

Towanda Borough Regular Council Meeting Minutes March 7, 2016

The **MARCH 2016** regular meeting of the Towanda Borough Council was held on Monday, March 7, 2016, at the Municipal Building. Council President Paul Sweitzer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM, with a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Mr. Christini, Mr. Klinger, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Long, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof, Mr. Sweitzer, and Mr. Taylor

ABSENT: Mrs. Lacek

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD: Mr. Raymond Finlan of 1766 Hillside Drive, Wysox, introduced himself to council. He is the owner of Finlan's Tavern on Main Street, Towanda. He was there to talk about "Code Enforcement." He is concerned about a 55-gallon drum of fuel oil owned by Mr. Saring, owner of the property next to him (Mr. Saring may have let the property go back to the bank). This drum resides in the side alley between the properties, and has been there at least 2 years. He suspects the oil is used. There were 2 drums there at one time. One was capped and one was uncapped. The one that is currently there is capped and sitting in alley by the dumpster.

Another issue Mr. Finlan has is there is an unmatched fence between his property joining the fence to the building next to his building, and his right-of-way is blocked. He is quite sure he has a deeded right of way. He also said for at least 5 years garbage has been thrown out of the window of the building next door. There are skunks living under the building. Mr. Finlan would like to see the landlord(s) addressed on these issues.

Also, Mr. Finlan reported that his father and his grandfather and he too has a long history of owning businesses in Towanda Borough - over 96 years. He has expressed concern over the municipal parking lot behind his business being called Finlan's Parking Lot (when something happens like DUI or similar arrests). It gets reported in the paper this way instead of listing the Municipal Parking lot as the location of arrests. He is tired of hearing or reading this, as it associates with his bar. Mr. Lowenstein from the Daily Review was present and he says he makes sure to not write "Finlan's Parking Lot." Mr. Finlan is very tired of this happening, as it focuses on his business negatively, and he works with many youths in gun safety most of the year. President Sweitzer told Mr. Finlan that the board appreciates his comments.

Mr. Gabe Spencer of 301 Second Street asked if the borough takes care of the fencing by J. Andrew Morrow Elementary School. The fence sticks out and could injure a child. Also, he stated that he received a ticket for parking against the flow of traffic. He paid the fine, but does not feel that he should have received the fine. President Sweitzer stated that we will call the school district to get action on fixing the fence.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES:

Motion to approve the February 1, 2016, regular meeting minutes was made by Mr. Taylor with a minor correction on page 4 (Mrs. Lack is Mrs. Lacek). Mr. Klinger seconded it. Motion passed.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT:

Chief Roof reported there were 13 calls reported from January 28 to February 29, 2016. He stated that equipment is all in good working order. Chief Roof also asked Council for permission to advertise the 1991 Ford F350 "Squad" truck. The fire company does not use this truck and they no longer need it. Mr. Kovalcin made the motion to give Chief Roof and the Fire Department permission to advertise the Squad truck. This was seconded by Mrs. Miller. Motion passed.

FIRE BOARD REPORT:

Mr. Klinger attended the last meeting, but stated there was nothing to report.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Miller introduced and swore in new part-time officer Derek Campbell. Officer Campbell will be training in the field with a couple of seasoned officers for a period of time. Also, Mayor Miller stated that the Bradford Hotel

has a camera crew from the TV show "Hotel Impossible" filming there. The show's purpose is to revamp and transform struggling hotels into successful tourist destinations.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT:

Chief Epler stated that the 2016 police SUV is in service now. There were modifications completed on it so that it can be used as a marked black and white patrol unit.

Also, new part-time officer Campbell has received his MPOETC Certification (Municipal Police Officers' Education & Training Commission) as a police officer and is beginning training with our officers.

Chief Epler also stated that the police station now has a new phone system, which enables the officers to transfer call and individual voice mail.

In closing, Chief Epler said that the the break ins are starting to slow down now due to some arrests and Borough residents being more alert.

February 2016

304	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	2	JUVENILE PETITIONS
14	TRAFFIC CITATIONS	0	K-9 SERVICE (BORO)
4	NON-TRAFFIC CITATIONS	6	THEFT REPORTS
0	DUI ARRESTS	4	ANIMAL COMPLAINTS
32	DISTURBANCE CALLS	4	VEHICLE DOORS OPENED
4	VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	15	WARNINGS ISSUED
0	OUT OF TOWN ASSISTS	0	K-9 SERVICES
6	CRIMINAL ARRESTS		

POLICE COMMITTEE REPORT:

Mrs. Miller stated there was nothing to report.

CODE ENFORCEMENT / PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:

Mr. Haight stated that Solicitor Smith is working on the sign ordinance for amending in relation to commercial and residential lots. The ordinance needs to be properly defined.

Also, Mr. Haight reviewed the code enforcement report.

There were 20 permits issued in February 2016.

The value of permits issued for work in the borough year-to-date is \$125,695.00.

Permit fees paid in February 2016 is \$1,917.00.

Code Inspections charges in February 2016 is \$1,285.00.

Total Towanda Borough collected in February 2016 is \$632.00.

Mr. Haight noted that there were ten (10) rental properties that failed the 1st rental inspection, and and one (1) rental failed the 2nd inspection. Of the ten (10), one property passed the 2nd inspection. There are eight (8) more that will need the 2nd inspection.

Also, Mr. Haight stated that there were fifty-eight (58) compliance action issues, with thirty-two (32) of the compliance action notices on just one particular address. The owners are working on bringing the property up to code. If there is failure to correct violations, the owner will be referred to the District Magistrate for possible prosecution and fines.

PARKING REPORT – FEBRUARY 2016

# Green Tickets Issued:	-	42
# Yellow Tickets Issued:	-	5
# Green Tickets Forgiven	-	2
# Yellow Tickets Forgiven	-	2
# Green Tickets Excused	-	0
# Yellow Tickets Forgiven	-	0
# Paid W/N 48 Hrs @ ½ Cost	-	12
\$ Amount Paid w/n 48 Hrs	-	\$120

# Paid After 48 Hrs	-	5
\$ Amount Paid After 48 Hrs	-	\$100
# Tickets to Magistrate as Citations	-	0
Amount Received from Magistrate	-	Need figure from Susan
Delinquent Tickets before Citations	-	1 \$20
Revenue from Reserved Parking Spaces	-	\$3,340
Hours on Parking per Month	-	70
Police # of Tickets Written	-	2
# of \$10 tickets (Police Dept.)	-	
\$ Amount Paid W/N 48 Hours	-	\$10
# of \$20 Tickets (Police)	-	
\$ Amount Paid After 48 Hours	-	\$0
TOTAL MONTHLY REVENUE	-	\$3,590

BOROUGH MANAGER’S REPORT:

Manager Lane stated that he received an official letter from FEMA stating that they (FEMA) received no valid requests for changes to the modified flood hazard information. Therefore, the modified flood hazard information for our borough community that became effective on February 25, 2016 remains valid and revises the FIRM and FIS report that were in effect prior to that date. Also, written in the letter was the modified flood hazard information will also be used to calculate the appropriate flood insurance premium rates for all new buildings and their contents and for the second layer of insurance on existing buildings and their contents. It was stated that the FEMA website with this information is quite cumbersome to navigate, therefore, it was suggested that Manager Lane put this information on the Borough Website.

1. College Run

Manager Lane is waiting to hear back from the PUC (Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission) regarding the railroad. The PUC is going to set up a meeting with the Borough and the Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad (RBMN), to try to work out an arrangement.

In the meantime, he stated that Solicitor Smith has contacted a colleague to put us in touch with a lawyer that specializes in railroad law. We are seeking to verify if the railroad has the authority (as they claim) to force us to tunnel under the tracks. Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad (RBMN) does not own the property, nor have an easement from the property owner for this portion of the track. What they claim is they do have a “Federally Registered Railroad,” and that is enough.

2. Downtown Revitalization Project

Manager Lane also received an answer from the Office of the Budget regarding the relocation of the electric utility through the parking lot property. The RACP grant will not reimburse for the cost of the relocation. Penelec has estimated the cost to be around \$50,000. He wishes to seek a line of credit to address this expense as well as secure funds for contingency during the project. The current construction budget does not allow of contingency. Manager Lane plans to use “Value Engineer-

ing” if the costs end up higher than the grant allocation. However, there is always a possibility of unforeseen circumstances once ground is broken. He will tie the line of credit directly the revenue of the parking garage itself, and anticipates the revenue to be more than enough to cover the small line of credit. At this time, Manager Lane asked permission from Council to look for a line-of-credit for \$150,000. Mr. Kovalcin proposed that Council approve Manager Lane’s request to look for a \$150,000 line of credit to be used toward the parking garage. This was seconded by Mr. Klinger. Motion passed.

Solicitor Smith is working on the cooperation agreement between the Borough and the Flying Cow.

3. Financial Audit

Manager Lane stated the audit company was here on 25th February to review our financial records. They plan to present the final 2015 audit report by March 31st.

4. Special Capital Reserve Funds

Manager Lane stated that he has put the Borough Hall generator and Municipal Building HVAC on hold for the moment. He would like to see what our impact fee payment would be before he continues with these projects. We typically receive our payment in July. The Police car and Police phone system have been purchased and are both currently in use by the department. The impact monies will be decreased seventeen per cent (17%), and the police pension receives a good show of the impact fee money.

5. Paving

Last month Manager Lane mentioned looking into paving Washington Street from Main Street to the Parkway. After a little investigation, it has become apparent that the sewer, water lines and a manhole on the street will need to be replaced. This has turned what was originally thought of as a small project into a larger one. Although it would be nice to pave the street now, Manager Lane has decided to take a more systematic approach to utility replacement and street paving. Fred Johnson and Manager Lane are going to put together a plan that will address the replacement of Water & Sewer Mains in direct correlation with paving. In other words, they will also look at the streets as well as the underground utilities and make plans accordingly.

Manager Lane stated that “Experience Works” formerly “Green Thumb” is an employee training service that is through Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) that allows low-income older workers employment opportunities. Experience Works partners with local 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit agencies to serve as training sites for participants. We have a woman coming in next week to organize the file drawers and do some file work for the billing department.

BOROUGH SOLICITOR’S REPORT

Solicitor Smith stated that much of his information has been reported by Manager Lane already. He mentioned his contact with a colleague friend of his that directed him to a lawyer skilled in railroad law. This may help to get things going in the right direction. He has not heard back yet and hopes to hear from this person soon.

As far as the zoning amendment of signs on corner lots in residential areas, Solicitor Smith needs some time to check the ordinance over some more before it goes to the planning commission and county planning. There does not seem to be specific definition in this ordinance. Vice-President Christini stated that Corning, New York, is a good example for signage, and he will check on that and get back to Solicitor Smith and Jim Haight before the next planning commission meeting.

BOROUGH SECRETARY REPORT

Secretary Kulick had nothing to report.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

UNION SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT – Nothing to report.

FINANCIAL REPORT – Motion was made by Mr. Long and seconded by Mr. Klinger to pay the bills. Motion passed.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT – Mr. Long reported no meeting held in February.

RECREATION REPORT – Mr. Kovalcin stated there was a meeting and the committee is looking into having a couple bands perform this coming summer at the park across the river (Riverfront Park). Also, Manager Lane shared about an idea for a bike trail (rails-to-trails conservancy). We would want to acquire a grant to do a feasibility study for the bike path to be from Towanda Borough to Monroe Borough that would run parallel (south) to the private railroad tracks. Manager Lane stated that they have had one meeting so far and there is a lot of interest. He also stated that Wysox Township is interested in doing a bike path from Wysox Park to Towanda Riverfront Park.

TMA/WMA/CBPA REPORTS

Other Business:

President Sweitzer asked if the four (4) way stop on Williams & Chestnut Streets is still needed. It was decided to keep the stop sign, as it's there and should stay.

It was also brought up about parking on the street being all over the place. Chief Epler said that they have an eye on it.

Also, Mr. Long reported that his street (3rd) has many cars speeding through it.

Finally, Mr. Klinger requested the borough to hang a banner for the Kinsman family (who lost their son due to a heroin overdose) for the month of April and the first week of May, for an Addiction Awareness Rally to be held here in Towanda Borough. Vice-President Christini asked council to approve hanging the banner, seconded by Mr. Taylor. Motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT - Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Taylor and seconded by Mrs. Miller. Meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM.

Diane M. Kulick
Towanda Borough Secretary