

**BOROUGH OF SLATINGTON  
COUNCIL MEETING  
MINUTES  
11/30/20**

The Special Meeting Minutes of Council was held on **Monday, November 30, 2020**, at 6:30 pm., at the Vigilant Fire House, 110 S. Walnut Street, Slatington, PA 18080.

Presiding: Bryon Reed: President of Council

Recording Secretary: Daniel Stevens, Borough Manager/Secretary

The meeting was called to order by President Reed at 6:35 pm following in attendance:

**ROLL CALL:**

<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>	<u>OTHERS PRESENT</u>	<u>VISITORS</u>
Bryon Reed		Mayor Niedermeyer	Jeffrey Hausman
Jason Ruff		Chief Rachman	Ron Hausman
Joseph Wechsler (via phone)		Daniel Stevens	Crystal Hausman
David Schnaars			Jason Nicholas
Thomas Bartholomew			Austin Berger
Ronald Kratz			Lindsay Taylor
Kevin Steckel (arrived 6:43 pm)			

**NOTIFICATION:**

President Reed announced that all public sessions of Borough Council are electronically recorded and such recordings are maintained as part of the meeting record until the minutes are transcribed and approved by the Board, at which time the recordings shall be erased.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION – None**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (Agenda and Non-Agenda items) You will have three minutes to address Council from the podium. The three minutes applies to your time at the podium. If you exit the podium, you have yielded the floor, and any time you have remaining.

Jason Nicholas – Slatington Fire Chief. Chief Nicholas pointed out to the Council that the preliminary budget doesn't leave any room for additions as far as minor equipment, equipment for vehicles, and capital purchases/vehicles. Chief Nicholas feels that they can't plan for the future without financial stability, example a catastrophic loss of the one of the vehicles or building repairs. The proposed budget is for \$86,250.00 that is what the Borough's tax revenue base generates for the fire department. Chief Nicholas stated that there is nothing in the budget for any kind of equipment purchases. Any of the equipment, or gear, needed to equip the truck, or the men and women, is all done either thru grants or fund raising done by the volunteers. Chief Nicholas requested, that if a tax increase for 2021 were going to happen, then give serious consideration to the fire department. Chief Nicholas stated that for each 1/10 of an increase to the millage, which is .50 now, is roughly \$17,260.00. If we were to go just 1/10 to the .60 it would be \$103,560.00, 2/10 would be \$120,820.00, 3/10 would be \$138,080.00, and 4/10 would be \$155,340.00. He would like to have the ladder truck paid off as the sewer note, even before talking about ordering a new truck. If they obtain some of the tax increase, they could pay off the ladder truck sooner.

**PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS:**

Manager Stevens informed the Council the Chamber has decided to have a virtual Christmas tree lighting at 5:30 pm on Friday, and they are going to try to have TV13 there and broadcast it on Facebook. They will also have a drive-thru for hot chocolate and gifts for children. The Chamber invited the mayor, or any one from council, to attend the lighting at 5:30 pm. Mayor Niedermeyer stated he would be attending.

## MAYORS/POLICE CHIEF'S REMARKS

Mayor Walter H. Niedermeyer

### Chief Rachman

Chief Rachman had a meeting with some of the councilors concerning current the status of the police department and moving forward with regard to addressing the quality-of-life issues and other items that were of concern. Chief Rachman stated that policing is not the same as it was 10 years ago. The police deal with more fighting, resistance, suing, etc. The department is held up to a higher standard. Chief Rachman stated that according to the Department of Justice Statistics the range for a full-time officer is from 2.6 per 1000 residences to 1.8 per 1000, the average is 2.5 per 1000. Slatington is at 1.34 per 1000. He cited other communities' full-time police with approximately the same number of residents. Chief Rachman has requested in the 3-year plan, over the course of the 3-year plan, to add 2 additional full-time police officers to make it a total of 8. He did say he understands that there are budget constraints and that taxes may be increased for other expenses that have gone up. He also stated the department could manage on as they are now. Chief Rachman cited line item 410.131 – police part-time patrol for 2020 at \$115,000. The part-time officers are paid \$19.00/hr. He provided other townships part time salaries. Chief Rachman stressed that the Borough must raise the part time hourly rate. He said that the number of candidates is way down, quality of candidates, and nobody wants to be a police officer. Having a low salary is not an incentive to work in Slatington. Chief Rachman stated that the rest of the budget is fairly standard each year. However, he did point out that there were 2 things that were not listed in prior years; the new records management systems require a licensing for \$4,500.00 per year; ammunition – the price has gone up. President Reed pointed out that the 2020 seminars/education line item was only \$275.00 as of 10/19/20, but it is in the budget for 2021 for \$5,000.00. Chief Rachman informed him that there will be more required training in 2021. Councilor Kratz asked Chief Rachman that if the Borough hires 2 more full-time police officers would we be within the range. Chief Rachman stated we would be closer, but still lower. President Reed mentioned other communities' salary rate for the part-time police are an average of \$20.00. Chief Rachman would like to see a raise to be competitive. Chief Rachman stated this raise does not have to be implemented on January 1.

Councilor Schnaars asked Chief Rachman what the police are doing to establish closer relations with the community. Chief Rachman said they use their social media page, occasionally officers will play basketball with kids, not much of anything else. Chief Rachman feels his priorities are coverage for the basics. Also, having the extra officers would enable the police to interact more with the community.

Councilor Ruff asked about the vehicle purchase line, 410.751. Chief Rachman stated that every other year they replace a car. The 3 marked cars are on the rotation, not the unmarked cars. Chief Rachman spoke about the condition of the vehicles and what their plans are for which vehicle needs replacing.

### **Discussion of 2021 Preliminary Budget:**

#### General Fund

Page 1 – Revenue. Manager Stevens stated there were not a lot of changes from last year. Manager Stevens did point out Tenant Registrations line there was an increase due to obtaining more registrations for apartments. President Reed questioned if we would be able to get to the budgeted to amount for Earned Income Tax. Manager Stevens stated we were a little above that last year.

Page 2 – Manager Stevens informed the Council he had to make a change. He signed the lease with Representative Mako office which added \$25.00/month. He stated that he thought we had a tenant for the

small office on the second floor, but it fell through at the end of last week. The other tenants, Steckel & Stopp, Turning Point, and Zack Mako leases are renewed. Manager Stevens had figured \$500.00/month for the small office, which is included in the 2021 budget, this is \$6,000.00 to high. He asked what the Council would like to do – remove the \$6,000.00 from the budget. No rent is in the budget for the other empty office. Council agreed to remove it. Manager Stevens is waiting for a new number due to claims for the Health Insurance Expense by December 1st.

Page 3 – no issues

Page 4 – Expense. Manager Stevens pointed out line item 457.200 – Civil & Military Celebration’s-supplies. We need to buy a lot of flags to replace those in poor shape. This is just for the flags, not the poles. He also stated that Janitorial – line 401.180 – dropped because we have only one person working instead of 2. Councilor Schnaars and President Reed questioned the Accounting & Auditing Services – line 401.311. Manager Stevens informed them they had originally figured it to be high, but they now have more accurate figures.

Page 5 – Expense. Manager Stevens pointed out Main. Bldg.- Municipal Bldg., line item 409.374. He stated that something always need replacement at the municipal building. Councilor Schnaars moved to increase the amount by \$5,000.00 making it \$20,000.00 total to include roof repairs. Councilor Ruff questioned the amounts for fuel & lights. Manager Stevens informed him the costs for oil was very low last year, and may increase significantly.

Page 6 – Expense – Police. Councilor Ruff stated that if there is an increase to the part-time police pay or consideration another full-time officer in the 2021, he would like people to consider not getting a new car every 2 years and pushing it off to every 3 years this off-setting the cost. Councilor Schnaars informed him that they have done that in the past, but the cost of the repairs was almost the cost of a new vehicle. President Reed questioned the insurance for the police department line item 410.350. Last year it was budgeted for \$10,965.00 and this year it is only \$7,000.00. Manager Stevens stated this insurance is for liability. The previous year may have been estimated high.

Page 7 – no issues

Page 8 - Expense. Manager Stevens informed the Council line item 430.245, Road Maintenance Supplies was increased due for the supplies needed to repair the 100 steps. Manager Stevens stated that there are always maintenance issues for the vehicles. Councilor Schnaars asked about the Workers Comp. Manager Stevens said it is increasing by 10% for next year. Manager Stevens pointed out to the Council that Foreman & Labor, line item 430-146, went down because Councilor Wechsler wanted the labor for the MS4 split separately, Hwy Foreman/Laborers-Storm Swrs., line item 436.112, on page 9. Manager Stevens placed \$4,000.00 in that account as a baseline.

Page 9 – Expense. Manager Stevens mentioned Contracted Services – Hwy Dept, line item 430.450, for \$3,000.00, is for doing the 100 steps. He reminded the Council the \$9,213 in 2020 for Capital purchases was for the new lift. Manager Stevens clarified that the \$1,000.00 for street signs and markings are ones that can’t be billed to Liquid Fuels. Manager Stevens asked Council if they still want to add an extra \$500.00 to their contribution for the library.

Councilor Schnaars made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Ruff, to increase the Per Capita Tax for the NLRA to \$6.00 per person in the 2021 budget. President Reed declared the motion passed following a Roll call, voting as follows:

ROLL CALL

AYES

NAYS

ABSTAIN

Bryon Reed  
Jason Ruff

Joseph Wechsler  
Dave Schnaars  
Thomas Bartholomew  
Ronald Kratz  
Kevin Steckel

Page 10 – Expense. Manager Stevens stated the Capital Projects, line item 454-700, reflects the \$5,395 that we still owe on the Multi-municipal plan. It was originally at \$10,227.00, but a payment of \$4,832.00 was made this year. There was a \$20,000.00 grant match for the bathrooms at Victory Park.

Councilor Schnaars asked Manager Stevens how much a mill brings. Manager Stevens said \$173,000.00, and 1/10 of a mill brings in \$17,300.00. The Council discussed possibly raising the millage.

#### Fire Fund

Page 1 – Revenue. No issues

Page 2 – Expense. Manger Stevens informed the Council there was nothing figured for the 1991 pumper, because they weren't sure if it would be sold. Jeffrey Hausman stated that there are 14 bids currently on Muncibid for the pumper. Line item 411.262, Veh Maint- Utility 2492 – Manager Stevens said Chief Nicholas had told him to eliminate that line because the fire company is paying for the maintenance for the 2012, along with the ATV. The Borough saved on Workers Comp, line item 411.354, because this is based on claims. Maintenance costs have been increased for the vehicles in the budget. Building maintenance also increased due to more work being needed.

#### Water Fund

Page 1 – Revenue. No issues

Page 2 – Expense. Manager Stevens pointed out the \$6,500 fee to DEP which started last year.

Page 3 – Expense. The telephone budget went down due to lines we want to have removed. Capital Purchase, line item 448.750, for \$125,000.00 is figuring \$25,000.00 for the Scada System and \$100,000.00 for the media replacement. Building maintenance has dropped due to all the work that has been done in the few past years.

Page 4 – Expense. No issues

#### Sewer Fund

Page 1 – Revenue. No issues

Page 2 – Expense. Manager Stevens noted Contracted Services, line item 402.450, \$20,000.00 is being added for LCA and an increase for the amount budgeted for Fulford.

Pages 3 & 4 – Expense. Line item 429.246, Sewer Pumps & Meters, another \$2300.00 was added for PSI company. President Reed questioned the rise in chemicals costs. Manager Stevens pointed out that as of 10/19/2020 the chemical budget is already at \$10,879.00. Councilor Schnaars questioned line item 429.73, Building Maint. increase. This is due to budgeting roof for the main building in 2021. Line item 429.450, Contracted Services (sludge dumping) is lower because with the new blowers we are not hauling as much sludge.

Garbage Fund

Page 1 – Revenue. The contract with the garbage company is ending in January of 2022.

Page 2 – Expense. Manager Stevens stated that last year the Borough spent \$4,870.00 on electronics recycling. Councilor Schnaars stated that maybe the Borough could hold only 1 electronic recycling event during the year in the future.

Liquid Fuels Fund

Page 1 – Revenue & Expense. Manager Stevens informed the Council that there was a problem obtaining the contract for the ARLE grant; however, he has finally received the contract. Manager Stevens has verified that the gas tax could be used toward the ARLE grant match for the stop light at Main and Church Streets. Manager Stevens pointed out that the Borough received less money in Liquid Fuels this year due to COVID19 because people were not driving as much. (approximately \$12,000.00 less) Council agreed to put the \$30,000.00 match for the ARLE grant in Liquid Fuels.

President Reed called for a recess at 9:08 PM. President Reed reconvened the meeting at 9:12 PM.

The Council continued to discuss items in the budget.

Councilor Schnaars would like to have .025, which would be \$4,325.00 a year increase for the fire fund and a .325 in the general, for a total of 3.5, it would add \$56, 225.00 to general account. (6.6% tax increase)

Councilor Schnaars made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to increase the general fund to .325 millage and .025 millage for the fire department. Motion withdrawn.

Councilor Schnaars made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to adopt the preliminary budget as presented as the Council modified it for 2021. President Reed declared the motion passed following a Roll call, voting as follows:

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
	Bryon Reed		
	Jason Ruff		
	Joseph Wechsler		
	Dave Schnaars		
	Thomas Bartholomew		
	Ronald Kratz		
	Kevin Steckel		

Councilor Schnaars made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to authorize the Borough Manager to advertise Ordinance 703, *Ordinance fixing the tax rate for Real Estate Tax for the fiscal year 2021, fixing the per capita tax at \$5.00 and reenacting the 1% wage tax, the Borough of Slatington local service tax of \$52.00, 1% realty transfer tax under the local enabling act, and setting the fire fund tax rate*, with the following modifications: add .325 mills to general fund tax rate (approximately \$56,225.00), this would be a 6.6% tax increase to the current millage rate

and add .025 mills (approximately \$4,325.00 per year) to the fire fund tax rate for a total increase of .350 mills. President Reed declared the motion passed following a Roll call, voting as follows:

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
	Bryon Reed		
	Jason Ruff	Jason Ruff	
	Dave Schnaars		
	Thomas Bartholomew		
	Ronald Kratz		
	Kevin Steckel		

**OTHER BUSINESS: None**

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR** – (Agenda Items Only – You will have two (2) minutes to address Council from the podium on Agenda Items Only.) **None**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: None**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Being no further business, Councilor Schnaars made the motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to adjourn the meeting. President Reed declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.

President Reed declared the meeting adjourned at 9:31 PM.

Daniel L. Stevens  
Borough Secretary