

November 12, 2024

The regular meeting of the Montoursville Borough Council held in the John Dorin Municipal Building was called to order by Council President Eric Greenway at 7:00 PM with the following answering roll call: Eric Greenway, Tina Kline, Chris Lucas, Misty Emick, Mark Tillson and Robert Brown.

The Pledge of Allegiance was observed.

The October 2nd, 2024 minutes were approved on a motion by Mr. Brown, second by Dr. Kline. The motion carried.

TREASURERS REPORT/BOROUGH BILLS – Motion by Mr. Lucas to approve the October 2024 treasurer’s report, second by Mr. Brown. The motion carried.

VISITORS AND PUBLIC COMMENT FOR AGENDA ITEMS – Resident, Ms. Kim Myers, 1127 Elm St, announced that she was recording the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS –

AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE 2025 BUDGET- Council President, Mr. Greenway presented a request to advertise the 2025 Budget.

Motion by Mr. Brown to approve authorization to advertise the 2025 Budget as presented; second by Mrs. Emick. The motion carried.

AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE MOWING BID– Council President, Mr. Greenway presented a request to advertise the Mowing Bid for review.

Motion by Mrs. Emick to approve the advertisement for the Mowing Bid as presented; second by Mr. Lucas. The motion carried.

PAYMENT APPLICATION #2 – FINAL - 2024 CDBG CURB RAMP PROJECT –BIG ROCK PAVING LLC.
– Council President, Mr. Greenway presented Payment Application #2 to Big Rock Paving LLC. for the 2024 Curb Ramp Project.

Motion by Mr. Greenway to approve Payment Application #2 for the 2024 CDBG Curb Ramp Project to Big Rock Paving LLC. In the amount of \$10,607.15, second by Dr. Kline. The motion carried.

GENERAL EASEMENT AGREEMENT -VERIZON- Council President Mr. Greenway presented General Easement Agreement with Verizon for review.

Motion by Mr. Brown to approve General Easement Agreement with Verizon as presented; second by Mr. Greenway. The motion carried.

PLANNING & ZONING – Central Keystone COG Reports October 2024.

RECREATION – Council member, Mrs. Emick announced the nine winners of the Pumpkin Decorating Contest which was held in conjunction with the Kiwanis and displayed Dr W B Konkle Memorial Library.

STREETS/WATER – Street and Water Project Coordination, Mr. Hoffman announced leaf collection is ongoing throughout the Borough.

MAYOR – Mayor Bagwell stated that the borough needs to look at other options as well as creative advertising to attract police officers to fill the empty positions in the department. He mentioned an incident that originally the PSP had responded to, with a follow-up by the Borough police who were able to rectify the situation with a better level of service. Council Vice President, Mr. Brown announced that the civil service ad will run in the newspaper through January to try to attract applicants.

Chief Gyurina responded to Council member, Mr. Lucas's question that at least 5 or 6 shifts a month are not being covered and that during the holidays there will be more gaps in coverage due to previously approved vacations. He continued stating our competition for new officers extends from the PSP, to Williamsport, to Penn College, to Muncy and through South Williamsport, who are all seeking new hires. He shared he feels the main issue getting new officers is the salary that is not competitive with the city or surrounding areas. Council member, Mr. Lucas also questioned if the benefits package is being advertised, which can make a job more attractive. Chief Gyurin also stated that they take interns from Penn College, which also helps with advertising. Council member, Mr. Lucas stated it seems that the issue is that no one wants to be a police officer right now, rather than it being so much as a salary issue since the salary issue levels off after a few years. Council Vice President, Mr. Brown also stated that the number of applicants taking the civil service test is about 10% of what it used to be.

POLICE CHIEF – Chief Gyurina reviewed the October 2024 police report. He gave update on a manure truck incident that occurred this past month and on a welfare check on an individual which was handled by Officer Hagemeyer. Officer Hagemeyer assisted in saving an elderly woman's life as she was found lying on her kitchen floor for three days. Chief Gyurina also reviewed an incident with a mentally challenged individual which eventually ended with a happy ending.

COUNCIL PERSONS – Council Vice President, Mr. Brown thanked all the residents in attendance at this evening's meeting.. He continued by reading a statement and explained he would like his official statement to be recorded and included as part of the meeting minutes.

Council member, Dr. Kline wanted to follow up on an item that was discussed at a previous council meeting and update the public that council email addresses are set up and are located on the borough website. She noted they cost about \$200.00 per year.

Council member, Mrs. Emick wanted to comment and let the audience know that she appreciates the public attending the meeting, noting that council really does listen and values their feedback, however unfortunately there are items/issues that cannot be changed/rectified.

SOLICITOR – Nothing at this time.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT –

PENDING MATTERS – Nothing at this time.

CORRESPONDENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS – The next Council meeting will be held Monday December 2nd, 2024 @ 7:00PM. The brush pile will close for the season on November 29th, 2024. An Executive session for Personnel & Legal will be held at the close of the meeting and will not be reconvened.

VISITOR AND PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Resident, Mrs. Tracey Buffington, 108 Sunset Circle, wanted to follow up on the status of 100 Sunset Drive that was discussed at the September council meeting. She distributed photos of that property. She wanted to thank Chief Gyurina regarding the handling of the woman feeding the cats on the property noting it doesn't seem to be occurring anymore. It was shared that the borough's codes department has followed up and currently are trying to move forward with enforcement hoping that the proper owners will be notified and start to maintain the property.

Resident, Mr. Rich Boyles, 409 Tule St, requested an update on the paving and curb project. Council President, Mr. Greenway stated that the project has been postponed and there have not been any discussions reevaluating the project as of date. Mr. Boyles then questioned the status of the demolition of 416 Spruce St. It was shared the hold up on the process was getting a demolition permit. The tentative demolition date is November 21st, 2024.

Resident, Ms. Melissa Magargle, 1023 Spruce St, stated she is a realtor and wanted to voice her concerns about the curb issues going on in Montoursville. She explained she feels it is causing potential buyers to look elsewhere and hurting the real estate market in Montoursville. She also stated that it is also a financial burden on residents and questioned why this is being imposed on the residents of Montoursville. She also questioned whether there is an alternative to making homeowners pay for their curbs.

Resident, Ms. Doreen Matty, 1129 Locust St, questioned why Montoursville residents are getting hit with four issues in one year. She cited the water rate increasing, curbing expenses, borrowing of money for the new water tower and taxes increasing. Council President, Mr. Greenway corrected Ms. Matty's statement sharing Borough taxes are not increasing. He also explained that the water tower project had been kicked down the road for the last eleven years. The tower is a century old and replacing it will fix water pressure issues and is needed to be done. Council Vice President, Mr. Brown also explained if they were to make the required repairs, it will still need additional repairs in the future and will not fix the pressure issues. He stated it is just putting a band-aid on the issue. Council member, Mrs. Emick stated they are looking at longevity vs. short-term fixes with this water tower project.

Resident, Mr. Boyles, 409 Tule St. made an additional comment stating that he sat on Duboistown Borough council for some time and questioned how tight the proposed budget is. He continued to state he noticed taxes have not increased in some time and he recommended raising taxes a quarter of a mil every year which is much more acceptable than a large increase at once. Council member, Mr. Lucas stated Council's current process regarding the budget is to raise taxes every 5 years. Council President, Mr. Greenway announced to residents the budget is available for review/viewing at the borough office.

Resident, Mr. Don Boyles, 329 Bennett St, asked several questions regarding bulk water. Council President, Mr. Greenway explained the bulk water sales utilizes untreated water and it flows consistently, the water supply is not in question, there is plenty of water. He shared all water sales are to help support the infrastructure of the water works. He also noted in the past, water profits were used to balance other funds. He shared that all water monies generated are to be used for the water works and must stay within that fund. In past it was not handled that way and is why taxes were not increased for many years. Also, he noted the water rates also should have increased as the water was being sold at a loss for years as well.

Resident, Ms. Daniele Lanzer, 412 Willow St, questioned if the water rates will increase as of January 2025 and if they do will it be a 45% increase. Council President, Mr. Greenway explained the amount you pay for water is based upon your water consumption, so basically a 20% increase would mean an additional \$2.00 a gallon increase. Council Vice President, Mr. Brown then explained the reason it hasn't been shared regarding the possible water rates increase is dependent upon multiple factors as with how much we will be required to borrow for the water project, along with the monthly debt service payment, which are all still up in the air to date. Mrs. Lanzer also questioned the amount of money that was made from the sales of bulk water and asked about the profit they made. It was then explained that the Borough is a non-profit government agency therefore all water sales are to be used within the water system, anything that we earn in excess is to be put into a capital improvement fund for future use in the system. Past council's actually lowered the water rates therefore creating a lower profit despite knowingly selling water at a loss. It was also explained that the bulk water is not treated unlike water that is treated and pumped to your home; therefore, it costs less to produce. Council Vice President, Mr. Brown explained they are not trying to judge or badmouth previous council's decisions, but a lot of decisions are made based on knowledge that the general public doesn't know and/or understand, based upon regulations and laws that are not typically known by the general public as well.

Resident, Mr. Josh Maeulen, 220 Maple St, stated he thinks there is a lack of transparency and a lack of long-term planning. He explained he would like to see a list of future projects for the next twenty years along with projected interest rates in the financial model. He also stated that he is frustrated with the bolus of increases he, as a resident, is facing this year. Council member, Mr. Tillson explained to Mr. Maeulen that unfortunately, the private sector does not operate the same as the municipal sector.

In response to various comments made during a discussion that took place between, Council President, Mr. Greenway and Mrs. Magargle; the Borough Solicitor, Chris Kenyon wanted to clarify one of the previously stated comments. He stated that the borough had not placed a lien on the home of a gentleman that attended the previous council meeting regarding the replacement of his curbs which did not follow Borough specifications. Resident, Ms. Magargle shifted into discussion regarding people not trusting the borough engineer to assess curbing. She continued to discuss real estate and claimed residents paying for curbs is hurting the Borough's real estate market.

A discussion ensued with multiple people. Council President, Mr. Greenway explained curbs and sidewalks are a maintenance items that are part of the Borough Code which coincides with home ownership. A discussion took place regarding several issues involving curbs. At this time, Borough Solicitor, Chirs Kenyon addressed a comment regarding the length of curb that is required to replace, stating the Borough code states curbs must be replaced in 10-foot sections. Council President, Mr. Greenway once again stated that the project has been postponed currently so that the Council can take a look at the ordinance and better define/clarify issues for residents. Council member, Mr. Lucas shared he concurred with Council President, Mr. Greenway statements noting that Council will be clarifying curb requirements and has paused the project to look at the ordinance. Resident, Ms. Myers thanked Council member, Mr. Lucas for being the only one to listen to them and answer her questions. She continued stating she has endured hearing council lectures regarding taxes, turnpike issues and all the sacrifices that borough council members make, when actually all she wants to know is what is going on with curbs and no one is talking, her concern is that council is going to secretly pass an ordinance.

Resident, Mr. Ken Raker, 1127 Elm St, stated at a past meeting Street and Water Project Coordinator, Mr. Cliff Hoffman explained several curb issues involving a chip and hairline crack. He shared this information is documented in the past meeting minutes. Mr. Raker continued stating that he attended the Street & Water committee meeting prior to this council meeting and went on to specifically ask Council member, Mr. Tillson why water is being sold at a loss. Mr. Raker then questioned why the Borough is running the water system so hard if it isn't making money. Why isn't the money in reserve being used in lieu of the Borough borrowing money from a bank with an interest rate. Council member, Mr. Tillson then went on to explain specifics with bulk water. He shared that it is separate and different than the treated water that goes to the public. Council member, Mr. Tillson went on to explain that we need to make money, and not sell it at a loss, and that the goal is to stay in the water business. He stated the water works is a great asset to the borough. Street & Water Project Coordinator, Mr. Hoffman stated the water works does not make a profit on selling water because all the money goes straight back into the water system, per regulations.

Council President, Mr. Greenway then stated no one is getting rich on the water system because all money goes back into maintaining the water system. It was explained that if they drained the money in their capital fund and there was any kind of water main break or sink hole they would not have the money to do the repairs and that is why they are seeking this loan with a very low interest rate, so as to not drain the capital improvement fund in the event of a disaster.

In response to another question about providing water monies to the help the police department it was explained by Council Vice President, Mr. Brown that it is against municipal law to allocate water money anywhere else in the borough except back into the water system. At this time, a resident shared that we must do something to help the police. It was explained unfortunately no one is applying to become a police officer across the country, it's not a matter of low-salary or lack of benefits. It was also explained that it is the law that we can only hire a full-time officer who passed the civil service test, and the civil service test is required to be advertised.

Resident, Mr. Raker then thanked Council member, Mr. Lucas for finally giving some answers because that's all they wanted. Mr. Raker questioned how committee meetings take place, it was then explained that the committee meetings are announced/established and advertised for the the beginning of the calendar year that they will be held if needed, at 6:15 PM prior to the Council meetings. The agenda is posted on the Borough building doors as required by law and also posted on the Borough website.

Resident, Mr. Boyles, commented regarding the property located at 101 Walnut St which is in disrepair and where a disabled person lives. It was explained that codes must be contacted to go through the proper channels in order to report any perceived codes violations.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM on a motion by Mr. Brown, second by Dr. Kline. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Gardner, Borough Secretary

11/12/2024
Montoursville Borough Council
Prepared remarks
Robert Brown

Good evening & thank you for attending

Tonight I would like to talk to you about running for and serving as a local elected official. My remarks refer to a Borough Council position, but the information applies generally to any elected office with certain changes keeping in mind differing legal rules among the differing bodies.

To give you an idea of where I am drawing my opinion from, I had been regularly attending Borough council meetings for approximately 12-14 years before I was elected. I am closing in on the end of seven years serving as a council person representing the 2nd ward.

Like many of you, there were times when, while sitting in the audience, I was frustrated or had what I thought were legitimate questions and concerns about what was going on. You may have noticed that Government at all levels does not always do things in the most expedient manner. There is a legal reason that things are done in a certain way.

If you are considering running for public office, the following are my observations. Other members of this council or other elected officials may have a differing opinion. The below is a list of some of the things that I have observed or experienced and would like to pass on to you.

Recommendation # 1

– Run for office for the right reason. Do not run for office as a one issue person. The reason for this is simple. As an elected official, you will be required to understand and vote on multiple issues on a regular basis. Most people that I have seen come in to Government as a one issue only advocate, care only about that issue and do a fairly poor job of representing their constituents in the myriad of other matters that they will be subjected to. In numerous cases, these type of people become disillusioned when they realize that they legally cannot do what they want to do or cannot get the other elected officials to agree with them. Remember that a majority of officials must approve any legally binding action. After becoming disillusioned, the one issue official then either stops participating, stops coming to meetings completely, or just resigns, leaving an opening and citizens in their ward area without representation. That is not fair to the citizens that you are supposed to represent.

Recommendation # 2 – In today's politically charged atmosphere, get ready to be personally attacked and have terrible untrue things said about you. Be prepared to have people walking around your property line taking notes and photos or video for some type of "gotcha moment", as we saw earlier this year with this particular council. You will be accused of being utterly incompetent or worse, you will be publicly accused of some type of criminal offense such as misappropriating public tax dollars. And just so you know, there will be no proof offered to substantiate these accusations. But there will be people at the meeting who will be willing to repeat it to their friends and also spread it on social media. This will be done by neighbors and sometimes

people whom you considered friends, people who in many cases have never actually been to a meeting where the issue they are talking about was discussed prior to any action being taken.

Understand that this will occur simply because someone who does not like a decision you made or are deliberating on has decided that you are wrong. Keep in mind that they may have done little to no research before hand. That is all it takes.

As an elected official, you have to take the time to make a decision after researching all sides of the issue. The people that disagree with your stance on an issue will have no problem attacking you, especially on Social Media. If you do not have “thick skin” as they say, then I suggest that you do not run for public office. I have personally seen a number of “politicians” lose friends that they had had for 30 or more years over their vote or stance on a single issue. Understand that, in some cases, the public may not understand that in order to vote the way that they want you to vote, you would have to violate a law along with the oath of office that you swore to uphold.

A perfect example of the reasoning for this recommendation was the Montoursville Area School Board issue over the new high school. This was a very contentious issue and there were multiple people on both sides of the issue. At least one person who was elected on this issue left the board within a year or so. That board member was constantly attacked by members on the other side of the issue and were then attacked by the members on their side when they resigned, leaving a vacancy on the board that needed to be filled.

The night that the Land Development plan was on the Borough Council agenda for approval, a step that is required

by law to be approved by the municipality, this room and the hallway were packed with people who were demanding that the then Borough Council, reject the land development plan, stopping the project. At the beginning of the meeting, Then council president David Moyer patiently explained that in the procedure, the council was bound by law. If the Land Development plan met the legal requirements for approval, the council had no choice but to approve the project. On the other side of the coin, if the plan did not meet legal requirements for approval, the council had no choice but to reject the plan. What the individual council members personally thought about the idea of replacing or not replacing the high school was irrelevant. They were required to follow the law. To not do so, would open the Borough and the Council members to possible legal action. A lot of unhappy residents left after that was explained, but in that matter, whether they agreed or not, the council followed the law as it was required to do.

Recommendation #3

If you are not willing to put in the time required for all of the responsibilities – do not run.

If you think, this a glamorous, high paying job that only encompasses one Monday evening a month in the case of this council, you are sorely mistaken. In the case of Montoursville Borough Council, There is no glamour and no pay. There is also very little “power” You must follow all of the laws that apply to the position and issues, period.

It is true that the council meetings are normally the first Monday of the month and they normally, but not always last approximately 1 hour. What you may not realize is that as a council member, you will be also be assigned to a number of committees. These usually meet at 6:15 the night of the

council meeting to make it easier for the public and the council members to attend. There are sometimes Executive sessions held during or after the meetings to discuss items that cannot Legally be discussed in public.

Before the Monday council meeting, the agenda is posted as this is required by law. The Agenda for this council is posted on Fridays before the meeting. It is available on the Borough web site as well as being posted on the doors leading into the lobby of the Borough building. It is also on the table as you enter the meeting room. Council may only vote on items that are listed on the agenda. Council members receive the agenda as well as the draft minutes of the previous meeting for review as well as information concerning any upcoming new business, Recreation permits and other items. All of these items can be discussed and voted on so knowledge of the subject is required. Be prepared to spend your weekend reading up on items and issues. There are also other agency meetings in which council members can attend. These include The W.B. Konkle Memorial Library Board, The Lycoming County Water & Sewer Authority and the Williamsport Area Transportation Study known as WATS. These are just a few examples.

At least one member of council has to sign the checks for any outgoing funds. This normally happens bi-weekly.

All of these require you to volunteer and give up your personal time. If you are not willing to do all of the required responsibilities, please do not run for office.

Recommendation # 4

Be prepared to file a "Statement of Financial Interests" form as well as campaign finance forms if applicable. Those of you

who do not want to provide this type of information to the Government will be prohibited from serving.

Recommendation # 5

This recommendation is one that you have heard from me as well as others including an audience member.

Do your own research and come to your own conclusions. Do not blindly believe anything that anyone tells you, especially the things you read on social media. When I say anyone, I include us as elected officials.

An example. How many times in previous meetings have you heard audience members complain that our taxes are outrageous and that they are higher than other municipalities?

For the past 4 months, I have placed a board with the municipal tax rates showing tax rates of Montoursville as well as comparable boroughs, ie. those with similar populations, We are the lowest at 4.5 mils. Do not just take my word for it You can easily look these facts up on the Lyco.org (Lycoming County Government) web site. Research it and then make up your own mind.

Recommendation # 5

if you decide to run for office and are elected, PLEASE take advantage of any training that is offered for newly elected officials.

If you are in a Borough, please attend the PA State Association of Boroughs newly elected officials boot camp. It will require that you give up a weekend and you may have to stay over in a hotel depending on where the training is being offered, but the information that you will receive is invaluable. For years as I sat in the audience, I wondered why the Council

did things in the way that they did them as in some cases I found it to be highly inefficient. It was only after I was elected and received my training that I learned that the reason things were done in the manner they were done is that it was required by law to do it that way. Before you ask why do we not just change the law, in most cases those laws are from other branches of Government and we cannot change them as a council person. Like you, I can only contact my Representative or Senator and voice my opinion.

For those of you who in other municipalities (Townships, cities, etc), training specific to that particular type of Municipality will be available.

To summarize:

1. Run because you care about the community that you intend to serve. Do not run as a one issue person.
2. Understand that people will disagree with you and you will be attacked, not only for your position on an issue, but also on a personal level.
3. Please be aware of the requirements that come with the position. The amount of time and energy you will expend is greater than you think.
4. Even if you do not run, please do your own research and reach your own conclusion on issues.

Madam Secretary, I ask that these remarks be included as an attachment to the November 2024 meeting minutes.