

Borough of Windber Council Meeting
Minutes of June 12, 2023
7 p.m.

The regular meeting of Windber Borough Council was called to order by Council President John Holden at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance.

The following council members were present: John Holden, Pete LaMonaca, Dr. Doug Ledney, Mark Portante, and Rich Rummel. Joe Pallo and Ron Mash were absent. Ron Allison, Borough Manager, and Mayor, Mike Thomas, were present. Attorney Joseph Green was absent.

**Approval
Minutes**

A motion was made by Dr. Ledney and seconded by Mr. LaMonaca to approve the Minutes of May 8, 2023, meeting. Two absent, Mr. Pallo and Mr. Mash motion carried.

Visitors

Todd Koehler inquired about the color to be painted of the ballroom. Mr. Holden said he and Ron Allison went to Sherwin Williams last week and they looked at a semi-transparent stain. Ron said it is like amber cedar. Mr. Holden said it is as close to the current color as you can get.

Mr. Koehler said with all his years of experience with that stuff it will still get darker over the years. Manager Allison asked if it would get darker even if treated every five years? Mr. Koehler said it will naturally get dark. Manager Allison said after seeing the picture that Mr. Koehler showed them, which was absolutely gorgeous, but when he looked at the cost effectiveness, we could not take that path.

Mr. Koehler said if you drive out through Paint Township there are several barns with the Hemlock siding on it that never had anything put on it and some as long as 30 years. When the air gets to it, it will get harder and harder as it ages. Even if it is untreated, it will last any of our lifetimes. It can not set on the ground or lay on the ground. When it is vertical like that the water will run off it and it will naturally become gray or silver.

Mr. Koehler suggests treating it with the Sikkens. He said the person he knew said he could not do the work because there is too much involved there in masking etc.

**Todd
Koehler**

Manager Allison said he and Mr. Holden went up and got a price for the materials. We do have a work crew coming in July to physically do the work. They will be coming from the prison and they can give us a week to do this project.

Manager Allison asked Mr. Koehler if we would go the route with the Sikkens, is a week long enough to treat that. Mr. Koehler said yes, it goes on easy and all soaks in. Mr. Holden thanked Mr. Koehler for his advice and help.

**Amy
Rummel**

Amy Rummel asked if there was any further information regarding a zoning hearing board meeting regarding the Dollar General store? Anson Bloom said Dollar General's legal team

has it right now. They have all the packets ready, and all of the requirements met, and they are finalizing their review and their statement and when they provide that to us, we will schedule a meeting.

Mrs. Rummel asked, so a hearing will be scheduled and we will know effective immediately? Mr. Bloom said when the documents come in the meeting will be scheduled. Mrs. Rummel asked when the people that live in that area get a letter.

Mr. Bloom said as soon as the zoning hearing board agrees to a date the property will be posted, a letter will go out with that date, it will be advertised twice seven days and fourteen days prior. Mrs. Rummel asked if they would get a letter in the mail. Mr. Bloom said all properties that border that property will get a registered letter in the mail and the property will be posted.

Mrs. Rummel asked if Mr. Bloom was saying 1300 or 1100 blocks? Mr. Bloom said that one block range that borders that property according to the law. For everyone else the property will be posted for all others to see. It will also be on the borough's website and advertised in the Tribune twice.

Correspondence

1. Minutes from the Windber Area Authority's Meeting of April 12, 2023.
2. Minutes of the Municipal Authority's Meeting of April 18, 2023.
3. Minutes of the Windber Area Public Library's Meeting of May 17, 2023.
4. Invitation from East Hills Ambulance Inc. to Attend a Mixer and Tour their New Facility and Meet their Team.

Approval Payroll A motion was made by Mr. LaMonaca and seconded by Dr. Ledney to approve payroll for May 19, and June 2, 2023. Two absent, Mr. Mash and Mr. Pallo, motion carried.

Approval Bills A motion was made by Mr. LaMonaca and seconded by Dr. Ledney to approve the bills for May 2023. Two absent, Mr. Mash and Mr. Pallo, motion carried.

Manager's Report Manager Allison provided council with a letter they received from the EADs Group, May 11, 2023. We were recently required to perform a problem inspection with emphasis on the sidewalk at Windber Borough Bridge No. 2, which carries 22nd Street over Seese Run. We were informed that several holes were present in the concrete sidewalk. This creates a serious safety hazard to pedestrians using the sidewalk area. The borough made repairs to the bridge deck and blocked it off as requested.

Manager Allison said we are going to be faced with either securing the sidewalk area so that it can not be driven on by other vehicles which there would be a design fee with it and then the actual placement of materials to keep traffic from entering onto the sidewalk. Manager Allison said we now own the 200 22nd Street property, which kind of opens things up for us a little bit.

Mr. Ferrante from EADS said the first letter sent out was a priority 0 which meant it had to be addressed within seven days and that was done. The priority 1 means the bridge situation still needs to be addressed within six months. A bridge inspector needs to present some sort of

solution to PennDot as far as what the borough plans to do to address the deteriorated bridge condition that is there now.

Mr. Ferrante said he spoke to the inspector and the project manager of the 22nd and 24th Street Bridge projects. We are at the point now where we need to put some leg work into presenting something for a temporary fix prior to the years 2025/2026 bridge projects. He suggested we set up a meeting between himself and the guy inspecting the bridges, Manager Allison and PennDot, that way we can find one solution without going down the path and then be told it is wrong. We will get their opinion and that way Manager Allison will have options.

Manager Allison said his goal is to prevent spending money that will be for nothing at the end of two years. Mr. Holden agreed let's do what must be done now to make it acceptable and we do not want to jeopardize our funding with PennDot. Mr. Holden said maybe we can even accelerate the 22nd Street project first and get done what needs to be done and go to the 24th Street Bridge next. We want everything in writing.

Manager Allison said we do have alternate access now if need be. Mr. Ferrante said he just wanted the council to be aware of the condition of the 22nd Street Bridge.

Ballroom- The sidewalk has been completed and landscaping is a work in progress. I met with a landscaper for an estimate on detail work. We will get soil from either the levee project or we may have to get a load of soil to finish the project.

I met with Matt Grohal and advised him of the area we will be maintaining and using for the ballroom venue. I am working on getting the dumpster moved to a permanent location. Once that happens, it will be properly screened and secured.

There is damage to a gutter at the rear of the Ballroom we are getting estimates for repair. In July the prisoners will be on site and supervised for the painting of the Ballroom. I am working on getting the materials lined up for this project.

We could save about \$15,000 using the prisoners to stain the ballroom which will leave us the extra money to use towards landscaping.

Stadium Drive/Bridge Projects: The Sales Agreement has been completed by Solicitor Green for the closing of 200 22nd Street. An appointment is being coordinated for the signing. The owner will have all personal articles removed by July 2, 2023

BELLAS- Meeting Tuesday June 6, 2023, with Barclay Electric and Barry Jerley to schedule the work and complete the separation of electrical services.

Pickleball Court- The area where the tree was removed has been patched. I did attempt to speak to Laurel Asphalt about the issues with the cracking in person. I left contact information for them to get a hold of me with no response.

12th St. Water issue- We will be meeting with the water authority to locate the source of the water and to see what needs fixed and by what entity. There may be a water leak or there may also be groundwater.

**Cash Bal./
Treasurer
Report**

Mrs. Gates said our audit date has not been set yet by the office of the budget for our RCAP Grant monies. We are now coming upon the maturing date for our loan with Somerset Trust Company in the amount of one million dollars. We have an amount of \$23,286.73 left, to pay off that loan. We will not receive the final funds from the RCAP Grant until after the audit has been completed because they hold a percentage until the audit is done.

Mrs. Gates said we have two options: one would be pay off the loan amount of \$23,286.73 and then reimburse the general fund after the audit and the final money is released or we will have to contact Somerset Trust and request another extension. If we get the extension, we continue to pay interest. If we pay it off were done but we will begin making the monthly payments.

Mrs. Gates said she realizes that we can not formally approve a decision tonight, but we must act before the end of the month. If you tell me what direction you want to go, I can move in that direction, and we will ratify approval at the July meeting.

Mrs. Gates said another issue we have that is on the agenda is the transferring of the rest of our ARPA monies into the ballroom account. She said we took out two loans for this project. The first loan was for one million dollars which was reimbursed by the RCAP Grant as we went along. The second one is for \$730,000. This loan was to pay for any costs not considered construction costs such as engineer, architect, attorney fees, insurance, interest payments, and the finishing of the floor. There were no moneys for startup of a business for the ballroom. So, we started a business with no start up money and we had to furnish the ballroom and still have landscaping and staining left to do all the building. These are all the things that need to be done to lease the facility out for weddings and be competitive.

We need to move the ARPA money over to the ballroom to sustain it. We knew we would need to eventually do that, and it is allowed under the ARPA rules because it is for recreation.

Council directed Mrs. Gates to move in the direction of paying off the one-million-dollar loan with money from the general fund and they will ratify approval of this at the next meeting.

Mrs. Gates said we will be more prepared at the end of the year with a prepared budget for the ballroom because we now know what things are going to cost such as utilities and wages and what not and all the big things are going to be completed.

Mr. Holden told council we were invited to attend a zoom meeting with Go Laurel Highlands today. They market businesses, municipalities and events in Somerset, Cambria and Westmoreland Counties. Their marketing of events extends out to Pittsburgh and West Virginia. They have a proposal for a partnership with a minimal amount of money. We can apply for grant money through the county for tourism to pay that fee, Mrs. Gates said. Mr. Holden said we can market together groups within the borough such as WAVE, Windber Area School District, the Municipal Authority, and the borough.

Council Liaisons

Dr. Ledney/ WAA Dr. Ledney said the Windber Area Authority's meeting is Wednesday.

LaMonaca/ WMA Mr. LaMonaca said his meeting with the Windber Municipal Authority will be next Tuesday. Mr. Holden said he would like to attend that meeting to relay to them the possibility of working together with Go Laurel Highlands.

Library/ Holden Mr. Holden said he missed the last meeting, but the library is working on the new lighting installation.

Mayor's Report Sunday, May 21st, the Mayor joined the Windber Veterans Association by placing flags on the graves of deceased soldiers at the cemeteries in Windber. There was a good turnout, and the task was completed in about two hours.

On Memorial Day, Mayor Thomas joined in the parade, and delivered the welcome address at the Veteran's Memorial Ceremony held at Veterans Park on Jefferson Ave. He was impressed at the amount of people that attended the ceremony and luncheon at the Windber VFW.

On June 3rd Mayor Thomas attended the Grand Opening of the Miller Martial Arts studio at 10th & Graham. Mr. Miller has done a great job remodeling the former church and turning it into a studio for martial arts instruction. He suggested that if the council hasn't been there, to stop in and see the transformation of this building.

June 4, 5, 6, & 7 Mayor Thomas attended the PSAB Conference in Hershey. Once again there were many sessions dedicated to the more efficient operations of borough government. The final morning included a session in which all voting delegates reviewed and voted on the issues that the PSAB will lobby the State Legislature and Senate to bring to the floor and vote for. He presented a list of those priorities to the council for their review.

Solicitor's Report There was no report at this time.

Code's Report Codes Officer Bloom had nothing further to comment on at this time.

Ballroom Update Manager Allison said we have covered pretty much everything in the previous reports. Country night has been cancelled and will be rescheduled for Fall.

There were no questions on the Ballroom Coordinator Lauren Smalley's Report at this time.

The council convened to an executive session at 7:46 p.m. for personnel.

The council reconvened from an executive session at 8:15 p.m.

- Approval Ballroom Discount** A motion was made by Mr. LaMonaca and seconded by Mr. Rummel to approve a 10% discount for veteran's, nonprofits, Windber Borough residents, and employees for the lease of the Grand Ballroom. Mr. Portante abstained because he is a veteran. Mr. Mash and Mr. Pallo were absent, motion carried.
- Transfer ARPA Funds** A motion was made by Mr. Rummel and seconded by Mr. LaMonaca to transfer funds from Windber Borough's American Rescue Plan Account to the Windber Ballroom Fund in the amount of \$56,649.71. Roll call vote: Mr. Rummel, yes; Mr. LaMonaca, yes; Mr. Holden, yes; Dr. Ledney, yes; Mr. Mash, absent; Mr. Pallo, absent; and Mr. Portante, yes. Motion carried.
- Resignation Dowdell** A motion was made by Dr. Ledney and seconded by Mr. Portante to accept the resignation of Thomas Dowdell as a part-time officer of the Windber Borough Police Department. Two absent, Mr. Mash and Mr. Pallo, motion carried.
- Resignation Heming** A motion was made by Mr. LaMonaca and seconded by Mr. Portante to accept the resignation of John Heming as a part-time officer of the Windber Borough Police Department. Two absent, Mr. Mash and Mr. Pallo, motion carried.
- Hire PT Officer** This item has been tabled.
- For the Fallen Run** A motion was made by Dr. Ledney and seconded by Mr. LaMonaca to approve the "For the Fallen Run" event to take place August 4, 2023, through August 5, 2023. Two absent, Mr. Mash and Mr. Pallo, motion carried.
- Next Meeting** Next meeting date will be Monday, July 10, at 7:00 p.m.
- Adjourn** Meeting adjourned by Council President, John Holden at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Robin S. Gates
Administrative Assistant