

BOROUGH OF CANONSBURG  
GENERAL PURPOSE COUNCIL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 20, 2012

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Bevec at 7:00 P.M.

II. MOMENT OF SILENCE:

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

IV. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Richard Russo, Paul Sharkady, John Bevec, Patricia Romano, Fran Coleman, Timothy Bilsky, and Peter Lucas

Others Present:

Borough Manager Terry Hazlett and Mayor David H. Rhome

Absent:

Joseph Graff, Joseph McGarry, Engineer Harvey Treschow, Attorney Patrick Derrico, and Police Chief R. T. Bell

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were none.

VI. PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:

Mr. Bevec had no comments at this time.

VII. VOTING ITEMS:

A. Approval of 2013 Tentative Budget for Sewer Plant

Mr. Russo motioned to approve the tentative budget for 2013 for the Sewer Plant in the amount of \$3,363,200.

Mr. Lucas seconded the motion.

Remarks: Mr. Russo informed Council that Mr. Robert Luksis, member of the Sewer Authority, called him today.

Full disclosure: Mr. Hazlett added some money to the the Sewer Budget, the Borough's Operations Budget, for Dick Zollinger. Mr. Russo made reference to discussions that had been held pertaining to the Authority and whether they wanted to be an operating authority, going forward with a ten or fifteen-million dollar project. What was thought to be necessary was getting Mr. Zollinger more involved. One of the things Mr. Russo asked him to do was to look into the

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number of lease-back authorities in the state, but he has yet to get him that answer.

Mr. Russo stated that the increase to the Operations Budget is \$30,000, and Mr. Luksis, having just heard about it today, was not happy that he was out of the loop on this and not given the opportunity to have discussion about it. Rates will not be affected. He said to keep in mind that this is the Borough's Operations Budget; the Authority has its own budget. This is something that, historically, the Authority and Mr. Hazlett's office have worked jointly on to create the Operations Budget. Mr. Russo stated that the final draft of the budget has gone past Katherine (Gilmartin), but it has not gone past the Authority board.

Mr. Russo also made reference to is the fact that the budget is out of balance, with total revenue of one amount and total expenses of another amount. He said that Mr. Hazlett told him this happens all the time. This is the way it's been done in the past. The difference in the budget is made up by the transfer of funds to the municipality.

Mr. Russo said he is willing to vote on the budget tonight, but he asked Mr. Hazlett if Council should want to have full disclosure with the Authority and keep them happy and informed. He asked Mr. Hazlett what the options are in tentatively passing the budget and having discussion with the Authority prior to approval.

Mr. Hazlett replied that the amount of the budget can always be changed between tentative approval and final approval, as long as it's not an overwhelming change.

Mr. Hazlett stated that he had been approached by Council members to change the budget. He said it is the Borough's budget, and it has to be a budget the Borough can live with. One small thing he changed was \$4,000 for a two-day a week Human Resources person, a position approved by Council. Mr. Hazlett

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informed Council that about a third of the employees are sewer employees. They should rightfully be paying a third of that cost, so it was moved over to them.

Mr. Hazlett stated that the rest of it was for Dick Zollinger, and the thought was that the Borough needs to have all eyes on this expansion project. The amount in the budget for Mr. Zollinger was increased from approximately \$13,000 per year to \$50,000, but that doesn't mean the whole \$50,000 must be used. If his services are not needed that much, the money won't be spent.

Mr. Hazlett stated that the Authority has told Council that Ms. Diane Altland will not be employed by them past the end of the year, and then they said she would be. Mr. Hazlett does not know where this stands. He explained that the reason for hiring Mr. Zollinger was to get another set of eyes on what the Sewer Authority does. If Ms. Altland isn't there, the person who probably knows the most about what the Borough is trying to do is Dick Zollinger. When Mr. Hazlett talked with Mr. Luksis today, Mr. Luksis' suggestion was that Ms. Altland not be involved at all after December 31<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Hazlett suggested to Mr. Luksis that, if the Sewer Authority is going to hire someone after Ms. Altland is no longer with them, why not hire Dick Zollinger and use him to their best advantage, as he is someone that both the Borough and the Authority can agree upon, and it would save money for both of them.

Mr. Russo said he does not disagree with the increase; he is more concerned about procedure and making sure that everyone is in the loop. He suggested passing the budget with perhaps a tentative approval based upon Mr. Hazlett having a sit-down discussion with the Authority board, getting their agreement, and then passing it in the final approval.

Mr. Lucas stated that if he were on the Authority, he would want to know what was going on. There's nothing wrong with letting them look at it; Council is not trying to hide anything.

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Mr. Russo agreed, and said he doesn't want to give them the impression that we are.

Mr. Hazlett said that he is fine with this.

Mr. Bevec asked Council to keep in mind that the tentative budget is just that – tentative. This is Council's almost final budget, and changes can be made, as Mr. Hazlett said. But everything cannot be scratched and the budget started over between the tentative passage and the final passage.

Mr. Russo stated that he hopes the budget isn't changed, as he endorsed the increase. He just wants to give the Sewer Authority an opportunity to have a sit-down with Mr. Hazlett and Ms. Lesnock and sign off on it so that there is disclosure.

In reference to the engineering matter, Mr. Sharkady said that it was his understanding that since Ms. Altland started this project, she's there for the duration – maybe not as the engineer for the Authority, but she certainly is for the project.

Mr. Hazlett replied that he understood that she was going to be involved, but it's not clear to what degree. Even Mr. Luksis, on the phone today, was not clear to what degree she will be involved in next year. This is one reason to justify what was done – to make sure someone is watching over the project. If the Authority hires an engineer, we can back off of the money.

Mr. Bevec said the last he heard about Ms. Altland was that she would be there on an as-needed basis up until construction.

Mr. Sharkady replied that that is for the Authority only – nothing to do with the project. Ms. Altland is the engineer of record for them.

Mr. Russo stated that the project engineer is another firm.

Mr. Bevec said that it is Wade Trim.

Mr. Russo stated that Mr. Michael Alterio has put it in writing that, as of the end of the year, Ms. Altland will be done. There will be no more meetings and no more active participation on a regular basis, but she is available should a question arise, billable

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based upon that request. This is opposed to how she is being paid now – drawing a monthly salary.

Further discussion was held pertaining to this matter.

REVISION OF THE MOTION: (SEE PAGE 1)

Mr. Russo motioned to approve the tentative budget for 2013 for the Sewer Plant in the amount of \$3,363,200 on the condition that Mr. Hazlett meet with the Sewer Authority Board and get a consensus from them on the budget.

Mr. Lucas seconded the revised motion.

ROLL CALL ON THE REVISED MOTION:

Richard Russo	Yes
Paul Sharkady	Yes
Joseph Graff	Absent
Joseph McGarry	Absent
Patricia Romano	Yes
Fran Coleman	Yes
Timothy Bilsky	Yes
Peter Lucas	Yes
John Bevec	Yes

RESULTS OF THE MOTION: Seven Yes, Zero No, Two Absent. Motion carried.

- B. Tentative Approval of 2013 Canonsburg Borough Budget  
Mr. Lucas motioned for tentative approval of the 2013 Canonsburg Borough Budget in the amount of \$4,393,322, which includes the following:

General Purposes Tax – 30 mils  
Special Road Fund – 2 mils  
Debt Service – 2.33 mils  
Parks and Recreation Fund – 1 mil  
Special Fire Department Equipment Fund – 3 mils  
TOTAL – 38.33 mils

Mr. Russo seconded the motion.

Remarks: Mr. Sharkady asked what was added to the balanced

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budget that the Borough had, as it was balanced in the beginning. Mr. Hazlett didn't have the papers with him but reviewed some of the changes. The budget was balanced at the original meeting; \$212,000 of items were added (the wish list); all the police items were taken out; \$60,000 was taken out for the brush hog; summer help was taken out because we were told to add the fireman at the full rate; the likelihood is that the fireman will come on board late in the year and the extra money will enable hiring summer help. Mrs. Coleman stated that she missed one of the budget talks, but she is not in favor of raising taxes. She expressed concerns about hiring a fireman and even putting this in the budget. Mrs. Coleman stated that she was told part of this would be paid by a grant and asked how much the grant would be.

Mr. Bevec explained that it is a 50/50 match.

Mrs. Coleman replied that she does not see the necessity of this. She said she had to fight years ago to get the guy in here to be cleaning and whatever, and he could drive the fire truck. But this is a guy from Monday through Friday from 8 until 4.

Mrs. Coleman stated that she hears Mr. Graff give the Fire Department report, and it doesn't say that we don't have firemen to answer the fire calls. She actually asked for the reports to be pulled so she could look at them for the year.

Mr. Russo informed Mrs. Coleman that this matter was addressed by the Fire Department at the meeting she was unable to attend. He said the overall scope of the need is that fire departments in general are losing volunteers and are going to paid firemen.

Mrs. Coleman asked if there is really a need for two men during the day.

Mr. Bilsky stated that he is rethinking the fireman.

Mr. Hazlett explained that it's 20 hours a week working in the Fire Department and 20 hours a week working in the Borough, but for 40 hours a week they would be in the Borough building to answer the fire calls. The furthest away they could be is the

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Senior Center.

Mr. Lucas stated that this was put in the budget because it had to be shown to march the grant that's going to come up in July or August.

Mrs. Coleman said she has seen enough of grants with Main Street.

Mr. Lucas stated that we (Council) were willing to try it out.

Mrs. Coleman's response was, "Not to the expense of the taxpayers".

Mr. Russo informed her that we got all the Main Street money back.

Mr. Hazlett said the Borough got a check from the state in the amount of \$35,000. (They still owe the Borough \$1,900.) \$24,000 is coming from the Main Street group, and then we will be paid up.

Mr. Russo stated that he supports the adding of a person to the Fire Department. He said Mr. Lucas was right. It's a line item that will not be spent next year but it's allocated there in order to get reimbursed in 2014 for half of that person, so the total expense won't be until the end of 2014, and it will be half.

Mr. Russo felt that the reason for it is justified.

Mr. Russo stated that the risk with the budget is, if Council doesn't agree, it will continue for another month. He said that Council sat through two budget meetings, and Mrs. Coleman and Mrs. Romano were not present for either one of them.

Mr. Russo continued by saying, "If anything, I would recommend that you abstain from the budget."

Mrs. Coleman replied, "I'm not going to, because I have a brain up here. My brain functions."

Mr. Sharkady asked if it's correct that there are three firemen working in the Borough who all answer fire calls when the whistle blows.

Mr. Hazlett replied that if it's a serious call, all three answer;

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actually, it's four because usually the Mayor is here as well. On a general basis, Jay goes out with the fire truck and any volunteer if it's something small. If it's known immediately that it's larger, Dale and Tom can go as well, and, of course, the Mayor.

Mayor Rhome explained that it is correct that Dale and Tom are here, but there are so many times they are involved in something else that they are unable to go. If Jay is sitting there for 7, 8, or 9 minutes waiting for someone else to come, this is one part of it.

Mr. Bevec used the example of working hot patch in the summer. If Tom is on hot patch, he can't leave unless it's a major emergency.

Mayor Rhome stated that it happened several times this year; they couldn't leave or they'd lose that load of blacktop.

Mr. Russo asked if there is a union issue and if it was addressed in the contract.

Mr. Hazlett replied that the union issue is with the sewer plant, because there are two firemen working at the sewer plant, and they are not permitted to leave under any circumstances.

He said the Mayor is right. In most cases, it's okay if they go. If they're involved in something like blacktop, it makes it difficult for them to go. Mr. Hazlett stated that, obviously, we're not going to let somebody die in a house fire because of blacktop. Mayor Rhome made reference to plowing snow, which also makes it difficult for them to leave.

Mrs. Coleman asked about mutual aid and the fact that our Fire Department assists the other departments (such as Houston and North Strabane) when they need us.

Mayor Rhome informed her that Houston has no one to offer us.

Mr. Russo stated that whether we face it now or later, this is a state issue. Our workmen's compensation insurance has gone up because of the Fire Department due to the fact that insurance companies now see fire departments as part of the municipality.

Mr. Russo said that if you didn't have all the volunteers and paid

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the Fire Department, our budget wouldn't be four million dollars; it would be six million dollars. He continued by saying that they do get money from us every year. However, in comparison to having to pay for that service, Mr. Russo said that he didn't know that we'd be able to do it.

Mayor Rhome added that the Fire Department raises money. He also said that the financial responsibility the Borough has given the Fire Department is fine. The critical part is that the membership is down to 21 or 22 individuals, and most of them are over 30 years old. The numbers they presented at the meeting as far as volunteers across America were staggering, and it isn't going to get any better. Everything has been done to increase membership other than having the Borough pay each fireman so much per call. Mayor Rhome stated that the department has taken a proactive approach through the Executive Board and finally through the membership that they know there's a grant coming in the next year. They felt that, to be positive, instead of having to wait 7 to 9 minutes for a truck to get out, having two guys (one working part-time, both sides) would be for the safety of all the people in the community. The Mayor said there is a two in, two out rule, and no one in the department is going into a structure fire with only one guy. He said there have been many calls in the past three years when he and Senator Solobay have been here and were fortunate enough to get that rig out. Mayor Rhome felt that \$37,000, for the safety of this community, is \$37,000 well spent.

Mr. Bevec talked about the day Sarris Candies was on fire. He asked, if we didn't have anyone to respond, is it not worth the amount of money we're talking about to help preserve the major business in our town? He also asked, how do you put a dollar figure on a life? Mr. Bevec said he looks it as a

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small dollar amount for the benefit of the town. He added that if people don't have responses to fires, this is something insurance companies keep a close eye on. This could affect everyone in town. They may not get a \$12 tax increase this year, but their insurance premiums might go up 25% next year, and that would be more than \$12.

Mr. Bevec said it is very unlikely that any of that money will be spent next year, as the grant application doesn't go in until July. The state will review it, and the earliest they can award it is September. After that, we would go through the hiring process, and we'll be lucky to have someone in place by November.

Mr. Rhome informed Council that this individual will also be doing fire inspections and infiltrating with different commercial divisions, boy scouts, cub scouts, etc.

Mr. Bevec added that this person will be involved with fire prevention in the schools. In addition, he may be able to generate additional revenue through fire inspections.

Mr. Bilsky asked if this position (paid fireman) would be a union position.

Mr. Hazlett replied that his understanding is that this person would be in a firemen's union—not Teamsters or Police; the current person is in the Public Works union.

Mrs. Coleman asked how the \$37,000 amount was determined.

Mr. Hazlett said this is a \$50,000 a year job. The Borough's contribution is \$25,000 plus \$12,000 in benefits. The federal government will match \$25,000,

Mayor Rhome stated that Council can redo that amount.

Mr. Hazlett explained that the fireman asked for \$25,000 for the matching grant of \$25,000.

ROLL CALL ON THE MOTION:

Richard Russo	Yes
Paul Sharkady	No

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Joseph Graff	Absent
Joseph McGarry	Absent
Patricia Romano	No
*Fran Coleman	Abstain
Timothy Bilsky	No
Peter Lucas	Yes
John Bevec	Yes

RESULTS OF THE MOTION: Three Yes, Three No, Two Absent. **MOTION TIED. MAYOR MUST BREAK THE TIE.** Mayor Rhome voted in the affirmative (for the safety of the people of this community). **MOTION PASSED.**

\*Mrs. Coleman stated that she was abstaining at this point, but not because she was told to do so; she has a lot of homework to do on this.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:

- A. Mayor Rhome informed Council that next Saturday, at 11:00 A.M., at Ashland and East Pike Street, Olympian Bill Schmidt will be present for the unveiling of the marquee. Mr. Schmidt, a bronze medallist from town, after four years (with private money) has been able to have a sign erected. The Mayor said that this is another tourist attraction, and we are working for him to have the medal here in Canonsburg.

IX. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Bilsky motioned to adjourn.

Mr. Sharkady seconded the motion.

The motion was passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 P.M.

Mary A. Solomon

ATTACHMENTS:

None

