

**BOROUGH OF SLATINGTON
COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
2/14/22**

The Regular Meeting of Council was held on **Monday, February 14, 2022**, at 7:00 PM, to be held in the Council Room, 125 S. Walnut Street, First Floor, Slatington, PA 18080.

Presiding: Thomas Bartholomew: President of Council

Recording Secretary: Daniel Stevens, Borough Manager/Secretary

The meeting was called to order by President Bartholomew at 7:00 PM with the following in attendance:

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT

Thomas Bartholomew
Bryon Reed
Joseph Wechsler (via phone)
Ronald Kratz
Kevin Steckel
Ronald Hausman
Zachari Halkias

ABSENT

OTHERS PRESENT

Mayor Schoch
Ed Healy
Justin Gross

VISITORS

Austin Berger, Jeremy Henry
Nancy Treskot, Bob Treskot
Drew Snowberger TV-13,
Robert Herzog, David Schnaars
Kristine Porter, Crystal Fink

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

NOTIFICATION:

President Bartholomew 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.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS – Councilor Hausman noted a correction for Reorganization Minutes that under President Pro-Tem should read 2021-2023, not 2020-2021. Councilor Reed made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to approve the following minutes as corrected: **Reorganization Meeting** January 3, 2022, **Council Meeting** January 10, 2022; **Special Meeting** January 17, 2022; **Committee Meetings** – January 17, 2022 & January 24, 2022; **Special Meeting** January 31, 2022. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.

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.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Nancy Treskot – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Nancy Treskot is the current chairperson for the Venture Group. Nancy wished to thank the Borough, Dan Stevens, and Bobby Herzog for any issues the Venture Group has come across. Nancy also thanked Councilor Reed for getting the electric resolved. The Venture Group was receiving extremely high electric bills. The Venture Group received a \$6,000 PPE Grant from the county for cleaning supplies. They had to connect to a cable modem due to an increase in vandalism. Nancy said they posted this information on Facebook which has helped to cut down on vandalism. The fundraiser the Venture Group will be having is scheduled for Saturday, October 15, 2022, which will be called October Fest, which is in conjunction with Walnutport and Canal Days. They are looking for wineries and breweries. They will also hold a basket social which will be an all-day event from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Nancy stated that their biggest support is from people who use the trail. Nancy added that in 2021 they counted over 100,000 people who used the trail. Nancy stated that improvements are needed, specifically looking for lights at the end of the trail at the parking lot. The potential cost of the lights is \$25,000.00. The Venture Group is looking at 3 grants. The County has been

helping them. They have sent grants into Walmart, the D&L, and the third one is a little iffy due to its location. It is a combination of Lehigh and Northampton Counties. It is also time to update the bathrooms. They are obtaining pricing for metal toilets at a cost of \$1,800.00 each. Nancy stated that for a lot of groups have a tendency to use the trail head. They forget that the facilities don't come free. She has spoken to St. Luke's about their run and is looking for a donation. However, since the Borough has approval for these events, if the Borough could suggest that type of donation to the Venture Group would be greatly appreciated. Manager Stevens informed Nancy that the Borough will be working on the trail, repairing the drainage, paving, re-decking the trestle bridge, and replacing stone at the covered bridge, as part of a GTRP Grant which was approved last year.

Crystal Fink - 25 Stable Road, Lehighton. Signed in and was recognized to speak. Crystal wished to speak about 234 Cherry Street. This building was the old sewing mill that they have recently purchased from Donald Gogel. The objective was to get it cleaned up. Crystal is trying to gather ideas, but also with the D&L Trail online, for these buildings. Crystal stated the cost to just clean out one floor has been about \$25,000.00. She stated that taking on this size of a project, and owning both halves, the taxes are \$10,000.00 a year. Crystal is asking if there is anything she can do such as a tax abatement for a few years, until she can at least get one half of the building in shape. One half of the building is in better condition. She is not looking for a reduction in taxes. Manager Stevens stated that she would have to go through Lehigh County Assessment. However, this is not what she would like to do. Attorney Healy advised the speaker and Council about the LERTA statute. He said it stands for the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act. Attorney Healy suggested that Council or the administration could get in touch with how LERTA works and that it can promote reinvestment on an area-wide basis, not a specific property, by holding the existing tax assessment in place and allowing the increased assessment attributable to reconstruction or rehabilitation of certain qualified improvements to be phased in over time, say 10 years. Attorney Healy also mentioned that a report would need to be created and that the success of the program can largely depend upon whether the school district would want to participate in the phasing-in of new assessments. Healy advised that nothing could happen that night and the matter could be considered by a committee of Council.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

REPORTS

The reports of various committees, officials and officers were provided to Council and are on file in Borough Hall and are available for public inspection.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE/TRANSFER

Councilor Hausman made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Steckel, to approve payment of the bills and transfers as presented by the Treasurer. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Roll Call, voting as follows:

ROLL CALL	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
	Thomas Bartholomew		
	Bryon Reed		
	Joseph Wechsler		
	Ronald Kratz		
	Kevin Steckel		
	Jeffrey Hausman		
	Zachari Halkias		

MAYORS/POLICE CHIEF'S REMARKS

Mayor Jeralyn Schoch

Mayor Schoch received a letter from the Northern Lehigh Pool Board stating that Northern Lehigh swimming pool will face permanent closure due to costly repairs which must be made to get the pool up and running. Several years ago, repairs were made, unfortunately the renovations did not hold up. They are looking for donations to get the pool up to code at an estimated cost of \$300,000. They are looking for a monetary donation from the Borough. The Northern Lehigh swimming pool has served, and provided jobs, to the community for many years. Manager Stevens stated, as far as he knew, the Northern Lehigh swimming pool had received a \$250,000.00 grant from the state and the Northern Lehigh Swimming Pool Association had enough money to match it. Jeralyn stated they are waiting on the paperwork.

STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Highway

Councilor Jeffrey Hausman

1. The Council discussed bidding and details for Franklin Street CDBG project. Councilor Hausman made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Reed, to authorize Lehigh Engineering to proceed with the bid process and advertising for the E. Franklin Street project. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Roll Call, voting as follows:

ROLL CALL	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
	Thomas Bartholomew		
	Bryon Reed		
	Joseph Wechsler		
	Ronald Kratz		
	Kevin Steckel		
	Jeffrey Hausman		
	Zachari Halkias		

2. Discussion and possible action on Church and Main Streets traffic signal project. Manager Stevens informed the Council that there is an inspection coming up on Wednesday for the lights. Justin added that he will be meeting with PennDOT on Wednesday at 9:30 AM. Manager Stevens said he would attend to represent the Borough. Several areas of concrete must be repaired. No other action is needed at this time.

B. Public Safety

Councilor Kevin Steckel

1. Councilor Steckel made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Hausman, to approve appointment of Jeremy Henry as Fire Police Captain. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.
2. Councilor Steckel made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Hausman, to allow Blue Ridge to bury service cable at the Boy Scout Camp at Victory Park. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.
3. Review flier from the PA State Police at the Zoellner Arts center at Lehigh University, February 17, 2022, from noon to 5:00 PM (informational only)
4. Possible motion to appoint members of the external review committee for Chief of Police. President Bartholomew requested this be tabled till after executive session.
5. Motion to authorize Manager Stevens to contact potential members of external review committee for Chief of Police. President Bartholomew requested this be tabled till after executive session.

- Councilor Steckel made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Wechsler, to approve request from Lehigh Township Fire Police Captain Barry Frey requesting mutual aid assistance for their annual sportsman's night on Saturday, March 26, 2022. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.

C. Human/Community Services

Councilor Zachari Halkias

- The Council reviewed the thank you letter from NOVA for the Borough's contribution (informational only)
- Councilor Halkias made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Steckel, to allow the NLRA to sell alcohol at various programs and events in Slatington for year 2022. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.
- Councilor Halkias made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Hausman to adopt Ordinance 709 – *An ordinance of the Borough of Slatington, adding Subsection 48-1.C (relating to the Chief of Police) to include a detailed job description*). President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Roll Call, voting as follows:

ROLL CALL	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
	Thomas Bartholomew		
	Bryon Reed		
	Joseph Wechsler		
	Ronald Kratz		
	Kevin Steckel		
	Jeffrey Hausman		
	Zachari Halkias		

- Councilor Halkias made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to authorize trail lighting on Walnut Street Bridge (Borough would be responsible for maintenance of lights). President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.
- Review e-mail from Northern Lehigh Swimming Pool thanking the Borough for their donation of \$1,000.00 (informational only)

D. Finance/Planning/Zoning

Councilor Ronald Kratz

- Councilor Kratz made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Reed, to appoint Mike Turoscy (Engineer) to the UCC Board of Appeals, term expires 12/31/23. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.
- Councilor Kratz made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Hausman, to authorize Borough Manager Stevens to approve Exemption Report from Statewide Tax Recovery Inc. for Delinquent Per Capita Tax for: Kelly Kremposky – closed bankruptcy - \$11.00 (2 x \$5.50); Dylan Sillett – \$5.50; Roy Trone - \$11.00 (2 x \$5.50); Sandra Rex - \$5.50; Angel James - \$5.50; Emily Buss - \$5.50; Marianne Hooke - \$5.50; Marl Louis Meixel-Moyer - \$5.50 – all closed efforts exhausted. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.
- Zoning Officer comments on 25-27 Willow Avenue submitted to LVPC for subdivision plan (informational only)
- Possible motion to hire Tracey Brazes assistant to the code enforcement officer at \$15.00/hour. Hours not exceed 19 hrs./week. (no benefits). President Bartholomew stated this will have to be tabled till the next regular council agenda.

5. Discussion and possible action concerning tax collector vacancy (30-day window expired on 2/9/22, currently with vacancy board). President Bartholomew requested this be tabled till after executive session.

E. Sewer/Solid Waste

Councilor Joseph Wechsler

1. Councilor Wechsler made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Steckel, to transfer \$3,750.00 to Slatington Borough Authority for annual NPDES permits. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Roll Call, voting as follows:

ROLL CALL	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
	Thomas Bartholomew		
	Bryon Reed		
	Joseph Wechsler		
	Ronald Kratz		
	Kevin Steckel		
	Jeffrey Hausman		
	Zachari Halkias		

2. Councilor Wechsler made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Reed, to authorize LCA to proceed with the 2022 sewer system inspection at a cost of \$23,000.00. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Roll Call, voting as follows:

ROLL CALL	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
	Thomas Bartholomew		
	Bryon Reed		
	Joseph Wechsler		
	Ronald Kratz		
	Kevin Steckel		
	Jeffrey Hausman		
	Zachari Halkias		

F. Water/Special Sewer Committee

Councilor Bryon Reed

1. Water Test Statement - Water was tested and found safe for human consumption
2. Councilor Reed made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Hausman, to approve estimate to supply and install a new water meter and casing at the water plant for \$8,410.00. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Roll Call, voting as follows:

ROLL CALL	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
	Thomas Bartholomew		
	Bryon Reed		
	Joseph Wechsler		
	Ronald Kratz		
	Kevin Steckel		
	Jeffrey Hausman		
	Zachari Halkias		

Councilor Reed informed the Council that the water plant has had a problem with the boards these last few days.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS: None

NEW BUSINESS: None

COUNCIL PRESIDENT’S REPORT: None

Thomas Bartholomew

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: President Bartholomew recessed to executive session at 7:50 PM. At 9:30 PM President Bartholomew reconvened the meeting. Matters of personnel and legal were discussed in executive session.

Councilor Kratz made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Steckel, to amend the agenda to appoint David Schnaars to the Vacancy Board. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.

Councilor Kratz made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Reed, to appoint David Schnaars as Chairman of the Vacancy Board. The 1st meeting will be at 6:00 PM on the 21st of February. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.

Councilor Steckel made motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to amend the agenda to include a motion to hire a contractor for purposes of making recommendations to hire part-time police officers. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.

Councilor Steckel made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to extend an offer to retired Police Officer Chief David Rachman to provide reports and his recommendations to the Council President for the hiring of part-time police officers at a rate not to exceed \$80.00 per hour. He is not to exceed 5 hours a week, and to have Attorney Healy draft the offer. President Bartholomew declared the motion passed following a Roll Call, voting as follows:

ROLL CALL

AYES

NAYS

ABSTAIN

Bryon Reed

Thomas Bartholomew

Kevin Steckel

Jeffrey Hausman

Joseph Wechsler

Zachari Halkias

Ronald Kratz

ADJOURNMENT

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

President Bartholomew declared the meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Daniel L. Stevens
Borough Secretary