

Rochester Borough Council
Regular Meeting in the Municipal Building
October 17, 2022, 6:30 p.m.

Present: Vice-President Don Brothers, Marjorie White, Rico Elmore, Jodi Hemer, David Alford, Mayor Keith Jackson, Solicitor Paul Steff, Code Officer Peggy Griffith, Sergeant Dawn Shane, Fire Chief Mike Mamone III, Manager John Barrett

Absent: President Benjamin Rader, Ron Becker

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

Persons in Attendance:

Marlon Robinson asked Council if the rain garden that was just put in off of Harmony Avenue was going to be fenced in. He feels it would be a hazard if not fenced in. Mr. Brothers stated the Sewer & Maintenance Authority installed this rain garden and he would have to address them as to whether they were going to fence it in or not.

Larry Blackwell stated that he supported the police. He asked Council to please consider finding funds if there is a need to hire more officers.

Beverly Davis expressed her concern regarding the accumulation of trash at 524 Cross Street. Sergeant Shane stated that she would have the police officers look at the property.

Mayor Jackson stated that he had delivered a letter on October 3rd to the Manager asking to have on the agenda his request for an independent audit of the borough building and police department. Mr. Brothers stated that his letter was on the agenda under his report.

Michael Brdar addressed Council asking for relief from his garbage bill for the years 2019 and 2020. Mr. Brothers asked if he had his hearing before the Magistrate. Mr. Brdar stated that it was scheduled for next Monday. Mr. Brothers stated that he would have to take this up with the Magistrate.

Carlton Vreen thanked Council and the police department for allowing his firm to beta test his software and application for Make it Home Safe.

Mr. Elmore asked about the newsletter. Manager Barrett stated that he has not had the time to develop articles for the newsletter. Mr. Elmore asked about putting an article about Make it Home Safe in the newsletter. Mr. Vreen stated that he would send information to the Manager for the article. Mr. Elmore also asked about filling the vacancy on Council. Manager Barrett stated that he did not receive any letters of interest to put on the agenda. Mr. Elmore stated that he had a person interested in filling the vacancy. Mr. Elmore motioned to amend the agenda and add filling the Council vacancy. Mrs. Hemer seconded and the motion carried.

Beth Welsh expressed her concern over the increase in her sewer bill. Mr. Brothers stated that she would have to address this matter with the Sewer Authority and not Council.

Action Items:

Mr. Elmore motioned to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2022 regular Council meeting as presented. Mrs. White seconded and the motion carried.

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

BILLS:

Gen. Fund – Ck# 11515–11566 – totaling \$425,463.97.

Payroll (9/30, 10/14) – Ck# 5429-5457 plus Dir. Dep. and Elec. Pymts. – totaling \$110,278.54.

Council received for their review and consideration, information from the Salvation Army regarding their annual Christmas Assistance event. After some discussion, Mr. Alford motioned to approve a \$250 donation. Mrs. White seconded and the motion carried.

Council received for their review and consideration, a request from Bags & Blessings to waive their zoning application fee of \$100. Code Officer Griffith noted a potential problem with them occupying 421 Railroad Street. Further review is needed. Council took no action on this request.

Council received for their review and consideration, a quote from the Joint Sewer Authority's contractor to demolish the old maintenance garage. After some discussion, Mr. Alford motioned to advertise for bid the demolition of the old maintenance garage. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried. Manager Barrett asked Council if there would be a willingness to consider vacating part of Harrison Street from the New York Avenue ramp to Center Avenue (map attached). This would enlarge the parking area and provide a larger area to spread the excavated dirt from the sewage plant project. Council took no action.

Council received for their review and consideration, a letter from the Rochester Area School District. They are interested in acquiring a used police car and are asking if the Borough has one they are getting rid of in the near future. After some discussion, Council determined that there was no car available at this time.

Review Items:

Council received for their review, the minutes of the September 8, 2022 Rochester Area Joint Sewer Authority meeting.

Council received for their review, a notice from New Brighton Borough that they will no longer be providing code enforcement services as of January 1, 2023. It was noted that the Borough would need to find a certified Building Code Official and a zoning officer. After some discussion, Code Officer Griffith will get with the Manager and research available code officials in this area for consideration.

Committee Reports:

Public Administration – Ron Becker, Chairperson

Council received for their review, the Expense & Revenue report for the period January 1, 2022 through October 12, 2022.

Council received for their review, three options for a proposed 2023 budget. Manager Barrett reviewed the three options which were developed based on three different policing scenarios. The first scenario included contracting police services from New Sewickley Township resulting in an overall budget deficit of \$236,854. The second scenario included the State Police covering the 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift and the Borough's police department covering the other 2 shifts resulting in an overall deficit of \$83,872. The third scenario included the hiring of 2 additional full-time police officers and the Borough's police department covering all shifts resulting in an overall deficit of \$301,490. Manager Barrett emphasized the need to look long term and recommended going with the second scenario. He stated that the Borough can no longer afford a full-time police department covering 24 hours, seven days a week. Council was not interested in utilizing the State Police or contracting with New Sewickley Township. There was discussion regarding grants and possibly utilizing ARPA funds for short term funding solutions. The long-term financial concerns would be addressed down the road. It was brought up that 2 of the police vehicles had some equipment removed in preparation of sale or reuse. After some discussion, Mrs. Hemer motioned to authorize the police department to re-install the equipment. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Public Safety – Don Brothers, Chairperson

Council received for their review, letters of interest from the police officers for the duties of code enforcement officer regarding property maintenance issues. There was discussion regarding the duties, hours and pay. Solicitor Steff recommended Council develop a job description outlining the duties, hours and pay before they offer the job to anyone. Council agreed and the Public Safety Committee will develop a draft for Council's review.

Sergeant Shane noted that the County Commissioners were looking into purchasing a County wide computer system for police services and providing each police department the initial computers and software for this change. The Sergeant also noted that the Rochester Police Department received a \$12,500 grant from the County for any equipment needs the department might have.

Public Works – Jodi Hemer, Chairperson

The Manager asked if Council had an interest in doing some additional paving. The Borough received the 2nd round of ARPA funds in the amount of \$180,600.25. There were 5 alleys and 2 streets removed from the paving program due to lack of funds. The Manager is recommending Council approve additional paving not to exceed \$60,000. The condition of Coolidge Way and Liberty Way were discussed as possible additions to the paving. Mrs. Hemer motioned to authorize the change order under the current paving contract with Youngblood Paving for additional paving not to exceed \$60,000. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Recreation

It was noted that the next Riverfront Committee meeting is scheduled for November 2nd at 6:00 p.m. at the riverfront.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Jackson thanked Sergeant Shane for setting up a department meeting for him to speak to the officers about his expectations moving forward.

Solicitor's Report:

Solicitor Steff had nothing to report.

Code Officer's Report:

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

Code Officer Griffith noted that the renovations at the Riverview Apartments are nearly complete. Council members are invited to attend a walk-through of the apartment buildings to review the work that has been completed. The walk-through is scheduled for October 25th at 10:00 a.m.

Police Report:

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

Fire Chief's Report:

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

Chief Mamone asked Council to attend a workshop on October 24th at 6:00 p.m. at the VFW where the future of fire services will be reviewed and discussed. Chief Mamone also stated that the Borough's ladder truck and pumper are no longer being used. He asked about selling these items to possibly fund future upgrades. The Chief was asked to find out how much the Borough could possibly get selling these items.

There was discussion regarding nuisance fire calls at several properties in the Borough and initiating fines under the ordinance Council recently passed. Solicitor Steff asked to get a copy of the ordinance for his review. Code Officer Griffith will review the matter with the Chief and Solicitor.

Manager's/Treasurer's Report:

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

Manager Barrett stated that he had received several emails from an individual asking about putting the Borough's traffic signals on blink from 11pm or 12am at night to 5am or 6am in the morning. She states that she comes to these intersections early in the morning and has to wait for the light to turn green when nobody else is even out. Sergeant Shane recommended not to have the lights blink for fear it would create a problem involving impaired drivers. Council took no action.

Old Business/New Business:

Mrs. White discussed garbage collection service. She stated that it might be best at this time to seek an extension of the current contract with Valley Waste. Council asked the Manager to approach Valley Waste about getting a proposal for an extension to the current contract.

Mrs. White asked if the Borough had any AED in the police cars or the Borough Building. She was told the Borough does not. Mrs. White thought it would be a benefit for the Borough to have them and the Borough may be able to use some of the ARPA fund for the equipment and training. Fire Chief Mamone stated that there are lease programs for the equipment that seem to be popular with other municipalities. Mrs. White asked if he could get some pricing for Council to review. Chief Mamone stated that he would.

Mr. Brothers brought up the addition to the agenda with respect to filling the vacancy on Council. After some discussion, Mr. Elmore motioned to appoint Sam Piccinini to fill the Council vacancy. Mrs. Hemer seconded and the motion carried. Roll Call – all members voted yes.

Mr. Elmore requested an executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Council went into an executive session at 9:40 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Submitted by,

John M. Barrett
Borough Manager