

## **Towanda Borough Regular Council Meeting Minutes January 3, 2023**

The Towanda Borough Council Meeting was held on Tuesday, January 3, 2023, at the Borough Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA. The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by President Christini.

**Present:** Vice President Eberlin, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof, Mr. Saring, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Schulze, President Christini, Mrs. Hatch & Mr. Parks

**Absent:** None.

**AMENDED AGENDA** – There was a vote to amend the agenda to include RESOLUTION 2023-3 – Act 57 of 2022. Mr. Kovalcin made the motion, seconded by Mrs. Hatch. The motion passed unanimously. The amended agenda will be posted.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:**

Reverend Rachel Stahle Ph.D. sent a letter to the Borough concerning the property at 12 Mix Avenue. The property has frequent police calls and often ambulance calls and sometimes multiple times in a day. She stated that this has been happening regularly for the 7 years she has resided at 10 Mix Avenue. Reverend Stahle also stated that these activities are disrupting the neighborhood. She realizes that the residents of this address have complex personal issues that may need attention its workers cannot provide, but its residents have been in the past year charged by police with violent offenses committed at that location. Some of the residents have been moved there that have criminal records.

She is very concerned about peacefulness and safety and feels that as a Towanda resident, these police calls are an excessive, disproportionate burden of time and cost upon the Towanda Police Department. This property's programs and residents are not only a nuisance to peace, but drain our town's limited resources.

She noted in her letter that other communities in Pennsylvania have laws that have been enacted and enforced to address nuisance properties with excessive police demands. Sometimes there are fines to the property owners or lessees. She stated there are relevant laws that allow a town to shut down such a property, especially when its residents are charged with crimes or when the policing demands exceed a reasonable limit in a defined time.

She asked the council to consider creating an ordinance or ensure that our neighborhoods are peaceful, and safe, and do not drain the resources of the police.

### **APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES:**

The motion to approve December 6, 2022, Regular meeting minutes was made by Mr. Eberlin and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion to approve December 28, 2022, Special Council meeting minutes was made by Mr. Saring and seconded by Mrs. Miller. The Motion passed unanimously.

### **FIRE CHIEF REPORT:**

Chief Roof's report was included. He stated that the department has been very busy, but everything is in good working condition. He commended his crew for the good job they did this past New Year's Day in stopping the fire on 518-520 Fourth Street.

### **FIRE BOARD REPORT:**

Mr. Parks stated they had a meeting but there is nothing to report.

### **MAYOR'S REPORT:**

- Mayor Miller thanked the fire department and all mutual aid for their response in dealing with the fire on Fourth Street on New Year's Day.

### **POLICE CHIEF REPORT:**

Chief Epler reviewed the report.

- Chief Epler also stated that Civil Service testing is proceeding along and the written and physical fitness have been completed. We have 2 candidates left who will be moving on to the oral interview.
- Officer Hennessy and K9 Hades walked in the Christmas parade.

- Officers Lake and Bellows attended a local 4-hour class on search and seizure held by the District Attorney's Office.
- Christmas vacations and holiday time off was covered.
- Chief Epler stated that in 2022 the police department had 3,651 total calls for service. 159 of them were mental health calls. Sometimes these calls are put under Miscellaneous, and they have added that category (Mental Health) now. There were 17 Mental Health calls for December 2022. 81 calls were to 12 Mix Avenue (an Allied Services group home), and 65 of those calls to 12 Mix Avenue were for the same 1 person. 45 calls were made to 408 Second Street (a Futures Community Support Services group home), 31 calls to 425 Main Street (a 5-apartment building), and 11 calls to 5 Poplar Street (a multiple-apartment building). He stated that these calls put an extra burden on the police department and takes services away from other law enforcement matters as well as other medical incidences that might occur at the same time elsewhere. He feels that some of these places need their own staff to handle these situations and not make it a police department issue (they are not legally charged with a crime). The facilities staff should transport their residents to the local behavioral science unit if the client expresses suicidal thoughts.  
President Christini stated that the facilities are burdening the police staff and a solution is needed. He looked at 20 different municipalities around the state and there have been ordinances enacted that Reverend Stahle mentioned in her letter as a concerned citizen.  
Vice President Eberlin stated that council should engage with the mental health organizations first and discuss these concerns with them before any kind of ordinance is considered. President Christini proposed that council meet with both Allied Services and Futures together. Mayor Miller, council, and the police committee would be in attendance. Mrs. Hatch (Police Committee) was asked to contact Allied and Futures to set up a meeting concerning these excessive calls, the burden placed on the police, and the borough council being contacted by concerned citizens.

**DECEMBER 2022 – Monthly Report**

269	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	0	JUVENILE PETITIONS
22	TRAFFIC CITATIONS	0	K-9 SERVICE (BORO)
12	NON-TRAFFIC CITATIONS	2	THEFT REPORTS
3	DUI ARRESTS	1	ANIMAL COMPLAINTS
82	DISTURBANCE CALLS	3	VEHICLE DOORS OPENED
7	VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	6	WARNINGS ISSUED
4	OUT-OF-TOWN ASSISTS	17	MENTAL HEALTH CALLS
9	CRIMINAL ARRESTS		K-9 SERVICE (OTHER)

**POLICE COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Mrs. Hatch gave a summary of the meeting tonight.

- Mrs. Hatch added that the committee has come upon information that some of our county services are having people brought into the community and that Main Link is getting involved with the county services. They are housing people at the Towanda Motel and paying the owners of the Towanda Motel (for some part of the Motel that is no longer used for guests) to house people that have mental health issues or are victims of abuse. Allegedly the county is bringing them in and they are not from Towanda but were placed here.
- The Committee also discussed these social services agencies hiring people who are not educated and are undertrained in dealing with the mental health issues of people who are living in these homes.
- Hopefully, meeting with these social services groups and discussing them will help resolve these issues.

**CODE ENFORCEMENT / PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:**

Mr. Sluyter, Code Enforcement Officer reviewed the report.

Mr. Sluyter elaborated on the amount of work his job entails and the difficulties he has in doing his job, and Vice-President Eberlin stated that the Finance and Administration committee have a discussion date set up with him.

**DECEMBER 2022 SUMMARY – CODE ENFORCEMENT STATS**

<b>PERMITS &amp; CONTRACTORS</b>		MONTH	YTD
Permits Issued		12	223
Permit Fees Paid	\$	1,190	28,458.30
Code Inspections Fees	\$	990	21,825
Borough Total after Code Inspections Fees	\$	200	6,633.30
Permit Work Value	\$	44,640	1,716,303.34
Contractors Registered		6	142
Contractors Registrations Amount	\$	600	14,200

**UCC Reportable Permits**

	Month	YTD	\$ Fees	\$ Fees YTD
#1 Residential – New		1		4.50
#2 Residential – Other	2	29	9.00	130.50
#3 Commercial – New		3		13.50
#4 Commercial – Other	2	14	9.00	63.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	4	47	18.00	211.50

**COMPLAINTS**

	Received		Investigated		Resolved	
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	Month	YTD
Single Family Non-Rental		151		130		51
1 & 2 Family Rentals		166		140		55
Commercial Rental Units		98		88		33
Commercial Non-Rental		53		47		21
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>468</b>		<b>405</b>		<b>160</b>

**Rental Dwelling Unit Inspections**

	Month	YTD
1st Inspection	8	114
2nd Inspection	1	5
3rd Inspection		
<b>FEES PAID \$</b>		<b>400.00</b>

**PARKING:**  
**Tickets by Status**

	Month	Year-to-Date
Issued	66	1274
Paid	33	563
Dismissed	12	232
Warning	5	163
Abandoned	4	50
Citation		375
Paid After Notice Sent		1

**Tickets by Street Location**

	Month	Year-to-Date
Main Street	24	190
Court Street	19	291
Bridge Street	4	149
Park Street	4	93
Pine Street	8	188
Washington Street	4	43
State Street		26
Parking Garage	3	75
John B. Merrill Pkwy		12
Second Street		7
Mix Avenue		
C&N Lot		
Poplar Street		
Other (Towanda)		

**Tickets by Violation**

	Month	Year-to-Date
Expired Meter, Non-Payment	32	488
Expired Meter, Payment Expired	1	7
3 Hour Limit	25	612
3 Hour Free Parking, Moved Locations		28
Permit Required		15
Parking Outside of Lines, Direction of Travel		22
Snow Emergency-Secondary Roads		7
Handicap/Disabled	6	39
Non-Space	2	44
Loading Zone		12

**BOROUGH MANAGER HOTALING REPORT:**

Manager Hotaling reviewed her report.

**1. Parks Master Plan RFP**

- a. We met with Stiffler-McGraw & Associates on December 14th at 10:30 for a kick-off meeting and developed a steering committee of approximately 12 people. The consultants will prepare our current conditions of the Parks, and the steering committee will meet in February and will hold a public meeting in March. We are looking to host the public meeting at the YMCA.

**2. Assistant Billing Clerk/Secretary**

- a. We have advertised for an Assistant Billing Clerk/Secretary for the front office. Applications are due back Wednesday, January 4th. We will review applications and begin interviewing in the next few weeks.

**3. Local Law Enforcement Support Grant Program**

- a. On 12/15/2022 we received an email that the grant application submitted to PCCD for the Local Law Enforcement Support Grant Program was approved for \$40,000. This is much less than what we originally applied for, but we were one of three Police Departments awarded funds in Bradford County. Manager Hotaling is waiting to hear from the PCCD staff to see what part of the grant they are looking at funding. The email explicitly stated not to reach out to them, due to the number of applicants.

**4. Dancing with the Stars at the Keystone Theatre**

- a. The Keystone Theatre is hosting a local version of Dancing with the Stars on Saturday, January 28th from 7:30-10:30 p.m. The event is a fundraiser for the Theatre, and we have two of our Police Officer's performing; Officer Bryan Bellows, and Officer Ryan Edsell. Please come out to support them if you are able.

**5. Borough & Municipal Authority Logo**

- a. Manager Hotaling is working with a company to develop a new Borough & Municipal Authority Logo. They have sent her six different ideas to look at and make changes. She will pass along the revised logos to Council and Board members to look at for suggestions, and hope to have a final version by late January/early February.

**6. PennDOT Liquid Fuels Auditor**

- a. We will meet with Anthony Frable, Bureau of County Audits from the PA Dept. of Auditor General for a review of our Liquid Fuels account on January 10th. Stacy and Manager Hotaling have been working on navigating the DOT grants account to make sure the information has been properly uploaded, and Stacy has been busy preparing all the necessary documentation for his visit.

**7. 15 Mulberry Street**

- a. Manager Hotaling has received a letter from Jeremy Sluyter, Code Enforcement Officer, regarding the condition of 15 Mulberry Street. His recommendation is to deem the property unsafe and dangerous. The letter notes the failing roof, broken windows, and lack of general property maintenance, and is unsafe for potential residents' and the public's well-being and safety. The recommendation is to obtain a structural report from Darin Rathbun, PE of HUNT-EAS. A motion was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mrs. Hatch. The motion passed unanimously.

**8. Bradford County Department of Public Safety-Emergency Operations Plan Update-Resolution 23-1**

- a. The Bradford County Department of Public Safety reviewed the County Emergency Operations Plan with no changes. Per Pa. C.S. Title 35, Chapter 75, Sections 7501-7504 allows each municipality to adopt by Resolution of Local Governing Body, the Bradford County Emergency Operations Plan as their own. Manager Hotaling requested that Council pass this resolution as each municipality has completed in the

County in the past. We are also in the process of updating the Borough's Notification and Resource Manual (NARM) for the County. This was last completed in 2016, and various changes and updates are needed for POCs and facilities.

**RESOLUTION 2023-1**

**Adopt Update of Bradford County Emergency Operations Plan**

Motion made by Mr. Eberlin and seconded by Mr. Schulze

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: Mr. Eberlin, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof, Mr. Saring, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Schulze, Mr. Christini, Mrs. Hatch, & Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

**RESOLUTION 2023-1 – Carried unanimously**

**9. PennDOT Traffic Signal Maintenance Agreement (TSMA)-Resolution 23-2**

- a. A new Traffic Signal Maintenance Agreement using standard language approved by PennDOT's Office of Chief Counsel needs to be fully executed regardless of funding source before the installation of the first traffic signal or any modification to a traffic signal within a municipality requiring a revision to the traffic signal permit. The new TSMA process is to simplify the steps to apply for permits to install or update traffic signals in our municipality. Manager Hotaling recommended the Council approve the Resolution and Agreement for PennDOT as required.

**RESOLUTION 2023-2**

**PennDOT Traffic Maintenance Agreement Authorization for submitting future modifications and to submit future applications for traffic signal approval either in writing or via electronic signature**

Motion made by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Saring

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: Mr. Eberlin, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof, Mr. Saring, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Schulze, Mr. Christini, Mrs. Hatch, & Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

**RESOLUTION 2023-2 – Carried unanimously**

**BOROUGH SOLICITOR**

- Solicitor Smith asked council to approve Governor Tom Wolf's "Act 57 of 2022" waiver (form provided by DCED), a resolution to have our tax collector grant a request to waive additional charges for real estate taxes in certain situations.

**RESOLUTION 2023-3**

**The tax collector shall, for tax year beginning on and after January 1, 2023, grant a request to waive additional charges for real estate taxes in certain situations.**

Motion made by Mr. Saring and seconded by Mr. Eberlin

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: Mr. Eberlin, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof, Mr. Saring, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Schulze, Mr. Christini, Mrs. Hatch, & Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

**RESOLUTION 2023-3 – Carried unanimously**

- Solicitor Smith stated that he will have the repeal of the per capita and occupation tax ordinance advertised and ready for adoption next month. Vice-President Eberlin will let the tax collector know this so she can tell them not to print these bills.
- Solicitor Smith stated that he would like to be present in the meeting that will be set up with Allied and Futures.

**BOROUGH SECRETARY**

Borough Secretary Kulick had nothing to report.

**FINANCIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:**

- President Christini stated that there was no Finance & Administration meeting because there were no bills to be paid as we paid that at the end of last year (Dec 28, 2022).

**UNION SUB-COMMITTEE:**

Mrs. Miller stated there was nothing to report at this time.

**PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT:**

- President Christini stated there was no planning meeting held in December 2023. Meetings will start up again on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, at 7 PM.

**RECREATION REPORT:**

Mr. Kovalcin stated he had nothing to report at this time. The next meeting will be in February.

**TMA/WMA/CBPA REPORTS:**

Included in the packet.

**LIBRARY REPORT:**

Included in the packet.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mr. Saring. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.



Diane M. Kulick  
Towanda Borough Secretary