

BOROUGH OF SLATINGTON

The **Finance Planning/Zoning, Public Safety and Human/Community Services Committee Workshop Meetings** were held on **December 20, 2021**, in Council Room, 125 South Walnut Street, Slatington, PA 18080.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Steckel at 6:35 PM with the following in attendance:

<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>	<u>OTHERS PRESENT</u>	<u>VISITORS</u>
Thomas Bartholomew	Bryon Reed	Daniel Stevens	Jeffrey Hausman
Kevin Steckel	Jason Ruff	Dean Heffelfinger (interviewer)	Jeralyn Schoch
		Dylan McDevitt (interviewer)	Dennis Wetherhold (interviewee)
		Justin Frable (interviewer)	Jason Nicholas (interviewee)
		Robert Reph (interviewer)	Austin Berger (interviewee)
			Randy Schmoyer (interviewee)

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

A. FINANCE/PLANNING/ZONING

Thomas Bartholomew– Chairman; Members: Kevin Steckel, Jason Ruff

1. Committee Member discussion on listed topics:

There were no questions from the committee members; the Finance Committee Meeting was adjourned.

B. PUBLIC SAFETY

Kevin Steckel-Chairman; Members: Thomas Bartholomew, Jason Ruff

1. Committee Member discussion on listed topics:
 - a. The committee and the interviewers questioned each applicant for the new fire chief position.

Randy Schmoyer stated he is currently a member of the Slatington Volunteer Fire Company since 1997. He started as junior fireman, fireman, the progressed to lieutenant, captain, assistant chief, and deputy chief. He currently resides in Palmerton. Randy's projects have mainly been in training. He has brought a lot of the members up from just essential training to pro-board national fire fighters' level 2, air pack project in 2008, training in 2011. Randy's biggest push was to get everyone certified to the national level. Randy has attended most fund raisers. Randy feels that the biggest improvement needed by the department is leadership. His plan would be to have better communication from the top down. Randy's hobbies include wildland – hunting, fishing. He works for PennDOT. He has been an EMT since 2000. Randy feels he can take the department to the next level and improve on the borough's ISO rating and get everyone certified. He

feels that the training as a wildland firefighter out west on two occasions, acting as a squad boss was a great experience along with coming up through the ranks. As a leader, he wouldn't have anyone do a job that he wouldn't do.; safety is a big key. Randy was asked how his supervisor at work would describe his work ethic. Randy feels they would say his work ethic is good. Greatest strength is to show leadership, and his weakness is he gets verbal, which sometimes is required to get the job done. Randy has proven his loyalty to the department since 1997 through good and bad. Randy feels he deserves the position because of his leadership and fire experience. Councilor Bartholomew asked if he could work under the leadership of a different chief? Randy has worked with many chiefs and feels he could.

Dennis Wetherhold, Jr. is not currently a member of the Slatington Volunteer Fire Company. Dennis was a member for 2 years and did not hold any officer position. He currently resides in Walnutport. Dennis' main project had been working on a radio upgrade with Randy Schmoyer and Ryan Schmoyer to get grant funding. Worked on redoing the tools, upgraded the lights on the utility vehicle. He works in the City of Allentown doing emergency lighting and vehicle stuff. Dennis has done the following fund raisers – gun bingo and pizza sales. Dennis believes the biggest area of improvement that is needed is that there are several groups of people that they need to bring together and make it more of a uniform department. Dennis feels that a plan a head of time should be put in place to obtain an apparatus that needs to be replaced and not wait until the last minute. Dennis' plan would be to look at the age of the vehicle and the cost of repair. Dennis has worked in a managerial position and would stress the importance of working as a team. Dennis' joined the fire services in 1992. Starting in 1996 he worked for the City Allentown 911 Center, also worked in Lehigh County. In the fire service he was a fire investigator and captain in Whitehall. Dennis likes photography. Dennis was questioned on how his supervisors at the 911 center would describe your work ethic. Dennis stated that he goes by the book, but if there is a gray area, he will always do the what is the safest for the people. Dennis feels his greatest strength is his experience over the years and management skills in the city. He stated that his weakness is that has not spent a lot of time in the Slatington Fire Department. Dennis had applied for the chief position in Whitehall. Dennis was a training lieutenant at Fullerton where he managed all the training, engine lieutenant in Fullerton, and captain in W. Catasauqua. He was asked how many fires, or major incidents, he had been in command of? Dennis stated approximately 10 major incidents and 30 fires. One of Dennis' best educations in training was the Fire Officer class which has been a benefit and having the knowledge the of fire investigation and fire inspections are beneficial. Dennis is also L&I certified. He is currently a firefighter with the Slatedale Fire Department. Dennis would resign from Slatedale if he obtained this position. He is in good standing with previous departments. There had been a fallout with Slatington. Dennis stated that he put in for the lieutenant position with Slatington and was running at Slatedale as well. Jason Nicholas felt he was using social media to bash the fire department, which was not correct. Dennis feels he deserves this position because of his experience, years of service, and

knowledge. Dennis stated that only other person that deserves the position is Randy Schmoyer.

Austin Berger is currently member of the Slatington Volunteer Fire Company for just over 11 years. Austin's positions have been lieutenant, captain and assistant chief. Austin resides in Washington Township. Austin's projects are currently working on getting a website together, working with the borough and sign installers trying get the major project done as part of the safer grant they just obtained, reviewing and upgraded dated paperwork, and applying for different grants from private corporations. Austin has participated in for Gun Bingo fund raiser, pizza stands, coin tosses, and tries to make it to all of the fund raisers. Austin feels discipline is the biggest improvement that is needed. He stated that people have gone against policies that are in place, people don't show up, but are still retaining membership, and there are a lot of people doing whatever they want without any repercussions. To correct these situations, Austin stated that over the course of February to November, he and other officers currently updated their SOG's and policies making them something that is enforceable. Austin works for the Lehigh County Communication Center; he has worked there for 22 months. First 2 months he worked at the jail as a correction officer and now in the communication center. Austin is devoted to fire fighting. Austin's supervisors would describe him as reliable with good work ethic and willing to work overtime. Austin's greatest strength is that he is very thorough knowledge of the policies and procedures that they adopted this year, and knows the available resources from the county. Even though Austin has been a firefighter for 11 years, he feels his weakness is that more experience is always needed on the operational side of command. Austin would like to become the fire chief because he would like to get the department back to a better place. He believes his experience and time served in the county and fire departments places him in a nice spot to step in that role. Austin would like to see 85%-90% of the members be pro-board certified in 5-years, which is a national certification. Austin feels he would be consistent as a leader. Austin's experience as a line officer, 2-years ago he got the lieutenant spot, but there wasn't much training when he took an officer's spot. Since then, he has worked with new officers to educate them properly. He was in command of a lot of large incidents through the borough, i.e., Tropical Storm Isaias, Hurricane Ida, commander for the Joint Operations Center, Emergency Operations Center, snow events, stand by crew, etc. Austin was asked what plans does he have to better himself. He has already been actively looking for an instructor 1 class and officer 1 class, then increase his training and knowledge of the operational side of the command. He has been in contact with people who do grant writing. He was asked what makes you think you deserve this position. Justin stated that short of the 2 requirements in the ordinance he is the only candidate that meets those in the near future. In the past 2 years he has more than shown his dedication to the department, both on the operational side and administration side, attending council and committee meetings, and school public safety meetings. Austin was asked, in comparison to the other applicants, you had more training hours in comparison to all of them, how do you feel that future training will play an aspect in the fire department. Austin stated that part of the SOG just adopted there is going to be a separate requirement for points. Austin

feels general public relationships is how the public perceives your department. Austin stressed that Slatington Volunteer Fire Department did a great deal of work to help get donations for the disaster in Kentucky. Austin doesn't have any problem with inter departmental relations. He would like to organize more joint training with other departments.

Jason Nicholas is currently a member of the Slatington Volunteer Fire Company for approximately 17 years. Jason started as an EMS officer, lieutenant, captain, assist chief deputy, and chief. Justin resides in Washington Township for the last 17 years. The projects that Jason has been involved with is FEMA grant writing, increasing the membership, getting into a positive financial state, repaired the fire department reputation with the council, police department and the mutual aid department. Jason manages the fund drive letter, is active in the gun bingo, and coin tosses. Jason was asked what is the biggest area in the department that needs improvement. Jason stated moral. Jason stated that when you pick a chief, it affects the entire community. Jason will be moving out of the area and had heard that maybe the ordinance would be changed and he would be able to continue to be fire chief. He enjoys NASCAR and football. Jason's feels his supervisor would state that his work ethic is unquestionable. He had been employed with NOVA since 1994, a Lehigh County employee since 2001, and Palmerton ambulance for 20 years. If Jason were to continue, where would you see it in 5 years. Jason stated to continue the legacy he has set for the last 5 ½ years and making sure they continue moving forward and not regressing. Personally, well establish in his new home and 7 years away from retirement from work. Jason would describe himself as a current leader as fair. Jason's weakness is that he tries to be everybody's friend. Jason's greatest strength would be his dedication to the task that he has that come along with the job. Why do you deserve to remain in this position? Jason to continue where we are and with the leadership, we have in place that in place now, it would just be an honor for him.

There were no questions from the committee members; the Public Safety Committee meeting was adjourned.

C. HUMAN/COMMUNITY SERVICES

Jason Ruff – Chairman; Members: Kevin Steckel, Thomas Bartholomew

1. Committee Member discussion on listed topics:

There were no questions from the committee members; the Human/Community Services Committee meeting was adjourned.

D. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS: None

E. COURTESY TO THE FLOOR:

Jeffrey Hausman – Jeffrey stressed the importance of choosing the right person for the fire chief position.

Councilor Steckel made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Bartholomew, to adjourn. Being no further business, Councilor Steckel declared the meeting adjourned at 7:36 PM.

Daniel L. Stevens
Borough Secretary