

Borough of Northumberland

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Borough of Northumberland 175 Orange Street, Northumberland, PA 17857 Northumberland Borough Council Meeting June 3, 2020

President Paul Ruane called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and Mayor Dan Berard offered an Invocation.

Roll Call

Council members present were Ann Boyer, Denise Guilbault, Ellie Rees, Paul Ruane, Kaitlyn Simmons, and Frank Wetzel. Others present were Mayor Berard; C.L. Kriner, Police Chief; Melissa Kelso, Borough Solicitor; and Janice Bowman, Borough Manager. Council member Orlando Toro was absent.

Public Comment

Mr. Robert Row informed council that the resident at 138 Priestley Avenue, Jerard DiPaola is blocking the stormwater from running behind his property. Mr. Row lives across Queen Street from Mr. DiPaola is concerned that the water will back up onto his property.

Mr. Mike Alexander informed council that his neighbor blows his grass onto Mr. Alexander's driveway. The code enforcement officer was at his property and has informed Mr. Alexander that the Borough Code prohibits blowing grass in the street. Mr. Ruane stated that he doesn't know what the council can do about it. Ms. Kelso advised that it is a civil matter between the two parties.

Mr. Quinn Ahern told council that he neglected to mow his yard and received a notice to mow his grass on or before a certain date. He planned to cut his grass that day. He was told that the notices have been revised so the date when the fine will be levied is a definite date rather than on or before a date.

Council Meeting Minutes

Upon motion by Mrs. Simmons, seconded by Mrs. Boyer, council approved the council meeting minutes of May 5, 2020 with a vote of 5-0-1. Mr. Wetzel abstained.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Berard reported that the Police Department issued 15 traffic citations and 5 non-traffic citations during May. They had 232 calls for service and 21 court appearances. Several people were arrested for misdemeanor crimes, some of which included possession of drug paraphernalia, DUI, discharge of a firearm into a structure, false reports,

retaliation against a witness, possession with the intent to deliver drugs, aggravated assault, simple assault, and recklessly endangering another person. The police answered 24 assist calls for the month; 11 to Point Township, 2 to Sunbury, and 11 to other agencies. Other agencies include other police departments and federal agencies as well as the fire department, EMS, and street department.

Mayor Berard noted that he heard a lot of brake retarders coming down Front Street. He thinks the signs that had been posted on Front Street to prohibit brake retarders had been removed when PennDOT started the road construction. He does not think the signs have been re-erected. He requested the Borough Manager check with PennDOT.

Mayor Berard stated that he has heard from various residents about their opposition to the Block Party. He said that the committee had not planned to hold the Block Party on July 3rd if the county is not open. The committee set an alternate date of August 29th if the Block Party could not be held on July 3rd. Mayor Berard said that if the Governor has not opened the area, the committee will not defy the Governor's order. Mayor Berard noted that this is unofficial until after the committee meets tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. so the committee can discuss it. Mayor Berard noted that the Governor was marching with a group today that was comprised of more than 25 people. He added that the Governor was wearing a mask.

Dr. Guilbault made a motion to cancel the Block Party for 2020. She added that there may be some alternatives to having a block party. She noted that if the Borough is in the green phase, she does not know how the block party can be limited to 250 people.

Mr. Ruane replied that it will not be held if the Borough is in the green phase.

Mayor Berard stated that he wants to applaud the owner of the Pineknoller Brewing Company. The owner wants to do a lot to refurbish Front Street downtown in advance of the Block Party. He added that even if Northumberland County goes green, the Block Party would be postponed because 250 people would not cover the cost that the Brew Pub is spending for this event. He said that the bottom line is that to have this event, there could be no restrictions.

Dr. Guilbault said that she understands this. She stated that she did some research through the Borough News and contacted various municipalities who had events listed. All but one who she contacted has canceled their events. One municipality is considering whether to cancel their event at their next council meeting. She is concerned that the Borough may be sending the wrong message.

Mrs. Simmons stated that she agrees and had questioned her vote to approve the Block Party. She feels it is not necessary right now and council could focus on other things this year and plan a bigger and better event next year. She added that she would love to see the downtown revitalized.

Mr. Wetzel stated that he is in health care and this is not going to go away. He said that in a normal world, a vaccine takes three years. He added that this is the normal and we have to live our lives. He said that he is with the Mayor as long as the plans follow the CDC and the governor's guidelines.

In response to someone's question, Mr. Wetzel responded that the reason they came up with this is because Pineknotters' Days was canceled. And Pineknotters' Days lasts a week where this is a one-day event. It was noted that some of the people who are on the Pineknotters' Days committee are on this committee.

Dr. Guilbault made a motion to cancel the 2020 Block Party. Mrs. Simmons seconded the motion. Mrs. Rees asked if Dr. Guilbault and Mrs. Simmons would be in favor of the Block Party if it were postponed until September. She added that the Borough would have to be out of the green phase to have it. Dr. Guilbault stated that after her conversation with the state health department, that is what is driving this for her. They were immediate in stating that this would be a bad idea to have it this summer. And other boroughs are canceling their events. Mr. Ruane replied that he has no faith in the health department at all; they have no common sense. Mr. Wetzel added that the CDC just came out with an article that their numbers are inflated. Mrs. Simmons stated that she feels that it is her job to listen to residents. Mr. Wetzel noted that it was just said that schools can open in August. Mr. Wetzel said that he does not understand the reason, in that in August, school children can go back to school, but we cannot have a Block Party. It was noted that the people who sent the emails did not look to see what the council voted on. They assumed that the council is going ahead and having the Block Party no matter what. The council had said that they will not have the Block Party unless this area of the state is opened; not in the yellow, not in the green. Mrs. Simmons stated that if this goes away and the governor says we can have it, then that is okay. Mr. Ruane responded that it is not coming back if the council votes no. Mrs. Simmons said that if the majority votes to have it, she understands and respects that.

Mrs. Rees noted that it was not necessarily a suggestion about September, she was wondering how they would feel about postponing it until the fall. Mrs. Simmons stated that for her, she thinks it is for the year and maybe it wouldn't be better next year. Dr. Guilbault agreed. She said that she has been doing a lot of reading and this is a dynamic event. This is everchanging and she noted that she could be overreacting and if the council votes to keep this, she will support it and do whatever she can to help.

Mayor Berard explained that the alternate date is August 29th and he would follow whatever the governor says. If only 250 people would be permitted, if you add all the vendors and crafters, you could not have that many other people attend. The area must be completely opened. He said that he wants to give his committee the chance at their meeting tomorrow night to decide whether to plan for August 29th or maybe the committee will decide to wait until next year.

Dr. Guilbault noted that Harrisburg held a virtual art show and suggested a virtual Block Party of some kind. This could help vendors who have not had an opportunity to sell

their wares. Mayor Berard stated that this is not just to help vendors. He asked how the town can become alive and be relevant. The road construction has lasted for three years, parking is difficult. Mayor Berard noted that he doesn't want to make an official announcement that the Block Party cannot happen on July 3rd because he respects his committee and wants them to make that decision and to determine if the alternate date or a different alternate date would be recommended by the committee.

Mrs. Rees requested that Rick Dandes, of the Daily Item, report that the council had never voted to hold the Block Party if the state is not opened.

Roll call vote to cancel the Block Party failed by a vote of 2-4.

Northumberland Borough Sewer Department

Mr. Ruane requested a motion to hire an accountant to conduct an audit of the sewer department to counter the auditor that Point Township Sewer Authority hired if the case goes to court. Mr. Wetzel made a motion to hire the accountant recommended by Attorney Page to conduct the audit of the sewer department. Mrs. Rees seconded the motion. Council approved unanimously.

Mr. Ruane explained that the "wet test" is a test where the sewer plant sends seven gallons of discharge water to Tennessee to be tested as required by the state annually. They put mosquito larva and fish in the water. If the fish die, the test fails. The fish did not die so the Borough passed the test.

Committee Reports

Community Development

Mrs. Simmons reported that the pavilion roof has been completed.

The committee discussed the possibility of the street department moving to the recycling building since the recycling group is disbanding. By moving to the recycling building, an expansion at the garage will not be necessary. The office has contacted DEP to learn what can be done with the recycling equipment that was purchased with grants. The DEP employees are working from home and do not have the information available.

Mr. Wetzel asked about putting bins that people can drop off their recyclables. This had been done years ago and people were putting garbage in with their recyclables. The Borough Manager will contact other municipalities to learn what they are doing.

Finance

Mrs. Rees stated that the committee has reviewed the budget. They discussed how the finances may be impacted by the corona virus. It was noted that real estate taxes have been coming in regularly. The earned income tax may decrease since people have been laid off. The Borough has had the cleaning service come to clean every week instead of every other week so that expense is more than

budgeted. No employees have been laid off during this time. The Borough may be able to recoup funds from the stimulus funding that is proposed.

Personnel

Mr. Wetzel noted that the street supervisor has been interviewing applicants for the street department vacancy. Mr. Ruane added that council will discuss personnel issues in the Executive Session.

Public Safety

Mrs. Rees reported that she attended an Emergency Services Board meeting. The group has requested that the Borough waive the sewer bills for the fire companies. Mr. Ruane responded that the sewer committee will look into the costs of their sewer bills. He said that they will have to pay their water bills. The Borough pays for the fire hydrants.

Mrs. Rees stated that it has come to her attention that FEMA recommends that council take the NIMS (National Incident Management System) training. It is strongly recommended that council members take two courses. Mrs. Rees stated that she will forward the information to council.

Rules

Dr. Guilbault reported that the donation link for the TNR program has been established.

The committee discussed a resolution prohibiting vaping on Borough playgrounds.

The committee discussed live streaming council meetings. Mrs. Rees made a motion to rescind the decision to temporarily stop live streaming. Dr. Guilbault seconded the motion. Council approved unanimously.

Mr. Wetzel requested that the solicitor develop a lease agreement to store campers either at Pineknott Park or the pool area. He added that most places in the area charge \$20-\$25 per space per month. The owner must provide proof of insurance and release the Borough of all liabilities if something should happen while in storage.

Streets

Mr. Ruane stated that he has met with the Borough's municipal representative from PennDOT to discuss the streets to pave this year. The Borough has applied for a grant to pave a portion of Queen Street, but the state has not yet announced what projects are to be funded. In case the funding doesn't come through this year, alternative streets to be paved are Prince Street from 6th to 7th Street, Front Street from Duke Street to Front Street Station, Riverview Drive which will be overlaid and curb repair, Wheatley Avenue from Route 11 to Depot Avenue,

including possible repair to a drain line, and a section of Orange Street between Third and Fourth Streets where water lies.

Mr. Wetzel asked when we may hear about the grant. He was informed that last year, the announcement was in February. However, this year's funding has not been announced. The applicants and their projects are listed online as well as the projects that were funded the last couple years.

Old Business

1. Mr. Ruane announced that the council has the list of the results of the bids for the items listed on Municibid. He noted that the price for the salt spreader is lower than its value and recommended not selling the salt spreader. It can be rebid. Mr. Wetzel moved to accept the bids on Municibid for all items except the salt spreader. Mrs. Simmons seconded the motion. Council approved unanimously. The payments will go into the General Fund.


New Business

1. Mrs. Boyer moved to approve payment of the bills. Mrs. Simmons seconded the motion. Council approved unanimously. Bills to be paid from the General Fund total \$46,702.94; 2nd Street Community & Municipal Center bills total \$3,300; Liberty Splashland bills total \$33.86; and Sewer Department bills total \$96,898.73.
2. Mrs. Rees made a motion to approve the handicap parking request from Debra Roberts at 282 Queen Street. Dr. Guilbault seconded the motion. Council approved unanimously.

Executive Session

Mr. Ruane announced that the meeting would be adjourned for an Executive Session to discuss personnel and litigation issues and that the meeting would not be reconvened. The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Janice R. Bowman
Borough Manager