

## **Borough Council Regular Meeting January 12, 2021**

The regular meeting of Windber Borough Council was called to order by Windber Borough Council President, Michael Bryan at 7:00 p.m. via video conferencing.

Pledge of Allegiance.

The following Council Members were present via video conferencing: Mike Bryan, John Holden, Dr. Doug Ledney, Ron Mash, Joe Pallo, and Jim Spinos. Pino Gallina was absent. James Furmanchik, Borough Manager, Mayor, Mike Thomas, and Attorney Joe Green were present through video conferencing.

**Approval Minutes** A motion was made by Mr. Holden and seconded by Mr. Bryan to approve the Minutes of December 8, 2020. Mr. Gallina was absent. Motion carried.

**Recognition Visitors** David Hurst, reporter from the Tribune Democrat was present through video conferencing.

### **Correspondence**

1. Windber Municipal Authority Minutes of November 16, 2020 Meeting.

**Approval Payroll** A motion was made by Mr. Pallo and seconded by Dr. Ledney to approve payroll for December 4, 18, and 31, 2020. One absent, Mr. Gallina. Motion carried.

**Approval Bills** A motion was made by Mr. Pallo and seconded by Mr. Holden to approve bills for December 2020. One absent, Mr. Gallina. Motion carried.

**Cash Bal., Treasurer Report** There were no questions at this time.

**Council Liaison Reports** There were no reports at this time.

**Mayor's Report** There were no reports at this time.

**Manager's Report** **USDA Grant for Police Vehicle** – The 2021 Dodge Charger was ordered on December 21<sup>st</sup> and is expected to be delivered at the end of March. Eli Bradich, from USDA, tells me he is still extremely optimistic about our possibilities for funding. Fortunately, we have budgeted the money to subsidize the purchase if the grant funds do not come our way.

**Christmas for Kids-** The annual event went off, as planned, on December 16<sup>th</sup>. Kudos to Carol Berkey and Robin for making this all happen.

**Officer Jason Knipple** – The executive board of the Teamsters determined, at their December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, that they will not represent former officer Knipple in any proceedings involving Windber Borough.

**Officer Greg Hall** – As you may remember, a letter stating the serious deficiency in form and content from Hall’s doctors, for return to work, was presented to Greg Hall in November. He refused to accept the letter and stated that he was going to seek legal counsel. Immediately afterward a copy of the same letter was sent by certified mail, and to this point in time, three unsuccessful attempts have been made for delivery. There has been no rebuttal, from legal counsel, in Hall’s behalf. Chief Frear will make sure Hall’s gear, which is Borough property, will be recovered, in the near future.

**1809 /1811 Graham Avenue** – As stated in a mailing to Joan Albright on December 10<sup>th</sup>, demolition will be started on December 31<sup>st</sup>. The project started, as scheduled and cleanup is nearing completion.

**CDBG Cares Act** – The County Commissioners have announced the Somerset County Municipal Police Department Grant, as part of the Cares Act. This grant will enable our municipality to recover a portion of the payroll expenses, up to \$25,000, incurred by our police department from March 1, 2020 to December 14, 2020. The Commissioners held a teleconference meeting on December 14<sup>th</sup>, with Robin, Anson, and I in attendance. Robin provided the needed documentation to the Commissioner’s Office and we received a check for \$25,000 on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

**22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Bridge Projects** – The projects are moving along with monies being exchanged between PennDOT and Windber Borough to cover engineering costs. Notice to proceed with design has been issued by PennDOT. Other preliminary project tasks are now in progress.

**Public Works** – On December 15<sup>th</sup>, all public works employees received a directive containing current policies, with regards to daily operations, during the COVID pandemic. A copy was also posted in their reporting headquarters. This will serve in assisting all public works employees and residents to stay safe and healthy, amid the pandemic.

**COVID Vaccine** - I have approached Windber Medical Center administration regarding vaccination for public works and our office staff. CEO Tom Kurtz claims he will bring them in with service employees (utility workers, etc.) when they are notified by the Board of Health, who oversees vaccine injections.

**Community Building Sign** – The poles that the existing sign is mounted on, have been approved by a structural engineer, for mounting the new sign. The new sign was installed on December 29<sup>th</sup> and is operational.

**PennDOT Notice** – I have been informed that they will be setting traffic counters in our municipality between January 2021 an April 2021, to collect traffic data on municipal owned roads within Somerset County. The purpose is to gather data for potential safety issues.

**COVID Cases** – To this date there have been 5 police officers stricken with the virus. Three of our public works employees have also been affected. Those three were all off over Christmas week and twice we had to go to our “back up list” for winter road maintenance coverage.

**RACP Grant** – Mr. Furmanchik said we are always looking for ways to make things happen and facilitate funding. Months ago, the Windber Area Economic Development Committee filed application for a grant through the Community Foundation of the Alleghenies and we were awarded \$10,000. The money was spent to do the feasibility study on the ballroom and have the Recreation Park property appraised.

Mr. Furmanchik said what he has been dealing with the past couple of days is the fact that we have been awarded a one-million-dollar grant for total restoration of the ballroom at the Windber Recreation Park. When the meeting is over, he will forward the exact email he received to council awarding the grant to Windber Borough.

The first step is to send them a letter of acceptance. If council is okay to proceed in this fashion, he will send that letter off to RACP.

They are not just going to send us a check for a million dollars, there is a lot of work that must be done. Part of it includes preparing a business plan/application. His understanding after speaking to Steve Spochart from the Somerset County Redevelopment Authority who has had dealings with two RACP grants they brought in a consultant.

Mr. Furmanchik said there will probably be a lot of extra work for our bookkeeper, Robin during this process. Monies will have to be paid and reimbursed. He has spoken to our friend Josh Miller a Vice President of Somerset Trust Company and there is a distinct possibility that they would head the table for a bridge loan. RACP, Steve Spochart, Travis Hutzell who wrote the grant and Josh Miller said yes, the money is there it is on the table.

It all comes around to our business plan and realistically we need a point man well versed in this type of grant to take the lead. We might entertain a lot of discussion over the next few weeks because the business plan must be submitted in the next six months. That takes you to the end of June to submit the business plan.

Mr. Furmanchik said this sets a big strong foundation for many opportunities for the community in the future. People want to invest with a community that is successful.

Mr. Bryan said congratulations this is great news. In listening to what you are saying we have a couple days to accept this and six months to provide a working plan with figures and numbers and getting experts involved in this, so it is done correctly. Mr. Furmanchik said yes. Mr. Bryan said his first response would be to form a committee and find out who these experts would be. A few of us sitting here should be involved in this committee and then we will need a person with the expertise to guide us through it.

Mr. Bryan asked what the projections from the feasibility study was to make it a year around facility. Mr. Furmanchik said he has not looked at that for a couple months but if he

remembers correctly it was just a little over \$800,000. He said additionally you would also need to look at lighting outside and putting in a parking area.

Mr. Spinosa asked if we can use the money left from the feasibility grant towards this? Mr. Furmanchik said yes, we have \$1,860 left to spend from the grant. Mr. Pallo said it would be a blunder of a generation if we squandered this opportunity. This will set up Windber for the next 100 years. Mr. Furmanchik said people are drawn to new venues like this.

Mr. Spinosa asked if Mr. Furmanchik spoke to anyone at the municipal authority yet? Mr. Furmanchik said no but he will, he wanted to tell council first. From the day the Economic Development Committee came into existence a hotel and the refurbishment of the ballroom were the top two items on the list.

Mr. Bryan asked council what their thoughts were on forming a committee? We would need three councilmen. Attorney Green said he read the email today and there is a lot of work to be done in a short period of time. His opinion is if you do not form some sort of committee to meet at least once a week the work will not get done.

Mr. Holden said he would be happy to serve on a committee. Attorney Green said it is a business plan geared to economic opportunities for residents of Windber and employment. It is a big plan. Mr. Holden said it would all tie in together. If someone finds out were going to spend a million dollars on the park a developer will raise his eyes on the possibility of development of a hotel.

Mr. Furmanchik read the email and award letter to council. Mr. Holden noted it says as one of the selected recipients of the limited amount of RACP funding available the organization now has the significant responsibility of assuring these funds are used for economic development in a timely manner. Therefore, it would be the policy of this administration to require that all recipients of all RACP funding must submit their application six months from the date of this letter. Mr. Holden asked if that was the business plan? Mr. Furmanchik said yes.

Mr. Bryan said it will be a lot of work but will be worth it. Mr. Holden said we need someone with a lot of experience developing a business plan. Project management also, Mr. Bryan said it will cost money to get this money.

Mr. Pallo asked if there would be an official announcement of some sort. Mr. Furmanchik said yes and Dave Hurst from the Tribune is on and the recording of this meeting is on our website.

Mr. Furmanchik asked council if they want to proceed with the grant? Mr. Bryan said he is in. Dr. Ledney said it is a great opportunity for economic development and the letter is a normal part of accepting a grant in order to proceed. He asked if the business proposal would have to be written from scratch or is there a form online where you must fill in a response to questions and so forth? Mr. Furmanchik said in the body of the email from Holly from RACP once you send the letter and it is accepted you receive your business plan handbook. Josh Miller and Travis Hutzell have both said we have the biggest part of it done because we did the feasibility study.

Mr. Spinos asked if Josh Miller knows of anyone capable of writing the business plan? Mr. Furmanchik said he has already spoken to him about that and we are trying to work through that. This is basically day one of its existence. They did agree talking to our engineer is a great place to start.

Mr. Furmanchik said Steve Spochart has been exceptionally gracious with us and he said yes that money is basically yours if you have that plan presented correctly and he would do what he could to help us.

Mr. Spinos asked if we know any big business people that we can contact and ask them who helped them with their business plan. Every company that has a business must have a business plan. Mr. Furmanchik said the big bump in the road is finding someone familiar with the RACP. Mr. Spinos asked if we know anyone who basically writes business plans. Mr. Bryan said St. Francis has for small businesses and he would think they might have some thoughts of people that would do that type of work.

Mr. Bloom said St. Francis has helped the fire department with a bunch of small business items and when he wrote the business plan for the training institute, they were instrumental in that also. They may not be your finish, but they could get the ball started. Mr. Bryan agreed that we need to find the quarterback or the person to lead the project. He said starting with a committee will help to get that off the ground.

Council mentioned a few names of businesspeople to check with as far as obtaining the right contact for the RACP Grant. Mr. Pallo said the business plan handbook is online. He will download it and email it to council.

Mr. Bryan asked if everyone agreed to move forward? Mr. Holden said he would be happy to join in and help on the committee. Mr. Bryan said he would also. This committee would meet at least every other week. Mr. Spinos said he would also. Mr. Pallo said he would love to but with his degree he does not believe he could commit the time needed but he would jump the sideline if they needed assistance. Dr. Ledney said he would be happy to help with whatever. Mr. Spinos said we need an experienced business planner.

A motion was made by Mr. Spinos and seconded by Mr. Holden to proceed with the letter of acceptance for the RACP million-dollar grant for the refurbishment of the ballroom and to proceed with the business proposal. Roll call vote: Mr. Spinos, yes; Mr. Holden, yes; Mr. Bryan, yes; Mr. Gallina, absent; Dr. Ledney, yes; Mr. Mash, yes; and Mr. Pallo, yes. Motion carried.

Mr. Spinos said if Dr. Ledney or Mr. Pallo wants to be involved more than he does, they are more than welcome to. Mr. Bryan said he appreciates that and will be talking to those interested individually afterward.

**Solicitor's  
Report**

Attorney Joe Green said he needs a firm number from Robin as to what we spent to tear down 1809/1811 Graham Avenue. He would like to file a municipal claim by the end of the month. Mrs. Gates said that number would be \$7,200.

## Codes Officer Report:

- COVID continues to impact the region, the directives will remain in effect until further notice. Facilities, Vehicles and Equipment will continue with weekly DECON. Facilities will remain on a modified lock down.
- The Emergency Plan regarding the continuation of municipal services was put into effect. Three of the Four Public Works employees were off work due to COVID-19. The Continuity of Operations Plan was implemented with great success, borough services never stopped. Roger Price, Nick D'Ambrosia, and I assured that happened.
- I will continue to rotate vehicle usage, when COVID calls are high it gets difficult cleaning and running two vehicles through DECON. I can assure you that multiple jobs are being fulfilled regardless of what vehicle I am in.
- 1809/1811 (Albright) - Has finally been demolished. The next phase will be to address the additional buildings on the property and their current condition.
- Legal proceedings will begin against the Mansion. I am seeking for immediate demolition of the structure.
- The new codes report will be online, a simplified format is being used and will be helpful for tracking reports. Also, a new complaint form is available for the residents, they must complete the form before any action can be taken.

**Approval  
Eisenhuth** A motion was made by Mr. Spinos and seconded by Mr. Holden to approve Gary Eisenhuth as a part-time officer for Windber Borough Police Department. Roll call vote: Mr. Spinos, yes; Mr. Holden, yes; Mr. Bryan, yes; Mr. Gallina, absent, Dr. Ledney, yes; Mr. Mash, no; and Mr. Pallo, yes. Motion carried.

**Resignation  
Kyle Wirick** A motion was made by Mr. Spinos and seconded by Mr. Pallo to accept the resignation of Kyle Wirick from the Windber Borough Police Department. One absent, Mr. Gallina. Motion carried.

**Resignation  
Joseph  
Stopko** A motion was made by Mr. Spinos and seconded by Mr. Holden to accept the resignation of Joseph Stopko as a part-time officer from the Windber Borough Police Department. One absent, Mr. Gallina. Motion carried.

**Approval  
Woodruff** A motion was made by Mr. Spinos and seconded by Mr. Pallo to approve Christopher Woodruff as a part-time officer for the Windber Borough Police Department. Roll call vote: Mr. Spinos, yes; Mr. Pallo, yes; Mr. Bryan, yes; Mr. Gallina, absent; Mr. Holden, yes; Dr. Ledney, yes; and Mr. Mash, yes. Motion carried.

**Next  
Meeting** Next meeting date will be February 9, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

**Adjourn** Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m. by Council President, Mike Bryan.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Robin S. Gates  
Administrative Assistant