

**TOWNSHIP OF O'HARA
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 5, 2023**

I. OPENING PROCEDURES

- A. Call to Order by President Smith at 7:00 p.m.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance led by President Smith.
- C. Roll Call

Council Members Present: Robert John Smith, President of Council; Cassandra R. Eccles, Vice-President of Council; Richard S. Hughes, First Ward; George H. Stewart, Second Ward; Michael F. Hammill, Third Ward; Olivia T. Payne, Fourth Ward; John R. Denny, Jr., At-Large

Also Present: Greg Caprara, Township Treasurer; Julie A. Jakubec, CPA, CGMA, Township Manager; Dan Garfinkel, Township Solicitor; Charles W. Steinert, Jr., P.E., Township Engineer; Christopher Komora, Special Projects Coordinator/Code Enforcement Officer; Todd Giammatteo, Public Service Superintendent; Jay Davis, Police Superintendent; Cathy Bubas, Manager's Secretary

II. VISITOR

- A. Representatives from Cooper Siegel Library

Ms. Jill McConnell, Executive Director, Mr. Dave Bennett, Treasurer, and Nadine Ostrowski, Development Manager of Cooper Siegel Library were in attendance to update Council on library activities. Ms. McConnell thanked Council for their support of the Sharpsburg Library Branch. She recalled sending copies of the Annual Report to Council.

Ms. McConnell stated the library resumed regular operating hours in 2022. Thanks to O'Hara Township's contribution, the Sharpsburg branch is open on Friday.

Ms. McConnell recalled partnering with the school district in 2022 by distributing library cards to students. New students will receive library cards each year. She also noted Teen Programs at the Sharpsburg branch increased by more than 220% at both locations in 2022.

Ms. McConnell stated 50% of O'Hara Township residents have Cooper Siegel library cards, borrowed nearly 74,000 items and 2,300 O'Hara Township residents attended various programs.

Ms. McConnell noted a new strategic plan was recently completed which focuses on four strategic areas, one of which includes building the library's capacity. The library will be launching a \$2,000,000 capital campaign, which includes applying for a \$750,000 Keystone grant. The capital campaign will be used to renovate the 6,000 square feet of the lower level and establish a fund for future capital expenses. The renovations include additional meeting space and programs and updating the existing technology in the meeting and study rooms.

Ms. Payne asked if the technology would be updated at both library locations. Ms. McConnell answered not at this time, as the Sharpsburg branch only has one small room. The library board is looking into possibly putting in Pods for additional meeting space at the Sharpsburg branch. Ms. Payne questioned how it is determined which places receive updates. Ms. McConnell explained the libraries have one big budget, but each library has line items. The library owns the Cooper Siegel building and Sharpsburg Borough owns the Sharpsburg Library Branch.

Mr. Stewart inquired about training children on how to use the library. Ms. McConnell stated only Hartwood Elementary School reached out for a tour of the library. Mr. Stewart suggested the library reach out to the school Superintendent.

Mr. Hughes noted climate impacts and inquired about solar power. Ms. McConnell stated it is not part of the strategic plan, but the library does recycle and has rain barrels.

Ms. Payne asked if the library card is part of the Linked-In-Learning Program, where people can take courses at no charge. Ms. McConnell answered no.

President Smith asked if the library communicates with the Laurie Ann West Community Center so that programs offered are not in competition. Ms. McConnell answered yes, adding she had met with Mark (Rothert) and Jason (Fate).

Vice President Eccles questioned what is planned for the lower level of the library, which Ms. McConnell explained. Ms. Payne asked if members were surveyed as to what they would like to see at the library. Ms. McConnell indicated members had not yet been surveyed.

Manager Jakubec noted Nadine Ostrowski helps the Township with the Facebook page.

III. CITIZEN COMMENTS CONCERNING NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Emily Glick, Yorkshire Drive, stated the Lauri Ann West Community Center discontinued the open gym program with an annual fee of \$100 and recommended reinstituting the program.

Ms. Glick also expressed stormwater management concern if a 24-acre parcel located off Powers Run Road is developed, noting 25 sewer taps were approved.

Ms. Glick commented that the process for yard waste pickup process is inconvenient, as she has missed the cutoff on several occasions. She questioned since Waste Management is in the Township, why can't they pick up all yard waste at the street. Manager Jakubec explained yard waste collection is contractual with Waste Management.

Mr. Denny, Jr. recalled a significant cost increase in the contract. To make a change would incur an additional cost. He noted residents do not pay for trash collection. Manager Jakubec stated the cost for trash collection is included in taxes. She noted information about yard waste collection is available on the Township website, including the schedule for collection.

Mr. Steinert, Jr., P.E. stated the 24-acre parcel is mostly unbuildable due to a stream that flows through the property, and steep slopes. He indicated at most three homes could be built. The proposed new owner has indicated his intentions are to leave the property clean and green.

Manager Jakubec stated the community center is a separate entity but Vice President Eccles is on the board. Vice President Eccles indicated she would mention the annual open gym program.

IV. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

A. Request for Transfer of Liquor License into the Township

Manager Jakubec referenced a letter received from Caputo Law Office on behalf of Viva La Vida Restaurant, LLC requesting an inter-municipal transfer of restaurant liquor license No. R-5655 from Virk Yilmaz, LLC, 5440 Center Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15232 to Viva La Vida Restaurant, LLC, 1141 Freeport Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238. A Public Hearing is scheduled for September 19, 2023 prior to the Special Council Workshop to receive public comments concerning the request. If acceptable, a resolution granting the request will be included on the September 19th Special Workshop Agenda for consideration.

Mr. Stewart questioned who pays for the Public Hearing advertisement. Manager Jakubec stated the Township pays for the legal notice but receives a liquor license fee.

The consensus of Council was to include the resolution on the Special Workshop agenda.

B. Discussion of General Concept of Residential Meadows

The Manager noted Township resident Sanford Leuba provided information to Council concerning front yard meadows to have a more natural habitat. She stated the Planning Commission would need to review such a proposal since it would be a change to zoning. The purpose of a meadow is not to avoid having to cut the grass.

Solicitor Garfinkel stated there are differences between grass, meadows, and higher grasses. People could say it's not a meadow; it's just messy grass.

Mr. Hammill referenced a meadow along Dorseyville Road. His concerns are deer hide in high grass, spread ticks and ticks spread Lyme Disease. He did not recommend planting a meadow close to a house.

President Smith stated the resident who wants this already has a meadow. Manager Jakubec stated it is high grass and Mr. Komora will be meeting him in court.

The consensus of Council was not to move forward with the concept of residential meadows.

C. Request from Pashek to Allow Working with RIDC

Manager Jakubec referenced an email from Jenni Easton of Pashek MTR indicating RIDC has requested them to prepare a scope of tasks and fees for a Park Master Plan. Council would need to grant permission for Pashek MTR to work with RIDC due to potential conflicts. RIDC would save lots of money because Pashek has the information needed since they are doing the Township's joint Long Range Plan.

Mr. Stewart questioned if the information could be shared with RIDC. Solicitor Garfinkel stated the information could be shared. The Township could also enter into a Joint Defense Agreement, whereby Pashek would just have to walk away.

Mr. Hughes stated if Pashek is a professional consultant, he did not see any conflict. Vice President Eccles also considered it a positive opportunity.

President Smith stated RIDC has their own rules. Manager Jakubec acknowledged, noting RIDC officials have indicated there are certain changes they would not fight.

The consensus of Council was to allow Pashek to work with RIDC.

Ms. Glick noted the Township's Long Range Plan could be altered as they work on the RIDC Plan.

D. Opting to Participate in Community Development Block Grant Funding

The Manager explained under federal regulations, the Township has a choice to opt-out or opt-in to the Community Development Block Grant Funding programs. It is recommended that the Township opt-in to provide grant funding opportunities and help eligible Township residents to apply for low-interest home-improvement programs. This action must be done every three years. Due to time constraints, Council is requested to consider action on the attached proposed resolution this evening.

Motion by Mr. Hughes to opt into participating in the Community Development Block Grant Funding programs, and was seconded by Mr. Denny, Jr. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Requesting Authorization to Execute an Agreement with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for Winter Road Maintenance

Manager Jakubec referenced information received from Penn D.O.T. regarding reimbursement to the Township for winter road maintenance of State roads, which include Kittanning Pike, Dorseyville Road from Kittanning Pike to Sharpshill Road, Sharpshill Road, Seifried Lane, Kirkwood Drive and Powers Run Road from Freeport Road to the Fox Chapel Borough border. The agreement is the same as in prior years.

Mr. Stewart asked if the Township would receive more money this year. The Manager indicated she would need to check the prior agreement.

The consensus of Council was to include the resolution on the September 12th agenda.

F. Requesting Authorization to Award Contracts Through the North Hills Council of Governments for Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation

The Manager explained per the Allegheny County Health Department Administrative Consent Order ("ACO"), the Township is required to maintain its sanitary sewer lines. The North Hills Council of Governments received bids for its annual sanitary sewer repairs contracts on August 24th. Township Engineer Chuck Steinert is requesting authorization to execute the necessary contracts on an as needed basis for sanitary sewer repairs to comply with the ACO. The estimated cost for repairs has been between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in past years.

The consensus of Council was to include the resolution on the September 12th regular meeting agenda for consideration.

G. Employee Pension Plan Budgets for the Year 2024

Manager Jakubec stated the Township is required by law to establish an appropriation in each year's budget for police and employee pension plans. The appropriation for 2024, referred to as the Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO), will be \$0 for the non-uniform defined benefit plan, \$55,000 for the non-uniform defined contribution plan, and \$221,212 for the police plan according to documentation received from the pension actuary, Mockenhaupt Associates. Pension aid money received from the state typically covers the MMO. The proposed resolution acknowledges the receipt and acceptance of the 2024 budget appropriation for the employees' pension plans.

The consensus of Council was to include the proposed resolution on the September 12, 2023 meeting agenda for consideration.

H. Establishing the 2024 Employee Contribution Rate for the Police Pension Plan

The Manager explained the resolution establishes the employee contribution to the police pension plan in 2024 at 3.0% of compensation. Without this action by Council, the employee contribution rate would be 5% of compensation as mandated by State law. She noted the reduction in the police employee contribution is contractual. The reduction must be implemented by resolution every year.

The consensus of Council was to include the resolution for consideration on the September 12th regular meeting agenda.

I. Designating Trick-Or-Treat Night in the Township

Staff will soon begin receiving phone calls inquiring about when Trick-Or-Treat is scheduled in the Township. Traditionally Trick-Or-Treat has been on Halloween between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. If acceptable, a motion will be included for consideration on the September 12, 2023 regular meeting agenda. Vice President Eccles noted October 31st is on a Tuesday.

The consensus of Council was to include the motion for consideration on the September 12th meeting agenda.

J. Solicitor's July 19 and August 11, 2023 Invoices

Mr. Stewart asked if it would be possible to recoup the Township's expenses on Zoning Hearing Board cases that are continuous. Solicitor Garfinkel answered, "No."

Mr. Hammill asked when the tax exoneration and property acquisition along Grove Street would be completed. The Manager indicated very soon.

K. Proposed September 12, 2023 Regular Meeting Agenda

There were no changes or comments.

V. CONCERNS OF COUNCIL

Mr. Stewart recalled a question from a former Police Officer concerning a Verizon wire with ribbons on it. The Manager explained that the Township does not have jurisdiction over Verizon.

Mr. Stewart noted as people get older, they have trouble taking care of their home and questioned if the Township was aware of any resources the elderly could get help. Manager Jakubec referred Mr. Stewart to the Social Services Coordinator. Jaylen.

Mr. Hughes noted an upcoming Zoning Hearing for a car sales lot along River Road. The Manager did not anticipate the Zoning Hearing Board would be favorable. She requested the secretary to forward information to Council concerning the zoning variance request.

Mr. Denny, Jr. commented that the new police vehicles are black. Manager Jakubec explained white police vehicles are no longer available. The color choices are silver, State Trooper grey, or black. Mr. Stewart recalled Police Superintendent Davis's comment regarding visibility and safety of the officers.

Mr. Denny, Jr. noted a shortage of teachers and believed the shortage is due to disrespect by parents. He suggested a resolution recognizing and thanking the Fox Chapel Area School District teachers. Treasurer Caprara suggested inviting the President of the teachers' union.

VI. CONCERNS OF STAFF

Manager Jakubec noted boxes of hygiene products dropped off for the fire victims in Maui would be collected tomorrow by Brothers' Brother.

The Manager stated the corrugated cardboard dumpster has been delivered. Corrugated cardboard boxes must be broken down. The dumpster is not for cereal, tissue boxes, etc.

Manager Jakubec announced that the Township will participate in Project Prom in cooperation with Allegheny County Department of Human Services. Beginning in January 2024 formal dresses can be dropped off at the municipal building.

The Manager noted the Township will again participate in the Toy and Food Drives for the holidays.

Manager Jakubec requested Council to remain for an executive session to discuss labor matters.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The workshop adjourned at 8:15 p.m. and Council entered Executive Session.


Cathy Bubas, Manager's Secretary

Attachment: Attendance Sheet(s)

SIGN-IN SHEET

DATE: 9-5-2023

TOWNSHIP OF O'HARA

Council Workshop
Meeting

Bill McLaughlin

Name

Cooper-Siegel Community Library

Address or Organization

Dave Barnett

Name

Cooper-Siegel Community Library

Address or Organization

NADINE OSIZOWSKI

Name

Cooper-Siegel Community Library

Address or Organization

Emily Gluck

Name

Zoom

Address or Organization

Name

Address or Organization

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Address or Organization

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