

**Towanda Borough  
Regular Council Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 1, 2021**

The Regular Meeting of the Towanda Borough Council was held on Monday, March 1, 2021, at the Borough Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Mark Christini with a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Present:** Mr. Christini, Mr. Eberlin, Mr. Klinger, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Lacek & Mr. Sweitzer

Note: Mrs. Miller was present and was sworn in to be a First Ward Council Member by Mayor Garrett Miller (her son).

**Absent:** Mr. Roof

**ELLEN LACEK REMEMBRANCE:**

President Christini, speaking for council, had a few words of remembrance to say about fellow Council member Ellen Lacek, who passed away on February 20th, 2021. He stated that he and the board are grateful for Ellen's giving of her service and commitment, and how her heart was for Towanda. He mentioned the many discussions she took part in and how her opinion was valued greatly.

He wanted her family to know that our prayers are with them and may she "Rest in Peace." Ellen was on borough council January 3, 2006 for a full year term. Then, she became a member again on January 3, 2012, and served as Vice President from 2014 through 2015. She continued to serve as councilwoman until her passing.

In addition, Ellen was also a Towanda Municipal Authority member since 2007. He said, "We're sure going to miss Ellen here."

**SWEARING IN JEAN MILLER:**

Jean Miller, who was previously on Council for over 17 years was sworn in again to replace Kala Saxon, who resigned due to moving out of the 1st Ward to the Third Ward (which made Ms. Saxon no longer eligible to serve the 1st Ward).

**PUBLIC RECOGNITION:**

Mayor Miller honored eight-year-old Scout Nemeth of State Street for donating money he earned from shoveling snow after the recent big snowstorm in Towanda. He donated his earnings to Tanner Keeney, a Wysox firefighter who was injured in January when fighting a local fire. Mr. Keeney was unable to go back to work until he is healed. Scout and his mother Randi Morse discussed how the firefighter was injured and the role he played in the community. He told his mother that he wanted to shovel snow to raise money for the Keeney family, and with her help and encouragement he raised \$295. Mayor Miller presented him with a certificate recognizing his community service and letting him know how much this gesture is appreciated.

**CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:**

Sally Vaughn (West), 6 Lombard Street – Mrs. Vaughn addressed the Borough Council concerning a property maintenance case issue for her 401 Main Street property. The work on the property is now complete, however, Mrs. Vaughn stated that she feels she was treated unfairly during the process of having the maintenance done on the side wall of the building.

President Christini thanked her for having the work completed and stated that Council is thrilled that the wall is fixed. He also stated that Council members have an obligation to protect its citizens (who are walking about) by making sure structures are safe.

David Yoder, 304 York Avenue – Mr. Yoder asked, in general, citations are issued in the first place? President Christini stated that citations are issued in situations where they are needed if problems drag on and are not resolved in a timely manner. The situation with the building at 401 Main Street had gone on for 12 months now and the borough has a liability and responsibility to the public to ensure it was made safe as soon as possible.

Mr. Bill West, 6 Lombard Street – Mr. West stated that the fine was levied after his meeting with the engineer when he agreed to install a security barrier, which he did do at the cost of \$1,000. In response, President Christini stated the safety of the people at The Main Link (next door) could have been in jeopardy, and that as far as he was aware, the Borough did not receive paperwork stating that the wall had been sufficiently stabilized and made safe after the steel L-Channels and plywood structure were added. President Christini stated that if the bricks fell away from where the loading doors were, it could have been very dangerous.

Mrs. Vaughn (West) then stated the minutes of the November 2020 Council meeting were not correct in her opinion since she did not receive the issued citation in October 2020.

Tammy Farley 304 York Avenue – Ms. Farley has been a business and property owner since 1985. She wondered what happened to the Main Street program. She asked about the efforts from council to help people who own businesses downtown. She asked if there is any real encouragement from Council to rental owners? President Christini stated that the Borough does provide an incentive to rental owners: If your rental property passes the first Rental Inspection, there is no charge and so it's free. She feels that many have not read the rental inspection code.

Ms. Farley also asked about grant writing for property owners which Manager Lane stated he has searched for approximately 7 years. The homeowner has to have a very low income to qualify for these grants. Manager Lane stated there is a program that is applied for through the County and not the Borough. She stated that Main Street and storefronts need help and Manager Lane stated that they had a façade program last year which was used by some of the businesses to make improvements. He stated that the Main Street Program ended years ago and is no longer available, however he continuously looks for improvement grant money for both commercial and homeowner properties.

Mr. Sweitzer stated that Council is always trying to find ways to revitalize downtown Towanda. He stated that solving the parking situation with a parking garage took 20 years, and the Merrill Parkway with the walkway took 18 years. Council is always trying to be creative in finding ways to keep the town viable, and anyone from the general public is welcome to learn more about it by attending the meetings.

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

Motion to approve the February 1, 2021, Regular Council meeting minutes was made Mr. Klinger and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin. Motion passed.

**FIRE CHIEF REPORT:**

Chief Roof was not present; however, the monthly report of incidents was included in packet.

**FIRE BOARD REPORT:**

Mr. Klinger stated he was unable to attend the meeting but he was told there was nothing to report at this time.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Miller stated that the police department was enforcing the law on 23 vehicles that were sitting around town and not moving. This is a safety issue, especially during snow storms for plows, and if fire service would be needed on the street.

Mayor Miller also stated that he would like to see established (once or twice a year) an "Ellen Lacek Community Service Award" in remembrance of Mrs. Lacek. He asked if anyone had any nominations to let him know.

**POLICE CHIEF REPORT:**

Chief Epler updated Council on 4 newer model "refurbished" tasers that he was thinking of purchasing for the department.

Also, the officers have started their yearly mandatory update training which is done on-line.

The department is also working on a few complex cases that are recent DA issue deferrals to the PA Attorney General's Office.

Maintenance has begun at the station, which includes painting and new flooring by a couple of the borough employees.

**FEBRUARY 2021 – Monthly Report**

250	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	3	JUVENILE PETITIONS
13	TRAFFIC CITATIONS	0	K-9 SERVICE (BORO)
8	NON-TRAFFIC CITATIONS	4	THEFT REPORTS
1	DUI ARRESTS	5	ANIMAL COMPLAINTS
70	DISTURBANCE CALLS	2	VEHICLE DOORS OPENED
3	VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	4	WARNINGS ISSUED
1	OUT OF TOWN ASSISTS	0	K-9 SERVICES
9	CRIMINAL ARRESTS		

**POLICE COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Mayor Miller stated the committee did not have a meeting this month.

**CODE ENFORCEMENT / PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:**

Mr. Sluyter, Code Enforcement Officer, was present and reviewed the written report for February 2021.

**FEBRUARY 2021 SUMMARY – CODE ENFORCEMENT STATS**

<b>PERMITS &amp; CONTRACTORS</b>		<b>MONTH</b>	<b>YTD</b>
Permits Issued		31	38
Permit Fees Paid		\$3,741.80	\$4,531.80
Code Inspections Fees		\$2,566.80	\$2,806.80

Borough Total after Code Inspections Fees		\$1,175.00	\$1,725.00
Permit Work Value		\$315,917	\$347,768
Contractors Registered		7	16
Contractors Registrations Amount		\$500.00	\$1,200.00

**UCC Reportable Permits**

	Month	YTD	Fees	Fees YTD
#1 Residential – New				
#2 Residential – Other	7	8	\$31.50	\$36.00
#3 Commercial – New				
#4 Commercial – Other	2	2	\$9.00	\$9.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>\$40.50</b>	<b>\$45.00</b>

**COMPLAINTS**

	Received		Investigated		Resolved	
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	Month	YTD
Single Family Non-Rental	30	45	30	45	12	24
1 & 2 Family Rentals	20	40	15	35	10	18
Commercial Rental Units	8	18	7	17	3	7
Commercial Non-Rental	4	8	4	8	3	4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>53</b>

**Rental Dwelling Unit Inspections**

	Month	YTD
1st Inspection	3	8
2nd Inspection	0	0
3rd Inspection	0	0
<b>FEES PAID</b>	<b>\$100</b>	<b>\$100</b>

**PARKING:**

**Tickets by Status (Year to Date)**

Issued	68
Paid	32
Dismissed	6
Abandoned	
Warning	1

**Tickets by Violation (Year to Date)**

3 Hour Limit	106
Expired Meter	
Parking Outside of Lines	1
Permit Required	
Non-Space	

**Tickets by Street Location (Year to Date)**

Main Street	56
Bridge Street	25
Park Street	8
Court Street	7
Pine Street	5
Washington Street	5
State Street	1
Parking Garage	
John B. Merrill Pkwy	
Second Street	

**Tickets by Officer (Last 30 Days)**

Keith Long	
Jeremy Sluyter	

**BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT – FEBRUARY 1, 2021**

1. **PennDOT Turnback SR 3020 –**

Manager Lane met with the contractor to address the driveway at 108 Popular. The new elevation of the street has created a steeper pitch to their driveway causing the car to scrap on the concrete. The situation is no one's fault, it just doesn't work so the contractor is going to degrease the grade via a change order when the weather permits. He stated we are also adding a "Trash Rack" on the headwall of Cash Creek above Third Street. This additional work will slow down closing the project however he wanted to make sure it gets done.

2. **Flooding August 2018 –**

Manager Lane is still waiting for payment from PEMA. Hoping to see the payment soon. We currently owe the contractor \$58,134 for the repairs to Cash Creek.

He also submitted the payment request for the repair of Cash Creek on December 7th, 2020.

The Mulberry St. repairs are on the schedule to be repaired in house come spring 2021. This will be funded through the FEMA/PEMA disaster relief program.

3. **2020 COVID -19 Supplemental COPS grant**

We received payment from the Bradford County probation department. \$17,600. Manager Lane plans to follow up with Chief Popovich to see if there is any documentation he will need from the Borough.

4. **Trail Project/Park Master Plan**

The application approval will be decided on the March 23rd CFA Board Meeting. Manager Lane will inform council as soon as he receives word.

5. **Borough Hall –**

Chief Epler provided Manager Lane with a list of maintenance items that need addressed at Borough Hall. He has dedicated two public works employees to shorten Chief's list. Some items will have to wait for better weather. The items include general maintenance of the building, painting, ceiling tiles, overhead lighting, removal of old generator, etc.

6. **YMCA – New Floor**

We have started submitting the special conditions for the DCNR grant to replace the gym floor at the YMCA. (\$70,000 DCNR Grant with a \$40,000 match from YMCA).

Manager Lane asked council to approve a budget modification for pass through grant fund purposes. He plans to utilize the bank account that we used for the construction of the parking garage and convert it to a "Grant Account" that can be used in the future when particular programs require separate bank accounts. Historically, he would use the "Community Development Fund" however DCNR insists a completely separate account. The Council packet included the budget worksheet for Fund 29 "Grant Fund". Grant monies and YMCA match funds are noted as revenues and Construction, Consulting, Legal and Advertising are noted as expenses. The total project has \$110,000 budget.

We are planning to use the cooperative purchasing agreement SourceWell for the purchase and installation of the flooring. Charity has been working with the vender for some time and we feel the price is fair and within the budget.

Manager Lane also signed an agreement with Hunt Engineers to provide consulting services and construction oversight of the project.

Manager Lane presented the resolution as follows:

**RESOLUTION #2021-4**

Approve 2021 Budget Amendment for the YMCA Project.

A motion was made by Mr. Sweitzer and seconded by Mr. Klinger

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Christini, Mr. Eberlin, Mr. Klinger, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Lacek, Mrs. Miller,  
Mr. Sweitzer

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Mr. Roof

**RESOLUTION #2021-4 - Carried**

**SOLICITOR'S REPORT:**

Solicitor Smith had 2 amended ordinances for Council vote:

**ORDINANCE #2021-1**

Amending Article III, Section 325-16. C. (1) of the Code of the Borough of Towanda pertaining to uses allowed by Special Exception in the R-4 Special One-Family Residential Zoning District to Delete Two-Family and Multi-Family Dwellings and Apartments as Uses Permitted by Special Exception in the R-4 Special One-Family Residential Zoning District.

A motion was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mr. Lacek

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Christini, Mr. Eberlin, Mr. Klinger, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Lacek, Mrs. Miller,  
Mr. Sweitzer

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Mr. Roof

**ORDINANCE #2021-1 - Carried**

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**ORDINANCE #2021-2**

Amending Article III, Section 325-13. C. (7) of the Code of the Borough of Towanda pertaining to uses allowed by Special Exception in the R-1 One-Family Zoning District to Delete Two-Family and Multi-Family Dwellings and Garden Apartments as Uses Permitted by Special Exception in the R-1 One-Family Zoning District.

A motion was made by Mr. Eberlin and seconded by Mrs. Miller

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Christini, Mr. Eberlin, Mr. Klinger, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Lacek, Mrs. Miller,  
Mr. Sweitzer

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Mr. Roof

**ORDINANCE #2021-2 - Carried**

**BOROUGH SECRETARY:**

Secretary Kulick did not have anything to bring before Council.

**ADMINISTRATIVE:**

**RESOLUTION #2021-5**

Appoint Council Member Ryan Eberlin to Towanda Borough Police Civil Services Commission (behind Keith Long).

A motion was made by Mr. Sweitzer and seconded by Mr. Klinger  
The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Christini, Mr. Klinger, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Lacek, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Sweitzer

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN: Mr. Eberlin

ABSENT: Mr. Roof

**RESOLUTION #2021-5 - Carried**

**UNION SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Mr. Sweitzer stated the contract negotiations will probably start in April.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Motion to pay the February 2021 bills was made by Mr. Klinger and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin. Motion passed.

**PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT:**

Mr. Christini stated there was no meeting in February and the next meeting will be on March 16, 2021 at 7 PM.

**RECREATION REPORT:**

Mr. Kovalcin stated there will be a meeting held in April.

**TMA/WMA/CBPA REPORTS:**

Included in packet.

**MISC:**

President Christini stated that he will notify the Daily Review to post a notice that if anyone is interested in being on Borough Council from 3rd Ward (of which term ends January 4, 2022), they should submit a letter of interest to the Borough. One would need to be a resident of that Ward for 12 months, and if they want to be on Council longer, they would have to run in the General Election in November 2021. If anyone wants to be nominated as a candidate, they must contact their political party chairperson. Questions can be directed to Renee Smithkors, Bradford County Director of Elections at 570-265-1717 or [smithkors@bradfordco.org](mailto:smithkors@bradfordco.org).

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Sweitzer and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.



Diane M. Kulick  
Towanda Borough Secretary