

**Summit Hill Borough Council**  
**September 19, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Borough Hall**

The special meeting of the Summit Hill Borough for special purposes was held at the above date and time with Pro-Tem Michael Kokinda presiding.

**Roll Call** – Michael Alabovitz, Bill Chapman, Harry Miller and Michael Kokinda were in attendance. President Joseph Weber, Vice President John O’Gurek, Ken Boyd, Solicitor Joseph Matika and Mayor Paul McArdle were absent.

**Floor** –

1. Michael Kokinda stated that the meeting is being held to discuss some sewer back-up issues, he added the Mr. Jones from the Sewer Authority and Ron Tirpak the Borough’s engineer were here to help out with any questions the residents may have.
  - Joseph Bohovich, 44 E. Hazard Street, said he has lived in his home for 16 years and has never had a problem before. Joe said he has had a plumber there several times and there is nothing wrong with his line. Mr. Bohovich wants to know why after 16 years is he having problems now, he asked is it because of the work the did on Pine street.
  - Ron Tirpak, said that the work that was done on Pine Street has nothing to do with the problems that are on Hazard Street. Joe stated that he has 5 signatures of people on his block that are having the same problem with sewage backing up into their basements.
  - A resident from the 100 block of East White Street, said he has been having problems since September 30, 2010. He said that the Fire Company was out pumping basements that morning when Kossie came to look at the sewer line and once he chipped off all of the black top off of the top of the man hole cover all of the sewage got sucked right out of their basements. The resident stressed that he believes when the new pipe was put in on Pine Street is when all of their problems began. George Paton said he believes that there is a problem with the sewer lines being crossed.
  - Edith Szczecina, 146 E. White Street, said that she has been in her home for over 54 years and has never had a problem before and now every time it rains heavy there is a back-up in her basement. Mike Kokinda said that they looked into the sewer and they have tried to turn off one of the pumps to try and figure out how the system is getting over loaded with water and there were homes on Pine Street with back up, he stressed that there is just too much water in the system. Edith said there are a lot of vacancies on the block so how is the system being overloaded. Ron Tirpak said that there is just a high amount of ground water. He said that at the Amidon Street pump station it normally pumps approximately 40,000 gallons a day but on September 7<sup>th</sup> it pumped 749,600 gallons, he said that it almost 20 times the amount that is pumped though there on a daily basis. Ron said so between sewage and ground water the system is being over loaded that is where the problems came from on September 7<sup>th</sup>. Edith stated that, that isn’t a good enough answer because there was never a problem in 54 years, so she is sure that it has to deal with the construction on Pine Street. Edith added that within the past year she has had thousands of dollars worth of damage to her basement.
  - Ron Tirpak said that he believes that this is a borough wide problem, Edith said well then fix it.
  - Courtney Miller, 301 S. Pine Street, said that she had \$16,000 worth of damage because of the sewer back-up issue and her insurance will only cover \$5,000. Courtney said that since there is an \$11,000 loss she wants the Borough to claim their insurance so that the damage can be fixed properly. She said that she also has no where to go with all of the debris from her basement and she doesn’t believe that it is her responsibility to pay because it was a borough issue. Mrs. Miller said that it damaged her living area and she

can't continue to live like this, Courtney added that it is not a health living environment for her children to be in. Mike Kokinda said that he can't give her an answer with out the Solicitor present, she asked why he wasn't there and added that there should be another meeting with the Solicitor there because she wants answers. Mike explained that the problem can't be rectified today. Courtney said that she has people lined up to start the demolition on her home tomorrow and she wants the borough there to dispose of the trash. She added that she isn't the only one on her block with the problem either her neighbor got back-up as well. Shannon Vasiliou said she put out 40 bags of trash and that Tamaqua Transfer took it all. Courtney stressed that she has to protect her family and she doesn't have that much money to fix her home properly. Harry Miller stated that the Borough doesn't have the money either.

- A resident stated that while he was walking his dog on White Street he saw construction workers working and someone asked what type of pipe they are putting in and they said 7'' and the gentleman said that with that size if you get a hard steady rain you are going to have all of these people flooded, because its going to back up the sewage system. The resident said now look at what has been happening. Ron Tirpak said that there are no 7'' mains in town he has no idea where this came from . A brief discussion took place on piping.
- Mike Kokinda explained that this is a town wide problem, and where the new main was put in on Pine Street that runs to the Amidon Street pump house which takes the whole southern side of town and pumps it to the crested part of Pine Street in order to get to Coaldale. Mike explained that the line in front of the Borough could be leaking and sucking in ground water and when it gets down today it could be on Walter Street, Vernon Street or Chestnut Street it could be anywhere in town, he said that it isn't just happening in one place either its happening all over town. He then explained that when water gets into the system it gets to the pumping station on Amidon Street and then the system gets overwhelmed and they have to turn the pumps on to pump it up the hill, and if they don't turn the pumps on it goes down to the end of Pine Street and dumps it into a residents basement. Mike said that the only way to fix it 100% is to replace everything in town, which can cost anywhere from 3-10 million dollar, which the Borough doesn't have that kind of money. He said we are doing the best we can to rectify the problem.
- Michael Keip, said that if they took out an 8'' pipe and put in a 10'' pipe take out the 10'' and put the 8'' back in. Mike Kokinda said that if we do that we will run into the same problem. Mike said that no one wants the excuse that we got 14 inches of rain in 24 hour period, but it happened and in turn it over whelmed the pump and the system can't handle it. He repeated himself and said the only way to fix the problem is to replace the whole system. He said that he does sympathize with everyone who is having problems. Mike said that floor drains are illegal and they have been for many years so if you have one it must be plugged. Everyone discussed sewage.
- Courtney Miller asked if the pumps being turned off can affect her home as well, Courtney added that she doesn't have a floor drain in her basement that the sewage comes right out of her toilet.
- Ron Tirpak explained that on September 7<sup>th</sup> is the day in question and we could only run 1 pump and it was trying to move 700,000 gallons of water by itself, and this is where our problem came from. Ron stressed that if we want to solve problem the rate for sewer in town will drastically increase, because we aren't eligible for grants because our rates are not a reasonable level. He said we aren't going to solve the problem with the rates we are currently collecting. Mike Kokinda asked Ron with out doing any testing does he know where the worse off areas are. Mike said maybe we can do 2 blocks every 2 years if we raise the rates \$50.00 dollars a year, Mike said that they home owner will be responsible for the lateral but he asked if that would be feasible. Mike Alabovitz said

instead of raising the rates maybe we should charge a separate fee. Ron Tirpak briefly explained how we can run into a problem by doing it this way.

- Mike Alabovitz said that we haven't had problems for 100 years and we are having problems all around town. Mike also added that we need to figure out where our current problems are coming from and fix them.
- A resident from East Hazard Street, said they have a drain in their basement and it is open, but the last time they played with the sewer she had sewage come out of her toilet not her floor drain. She asked what she is supposed to do. Mike Kokinda said that there is a problem with the water over whelming the pump when we have hard, heavy rains. A lengthily discussion took place on the size of the line on Pine Street and installing a check valve. Mike Kokinda said that it's not going to be an over night fix, it may take a couple years but we are doing the best we can.

**Motion was made by Mike Alabovitz and second by Harry Miller to adjourn at 8:47 p.m. until the next regular scheduled meeting of the Summit Hill Borough on October 10, 2011.** The motion was opened to the floor for comment, none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Amber Shemansik  
Summit Hill Borough  
Assistant Secretary

Joseph Weber  
Summit Hill Borough  
Council President