

Borough of Northumberland

Council Minutes for February 6, 2024

Council President Paul Ruane called the Special Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and Mr. Ortiz offered an Invocation.

Roll Call

Council members present were Mr. Paul Ruane, Dr. Denise Guilbault, Mr. Elijah Scretching, Mr. Timothy Botts, Mr. Frank Wetzel, Mr. Winston Ortiz and Mr. Charles Stroup. Others present were Mayor Daniel Berard; Melissa Kelso, Solicitor; Mr. David Johnston, Streets Supervisor, Mr. C.L. Kriner, Police Chief; and Ms. Ann Zartman, Borough Manager.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

An audience member requested information on agenda item Proposal for Front Street to be one way, which was marked tabled until receive PennDOT report. Ms. Zartman replied that a request was made to be on the agenda regarding the matter. As the council cannot make a decision until PennDOT approves or denies it, Ms. Zartman requested Chief Kriner to contact PennDOT with the request. Therefore, until we hear from PennDOT the matter is tabled.

Mr. Harry Lewis, resident, presented information on the National Historic Register. In 1988, Council member Margaret Weirick obtained the registration of the Northumberland Historic District through the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), which filed the application and registration on the National Park Service National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Lewis explained the benefits of having a Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB). Mr. Lewis requested the council consider creating a HARB, inform the public about tax credits and consider grants to assist the HARB. Dr. Guilbault stated that she has already spoken to a representative of PHMC.

Ms. Angela Troutman, VP of Susquehanna Riverboat Society. She requested the lease agreement be approved, and would like approval to have Boy Scouts do a clean up of the area. She also requested Community Development review the plan. Everyone is invited to the Unveiling of the Blueprint for the Riverboat on February 18th at the Front Street Station from 1 pm to 4 pm; and invited council members to be in a photograph session afterwards of hammering the Future Site sign at Pineknott Park.

Mayor's Report

President Ruane read the report on the activity of the Police Department for the month of January. The police issued 15 traffic and 1 non-traffic citations, and 184 parking tickets. They responded to 216 calls for service, made 10 court appearances and trained for 40.5 hours. Several people were arrested for the misdemeanor and felony crimes of Aggravated Assault, Terroristic Threats, Simple Assault, Recklessly Endangering another Person, and DUI. The police responded to 29 assist calls for the month; 6 to Point Township, 16 to Sunbury, was primary on 1 to Sunbury, and 6 to other agencies. Milage for the month was 1,395.

Sewer Department Report

Two employees are attending one day a week training to prepare to take the Operator's exam in March. Kenyon will be restarting the pipeline project. They will be responsible for notifying the residents. One employee has also been assisting the Streets department and everyone is pleased with how that is working out.

Street Department Report

Mr. Johnston reported that debris from the latest storms are in the process of being cleaned up. The Fire Department will be doing a controlled burn on the debris. They will also be assisting in the renovations of the new door and window. Ms. Zartman mentioned that the borough office will be closed on Friday the 9th due to the renovations. The office should be up and running again on Monday.

NEIC Report

Ms. Jackie Hart of NEIC reported 6 building permits were issued, and \$14,491.83 in building permit fees collected. 41 citations were issued, and 3 complaints were lodged and reviewed, 1 street cut permit was issued, resulting in \$350 in fees collected, 5 rental units were inspected, and \$900 inspection fees collected. With the new program, they have validated there are 558 rental units within the borough. Out of those rental units, 217 did not need inspections as they are on a 3-year cycle, and from May until December 2023, 221 rental units were inspected. Mr. Wetzel questioned homes that have burnt, and the required time frame for repairs. Ms. Hart is not familiar yet with our ordinance, but will look into it. They are trying to reach the owner of the Duke St property. Ms. Hart asked about insurance escrow. Mr. Ruane replied out insurance escrow on fire damaged properties is 10% of the insurance cost value. Ms. Zartman replied we have \$7,000 in funds in escrow. Ms. Hart will follow up. Ms. Weirick questioned the current status of the condemned property on Sheetz Ave and Third St. Ms. Hart responded that there is an open permit on that property that was just issued. Ms. Weirick also questioned the status of Adam Klock's property. Ms. Hart replied that he has 8 days to move back into the main house, and then he may apply for a subdivision if he chooses.

Committee Reports

Community Development

Mr. Scretching made a motion to advertise the new Santa House for sale. Dr. Guilbault seconded. All approved, motion carried. The Santa House will be listed on Municibid.

Finance

No report.

Personnel

No report.

Public Safety

The committee met with Mr. Bernie Rumberger of A.R.E.A Services. He is in the process of selling to Geisinger Medical Center. Mr. Rumberger has some things he needs to complete in Shamokin before the sale can proceed. We are looking at entering into a short-term lease with A.R.E.A. services. Geisinger will not absorb his lease agreement with us. In the meantime, we have not met with Geisinger yet. Since the borough is in the position to consider other services. Mr. Wetzel would like to send out a request for proposals to Evangelical Community Hospital and Geisinger. The proposal would include perks for the volunteer fire department. The Fire Departments Quick Response Unit, usually EMTs, often arrive before the ambulance. They start patient care, and use equipment that is expense to replace. We would request the hospital replace that equipment, and they include our volunteers in the continuing education classes offered to their employees. Mr. Wetzel made a motion to send a letter asking for proposals from Geisinger and Evangelical, with a suggestions of what we are looking for, and to arrange a meeting with Public Safety. Mr. Ortiz seconded, all approved, motion carried. An audience member questioned the status of membership cards for 2024. Geisinger has indicated to Mr.

Rumberger that they will honor the membership cards. Mr. Wetzel feels Evangelical will as well, and it will be in the request for proposals.

Rules

No report.

Streets

Mr. Ruane mentioned they will be attending the COG meeting next Wednesday. Mr. Otiz brought up two concerns from residents. The first is regarding parking too close to the driveway, which is unsafe for the person pulling out. Mr. Ortiz would like to know when the person called the borough nothing happened. Chief Kriner replied that there is nothing in the law they can do about it, no violation occurred. Mr. Ortiz wants no accidents in our borough from that.

An audience member commented that she was almost hit by a truck coming up Queen street because the view was blocked by another truck. She pulled up state laws on the internet even Pennsylvania and saw that there is a law regarding parking 5' from a driveway to not get a violation. But when she called the borough, they said there is no law. Dr. Guilbault will put it on the Rules agenda.

Mr. Ortiz would like the street cleaning schedule posted on the internet. Mr. Ruane indicated that the sweeper will not run until there is not a possibility of freezing due to the water used during the process.

An audience member mentioned the ADA curb at 7th & Queen has been broken by a truck. Kids pick up a large chunk that broke off and put it out into the middle of the street so people hit it. She has brought it back numerous times. Mr. Ruane mentioned that Queen St will be resurfaced with the stormwater project. Ms. Zartman mentioned a possible reworking of Queen street by American Water. Ms. Zartman also requested Mr. Johnston concrete the chunk back in place.

An audience member commented that she has a two-car garage, but her company cannot park in front of her garage because the cars stick out into the sidewalk, and that in the past she received a letter citing that she will get a citation if that occurs. She stated the sidewalk is not totally blocked, and people can walk around the cars and still be on her driveway. Chief Kriner mentioned they received calls every year about that type of situation.

An audience member questioned when Susquehanna Road will be re-paved, the potholes are large and numerous. Mr. Ruane mentioned there are limited funds. The plan is to re-pave Susquehanna but it is still unknown how far that will extend.

New Business

Mr. Stroup mentioned that 17857.org has started up the Beautification Awards again. If you see any place that should be awarded, please let them know. At the next meeting, plastic easter eggs are being stuffed for the Easter Egg hunt. They meet at the Little House once a month on the first Thursday at 6 p.m.

Payment of Bills

Mr. Wetzel made a motion for the payment of bills; Mr. Sretching seconded. All approved, motion passed. Bills to be paid from the General Fund totaled \$105,678.26; and Sewer Department bills totaled \$119,229.03.

Adjournment

Mr. Wetzel moved to adjourn; Mr. Stroup seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ann Zartman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ann" and last name "Zartman" clearly distinguishable.

Ann Zartman

Borough Secretary