

Canonsburg Borough Council Special Meeting  
Monday, February 22, 2016  
7:00 PM

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Bell at 7:00 pm.

**Moment of Silence** called by Mr. Bell

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call:**

Mr. Bowman-Present

Mrs. Coleman-Present

Mr. McGarry-Vice President-Absent

Mrs. Bails-Present

Mr. Severine-Present

Mr. Sharkady-Present

Mr. Richard Bell –President- Present

**Others Present:** Canonsburg Borough Manager Mr. Bob Kipp, Mayor David Rhome, Assistant Fire Chief Mr. Tim Solobay, Fire Chief Mr. Tom Lawrence and Fire Inspector/Fireman Jason Brown.

**GUESTS:**

None

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Mr. Severine stated the access road at Town Park will be moved away from residential homes and will be bid when ready. Mr. Severine stated the pricing may be better. Mr. Kipp is working on a grant for trees. The road is to allow emergency access to the lower ball field. The pile of millings will be removed in May.

Mr. Bell stated the purpose of this meeting is for Council and the Fire Department discuss Fire Inspections, guidelines and the fees.

Mr. Tim Solobay stated the Ordinance that created the Fire Inspector position occurred last year. Mr. Solobay discussed the letter that was generated and reviewed that was sent to commercial and industrial clientele in the Borough. Mr. Solobay stated the Borough Manager worked on the fee structure list. Once the letter went out, inspections began. Mr. Solobay further stated Council members were “caught off guard” by receiving phone calls regarding the letters. He stated that since the letters were distributed there has been misinformation and intended misinformation given to commercial and industrial properties. Mr. Solobay stated the Mayor and Mr. Brown have been able to rectify those concerns and rumors. Mr. Solobay stated the program is about public safety, the safety of the fireman and to make the community safer.

Mayor Rhome stated Erie insurance provides a 5-10% savings on premiums. The Mayor stated approximately 20 inspections have occurred and everyone has been happy. Previous fire inspections can be honored as long as documentation is provided for Mr. Brown to review and approve at no

additional fees. Mayor Rhome stated Mr. Brown is doing a wonderful job.

Mr. Solobay said that with the fire inspections, the fire department will have a layout of a building to minimize damage. The Mayor said it assists with pre-planning with the Police Department as well.

Mr. Brown provided an overview of his duties since January. He stated the first two weeks were organizing with the Fire Department and the Borough, bringing it up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The software company was selected with training for Mr. Brown and the Chiefs.

Mr. Brown completed 29 inspections with 2 buildings passing. The majority of the buildings were not in serious condition with violations such as not having a fire extinguisher or having a fire extinguisher that has not been inspected recently, (one last inspected in 1992), overloaded electrical outlets, circuit breakers tripping, exit signs and emergency lighting with no battery back up or batteries not working.

Mr. Brown stated all the violations were easy fixes. Mr. Brown stated owners were very grateful for the inspection and he in fact taught 5 owners to use a fire extinguisher. He stated inspections are for the safety of people, employees and fireman. Mr. Brown stated he has been greeted with open arms. Mr. Brown stated if it is an issue that takes time to fix, he is willing to work with the owner. He also stated that business owners will not be made to install a sprinkler system.

Mr. Bell stated that looking back it would have been easier if there was a community meeting as this would have deterred the miscommunication that occurred. Mr. Bell also walked through an inspection with Mr. Brown and found the inspection to be impressive. Pictures of each building and issues are obtained and kept on file and shared with both the fire department and police department. The tenant/owner is emailed a copy of the report and photos as well.

Mr. Kipp and Mr. Brown mentioned that a total of 8 businesses were identified that were not on the Borough record.

Discussion held regarding those buildings that are not operational and boarded up. Mayor Rhome stated they will eventually have to be inspected.

Mr. Severine discussed the history of the fire inspector position, stating Council was initially informed that there were not enough volunteers, then the position was to be a fireman and now turned into an inspector position. He discussed the residence of Mr. Brown, his work hours being 8 am -4 pm and his yearly salary of \$42,000.00. Mr. Severine stated that Code Enforcement could have taken the inspector test and complete the functions of the fire inspector. Mr. Solobay stated the fire inspector position was mentioned from the beginning. Mr. Solobay also reiterated that Mr. Brown identified 8 businesses that Code did not find. Mr. Solobay said the Mr. Brown's hours do fill in the fire fighter side during the day. Mr. Severine discussed the inspection fees.

Further discussion held regarding the salary. Mr. Severine said the total cost of this position could be \$80,000 a year once insurance, gas, computer, internet, office and the truck are included. Mr. Lawrence stated the Fire Department paid for the upgrade of the computer system, uniform, bunker gear and tablet. Mrs. Coleman stated that Mr. Severine was wrong as Council did not hire Mr. Brown as only a fireman and said his benefits were discussed as well. Discussion held regarding Mr. Brown's work hours, Mr. Severine stated he could work 12 hours a day as he is salary. Mrs. Coleman stated then he should be paid accordingly. Mr. Severine again stated the Fire Inspector position was originally discussed as needing more fire volunteers with no thought how much the position would pay or where the money would come from. Mr. Severine stated he is not against the program but there was no thought into the costs. Mrs. Coleman disagreed.

Mr. Bell said the meeting was to discuss the fees and job functions of the program and not intended to bring up things from last year that the previous Council put in place. He stated the intent is to discuss how the program will operate and for Council to support the program. Mr. Bell stated the Fire Department did not set the fees. Mr. Kipp stated the fees were obtained from HMT Engineers and Council adopted the fees in September 2015.

Mr. Severine stated residential was not discussed. Mr. Solobay and Mr. Brown stated that residential buildings/ areas are not being inspected. Specific buildings with a business and private spaces discussed. Mr. Brown stated he would need a search warrant to inspect private living areas. Mrs. Bails inquired about senior high rises and assisted livings. Discussion held that the County Health Department and the Department of Human Services have to inspect for occupancy permits. Specific buildings in the Borough were discussed. Mr. Severine inquired what happens if an owner cannot afford to fix the violations. Mr. Brown stated 60 days are provided to rectify violations and he offers to assist and re-schedule his re-visit to help the owners. Mr. Severine continued to inquire about owners that cannot afford upgrades. Mr. Solobay stated if the violations are that bad and the owner cannot afford to make the upgrades, then it should not be open.

Further discussion held regarding the fee schedule. The Fire Department did not set the fee schedule; it was determined by the fee schedule by HMT in September 2015. Mr. Severine asked if the fees can be reduced. Mr. Bell said the purpose of the program is safety. Mr. Brown stated there have been no complaints regarding the fees. Mr. Bell stated a meeting can be held to discuss the fees if needed.

Mrs. Coleman stated she had misgivings regarding the inspections at first, however, she is happy the way it is working out, she has heard nothing but good. She continued to say the focus should not be how many hours Mr. Brown works, but that Council's number one concern is for safety. Mr. Bell said it is Council's responsibility to be concerned about the fees and not the Fire Department. Mr. Severine stated he is not against safety, he is looking at money.

Discussion held of the location of the Fire Inspector's office. He is located in the line officer's room. Those wishing to meet with Mr. Brown can do so by asking the secretary. Mr. Brown stated he is in the office usually until 9:45 am. He notifies the secretary when he is leaving the office. Discussion held regarding his personal safety. The software on his tablet has a GPS locator and he carries a radio. Mr. Sharkady mentioned other areas of exits in the office area that should be opened for safety.

Discussion held regarding monthly update on inspections during the regular Council meetings, it will be added to the Fire Department report.

Discussion regarding parking on Greenside, Mr. Severine to follow up for his recommendation.

Mr. Bell inquired about a notice in the newspaper regarding the Fire Department's intent to apply for a loan for a fire truck. Mr. Lawrence stated they are applying for money through the state and it is required to provide notice via the newspaper. Mr. Severine stated he read about it in the newspaper and it should have been brought to Council's attention first. Mr. Severine asked who is paying for it and who will be paying for the gas. Mr. Lawrence stated the loan is to replace the 31 year old fire truck; the fire department has always placed a notice in the newspaper. Mr. Severine discussed the budget and particular line items relating to the Fire Department. Mr. Bell stated Council should be kept up to date and the public informed.

Mr. Bell discussed next week's meeting is to discuss Engineer proposals. Mr. Bell mentioned the workshop that the Borough and Township provided. Mr. Bell, Mrs. Bails and Mr. Severine attended the session. Mr. Bell stated it was enlightening and he recommended if the program is provided again that all Council members attend. Mr. Bell stated it was suggested for Council to meet, at least annually, with the Authorities such as Zoning and the Planning Commission. Mr. Bell also discussed not sending group emails requesting a response, that only informational emails should be sent.

Mrs. Bails mentioned information learned at a workshop and in particular that a Mayor cannot break a tie vote as it is a conflict of interest. (She cited 957 of the Pennsylvania Borough Code, under Dillon's rule). Mrs. Bails discussed the Mayor voting to break a tie with the hiring of police officers. Mr. Bell stated at the next meeting, this will be reviewed with the Solicitor. Mayor Rhome stated he always yields to the Solicitor for his recommendation and he is protected. Mayor Rhome stated if it is wrong, then it will be cleaned up. Mr. Bell said at the workshop they asked what if that did happen; they were

informed nothing as the Solicitor guided Council. Mr. Bell said in the future if that would occur again, then the vote would be suspended. Mr. Severine stated the Zoning Board requires a stenographer. Garbage trucks discussed, Waste Management is willing to meet with Council to discuss.

Mr. Sharkaday discussed the Sewer Authority and if documentation was obtained regarding Mr. Bevec's resignation. Mr. Sharkady stated Mr. Kipp and the Solicitor were to follow up and they did not. Mr. Kipp stated he did follow up with Ms. Gilmartin of the Sewer Authority. Mr. Bell said he has a copy of the minutes from October, November and December 2015. Mr. Bell said it was addressed during the Sewer Authority's November 2015 meeting in which there was a re-organization. Per the minutes, it was said that they are "re-organizing the Authority, all the members that were past members are here and being sworn in. Mr. James Maund is here replacing John Bevec." Discussion held when the new Authority started. Mr. Sharkady stated there were no appointments for the Authority until he made a motion last month, which was defeated. Mr. Bell stated there will be a final answer at the next meeting.

Mr. Severine stated the Solicitors cannot be from the same office. Discussion held regarding the Solicitors for the Zoning Hearing Board and the Planning Commission. Mr. Bell said it is something to be reviewed.

Mayor Rhome discussed a group that does rabies clinics and also provides spaying and neutering. It is a five hour program providing rabies vaccinations, spaying and neutering of cats. Per Mayor Rhome, Gina Nester with the Cat Committee spoke highly of this program. Mr. Bell stated the Cat Committee does a wonderful job.

#### **RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES:**

None

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

None

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mrs. Coleman made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 pm. Seconded by Mr. Bowman Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm.

**Submitted by: Michelle LoBello**



