

Summit Hill Borough Council
December 18, 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 Michael Kokinda, Vice President William O’Gurek, Gino DeGiosio, Karen Ruzicka, Alan Kruslicky, Joseph Weber, David Wargo and Mayor Jeffrey Szczecina were in attendance. Solicitor Robert Frycklund was absent.

Floor – No comments from the floor.

Minutes – **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by William O’Gurek to approve the meeting minutes from the November 14 and December 6, 2023 Council meeting.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Mayor’s Report – Mayor Szczecina reported the total collected from the District Justice was \$580.54.

1. Mayor Szczecina mentioned that Christmas on the Hill was one of the best ones that the town has had in years. The Jim Thorpe Trolley drove residents around town. It was decorated for Christmas; Christmas carols were playing, and the trolley driver was wonderful. He thanked Tom and Janelle Tirpak for their donation of \$500 to the Recreation Commission towards the purchase of the teddy bears, which were distributed by the police department during the event. He also thanked the Legion, SALs and the Auxiliary for their donation of \$600 towards the cost of the trolley. It is another example of the excellent programs that are in Summit Hill. He thanked Kathy and the rest of the recreation commission members for making sure the event took place. Kathy Gieniec thanked Mayor Szczecina for all of his help setting up the day of the event and also thanked Council for allowing the commission to hold the event.
2. Mayor Szczecina recognized Gino DeGiosio and Alan Kruslicky. He said it will be their last meeting. They both stepped up during a time when they needed to fill Council seats. Gino was on Council for two years and Alan was just short of a year. It is easy to come to a meeting and complain but when it is time to step up, no one does. He thanked them both for filling in the terms.
3. Mayor Szczecina stated that President Kokinda has served on Council for 23 years and 9 months. During this time, he raised two children and was involved in a lot of new things in the borough. He was instrumental in getting the equipment shed built to help keep the borough’s equipment protected. He was also involved in the building projects to build the new municipal building and community center. His skills, knowledge and mechanics have helped save the borough thousands of dollars over the years. He was involved with the HVAC project and had people involved who volunteered their time to run pipe and propane lines, which saved the borough thousands of dollars. It is things like this that 99% of the people do not know that he did. Two weeks ago, Mayor Szczecina received a call from Officer Fischel that there was no heat in the building. He was out of the area, so he called Mike, who dropped everything to get the issue resolved. Just last week there was an issue with the heat at the community center and he again dropped everything and went right to the center. Mayor Szczecina thanked President Kokinda for his years of service. He wanted to have a more formal presentation for Mike to recognize everything he did during his time on council, but Mike refused to tell him anything. He said he did not do it for the recognition.

Motion was made by Karen Ruzicka and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to accept the mayor’s report for the month of November 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Police Report – Chief Woodward read his monthly report. He also requested to place the 2015 Ford Taurus police vehicle for sale on Municibid.

Motion was made by William O’Gurek and seconded by Joseph Weber to amend the agenda to include the sale of the Ford Taurus. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Motion was made by William O’Gurek and seconded by Karen Ruzicka to put the 2015 Ford Taurus for sale on Municibid. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Motion was made by William O’Gurek and seconded by David Wargo to accept the Police report for the month of November 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Planning and Zoning – No report was given.

UCC, Code Enforcement and Rental Inspection Reports – Councilwoman Ruzicka asked if the properties that failed the rental inspection are occupied. Ms. Steber stated that they should not be occupied. If it filed inspection, the applicant was informed that they cannot move anyone in until everything is corrected, a reinspection fee is paid, and the property is reinspected. **Motion was made by William O’Gurek and seconded by Karen Ruzicka to accept the UCC, Code Enforcement and Rental Inspection reports for the month of November 2023.** Motion was opened for comment. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Work Leader Report – **Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to accept the Work Leader report for the month of November 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 November 2023. Total collected was \$10,594.67 with a commission of \$317.84. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by William O’Gurek to accept the Tax Collector Report for the month of November 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 November 2023. Total collected was \$2,202.53. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Joseph Weber to accept the Delinquent Real Estate Tax Report for the month of November 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Wage Tax Report – Berkheimer submitted their Wage Tax Report for the month of November 2023. Total EIT submitted was \$54,767.59 with a commission of \$947.48 and postage charges of \$22.49. Total LST submitted was \$106.49 with a commission of \$3.29 and postage charges of \$2.61. Total DLT submitted was \$673.33 in delinquent Occupation Tax and \$245.68 in delinquent Per Capita Tax. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Karen Ruzicka to accept the Wage Tax report for the month of November 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 November 2023. Total collected from Central Credit was \$648.13 and total collected by the Borough was \$72.00. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to accept the Delinquent Garbage Collection Report for the month of November 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Receipts – Total receipts received for the month of November 2023 were \$128,874.35. **Motion was made by William O’Gurek and seconded by David Wargo to accept the Receipts for the month of November 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Committee Reports

Recreation – Council received the meeting minutes from October 3, November 8, and December 5, 2023.

Buildings – President Kokinda gave an update on the HVAC system. He said the municipal building is up and running and the community center is also up and running. There are still some adjustments that need to be made to the system at the center. There is a vibration in the system due to a broken part, which is already on order. Hoping to see a difference in the electric bills.

Emergency Services - Councilman Weber said there is a list of dates for events in 2024 from the fire company.

- January 25-28, 2024 – Dart Tournament
- February 11, 2024 – Pizza sale for Super Bowl Sunday
- March 23-24, 2024 – Easter Flower Sale
- April 27, 2024 – Spaghetti Dinner
- May 25, 2024 – Food Truck Festival – Also asking for the streets to be blocked off similar to the Hootenanny setup and use of the park for vendors, weather permitting.
- September 7-8, 2024 – Mum Sale
- November 7-10, 2024 – Ham Dinner – need the fridge for storage but dinner will be on the 10th.
- December 14, 2024 – Fire Co. Christmas party
- December 31, 2024 – Fire Co. New Year’s Eve party

Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Joseph Weber to approve the list of events for 2024 for the Diligence Fire Co. #1. Motion opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Sanitation – Councilman DeGiosio wanted to let everyone know that the garbage rates for 2024 will stay the same as 2023. The rates will be \$60 per quarter or \$240 for the year.

Economic Development – Councilman Wargo gave an update on the Blueprint Community project. The application was submitted to the Pennsylvania Downtown Center for consideration of training their team under the program. It will be about 18 months of intensive training and the result will be that those trained will be specialized in project management to be able to know where to go for grants and become experts at doing projects in the communities. There are 13 communities competing against them and only 10 will be picked. He thanked Mayor Szczecina for helping out and giving a tour of the four communities to the director of the PA Downtown Center. The primary team will consist of Gino DeGiosio as the bank liaison, Mayor Ramirez of Coaldale will be the municipal official, real estate developer, Joe Bennet, will handle developing aspects, Jesse Walck is going to serve from the school district, a student from the school district, Hamilton Perez Flores, will represent the youth in the area, Dr. Richard Vermillion and Joe Guardiani will represent St. Luke’s Health Network as the community outreach contact. All of those mentioned will participate in training and meetings for the next two years. They will graduate from the training in December 2025. If successful, they will be designated as a Blueprint Community, which will give them favorable status when they look into grants and programs that will allow them to create affordable housing in the Panther Valley to try and stem some problems they have in the area and to help the area thrive and flourish.

Motion was made by William O’Gurek and seconded by David Wargo to accept the Committee Reports for the month of November 2023. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Communications –

Communications for the Month of December 2023:

1. Notice of Property Assessment from the Carbon County Board of Assessment and Revision of Taxes
2. Notice of Occupation Assessment from the Carbon County Board of Assessment and Revision of Taxes
3. Thank you card from Kathryn Chickilly and family.
4. Notice of Termination Approval Letter for Frackville from Carbon Conservation District – Rebuild NPDES Permit
5. Notice of Permit Correction from the PA DEP for BET Associates IV, LLC
6. PA Municipal League and PATH Newly Elected Officials Training – Three-week virtual webinar program for newly elected officials
7. Fall 2023 Newsletter from Portnoff Law Associates, Ltd.
8. PA Dept. of Transportation LTAP Information:
 - Information on the LTAP Website
 - PennDOT LTAP Technical Information Sheet #227 for Fall 2023
 - PennDOT LTAP Moving Forward Newsletter Fall 2023

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

Bills – General Fund \$134,349.51, Community Center \$380.88, Sanitation Account \$28,211.15, Street Account \$7,149.02, and Capital Improvement Fund - Borough Building \$95,090. **Motion was made by Karen Ruzicka and seconded by Gino DeGiosio to pay the bills from November 15 – December 18, 2023.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Old Business -

1. RFPs for Abatement Program – Councilman Wargo stated that this is the draft for the outdoor cleaning part of the Quality-of-Life abatement. There is a second RFP that is being drafted that will deal with the extermination program. He recommended tabling it until January when they have both RFPs for approval. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by William O’Gurek to table the approval of the RFP until the January 2024 meeting.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.
2. Sidewalk Ordinance – Councilwoman Ruzicka stated that she is working on a draft sidewalk ordinance. She is hoping to have it submitted to the solicitor in January for his review. Mayor Szczecina said he has been asked by several residents if people who currently do not have sidewalks will be required to put sidewalks in. Ms. Ruzicka said she is not at that part of the ordinance yet. She is looking at other borough’s ordinances to see how they handle it.
3. Councilman Weber asked the status of the payment request for the grant for the tanker truck. Ms. Steber explained that all the paperwork was submitted but there was an issue with the wire transfer. She received the proper paperwork for a wire transfer and forwarded it to the state. She is hoping that the money will be deposited into the account this week.

New Business –

1. 2024 Budget – Councilman Wargo reiterated that they have gone over the budget several times over the past six weeks, and they cut everything they could out of it that was not essential. Unfortunately, with the rise in cost of everything, they do not have much of a choice. He is not fond of making this decision but feels it is the fiscally responsible thing to do because he does not feel it is fiscally responsible to borrow money to run the borough. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by William O’Gurek to adopt the 2024 budget with a 2.75 mill increase with income/expenses totaling \$1,622,045.** Councilman Wargo asked for a roll call vote.

Roll Call vote was taken.

Mike Kokinda	Yes
William O’Gurek	Yes
Gino DeGiosio	Yes
Karen Ruzicka	Yes
Alan Kruslicky	Yes
Joseph Weber	Yes
David Wargo	Yes

Motion passed by a 7-0 vote to adopt the 2024 budget with a 2.75 mill increase with income and expenses totaling \$1,622,045.

2. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by William O’Gurek to advertise Ordinance No. 01-2024 Fixing the Various Tax Rates for the Fiscal Year 2024.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.
3. Kira Steber presented Council with information about a training subscription program through PSAB called PSAB Plus. The cost is \$450 to enroll but when anyone signs up for training, there is a huge savings because the cost is only 50% of the total cost. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Joseph Weber to enroll in the PSAB Plus training subscription program for 2024 at a cost of \$450.** Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.
4. Kira Steber said they need to set the meeting dates for 2024. Council meetings will be held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m., with the reorganization meeting being held on January 3rd. The Zoning Hearing Board meetings will be held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. on an as needed basis. The Planning Commission meeting will be held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. on an as needed basis. **Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by William O’Gurek to set the 2024 meeting dates for Council, the Zoning Hearing Board, and the Planning Commission.** Motion was opened for comment, none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.
5. **Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by William O’Gurek to transfer \$150,000 from the Sewer Account into the General Fund for operating expenses until tax dollars are received in April 2024.** Motion was opened comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by William O’Gurek to enter into an Executive Session to discuss possible litigation at 7:35 p.m. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Motion was made by Joseph Weber and seconded by Karen Ruzicka to enter back into regular session at 7:43 p.m. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Motion was made by David Wargo and seconded by Alan Kruslicky to adjourn at 7:45 p.m. until the next meeting of the Summit Hill Borough on January 3, 2024. Motion was opened for comment; none made. Motion carried unanimously by Council.

Michael Kokinda
Council President

Kira Steber
Secretary/Treasurer