

Summit Hill Borough Council
October 10, 2023, 7:00 p.m. Borough Hall

The regular scheduled meeting of the Summit Hill Borough Council was held at the above time and place with President Michael Kokinda presiding.

Roll Call – President Micael Kokinda, Gino DeGiosio, Karen Ruzicka, Alan Kruslicky, Joseph Weber, David Wargo and Solicitor Robert Frycklund were in attendance. Vice President William O’Gurek and Mayor Jeffrey Szczecina was absent.

Floor –

1. Joanie Morana, 104 East Ludlow Street, notified Council that after the Zoning Meeting with Dan Matika, she asked on Facebook if more people with concerns would attend the Council meetings and get involved. She stated that many people contacted her privately and said that they will not come to the meetings because they feel that issues have been ignored in the past, they have been shut down and yelled at. She is not saying this is the truth, but it is the perception of many residents.
2. Kathy Gieniec, President of the Recreation Commission, read a list of events that are coming up. She asked if it would be ok for the commission to stand in the gazebo and hand out candy on Trick-or-Treat night. They decided to set an age limit of 14 and older with Pickleball because some of the adults do not feel comfortable playing against a child. She mentioned that they would like to hold a kid’s Paint and Snack on December 15th and have the Jim Thorpe Trolley come up for Christmas on the Hill from 6-7 p.m. Residents will not have to pay to ride the trolley because the commission will be paying for it. Solicitor Frycklund explained that any items that need to be discussed or approved must be on the agenda before the meeting. They can approve amendments to the agenda and make a motion, but it is more for emergency items. He asked that she let the secretary know before a meeting what she would like to discuss so that it could be placed on the agenda before it is prepared, published, and posted.
3. Joseph Bohovich, 334 West White Street, stated that the borough paved sections of Carbon Avenue about 3-5 years ago but there is a 75-foot section that was never done near his garage. He had to put modified stone by his garage so that he does not scrape his vehicle when pulling in but was wondering if they would be able to address it anymore this year. If not, then next spring. Council will talk to the Street Department and have them take a look at it. He also asked if lines could ever be painted for parking. He has a neighbor’s driveway and another one on the other side. Realistically, you can park six vehicles in the spot if there were lines. Maybe they can consider parking permits for homeowners, like Jim Thorpe Borough does. Councilwoman Ruzicka said this is something she has brought up in the past and agrees that it would be good for the town. Chief Woodward stated that he urges residents to call the police if a vehicle has not moved in days. They are not aware when a vehicle has moved, or if at all.
4. Marlene Basiago, 20 West Walter Street, had questions about the streets. She mentioned that a few years back a project that was done on Hazard Street and was told that the streets were supposed to be paved after the project. She asked why they were never paved. President Kokinda stated that it was a Water Authority project, and he was not aware of anything that said the streets would be paved once it was completed. He did mention that it would be the responsibility of the engineer of the project to make sure the street what put back to its original condition. Ms. Basiago also asked about the repairs that are being done to residents homes to replace sewer and water lines. When she had it done at her father’s house, she had to put an additional \$500 down to for the cement and macadam, plus she had to give the borough \$700 to hold for one year. Why is it that every project that is being done on the streets there is a divot, and they are not being made to put the streets back to the way to its original condition. Who is the inspector that is supposed to be overseeing this and why is the secretary giving the money back if the street is not done properly. Ms. Steber explained that the borough is not responsible for the Water Authority’s projects. They are responsible for the water lines in the street, which the borough does not charge for Street Opening

permits. If a homeowner is replacing a sewer line, they are charged a street opening permit because they are responsible for the sewer line from the home out to the main. Ms. Basiago asked if the majority of the potholes were done by people who were having problems or by the Water Authority and why the street is not repaired. Ms. Steber said if it was a project done by the Water Authority, then that is a question to be asked to them. If it was a sewer repair, then the borough holds the money. She is the person who will call the engineer a year later to do the inspection. She will not refund the money unless the engineer says that it is ok to refund it. Ms. Basiago asked why the Street Committee is allowing people to dig holes, damage the borough streets and not making them put the street back to the way it was before it was dug. Councilman Kruslicky stated that they do have it inspected by the engineer. He cannot speak about what happened years prior because he was not on Council, but every permit that he signed off on was inspected and approved by the engineer. If it sinks five years after the project, that is a different story. If it sinks within the year timeframe, then the engineer will not approve it for the refund. President Kokinda said things do settle over time. Ms. Basiago said the next time she sees someone working on a street, she is going to take pictures and will check it again in 3 months. If the street is sinking, she will bring it to Council and see what will be done.

Minutes – Motion was made by Gino DeGiosio and seconded by David Wargo to approve the meeting minutes from the September 12, 2023 Council meeting. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Mayor's Report – Chief Woodward read the Mayor's report for the month.

1. Chief Woodward returned to work in a limited capacity on October 2nd. He will be doing Administrative Duties within the police department and catching up on some additional paperwork within the department.
2. The Civil Service Commission completed the Police selection process for the new full-time police officer. That recommendation will be made by Council tonight. If approved, he is anticipating a possible start date of Monday, October 16, 2023. In speaking with Chief Woodward, he is anticipating a 6–8-week Field Training program for the new officer. The Zoning and Code enforcement training for the position will be slightly longer.
3. On Wednesday, September 27th a Town Hall meeting was held with himself and the Interim Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer, Dan Matika. Approximately 20 residents attended the meeting to discuss zoning and Quality of Life issues. Approximately 14 properties/issues were identified and discussed. To date, Mr. Matika has contacted individuals, property owners or businesses related to all the locations identified at the meeting and he is continuing to monitor the properties. A follow-up Public Meeting was held on October 9, 2023 with Mr. Matika, but he was unable to attend.
4. The Diligence Fore Co. will be hosting a Halloween Dance at the Fire Station on October 21st beginning at 8:00 p.m. The band will be playing from 9:00 p.m. until midnight. Remember to support our fire department and fire fighters any way you can.
5. On behalf of the Borough, he would like to congratulate Panther Valley High School Senior Drew Kokinda. Last week Drew won the District 11, Double A, Golf Championship. There was a fire truck parade that traveled through the towns last week honoring Drew for his accomplishment. Drew is the grandson of Summit Hill residents Sonya and Artie Kokinda. Congratulation Drew.
6. Next month, at the beginning of the Council meeting they will be recognizing a Summit Hill resident who will be celebrating her 100th birthday in November. He hopes to see everyone there to help in the celebration. Senator Argall and Representative Heffley were made aware of the event.

Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Joseph Weber to accept the mayor's report for the month of September 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Police Report – Chief Woodward read his report for the month of September 2023. He stated that he and Council President Kokinda discussed possibly transferring the 2015 Ford Taurus police vehicle to another municipal government agency. Included in his report is a recommendation letter from the Civil Service Commission, as well as a letter from himself, to hire a full-time officer. All testing was done with three candidates, and it ended with one candidate who successfully completed all of the testing. She successfully completed the polygraph examination and the background examination. He is asking Borough Council to consider hiring Tara Strauss as a full-time police officer for the borough. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Karen Ruzicka to hire Tara Strauss as a full-time police officer for the Summit Hill Borough.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to accept the police report for the month of September 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Planning and Zoning – Kira Steber read the report, which is for September 27 through October 5, 2023. She stated that there is an activity log attached, which relates to everything that is being addressed under Quality of Life and a copy of the sign in sheet from the first Town Hall Meeting. **Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by Karen Ruzicka to accept the Planning and Zoning report for the month of September 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

UCC and Code Enforcement Report – Councilwoman Ruzicka asked why items are being carried from month to month even if it has been completed. Ms. Steber explained that they will keep it on the report for the year. **Motion was made by Alana Kruslicky and seconded by Gino DeGiosio to accept the UCC Code Enforcement report for the month of September 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Work Leader Report – **Motion was made by Gino DeGiosio and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to accept the Work Leader report for the month of September 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Tax Collector Report - Nathan Halenar submitted his Tax Collector Report for the month of September 2023. Total collected was \$3,004.02 with a commission of \$90.12. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Joseph Weber to accept the Tax Collector Report for the month of September 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Delinquent Real Estate Tax Report – Portnoff submitted their Delinquent Real Estate Tax Report for the month of September 2023. Total collected was \$1,744.00 with no expenses for reimbursement. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to accept the Delinquent Real Estate Tax Report for the month of September 2023.**

Wage Tax Report – Berkheimer submitted their Wage Tax Report for the month of September 2023. Total EIT submitted was \$11,898.00 with a commission of \$205.84 and postage charges of \$48.38. Total LST submitted was \$238.53 with a commission of \$4.89 and no postage charges. Total DLT submitted was \$130.24 in delinquent Occupation Tax and \$127.06 in delinquent Per Capita Tax. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Gino DeGiosio to accept the Wage Tax report for the month of September 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Delinquent Garbage Collection Report – Central Credit Audit submitted their Delinquent Garbage Collection Report for the month of September 2023. Total collected from Central Credit was \$459.00 and total collected from the Borough was \$269.25. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Karen**

Ruzicka to accept the Delinquent Garbage Collection Report for the month of September 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Receipts – Total receipts received for the month of September 2023 were \$431,060.16. **Motion was made by Karen Ruzicka and seconded by Gino DeGiosio to accept the Receipts for the month of September 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Committee Reports

Streets – Councilman Kruslicky said that at last month's meeting it was reported there was a streetlight out at the corner of Poplar Street and Carbon Avenue. The paperwork was completed and forwarded to PPL for repair.

Police –

1. Councilman Wargo stated that since Tara is now hired, she will need to be trained and also trained in zoning. He recommended that they keep Dan Matika as the interim zoning officer until Tara has satisfied the basic training that she needs for the police department and Dan has time to work with her to get the basics on zoning. He asked that they defer appointing an alternate zoning officer until next month and reevaluate where they stand with Officer Strauss' training.
2. Councilman Wargo asked for an update on the laptops for the police vehicles. Ms. Steber said that she knows they were ordered but does not know anything else. She emailed the IT company to get an update.

Recreation –

1. Councilwoman Ruzicka said that there was an invoice submitted from Kresge Electric for the electrical work done in Ludlow Park. She will need it approved for payment so that she can submit the paperwork to get reimbursed from the grant. Ms. Steber added that Ralph Hummel did come and inspect the work. He failed it at that time, everything that needed to be corrected was corrected and the 2nd inspection passed. **Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by David Wargo to approve the payment to Kresge Electric for the Ludlow Park electrical project in the amount of \$9,950.00.** Motion was opened for comments; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.
2. **Motion was made by Karen Ruzicka and seconded by Joseph Weber to allow the Recreation Commission to hold a cupcake decorating class in the community center on Sunday, October 22, 2023 from 2-4 p.m. with the cost being \$25 per person.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Personnel – Kira Steber mentioned that Mary Ann Eickhoff has offered to come and help her out in the office until someone is hired to fill the vacant assistant secretary position. She asked Council if they had an issue with Mary Ann coming back and if not, what rate would she be paid. It would not be more than 25 hours per week. Councilwoman Ruzicka asked the status of applicants for the assistant secretary position. Ms. Steber said that no applications have been received because Council never advertised the position. **Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by David Wargo to grant permission to have Mary Ann Eickhoff fill in on a temporary basis until a new assistant is hired at the same rate the previous assistant was being paid.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Emergency Services – Councilman Weber stated that the new fire truck should be delivered soon and that a few members from the Fire Co. will be heading to Florida in the next week or so to do a final inspection of the truck.

Handicap – Councilman Weber said that they do have a list of renewals for the year. Looking at the current ordinance, there really is not a great mechanism to follow from year to year except for the initial application which has information from doctors. He feels that the ordinance needs to be looked at a little more because he feels the renewals are approved with a rubber stamp. **Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by Karen Ruzicka to approve the yearly handicap parking renewals for 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council. Karen Ruzicka mentioned that she noticed that when someone passes away or moves away, the signs are taking down, but the blue lines are still there so people will not park in that space. She asked when signs are removed if they could also black out the blue lines.

Economic Development –

1. Councilman Wargo stated that he was the only person who showed up to the last meeting. Last week the LSA grant was submitted for the visitors center. They received seven letters of support to submit with the grant. An acknowledgement letter was received that the grant was received, and someone was assigned to it. It will be a few months until they hear something. He also ran a bus trip to Gettysburg to show the technology to the interested parties, which was very well received.
2. Councilman Wargo gave an update on the Blueprint Community. He and Councilman Weber are meeting with representatives from different organizations throughout the Panther Valley to work on applying for the Blueprint Community designation. They will continue to meet to get the application together. The basic benefit of this is if the committee does successfully apply for the Blueprint Community, it gives them a designation to allow people to run projects to help develop the whole Panther Valley. The designation does last for ten years and gives them a leg up when they apply for grants and run projects using state funds. This opportunity comes around about once every 15 years and only about 10 communities are selected to be designated as one. This is community based so they need people from the community to join and help improve the Panther Valley.

Motion was made by Karen Ruzicka and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to accept the Committee Reports for the month of September 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Communications –

1. President Kokinda said a request was received from the Lehighon Ambulance Association asking for assistance plowing and salting at the ambulance garage that is located at 345 East Ludlow Street. They do have a private contractor who plows the lot. All they are looking for is the area in front of the bay doors and the hill of the lot so they can get out when there are emergencies. Councilman Kruslicky asked if there should be a disclaimer stating that the borough would not be held responsible for damage. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to table the request from the Lehighon Ambulance to assist with some plowing at the garage until a disclaimer is drawn up and agreed upon.** Motion was opened for comment; none made.

Communications for the Month of September 2023:

1. Request from Lehighon Ambulance Association for assistance plowing and salting at the ambulance garage that is located at 345 East Ludlow Street.
2. Notice of Occupation Assessment from the Carbon County Board of Assessment and Revision of Taxes
3. Notice of Assessment Appeals from the Carbon County Board of Assessment and Revision of Taxes
4. 2022 Annual Report from Pennsylvania One Call

Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to accept communications for the month of September 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Bills – General Fund \$351,152.84, Community Center \$301.30, Sanitation Account \$29,367.38, Street Account \$3,134.24, Capital Improvement Fund – Recreation \$2,636.67, Capital Improvement Fund – Borough Bldg. \$2,636.66 and Capital Improvement Fund – Police \$2,636.67. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Gino DeGiosio to pay the bills from September 13 – October 10, 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Old Business –

1. Councilman Wargo said as part of the Quality-of-Life Abatement Program, they need to prepare to start. One thing is the ordinance will need to be updated so they can make sure they can handle the intended method of enforcing the ordinance especially the cleanup part of it. As promised, Atty. Frycklund came back with revisions to the ordinance. They need to make sure the ordinance is compatible with the program that was proposed, make sure there are no loopholes and make sure the violators are taken care of property. One area that is vague and needs to be reviewed by Atty. Frycklund, is to have another method of remedy by allowing the borough to sue any violators for the costs that may be incurred because they refuse to clean up their own property. He asked that Council review it with hopes of moving forward with it next month.
2. Councilman Wargo said he talked to Atty. Frycklund about the RFPs for the Abatement Program. He is still actively working on preparing them, so they are not ready yet. Atty Frycklund stated that he and Mr. Wargo are going to have to have a few more discussions about it before he can finalize the proposals.

Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by Karen Ruzicka to approve Old Business for the month of September 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

New Business –

1. Councilman Wargo said that in light of the Town Hall meeting that was held on September 27th by the Mayor and Mr. Matika, one thing that was mentioned was the fee schedule changes for rental inspections. The fees may not cover the costs of the inspections. He asked the secretary and the solicitor to pull that part of the ordinance to review. In Section I, it states that upon application or reapplication for a certificate or lease, the landlord shall pay a fee of \$75 to cover the costs. The new fees should be \$90 for inspection and \$50 for reinspection and he would also suggest that the fees be pulled out and make it applicable to a resolution. If done by an ordinance, it will take a few months and have costs to go through the ordinance process just to change the fee schedule. He proposes that they take Section I and revise it to say that fees will be set by resolution because they can pass a resolution instantly. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to amend the ordinance to remove the fees from the ordinance and replace them with language that allows them to set fees in the future by resolution.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.
2. **Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to advertise the part-time Assistant Secretary Position.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.
3. Councilman Wargo said they received information from the American Lung Association in PA about a program they have called Young Lungs at Play. It is supposed to help prevent children's exposure to secondhand smoke. There are three steps to take for the program. The first step is the implementation of a local 100% tobacco free ordinance, policy, or resolution in public areas where children play. They can

then apply to participate in the program and the last step is to install Young Lungs at Play signs at designated areas. The signs will be provided at no cost to the borough after they follow the first two steps. He recommends Council review it and bring it back to the table next month. Councilman Weber would like to see sample ordinances and other information. He feels this is a great program to put into place. Councilwoman Ruzicka agreed and said she would also like to see signs at the bus stops. Chief Woodward stated that they need to be careful with trying to enforce things like this in public areas.

4. President Kokinda noted that Trick-or-Treat night will be held on Tuesday, October 31, 2023 from 6-8 p.m. with a rain date of November 1st from 6-8 p.m.

Motion was made by Alan Kruslicky and seconded by Gino DeGiosio to enter into an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters at 8:00 p.m. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Joseph Weber to enter back into regular session at 8:35 p.m. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Motion was made by Karen Ruzicka and seconded by David Wargo to adjourn at 8:37 p.m. until the next regular meeting of the Summit Hill Borough on November 14, 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Michael Kokinda
Council President

Kira Steber
Secretary/Treasurer