

TOWNSHIP OF O'HARA
COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 14, 2020

I. OPENING PROCEDURES

A. Call to Order by President Smith at 7:04 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Council Members Present: Robert John Smith, President of Council; Charles A. Vogel, Vice-President of Council; George H. Stewart, Second Ward; Scott Frankowski, Third Ward; Allison Berger, Fourth Ward; Cassandra Eccles, Fifth Ward; John R. Denny, Jr., At-Large

Also Present: Ted Curran, Treasurer; Julie A. Jakubec, CPA, CGMA, Township Manager; Daniel Garfinkel, Township Solicitor; Charles W. Steinert, Jr., P.E., Township Engineer; Loren R. Kephart, Public Service Superintendent; Scott K. Slagel, Police Superintendent; Cathy Bubas, Manager's Secretary

President Smith welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. On behalf of Township Council, he thanked staff, volunteer fire and emergency medical service providers, the Police, Public Service Department employees and Emergency Management personnel for providing vital services during the pandemic.

II. CITIZEN COMMENTS CONCERNING NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Deferred to end of meeting.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Council Regular Meeting – February 11, 2020

B. Council Combined Regular Meeting and Workshop – March 10, 2020

Motion by Mr. Denny, Jr. to approve the subject minutes as presented was seconded by Mr. Stewart and carried unanimously.

IV. FINANCE

A. Vouchers – March 2020

Motion by Mr. Stewart to approved the subject vouchers was seconded by Ms. Berger.

Mr. Stewart and Mr. Frankowski presented questions which staff answered satisfactorily.

The motion carried unanimously. The vouchers totaled \$593,837.26.

B. Receipts and Expenditures Records – February 2020

Motion by Mr. Stewart to accept the subject receipts and expenditures records was seconded by Vice President Vogel and carried unanimously.

C. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Curran noted the audit has been completed and staff did a great job. The challenges now are providing residents with essential services, addressing concerns of cash flow and revenue sources, which could be a timing issue.

V. REPORTS

A. Other Organizations and Agencies Reports

Treasurer Curran provided an update on the North Hills Council of Governments activities, which included filling the Executive Director position.

Mr. Stewart stated he had talked with Mr. John Kight of the RIDC Business Alliance concerning issues within the RIDC Park, and recommended Mr. Kight contact staff directly.

B. Monthly Departmental Reports

Ms. Berger noted a typographical error on the Finance Department Report, which Manager Jakubec indicated would be corrected to \$538,582.

Mr. Stewart requested an overview of what the Township Engineer and Public Service Department are able to do during isolation and the pandemic. Mr. Steinert, Jr., P.E. indicated the Public Service Department employees are working on a shortened road program, which the Manager added includes repairing catch basins and storm water line replacement. She explained the employees are split into two teams to limit contact. Leaf collection has been completed and brush pickup has begun; sanitary sewer inspections for property transfers have been suspended and funds can be escrowed for potential repairs; and park amenities are closed.

Vice President Vogel recalled the road paving was to begin earlier this year. Mr. Steinert, Jr., P.E. noted a conversation with the Township Manager regarding funding for projects. Some municipalities have awarded paving contracts, but there are a lot of unknowns at this time. The paving companies have opened. Mr. Denny, Jr. asked if some of the unknowns/delays are the result of not just the current isolation but also budget concerns. Manager Jakubec stated she and the Treasurer are running models in an attempt to try to determine future revenue. All roads for the paving program are listed as alternates until staff can determine the number of roads that can be done and at what dollar amount. She explained real estate taxes are due the end of April at discount, and earned income tax will be received in July and August.

Mr. Frankowski inquired about the status of the RedZone sewer line work, which Mr. Steinert, Jr., P.E. stated the work has been completed. He has an extensive list of bad wyes, one which was a lateral, and he is currently reviewing videos of Powers Run. It was noted RedZone had not yet been paid for any additional work.

C. Manager's Report

Mr. Stewart inquired about a meeting with Penn D.O.T. concerning storm water from Route 28. The Manager explained there is some water ponding on Route 28 which is impacting Sunoco on Freeport Road. Penn D.O.T. was to work with Sunoco to catch the water so it does not flood onto Freeport Road.

Mr. Stewart asked if anyone has hooked up to the new Saxonburg sanitary sewer line. Manager Jakubec noted the County does not want to inspect the connections at this time as they are working on emergencies. Township staff has done drive-by inspections. One resident did connect and one resident is in the process as their septic system is failing.

Mr. Frankowski inquired about the status of the Ravine Street project. Manager Jakubec noted the project went out to bid, but due to the current pandemic situation it is on hold. Mr. Frankowski noted money left over from a Millvale project was to go toward Ravine Street, but if Sharpsburg has to replace a bridge the funds could be diverted to Sharpsburg. The Manager noted an upcoming meeting with officials. Mr. Steinert, Jr., P.E. stated Sharpsburg was awarded a grant for Main Street.

VI. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION / NEW BUSINESS

President Smith added an item for discussion to the agenda.

Manager Jakubec stated a request has been received for support of a grant for 18 homes in Indiana Township to connect to the O'Hara Township sanitary sewer line. She informed Council that the Township has not come to an agreement with Indiana Township concerning connection or conveyance charges to maintain the line.

Vice President Vogel provided some history about the topic, and indicated this is Indiana Township trying to get O'Hara Township to let them connect to the sanitary sewer line without contributing any funding. He opposed a letter of support for the grant, to which Mr. Frankowski, Mr. Denny, Jr. and the consensus of Council concurred.

It was noted O'Hara Township residents will pay \$13,514 per home. Manager Jakubec stated she had clearly communicated to Indiana Township officials that their residents would have to pay the same plus an annual conveyance/maintenance charge to be determined. She noted the Township pays a conveyance charge to Fox Chapel Borough for connecting to their sewer system. The Manager indicated she would relay Council's answer and call Lynn at Deer Creek Basin Authority as a courtesy.

Mr. Frankowski recalled some flooding had occurred on Saxonburg Boulevard, just after crossing the bridge from Indiana Township into O'Hara Township, after the sewer line was installed. Mr. Steinert, Jr., P.E. noted one resident had a storm drain issue when the sewer was installed through his yard, but he had not heard anything since then.

Manager Jakubec stated staff has been in contact with the contractor, Chivers, to finish the restoration work.

A. Possible Extension of Real Estate Tax Filing Deadlines

Manager Jakubec referenced a memo summarizing a discussion with Chris Bell of Jordan Tax concerning real estate tax billing and due dates, and an email from Chris with the bullet points discussed.

Mr. Stewart noted a lot of municipalities are not pushing the due date back as a lot of the tax comes through escrows. Manager Jakubec stated she polled the North Hills COG communities and no one is extending the face due date. She suggested when reminders are mailed in June Council may want to consider an extension. Chris is also to prepare an analysis.

Vice President Vogel had heard that they might have to extend the due date through the end of the year. Manager Jakubec noted Senator Williams was to provide clarification on recent legislation and a conference call was scheduled for tomorrow.

Vice President Vogel noted municipalities were not extending the discount period but would consider extending the face amount through the end of the year. He noted people are out of work and will need help. His preference would be to not extend the discount period, but agreed to wait and see what happens by June, to which Mr. Denny, Jr. concurred.

B. Possible Extension to Connect to Saxonburg Sanitary Sewer Line

The Manager noted residents that are required to connect to the new Saxonburg Sanitary Sewer Line were given to mid-August 2020 to connect. As a result of the current economy due to Covid-19, staff is asking if the deadline to connect to the sewer should be extended. She noted Council could take action tonight, but a lot will depend on the Governor's actions concerning opening the economy.

The consensus of Council was to hold off on any action to the next Council meeting.

C. Request for Financial Assistance from Lauri Ann West Community Center

Manager Jakubec referenced a letter received from Anthony Allison of the Lauri Ann West Community Center. The community center is requesting advanced payment of the Township's fourth quarter subsidy and deferment of the April 2020 debt service payment to October due to current limited liquid funds. She noted a change in the request as of today. In talking with Mr. Allison the community center is a recipient of the SBA (Small Business Association) Loan, which would cover payroll and the debt service. However, due to timing the loan funds may not be available until May.

Mr. Stewart and Mr. Denny, Jr. were acceptable to a short grace period if the loan funding is delayed a couple weeks. Mr. Frankowski recalled past experiences with SBA loans and suggested the community center not put all their eggs in one basket, though things may have changed with the current situation. The Manager noted Huntington Bank communicated a number that came with the loan to Mr. Allison.

Manager Jakubec presented a question from Ms. Cindy Harris about using the loan funds to pay community center staff. The Manager indicated the loan funds could pay the bond debt service and other obligations as needed.

Mr. Denny, Jr. stated the membership dues do not provide enough revenue to pay the salaries.

Mr. Frankowski questioned how the Township is doing before handing out any money, and if the Township is able to make payroll. Manager Jakubec stated the Township is holding its own and monitoring finances very closely.

President Smith recommended relaying to the community center that their request is contingent on the Township's cash flow. He also noted the community center has a 'Plan B'.

Ms. Berger questioned if the community center could make revenue by having virtual classes. The Manager indicated the community center board was meeting tonight and she would talk with Mr. Allison tomorrow.

D. Verbal Update of State of the Township

Manager Jakubec stated the Township is offering essential services while taking precautionary measures. Police Officer shifts are staggered, staff is not crossing into other departments, Administrative staff are alternating days working from home, and Public Service Department employees are alternating days worked. Staff has been in contact with residents about communicating through fax, phone and email since the building is closed to visitors.

The Manager continues to monitor the budget and seek guidance through the Government Finance Officer Association ("GFOA").

Manager Jakubec presented a question from Ms. Cindy Harris about earned income tax. The Manager indicated earned income tax, local service tax ("LST") and Allegheny Regional Asset District ("ARAD") funding would be impacted.

The Manager noted a hiring freeze has been implemented, overtime is not permitted unless absolutely necessary, purchases are limited and vendors are asked to sharpen their pencils. She would be meeting with Treasurer Curran to review the budget this week.

Mr. Denny, Jr. inquired about the fund balance at the end of 2019, and if the Manager had any sense of the impact on emergency medical services and the volunteer fire department/company. Manager Jakubec noted Tom Heilmann, EMS Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator, applied for a SBA Loan and a grant is available through Pittsburgh Emergency Medical Foundation, which Ms. Berger had provided information. Both the Police and Mr. Heilmann have indicated emergency calls have been eerily quiet. The Manager stated as for fund balance, she would provide the information later as she had to pull a spreadsheet from her computer.

Mr. Frankowski stated SBA loans sound great but are based on income and are geared toward minorities. Mr. Denny, Jr. noted due to the Covid-19, SBA loans have done away with a lot of the requirements, making it simpler to apply and trying to get money out faster.

II. CITIZEN COMMENTS CONCERNING NON-AGENDA ITEMS

President Smith requested questions or comments from anyone in the audience. Manager Jakubec requested anyone wishing to comment to post in the chat box so that she could unmute their microphone.

No questions or comments were remitted.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Council

Mr. Stewart stated there is not anyone that is not affect by this isolation situation and inquired about meetings with the County and a clearinghouse for people with health and mental health issues, so they know they can call for help. Manager Jakubec stated the Township has implemented a “Neighbors Being Neighbors” program so if someone would like a phone call just to talk, volunteers are available to call. She also noted Senator Lindsey Williams’ staff is gathering information of various agencies that provide assistance. The Township will forward information about anyone that contacts the Township to Senator William’s office so they can get the appropriate assistance.

B. Staff

Manager Jakubec indicated regular operations are continuing. She has been preparing three GEDF grant applications, and all state mandated reports have been submitted.

The Manager and Council stated they did not need to conduct an Executive Session.

VIII ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Vice President Vogel to adjourn the meeting was seconded by Ms. Berger and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Cathy Bubas, Manager’s Secretary

Attachment(s): Attendee Sheet