

REGULAR MEETING
Hastings Borough Council

April 6, 2021

The Hastings Borough Council held their Regular Meeting on Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Hastings Borough Office.

CALL TO ORDER: Alison Link, Council President

ROLL CALL: Members of the Council present – Alison Link, Melanie Zearfoss, Mayor Donald C Drass, Thomas Kinney, Jeff Semelsberger, John Schettini, Solicitor Patrick Fanelli, and Rhonda Churella. Absent was Sam Patterson and Jeff Zearfoss.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion made by Jeff Semelsberger, second by Thomas Kinney, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting and to dispense with their reading, since all were provided with a copy. All present voted yes.

Motion Carried.

VISITORS: Nancy McMullen & Father Thad from St. Vincent DePaul of Altoona-Johnstown; and Matthew “Butch” Urban.

Nancy McMullen stated St. Vincent DePaul is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) dated 4/24/2019. We got a tax bill for 2020 taxes for \$2,328.15. We are here asking for forgiveness. We have a Department of Revenue certificate of exemption that expires 4/30/2022. **Father Thad** stated St. Vincent DePaul must go through the Altoona Diocese. Nancy McMullen said, “We need a letter to take to the Tax Claim Bureau stating you forgive this bill. We are hoping you will exonerate these taxes for 2020.” Father Thad said, “We started this project in 2018. Thus far we have given out four million dollars’ worth of food. We give 2,500 families food per week. We have 60-80 volunteers that help.” Nancy McMullen said, “If you forgive us, we will use the money toward food to give out where it is needed.” Jeff Semelsberger said, “We would like to discuss this before making a decision. Can we get back with you about our answer?” Nancy McMullen stated they have some time but would like to know as soon as you can. They left the meeting. Patrick Fanelli stated that amount looked like it was too much for borough taxes. Patrick Fanelli said it could be possible that was for county, school and borough taxes. Patrick Fanelli advised the office to call the Tax Claim Bureau office tomorrow and ask them what the bill was for. Alison Link

said the Moose is a 501 (c) (3). If we would give up that tax money to St. Vincent DePaul, the Moose will probably ask for that on their building too. If we do it for one organization, we can create a problem with others. Jeff Semelsberger agreed.

Matthew “Butch” Urban said, “The water was shut off at three of my trailers today on Coleman Street. Rich and Michelle were out near the trailers today.” Alison Link texted Michelle about this. Michelle replied that she will call Rich Banik. Alison said Rich shut the water off but forgot to turn it back on. This is a huge water leak that Rich has been looking for.

STREET/EQUIPMENT COMMITTEE:

- Thomas Kinney reported, “We never went out for a ride around town for a road project.” Mayor Drass suggested the road past the park going back to the development. Melanie Zearfoss asked, “Can we widen that road a foot on each side?? Mayor Drass said, “You could a little on each side.”
- Rhonda Churella read an email from Sam Patterson about a couple things to mention. Sam stated needing a plan for the bridge that goes to the t-ball field. We can’t leave it as is because of a safety issue. Rhonda explained we had a past employee that got bit by a rattle snake when they were tearing it down to rebuild a new one. Mayor Drass said he hasn’t heard anything about the snakes, but he hasn’t seen any snakes either. Don asked if they can leave the area to go somewhere else. Alison Link stated we would need a good month to get this fixed before T-ball starts. Someone suggested hiring Kevin Galinis Construction to see if they can fix the bridge. Melanie Zearfoss said the price of lumber is high now. Thomas Kinney gave Rhonda Churella Kevin’s phone number. The second issue Sam emailed was about the jeep parked on Beaver Street that is jacked up. If he’s going to be working on it, he can’t leave it like that. He should know better...he has small kids of his own and it’s a huge safety issue. John Schettini said it was jacked up but you have to look to notice it. The wheel is on it but it is in the air.

POLICE COMMITTEE/REPORT:

- Nothing to report.

TAX COLLECTOR’S REPORT: Real Estate & Per Capita Tax collected from March 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021.

Real Estate Tax Collected.....	\$54,857.08
Per Capita Tax Collected.....	\$1,504.30
Total Collected.....	\$56,361.38

Earned Income Tax collected from Berkheimer’s from March 12, 2021 to March 26, 2021.

Gross Tax Collected.....	\$5,931.89
Delinquent Per Capita.....	\$50.00

- Motion was made by Thomas Kinney, second by John Schettini, to approve the Tax Collector’s Report as read. All present voted yes.

Motion Carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Council looked through the Financial Reports. Motion made by Jeff Semelsberger, second by Thomas Kinney, to approve the Financial Report as of March 1, 2021. All present voted yes.

Motion Carried.

FINANCE/INSURANCE COMMITTEE:

- Rhonda Churella asked Patrick Fanelli about updating our Per Capita Tax Ordinance since it is old and was never signed. The ordinance is a six part. Parts 1 through 5 are not signed but part 6 is signed for only part 6. Toni Zalisnock, Hastings Borough Tax Collector, called the office on March 25, 2021, about disabled people being exempt from Per Capita tax. Toni said when she collected for Northern Cambria Borough, their disabled residents paid this. Toni asked if we should set a guideline. Patrick Fanelli said since it doesn’t stipulate that in our current ordinance, they are not exempt and must pay this tax. Toni Zalisnock gave an update on the list of names Melanie and I sent her. There are some that are duplicates, like Robert & Bob or Margaret & Peggy and some addresses were incorrect. Toni also mentioned that Haida Village told her they cannot give names because of HIPA laws but advised her to bill as “resident”. Toni said people will look at that and throw it away because it doesn’t have their name on it. Toni also said that Northern Cambria Borough had Cherry Ridge Apartments and they gave Toni their residents names. Alison Link said they are the same business. Patrick Fanelli will send a letter out to Haida Village advising them to give the Hastings Borough Tax Collector the names of their tenants.

- Rhonda Churella told Council that Real Estate taxes for 2021 will be less 43,290 from 2020 taxes. I check this every year when I send the Fire Company their 1 ½ mills. Some years it goes up and others down. The reasons are demolitions such as tear property down, all exemptions, assessed value goes down, etc. Toni Zalisnock called the Cambria County Courthouse about this. They agreed with the above listed reasons and added taxes can go up if someone builds a house, double wide, garage, etc. If people call Laurel Municipal Inspection Agency for a permit, an LMIA assessor values by going out and reporting this information to the Cambria County Courthouse. Council discussed this and don't feel this is equivalent to 43,290. Rhonda is to send Patrick Fanelli a copy of this information from 2020 & 2021 Tax Collector book given to Hastings Borough.
- Dearborn Life Insurance Company sent a letter informing us that there will be no charge in the existing rates for the upcoming renewal period. Rates will be guaranteed until June 1, 2022.

WATER COMMITTEE:

- A certified letter came to the office on March 29, 2021, from Stiffler McGraw in regard to Hastings Municipal Authority CIP Water Main Replacement Project – Project NO. 21-0009.014. They enclosed a project map. They are requesting a letter from Hastings Borough indicating that this project is consistent with your land use and/or agricultural preservation policies and initiatives. They will forward it to the PennVEST offices.

SEWER COMMITTEE:

- Nothing to report.

PROPERTY COMMITTEE:

- Laurel Municipal Inspection Agency sent the permit report for March 2021.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

- Alison Link stated Michelle Baker has flags on her property. Mayor Drass got quite a few calls about the profanity on the flags. Thomas Kinney said Michelle doesn't live in Hastings Borough. Mayor Drass asked, "Is there anything we can do since she is a borough employee?" Patrick Fanelli said,

"I just had another client ask the same question about the same flag. This is a free speech right that's not pertained to borough business. She is constitutionally protected." Jeff Semelsberger said, "I don't support it but it doesn't affect her job performance."

- The borough office received a resignation letter from Brian Maul dated March 22, 2021.
- Motion made by Melanie Zearfoss, second by Thomas Kinney, to accept Brian Maul resignation letter.

Motion Carried.

- Melanie Zearfoss discussed a problem from the water & sewer plants about new computers that were installed. They were upset and made a statement that the office girls could go in and change their figures entered in reports. Michelle said she doesn't trust anyone. The problem was a Microsoft one drive which has been disconnected. The water & sewer plants will need to back up their own files. The authorities will need to hire Link's to come and set this up at both plants or have the two employees set it up themselves. Alison Link said they could use a thumb drive or call Link's to get their own backups.
- Applications for full-time borough crew worker were brought to the meeting. Council members had job interviews on March 24, 2021 starting at 6:00pm. The office received another application from Jason Bacho. There were three applicants to look at. Kenneth Solley went to work at Susquehanna Township. Bryan Link is starting his own business. Richard Shepherd is the only left of the three possible hires. Jeff Semelsberger said, "We can fish for another week." Alison Link said this will be discussed later in executive session.
- Thomas Kinney said, "Dustin Pellas is very interested in the old school building. They are checking on the asbestos first. He wants to sell trailers. He also said he has outgrown his building."

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Council President called an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters and matters of possible litigation.

END OF EXECUTIVE SESSION: The session ended.

- Pending motion made by Thomas Kinney, second by Jeff Semelsberger, giving the Personnel Committee authorization to hire a new employee on the borough crew pending Joe Wentz approval.

Motion Carried.

- Motion made by Thomas Kinney, second by Jeff Semelsberger, to approve an amendment on vacations in the Employee handbook. You cannot be paid out on vacation time or roll it over to the next year. You must take it before 12/31/21.

Motion Carried.

RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES:

- None.

APPROVAL OF THE BILLS: Motion made by Thomas Kinney, second by Jeff Semelsberger, that an Order is drawn, and the bills be paid, as funds become available. All present voted yes.

Motion Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Nothing to report.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Alison Link gave each Council member a list of committees for 2021 and Sunshine Law information.
- Rhonda Churella gave each Council member a copy of 2021 budget to show how we are doing six months into it. Jeff Semelsberger suggested getting this every quarter.

ADJOURN: Motion made by John Schettini, second by Jeff Semelsberger, this meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m. All present voted yes.

Motion Carried.

Rhonda Churella
Borough Office Manager