

Rochester Borough Council
Regular Meeting in the Municipal Building
November 21, 2022, 6:30 p.m.

Present: President Benjamin Rader, Ron Becker, Rico Elmore, Jodi Hemer, David Alford, Sam Piccinini, Mayor Keith Jackson, Solicitor Paul Steff, Code Officer Peggy Griffith, Sergeant Dawn Shane, Fire Chief Mike Mamone III, Manager John Barrett

Absent: Vice-President Don Brothers

Mr. Rader asked for a moment of silence to remember Mrs. White who recently passed away. The regular meeting was called to order with the pledge of allegiance and roll call.

Persons in Attendance:

John Farmer discussed the status of the fire department and the need to support the fire service.

Action Items:

Mr. Alford motioned to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2022 regular Council meeting as presented. Mrs. Hemer seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Becker motioned to pay all approved bills as submitted. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

BILLS:

Gen. Fund – Ck# 11567–11630 – totaling \$98,348.29.

Payroll (9/30, 10/14) – Ck# 5458-5480 plus Dir. Dep. and Elec. Pymts. – totaling \$115,260.93.

Council received for their review and consideration, a draft ordinance removing the north side of Reno Street from Virginia Avenue to the entrance to the Rochester Area School District parking lot from the “Parking prohibited at all times” section to allow for parking in this area. After some discussion, Mr. Piccinini motioned to authorize the Solicitor to advertise the ordinance for consideration at the December 19th regular meeting. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Council received for their review and consideration, a proposed 2023 Budget from the Manager. The budget reflects a 1 mill tax increase for general purposes, going from 29 mills to 30 mills; a .5 mill tax reduction in the debt service tax, going from 5.5 mills to 5 mills; and a transfer from the capital reserves of \$290,542 to cover the projected deficit. The budget includes the hiring of 2 additional police officers. After some discussion, Council agreed to have a special meeting on December 5th at 6:00 p.m. to further review and discuss the proposed 2023 budget.

Council received for their review and consideration, a draft ordinance establishing the 2023 property tax rate at 30 mills for general purposes and 5 mills for debt service. This was tabled until the meeting on December 5th.

Council received for their review and consideration, a letter from the Rochester Borough Sewer & Maintenance Authority requesting that Candy Farmer be re-appointed to the Authority Board for a 5-year term beginning January 3, 2023 and ending the first Monday in January 2028. Mr. Elmore motioned to re-appoint Candy Farmer to the Rochester Borough Sewer & Maintenance Authority for a term of 5-years. Mr. Becker seconded and the motion carried.

Grant Farmer's term on the Rochester Area Joint Sewer Authority's Board is set to expire January 2, 2023. Mr. Farmer is 1 of 2 Rochester Borough representatives on the Joint Sewer Authority Board. The Sewer Authority is requesting that Mr. Farmer be re-appointed to the Authority Board for a 5-year term beginning January 3, 2023 and ending the first Monday in January 2028. Mr. Alford motioned to re-appoint Grant Farmer to the Rochester Area Joint Sewer Authority for a term of 5-years. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Review Items:

Council received for their review, a thank you letter from the Salvation Army for the Borough's donation to their annual Christmas Assistance event.

Council received for their review and consideration, a list of items from Sam Piccinini. Mr. Piccinini noted the Police Department ran a candy safety check event on Halloween for the families in Rochester and mentioned the need for some additional lighting in the stairway. Mr. Piccinini stated that he met with the Sergeant and the Police Department is in need of some changes to the door locking system and need additional space for evidence lock-up. Other items included some remodeling of the restrooms and a metal detection wand. Council agreed to the changes and additions. Mr. Rader stated that he would ask the Elks for a donation towards the purchase of a metal detection wand. Mr. Piccinini discussed the need to support the Fire Department and increase funding for fire services. After some discussion, Mr. Piccinini motioned to impose a 2 mill special fire tax beginning January 1, 2023 to provide additional funding for fire services. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried. Roll Call, 5-1 yes with Mr. Becker voting no.

Committee Reports:

Public Administration – Ron Becker, Chairperson

Council received for their review, the Expense & Revenue report for the period January 1, 2022 through November 17, 2022.

Public Safety – Don Brothers, Chairperson

Manager Barrett noted that garbage collection service has been advertised for bid. The bid opening is December 1, 2022. The Manager will distribute a bid tabulation to Council following the bid opening. The President of Council and the Manager will discuss the possibility of a special meeting to award the contract if needed.

Public Works – Jodi Hemer, Chairperson

The Manager Barrett noted that the additional paving approved at the last Council meeting will not be completed due to the change in weather. This work will be reviewed and incorporated into next year's paving program.

Recreation

Mr. Rader noted that the Light-up event at the High School is set for December 4th from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. After some discussion, Mr. Piccinini motioned to approve a \$200 donation to this event. Mrs. Hemer seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Rader stated that Rochester Alumni are having a "Home for the Holidays" event at Hollywood Gardens on December 30th at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Rader also stated that Santa Claus would be riding around the 3 Rochester on December 18th starting at 1:00 p.m.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Jackson thanked Sergeant Shane for her efforts to work with him in his efforts to oversee the Police Department.

Solicitor's Report:

Solicitor Steff had nothing to report.

Code Officer's Report:

Council received for their review, the October 2022 Code Officer's Report.

Code Officer Griffith noted an addition Rome Monument is beginning on their building and interior renovations being completed by Rite-Aid. The new owner of the Dairy Queen has approached her about adding a drive-thru to their building.

Police Report:

Council received for their review, the October 2022 Police Department report.

Sergeant Shane noted that Officer Murphy will be returning to work on December 1st, that the Civil Service Commission will be holding the oral exam for the officer testing next week and that she would be meeting with the Rochester Township officers to talk about the possibility of creating a regional police department. There was discussion about inviting Bridgewater Borough and Pulaski Township to the regional police department discussion.

Sergeant Shane asked Council to consider an additional Sergeant's position if they were not going to be hiring a Police Chief. The Sergeant also asked if she could get a cell phone to use for conducting police business since she is being asked to oversee the department. Council agreed to the purchase of a cell phone.

Fire Chief's Report:

Council received for their review, the October 2022 Fire Department report.

Chief Mamone noted that the Fire Department was in the process of purchasing a used ladder truck from Butler.

Manager's/Treasurer's Report:

Manager Barrett presented the October 2022 Treasurer's report for Council's review.

Manager Barrett provide a draft resolution and stated that new State legislation requires municipalities to enact an ordinance or resolution to provide relief from late fees to property owners who can prove they did not receive the annual tax bill. This will be on the agenda for the December meeting.

Old Business/New Business:

Mr. Rader stated that there was an open Council seat in the 3rd ward. Council received a letter of interest from Toni Bucher and Marlin Robinson. After some discussion, Council took a roll call vote each selecting one of the two candidates. Hemer, Piccinini, Elmore, Alford and Rader selected Mrs. Bucher; Becker selected Mr. Robinson. Mr. Piccinini motioned to approve and adopt Resolution 2022-06 appointing Toni Bucher to fill the vacant Council seat in the 3rd Ward. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried. Mrs. Bucher was in the audience. Mayor Jackson administered the oath of office and Mrs. Bucher completed the affidavit of residency then took her seat on Council.

Mr. Piccinini requested an executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Council went into an executive session at 9:11 p.m.

Council reconvened at 10:41 p.m.

Mr. Piccinini motioned to authorize the investigation discussed in executive session. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 10:42 p.m.

Submitted by,

John M. Barrett
Borough Manager