

**BOROUGH OF SLATINGTON  
COUNCIL MEETING  
MINUTES  
10/12/20**

The Regular Meeting of Council was held on **Monday, October 12, 2020**, at 7:05 PM, at the Vigilant Fire Company, 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 7:05 PM with the following in attendance:

**ROLL CALL:**

PRESENT

Bryon Reed  
Jason Ruff  
Joseph Wechsler via phone  
David Schnaars  
Thomas Bartholomew  
Ronald Kratz  
Kevin Steckel

ABSENT

OTHERS PRESENT

Dave Rachman  
Ed Healy  
Mayor Niedermeyer  
Daniel Stevens  
Larry Turoscy

VISITORS

Robert Herzog, Jr., Jason Nicholas  
Austin Berg, Paul Gass, Lisa Fisher  
Michelle Raber Gass, Frank Solt  
Lindsay Taylor, Marc Grammes  
Eric Heiney, Patty Smith, Shawn Rios  
Kylie Adams, Linda M. Nierer  
Dan Eckhart, Larry Hontz  
Nick Swartz, Mike Fink, Dale Sell  
Pete Papay, Sr., Thomas Nicholson  
Edward Bechtel, Taylor Jones  
Crystal Fink, Patricia Hunsicker  
Jill Hontz, Mel Gildner, Katja Bender,  
Donald Eckhart, Jeff Hausman,

**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.

President Reed informed the public that due to the COVID19, the governor has mandated a limit to the number of people attending meetings to 20% of the capacity of the building. The Vigilant has a capacity of 150 and 20% is 30 people.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION – None**

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS** – Councilor Schnaars made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to approve the following minutes: **Council Meeting** of September 14, 2020; **Committee Meetings** – September 21, 2020, and September 28, 2020. President Reed declared the motion passed with following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION:** NLRA Executive Director Lindsay Taylor

President Reed stated that many of the people here tonight are in regards to the Northern Lehigh Recreation Authority. The Borough has received letters and emails from approximately 50 people supporting the NLRA. President Reed would like to clarify a few points. First, the Borough Council is not considering eliminating all funding for these programs. They are considering reducing our per capita contributions. The contributions for the first 5-years of the program were \$3.00 per capita which was \$12,696.00 per year. There are 3 parts to this: Washington Township, Slatington Borough, and Walnutport, and this money is just representing the Borough of Slatington. President Reed stated that for 2020 and 2021 the per capita increased

to \$7.50, for a total of \$31,740.00 per year. In 2022 it will go up to \$43,000.000, which is \$10.00 per capita, and in 2023 it will be up to \$12.50 per capita, which is \$52,900.00 per year. Council is also considering reducing funding due to costs which the council has no control over. Last year the Borough had an 8.5% increase in the cost of the family healthcare plans for the employees. The Council was able to carefully budget and not increase taxes. This year the Borough has been informed by their carrier that costs will likely increase by 15% to 17%, which will result in an increase between \$38,000.00 to \$43,000.00 per year. Also, the medical refund has dropped from \$53,789.00 in 2018 to zero in 2020. The increased costs and loss of refund on medical expenses will cost the Borough over \$100,000.00. This is not taking into account the current police contract, what is in arbitration, and other cost increases. In addition, it does not take in to account any loss of income due to COVID19. President Reed said that Council does not want recreation to end for the Borough of Slatington. This year the Borough has given \$20,000.00 to budget our parks maintenance, electric, and different things, but this is additional money over the top of NLRA. The Borough has donated money every year to the library, pool, NOVA, and other organizations.

President Reed introduced Lindsay Taylor from the NLRA

Lindsay Taylor thanked the Council for allowing her to speak. Lindsay Taylor understood that the Council will be considering the level of which to fund the Northern Lehigh Recreation Authority. The NLRA is asking the Council to uphold the commitment they made to the parks and recreation and the residents of Slatington. In 2015 Slatington, lead the efforts that resulted in the creation of the small municipal authority. In fact, as a result of this effort, Slatington, along with other partner municipalities, the NRLA were awarded a 2018 Lehigh Valley Award from the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission for multi-municipal planning. Since then the NLRA has grown and found its place as an increasingly important part of the community, in terms of the programs, events, and services that the NRLA offers. Lindsay Taylor stated that their budget is lean and relying upon the commitment of 3 municipalities to support the recreation authority. The NRLA apply for small programs grants and seeks sponsorships, but the funding mechanism that was put in place when the Authority was established centered on the commitment from each municipality. This commitment is getting results. Over the past 2 years, they have offered over 25 programs, with an estimate of over 7,000 participants. Lindsay Tylor mentioned some of the programs they have run such as: summer rec, tennis lessons, Unwind Wednesday, canoeing and kayaking, family fishing, trail rides, community night bikes, environmental programs, senior fitness, yoga, etc. In terms of parks, the NRLA has completed the draft improvement plan for Victory Park and will be reviewing it with Borough staff and the Parks and Recreation Board. Along with the Parks and Recreation Board, the NRLA will be looking at the Westend Park to determine the types of improvements that can be made to the park that will re-energize the area and surrounding neighborhood. The NRLA is working with volunteers and the Borough to rejuvenate the disc golf course in advance of the Borough possibly being awarded a grant. They are moving forward on building an amphitheater at Victory Park with the goal of dedicating it on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2021. At the Trailhead they are working with the Borough, Venture Group, and the D&L National Heritage Quarter, to develop the trailhead, which is arguably the finest on the D&L. One of the reasons for the establishment of the Northern Lehigh Recreation Authority was to bring in a professional to complete the community center. A feasibility study was completed in 2018. It had determined that an additional \$3.5 million to \$4.3 million would be necessary to complete the building. This has been proven to be very difficult to obtain. Our goal is to determine its condition and what will be needed to secure a certificate of occupancy and the estimated cost. The NRLA will go out to

the community to determine if support for this center still exists. The NRLA feels it has proven their importance to Slatington. Lindsay hopes that members of Council will continue their commitment to the quality of life of the residents you were elected to serve by continuing this commitment to the rec authority. She looks forward to answering any questions the Council may have.

President Reed asked Lindsay about reducing the per capita fees and she stated they would consider a discussion on doing that. Councilor Kratz asked if the community center would eventually fall under the NLRA. Lindsay stated that once legal work is done, the community center board will be merging with the recreation authority. Councilor Ruff pointed out from President Reed's statement, that there is a majority of council that supports the reduction in the per capita cost. Councilor Ruff was under the impression that the majority of the council was advocating completely defunding the NLRA, and asked if Lindsay was under the same impression. Lindsay stated that she too was under that impression. President Reed stated that it was never the council's intention to totally defund the NLRA. Councilor Ruff feels that this topic should be discussed further in committee meetings and not discussed tonight. Councilor Schnaars agrees with Councilor Ruff.

Manager Stevens provided some information concerning the budget as of September 2020 vs September 2019. He stated that the EIT is up 3.3%, Real estate transfer tax is down about 16.7%, LST is up 10.17% (the \$52.00 tax), real estate property tax is down 1.65%. Councilor Schnaars stated that at this time our income is about the same, but our expenses have changed.

President Reed asked Lindsay what did the NLRA do with the \$12,696.00 vs. the \$31,740.00. Lindsay informed him that it was part of a circuit rider grant from the PA Department of Community and Natural Resources that paid for director's salary in the initial years, and then it scaled down to zero last year. It was anticipated that the department would be growing. Lindsay restated the plan to obtain the cost to find out the condition of the community center. Manager Stevens asked Lindsay if she had worked out any figures for the per capita contribution from the Borough. Lindsay informed him that she had and went from \$.75 down to \$.50. Every \$.25 decrease works out to \$3,242.00 less income to NLRA. This would be significant loss to the Authority.

Councilor Bartholomew stated that to continue this program taxes will have to be raised. He asked if \$.50 of every dollar of the municipalities pay goes to Lindsay's salary. She stated that part of the budget is payroll, summer help, help at the trailhead, and contracted services, such as instructors. Councilor Bartholomew asked Councilor Ruff how he proposes to pay for the NLRA without raising taxes. Councilor Ruff stated that all he is advocating for is that we wait to see a proposed budget for next year before we start talking about cutting programs or raising taxes. Councilor Schnaars informed the Council, that when the NLRA went out to find a new director, a decision was made to hire the person they needed to carry on all the programs. After Mike left, they hired Lindsay and at a lower rate than she could have requested. Councilor Schnaars stated that the reason taxes have not been raised over the years was due to a reduction in the bond payment. Councilor Schnaars feels that the Borough needs to decide what type of community they want to be and attract people to purchase homes, not just rentals. Councilor Schnaars also stated that the school taxes are the highest in the area, but the Borough taxes are relatively small.

President Reed stated that in the 6-years that we have had the NRLA the Borough has given \$95,000.00 and Walnutport, plus Washington Township, gave \$196,000 for a total of \$291,000.00. He asked if we had gotten \$291,000.00 worth of programs. The Borough currently puts approximately \$20,000.00 into parks and recreation in addition to the NLRA.

Councilor Barthlowmew discussed future funding for the NLRA. In 2023 the per capita tax would be up to \$12.50.

Councilor Bartholomew stated that the Borough spends approximately \$1,000,000.00 for the police. The Slatington Police Department will respond to calls in Washington Township. Washington Township does not pay any police assistance.

Lindsay informed the Council that there is a fee for the summer programs. However, due to COVID19 there was no fee. The fee is currently about \$100.00, but they are looking into raising the fee.

Councilor Schnaars feels this topic bears more discussions.

Lindsay informed the Council that in 2021 all the data will be completed to determine if the NLRA can continue with the community center.

**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.

Michelle Raber Gass – 534 Diamond Street - Signed in and was recognized to speak. Michelle informed the Council of her volunteer work. In 1997 she and others formed the Northern Lehigh Community Center non-profit organization. At that time, they did not have the support of the Borough. Over the years they raised funds and grants that came to \$600,000.00. They built what they could and purchased the land. They decided not to get a loan, but instead to try raise the rest of the money to do Phase 2, which would be the gymnasium. The reason the building is so big, they took a survey and they found out they wanted an art room, computer lab, exercise room, bathrooms with showers and lockers, and small events catering kitchen. Their goal was not to compete with the fire halls. After all the money was spent, they went to State Representative Julie Harhart and asked her how to get this done. State Representative Harhart stated that they would have to create a Northern Lehigh Recreation Authority. This would have more clout and can get you backing of the grants you would need. That is how they come up with the 5-year decreasing grant and all the municipalities came onboard. One program she started was the 55+ group and the people on fixed income exercise program. Michelle would hate to see recreation programs go away and she gave Lindsay Taylor kudos for the great job she is doing.

Paul Gass – 534 Diamond Street – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Paul feels that having the rec authority is a positive action for the Borough. People want to live in an area that has things to do, where they feel safe and have opportunities.

Marc Grammes - 3923 Main Street, Slatedale – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Marc Grammes originally lived in the Borough of Slatington for 24 years. Marc Grammes is the District County Commissioner, and he chairs the finance committee on the county board, and is also vice-chair of Board of Commissioners of Lehigh County. Marc Grammes suggested the Borough use their fiscal ops in order to help with the Borough's budget. Marc Grammes continues to obtain grants for the community center. Marc Grammes gave kudos to Lindsay Taylor for her work at the NLRA and the Rotary Club. Marc Grammes informed the Council that the Borough of Slatington has been approved for \$77,000.00 due to COVID19 grant. Manager Stevens stated that the application has already been sent to the county on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Marc stated that the NLRA will receive \$10,000.00 for the amphitheater.

Pete Papay, Sr. - 7975 7<sup>th</sup> Street - Signed in and was recognized to speak. Pete Papay has lived in the community all his life. Pete Papay pushed to get the Covered Bridge and the Trailhead done. Pete Papay stressed how important volunteers are. Due to COVID19 there aren't many fund-raising events. Pete Papay gave Lindsay Taylor kudos for her work.

Councilor Schnaars thanked Pete Papay for all his work in the past years. President Reed also thanked Pete for getting the trails completed.

Thomas Nicholson – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Thomas Nicholson supported what Pete Papay had said.

Edward Bechtel - 1218 Main Street – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Edward Bechtel stated that the 3 municipalities made a commitment, to each other, to work together for something for the greater good of all the community. Ed Bechtel stated that his son lives in Philadelphia. Philadelphia is working to keep the young people there by building playgrounds, and programs for children, etc. Ed Bechtel feels that this should be the same attitude for the Borough.

Taylor James – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Not present

Crystal Fink - Signed in and was recognized to speak. Not present

Patrice Hunsicker – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Not present

Jill Hontz – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Not present

Katja Bender- Signed in and was recognized to speak. Not present

Don Eckhart – 320 Main Street, Walnutport – Signed in and was recognized to speak. Don Eckhart is concerned about the younger people. Don Eckhart said there are so many commercials requesting \$19.00 to save animals, but where are the commercials to save children for \$19.00. Don Eckhart feels that it is more important to have programs to help keep them off the streets

Mel Gildner – 6638 Leah Drive– Signed in and was recognized to speak. Mel Gildner thanked everyone who has donated time and money to the community center. Mel Gildner feels that the community center would had gotten further had the Council members been more interested. Mel Gildner feels that if the Borough cuts funding, then Walnutport and Washington Township should also cut funding. Mel Gildner stated, that if you want a positive community, you need positive leaders.

Jeffrey Hausman – 46 So. Walnut Street – Jeffrey Hausman informed the Council that a tractor trailer had an accident on Fairmont Street and Franklin. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> tractor that came down that hill and got stuck. He is asking if a bigger sign could be posted. Jeffrey Hausman said that Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020, is Community Cleanup Day in the Borough. He is requesting a pickup truck that the fire department could use to go out and pick up the trash. The fire department over the years has been using the ATV, but it is a small vehicle. Jeffrey Hausman suggested that the Council look at hiring more road crew personnel.

Councilor Schnaars informed the Council that when they formed the NLRA, nobody forced the other 2 municipalities to join. However, Walnutport did not enter into it until a year later.

Councilor Ruff requested the Council have a separate budget conversation before they start cutting funding or any programs.

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

Manager Stevens reminded the Council that Trick or Treat Night will be held on Wednesday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

## **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 Schnaars made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to approve payment of the bills and transfers as presented by the Treasurer. President Reed declared the motion passed following a Roll call, voting as follows:

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

**MAYORS/POLICE CHIEF’S REMARKS**

**Mayor Walter H. Niedermeyer**

Mayor Niedermeyer requested information on the storm sewer repair at Walnut and Main Street. President Reed informed him they had a contractor there to look at it last week. He would like to see it fixed as soon as possible. Mayor Niedermeyer attended the last Unwind Wednesday on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**Chief Rachman**

Chief Rachman said that with the budget conversations coming up, he feels that everyone has their own needs and costs will not be going down.

**STANDING COMMITTEES**

**D. Finance/Planning/Zoning**

Councilor Thomas Bartholomew

1. Councilor Bartholomew made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Wechsler, to fix the 2021 per capita for NLRA for \$5.00 per capita, or \$21,160.00. The Council discussed options for funding the NLRA. Councilor Bartholomew modified his motion, modifications duly seconded by Councilor Wechsler, to fund the NLRA at \$5.50 per capita, total not to exceed \$23,276.00. President Reed declared the motion passed following a Roll call, voting as follows: 5 ayes; 2 nays

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

2. Councilor Bartholomew made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to approve Borough cell phone for Tony Lopsonzski. Manager Stevens stated that it would be approximately \$40.00 per month. 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		

- Councilor Bartholomew made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Schnaars, to authorize payment of \$42,511.17, from the general fund, into the Police Pension Plan for the balanced of the 2020 MMO. 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		

- North Whitehall Township Board of Supervisors – bill for business automobile insurance coverage for NOVA vehicle and workers comp insurance - \$479.96. Informational only
- Councilor Bartholomew made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to authorize Daniel Stevens to approve Exemption Report from Statewide Tax Recovery Inc. for Delinquent Per Capita Tax for: Lisa Thierer – Deceased - \$11.00 (2 x \$5.50); Kimberly Kemp – Non-resident - \$5.50; Mark Delong – Deceased - \$11.00 (2 x \$5.50); Helene Dennis – Deceased - \$5.50; Glenn Gregory – Deceased - \$5.50; Shirley Wagner – Deceased - \$5.50; Hilda Steigerwalt – Deceased - \$4.50. 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		

**C. Human/Community Services**

**Councilor Jason Ruff**

- Notification that the 2020 Lehigh County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event has been rescheduled for Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Informational only.
- Councilor Ruff made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Schnaars, to approve Chamber Tree Lighting Ceremony on Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at Slatington Memorial Park

from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, including the permission to allow a winery to offer free samples and sell bottles (not wine by the glass), and including the street closures indicated on the map. President Reed declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.

**A. Highway**

**Councilor David Schnaars**

1. Councilor Schnaars made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Ruff, to advertise changes to Ord. 702 changing Kuntz Street to one-way east bound between Second Street and Chestnut Alley. President Reed declared the motion passed following a Voice Vote, All in Favor.
2. Manager Stevens had met with a contractor on Thursday at Walnut and Main Street to get a quote on repairing the storm sewer problem. Manager Stevens is waiting for the quote. Councilor Schnaars made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Kratz, to authorize Manager Stevens to approve the project providing it is less than \$10,000.00. 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		

**B. Public Safety**

**Councilor Kevin Steckel**

1. Police contract arbitration hearing will take place virtually on Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Informational only

**E. Sewer/Solid Waste**

**Councilor Joseph Wechsler**

1. Councilor Kratz made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Wechsler, to appoint Ebert Engineering as engineer for the grant to remove the digester lid. The grant is for \$114,750.00. 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		

2. New PLC, program and controls at the pump station are installed and operational. Informational only
3. Borough Manager approved \$500.00 transfer to Borough Authority for NOV which took place on August 4, 2020. Informational only

4. When new NPDES permit is issued, the sewer authority, solicitor, and operators will make a presentation to the full borough council. Informational only
5. Manager Stevens provided the LCA proposal for sewer system maintenance. Solicitor Healy suggested that there be a written agreement with LCA, including categorizing specific types of work and other issues. Manager Stevens requested that Solicitor Healy put his requests in writing.

**F. Water/Special Sewer Committee**

**Councilor Ronald Kratz**

1. Water Test Statement - Water was tested and found safe for human consumption
2. Councilor Kratz made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Schnaars, to accept quote from Essex Service Corporation for remote panel cleanup for \$2,950.00. 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		

3. Councilor Kratz made a motion, duly seconded by Councilor Schnaars, to accept quote from Essex Service Corporation for relocation of radios for \$5,250.00. 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		

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None**

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Manager Stevens informed the Council that the airport will have a hot air balloon glow event on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.

**NEW BUSINESS: None**

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT’S REPORT: None**

**Bryon Reed**

**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 9:17 PM.

Daniel L. Stevens  
Borough Secretary