher to enter into an Executive Session for legal and personnel matters at 4:33 p.m. Motion seconded by Mr. Kupchella. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor, motion carried (6-0).

Executive session ended at 5:31 p.m. and council resumed its regularly scheduled meeting.

Solicitor Hochfeld stated that council reviewed the history and request from Mr. Forcey and noted there is a proper procedure to follow to appeal for an extension or waiver of sewer lateral compliance requirements and he will send Mr. Forcey a letter that will outline the appeal process.

There being no further business a motion was made by Mrs. Speicher for adjournment of the January 21, 2025 meeting at 5:40 p.m. Motion seconded by Mr. Kupchella. Mr. Burkert absent. All in favor, motion carried (6-0).

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Riek
Assistant Secretary