

Rochester Borough Council
Regular Meeting in the Municipal Building
December 18, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

Present: President Don Brothers, Vice-President David Alford, Renee Simmons, Sam Piccinini, Rico Elmore, Mayor Keith Jackson, Solicitor Paul Steff, Sergeant Dawn Shane, Manager John Barrett

Absent: Chad Rape, Toni Bucher, Jodi Hemer, Fire Chief Mike Mamone III

The regular meeting was called to order with the pledge of allegiance and roll call.

Persons in Attendance:

Tom Damen addressed Council regarding the County wide property reassessment and the affect on the Borough's property tax rate. Mr. Damen feels the tax neutral rate should be 6.621 mills and the Borough is planning to set the rate at 7 mills. Mr. Damen was told the 7 mills is in compliance with the law and was needed to balance the 2024 budget. Mr. Damen also discussed the installation of a gas regulator by Columbia Gas at the intersection of Jefferson Street and Maryland Avenue. Mr. Damen was told that Columbia Gas, being a public utility, has the right to install the necessary components to safely operate their system.

Tyler Schnerch stated that he had applied to purchase 379 Ohio Avenue from the Beaver County Repository last month. Since it was awarded to another individual, he was asking about getting back his deposit. The Manager stated that it would be sent out this week.

Bill Evanochko discussed with Council the possibility of him promoting and producing a Blues concert at the riverfront next year. The event would be 1 day and run from 1:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Mr. Evanochko would expect to have about 8 different acts playing throughout the day. If it goes well, he would like to make this an annual event. After some discussion, Council was in favor of exploring the idea and would like to meet with Mr. Evanochko to further discuss the event in more detail.

Corey Zelnack introduced himself to Council. He was hired as the full-time police officer for the Rochester Area School District. He wanted to let Council know he was looking forward to working with Council and the Police Department in conducting his official duties.

Mark Kopsack, Beaver County PUSH, discussed with Council the possibility of the PUSH holding an event on September 14, 2024 at the Borough's riverfront. The event would run from 12:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., There would be 8 to 10 bands, food vendors and other activities. They hold this annual event to raise funds to benefit families affected by childhood cancer. If it goes well, they would like to make this an annual event at the riverfront. Council was in agreement to allow this event and would like to meet with Mr. Kopsack and his group to further discuss the event in more detail.

Action Items:

Mr. Alford motioned to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2023 regular Council meeting as presented. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

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

BILLS:

Gen. Fund – Ck# 12427–12484 – totaling \$173,287.50.

Payroll (10/27, 11/10) – Ck# 5530-5548 plus Dir. Dep. and Elec. Pymts. – totaling \$114,489.33.

Council received for their review and consideration, the 2024 Budget. The budget reflects a property tax rate of 7 mills. After some discuss, Mr. Elmore motioned to approve the 2024 Budget as presented. Mr. Alford seconded and the motion carried.

Council received for their review and consideration, Ordinance 03-2023, setting the 2024 property tax rate at 7 mills and repealing the special debt and fire taxes. After some discussion, Mr. Piccinini motioned to approve and adopt Ordinance 03-2023 as presented. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Council received for their review and consideration, a letter from the Rochester Borough Sewer & Maintenance Authority asking Council to re-appoint Larry Blackwell to another 5-year term on the Authority Board. His current term expires at the end of this year. Mr. Elmore motioned to re-appoint Larry Blackwell to the Rochester Borough Sewer & Maintenance Authority for a 5-year term beginning January 1, 2024. Mr. Piccinini seconded and the motion carried.

Council was informed Ms. Vargo was no longer able to provide grant writing services. Council received a proposal from Deborah Samuels for grant writing services. Ms. Samuels will research, write and submit 10 grant applications approved by the Borough for a service fee of \$10,000. After some discussion, Mr. Piccinini motioned to hire Ms. Samuels and approve her proposal as presented for a fee of \$10,000. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Council to discuss and consider the services of Patrick McGuire as the Zoning/Code Officer. He has restructured his fee and is willing to continue at the rate of \$50 per hour. Council tabled this to discuss later in the meeting.

Council discussed the installation of a guiderail around the parking lot at the riverfront. Mr. Piccinini motioned to authorize the Engineer to advertise for bids to install the guiderail. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Council received for their review and consideration, a quote from Jeffrey Associates to construct a 28' X 52' pavilion at the Connecticut Avenue Park. After some discussion, Mr. Piccinini motioned to authorize the Engineer to advertise for bids to construct the pavilion. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Council discussed the meeting schedule for 2024. Council agreed to set the regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. even if that Monday is a holiday. The Re-organization meeting will be held Monday January 15, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Review Items:

Council discussed the possibility of approaching East Rochester Borough to acquire the East Washington ballfield and basketball court. Council agreed to continue this discussion in the future.

Committee Reports:Public Administration – Chad Rape, Chairperson

Council received for their review, the Expense and Revenue Report from January 1, 2023 through December 14, 2023.

Public Safety – Rico Elmore, Chairperson

Mr. Elmore had nothing to report. Mr. Piccinini discussed Mr. Damen's concern regarding the installation of a gas regulator. Council asked the Solicitor to review the possibility of developing some regulations to consider conditions for these types of uses.

Police Department Report – Sergeant Shane stated that she was looking to purchase 3 new tasers at a cost of \$13,649.40. She asked Council if they could pay \$1,804.70 towards the cost. The rest would be funded by a grant and money out of the drug fund. Mr. Piccinini motioned to approve the \$1,804.70 towards 3 new tasers. Mrs. Simmons seconded and the motion carried. Sergeant Shane stated that in the grant application she submitted for 5 new police cars, she noted that the Borough would cover \$25,000 of the cost with the grant covering the balance of \$288,000. The grant agency is asking for a commitment letter from Council confirming the \$25,000 match. After some discussion, Mr. Piccinini motioned to approve the commitment letter. Mr. Alford seconded and the motion carried. There was discussion regarding the crossing guards. Sergeant Shane will check with the School District to see if they have a written agreement on file with the Borough detailing the responsibilities for managing and maintaining the crossing guards.

Public Works – Toni Bucher, Chairperson

There was nothing to report in Mrs. Bucher's absence.

Recreation – Renee Simmons, Chairperson

Mrs. Simmons had nothing to report.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Jackson asked Council to formally recognize Eugenia Priest for all her efforts planning and working the annual Martin Luther King Celebration event. Mayor Jackson asked to purchase a plaque and present it to her at the January Council meeting. Mr. Piccinini motioned to approve the Mayor purchasing a recognition plaque honoring Mrs. Eugenia Priest. Mrs. Simmons seconded and the motion carried.

Solicitor's Report:

Solicitor Steff had nothing to report.

Code Officer's Report:

There was nothing to report.

Fire Chief's Report:

Council received for their review, the November 2023 Fire Department report.

Manager's/Treasurer's Report:

Council received for their review, the November 2023 Treasurer's Report.

Old Business/New Business:

Mr. Piccinini noted that He, Mr. Alford and the Mayor approached the County Commissioners to see if there were any additional ARPA funds available that Rochester could access for further improvements to our riverfront park. They stated that they would appropriate an additional \$50,000. The Borough would need to send a letter requesting the funds. The Manager did submit the letter and the Commissioners should let the Borough know sometime this week of the award.

Mr. Alford asked about the status of the Borough's message board. Manager Barrett stated that it is no longer functional nor repairable. There was discussion about replacing the sign sometime in the future.

Council went into an executive session at 8:55 p.m. to discuss personnel matters.

Council reconvened at 9:35 p.m.

Mr. Piccinini motioned to approve the fee change of \$50/hr. for Patrick McGuire as the Zoning/Code Officer. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:51 p.m.

Submitted by,

John M. Barrett
Borough Manager