

**Towanda Borough
Regular Council Meeting Minutes
May 6, 2024**

The Towanda Borough Council Regular Meeting was held on Monday, May 6, 2024, at the Borough Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA. The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by President Eberlin.

Present: President Eberlin, Mr. Roof, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Saring, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Shulze, Vice-President Christini via telephone, Mrs. Hatch & Mr. Parks

Absent:

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

Mr. LeRoy McCracken, the director of the Valley Walk Against Suicide invited Mayor Miller and all of Council an invitation to take part in this benefit being held on September 7, 2024. It is being held in Sayre with a rain date of September 14th. He stated there would be vendors, 50/50 raffles, a silent auction, food, refreshments, and music. There will be a motorcycle ride in addition to the walk. The purpose is to benefit survivors, victims, and those affected by suicide. The group would like to become a non-profit organization in the future to help spread knowledge and awareness about suicide, the causes, and the prevention of suicide.

Melody Cervantes of 518 Third Street (corner of Elizabeth & Third Street) was present to talk about some issues she is having with vandalism in her neighborhood allegedly caused by a neighbor. She passed some pictures for council to see that relate to these issues, plus Chief Epler is aware of these problems. She is very concerned about the safety of her neighbors, her children, and herself. This neighbor/individual is the primary suspect, but it is hard to prove this in court. There has been paint thinner thrown on a neighbor's car and red paint on the back of a neighbor's house. The police have asked the neighbors to get more cameras. This person put their handicapped sign in his yard. Mrs. Cervantes and her daughter are both handicapped, and she tries to park her car in her garage most of the time but needs to have her car very near her door to transport her daughter to the hospital. However, there is no parking on her side of the street. This neighbor has also been harassing them with a laser pointer, pointed into her windows, and he is leaving notes around the neighborhood. President Eberlin stated that we have a Parking Committee and they will meet to try to come up with a solution for parking. In the meantime, if she feels threatened in any way to contact the Borough Police.

Mrs. Charlotte Parks, Treasurer of Kali's Mission was present to give an update on its activities. They received a United Way Grant for \$2,000 for the 2024 year. They have applied for another grant for 2025, and hope to hear the outcome in June or July. A rabies clinic was held in April at the Wysox Animal Clinic. There were 50 vaccines and \$300 raised. Dr. Robyn Terrell and her staff volunteered their time for this event. They held a yard sale on May 4th and did not sell a lot of items, but they did receive \$120 in donations (\$100 of it from one couple who used Kali's Mission and gave back to them). They will be selling hot dogs, chips, and soda again at Concerts in the Park at Tom Fairchild Park this summer, and at the Pumpkin Roll in the fall. She also stated the Got Sneakers program is continuing. The Baptist Church & particularly member Mrs. Sue Wheeler, as their contact has donated all the sneakers that they receive when they have household giveaways. They received 122 pairs of sneakers to send to this recycling program. The sneakers bring in \$.50 to \$3.00 per pair with zero cost for shipping. They collect and recycle \$.05 returnable bottles and cans. Mrs. Parks stated that there has been a trapping in Towanda Borough and we are seeing a reduction in the number of stray/feral cats in the borough.

President Eberlin had a letter from Marge Chilson of 301 & 1/2 Pine Street, Apartment 1. She is requesting a handicap sign be placed in front of her home. President Eberlin stated that if approved, she needs to understand this spot is not a reserved spot just for her, but for anyone who has a handicap placard that might desire to park there. Mr. Thrush has tried to contact her at the number she listed in her letter and also emailed her, but has not had a response yet. President Eberlin stated that Mr. Thrush try to get in touch with her again and they will address this again next month.

President Eberlin has a couple of letters from two citizens who live on Mr. Saring's street (Lombard) that involve PennDOT's motorcycle training that has been happening in the lower Towanda High School parking lot every Saturday and Sunday from 7:00 AM to approximately 5 or 6:00 PM. These letters are asking for the Borough's help. Mr. Saring stated that he has received other calls and this is taking place right across from his house. There are a lot of participants and they rev up their engines, beep their horns, which is probably part of the training and testing. The residents can't sit on their porches, and they have to close their doors and windows to try to help alleviate the sounds. President Eberlin stated that he had run through there while it was going on and it was pretty loud. He stated that Mr. Peachy, the Superintendent knows that this has become a nuisance in the neighborhood. Peachy thought that this was only taking place on Sunday, not both days. President Eberlin stated that

he would like to support this neighborhood by sending a letter to the school district to see if they can do anything about this situation. Manager Hotaling will send a letter to Superintendent Peachy.

APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES:

A motion to approve the April 1, 2024, Regular meeting minutes was made by Mr. Kovalcin, and seconded by Mrs. Hatch. Motion passed.

A motion to approve the April 22, 2024, Special meeting minutes was made by Mr. Kovalcin, and seconded by Mrs. Miller. Motion passed.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT:

Chief Roof stated that it was a busy month. Everything is in good working order. He stated that he has been getting some phone calls from people installing solar panels. He stated as a firefighter he does have a problem with these panels being on roofs. They are dangerous and the firemen have to work around them. Also, even though you disconnect the panel, it is still charged. He tells the firefighters to stay away from them because they will zap you. Also, he said that he tells people this, but they don't believe him. Chief Roof has been in classes where he has been told that they are still charged. President Eberlin stated that there is nothing in our code that says someone can't have solar panels.

FIRE BOARD REPORT:

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

MAYOR'S REPORT:

- Mayor Miller talked about the Tour of Honor ride and said he would like to have a small container with a certificate in it for each rider to take when they visit our Veterans Memorial Park. Note: There is a Tour of Honor website that lists the rules for the riders and how to get recognition for the sites they visit. Mayor Miller also stated they have been very busy with Riverfest.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT:

Chief Epler reviewed his report:

- A DUI Rove and Aggressive Driving Patrol was conducted in the Borough this month.
- Officers Hades and Hennessy did K-9 training in Wilkes-Barre which involved article searches and tracking. Officer Hennessy also did active shooter training for the Towanda Creek Animal Hospital and assisted the Towanda Little League with their opening day Ceremony and player's parade.
- Training for the new camera system has been set up with a deployment date of 15 July.
- We have begun training the new part-time Officer, he will start working overlap shifts with different Officers.
- Officers who had expiring Body Armor were fitted last week in preparation for new armor. We have a grant that covers half the cost of the Armor.
- Several Officers attended training with the CERT team in the Valley, all reported that it was good training.

APRIL 2024 – Monthly Report

376	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	1	JUVENILE PETITIONS
66	TRAFFIC CITATIONS	0	K-9 SERVICE (BORO)
8	NON-TRAFFIC CITATIONS	6	THEFT REPORTS
3	DUI ARRESTS	6	ANIMAL COMPLAINTS
51	DISTURBANCE CALLS	2	VEHICLE DOORS OPENED
5	VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	13	WARNINGS ISSUED
0	OUT-OF-TOWN ASSISTS	9	MENTAL HEALTH CALLS
9	CRIMINAL ARRESTS		

POLICE COMMITTEE:

Mr. Saring stated that Chief Epler covered all the topics that the committee discussed. Therefore, he had nothing more to add.

CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT:

Barry Thrush, Code Enforcement Report included.

- Mr. Thrush has sent some letters out for high grass.
- He spent time with his mentor and he highlighted two properties in the borough that will be receiving letters in the mail soon for property maintenance violations.

PUBLIC WORKS/CODE ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:

Manager Hotaling, Mr. Parks (Chairman), Mr. Kovalcin, and Mr. Hatch

Mr. Parks stated there was no meeting this past month, and Manager Hotaling stated that she and Solicitor Smith have had some discussion on the street opening ordinance draft.

BOROUGH MANAGER HOTALING REPORT:

Manager Hotaling was report included the following:

1. Paving Fifth Street between Elizabeth and Bridge Street

- a. We received three bids for paving on Fifth Street.
 - i. Sikora Brothers-\$122,138.00
 - ii. **Glenn O. Hawbaker-\$84,943.00**
 - iii. Bishop Brothers-\$89,446.20
- b. She recommended to Council that we approve the bid from Glenn O. Hawbaker for \$84,943.00.

RESOLUTION 2024-11

Approve Paving Contractor for 2024

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

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Eberlin, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof, Mr. Saring, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Shulze, Vice-President Christini, Mrs. Hatch & Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

RESOLUTION 2024-11- Carried

2. Floodplain Management Resolution

- a. To comply with the new FEMA maps, ManagerHotalingaskedcouncilto adopt the updated ordinance for requiring a permit for any building or construction within a floodplain.

ORDINANCE 2024-3

Adopt Updated Floodplain Management Regulations for Towanda Borough

Motion made by Mrs. Hatch and seconded by Mr. Parks.

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Eberlin, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof, Mr. Saring, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Shulze, Vice-President Christini, Mrs. Hatch & Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

ORDINANCE 2024-3 - Passed

3. DCED Greenways, Parks and Recreation Grant-SCI Pool Feasibility Study

- a. Manager Hotaling asked for approval to apply for a grant for the (YMCA) SCI Pool Feasibility Study that DCNR requires to obtain any future grant funds for construction costs towards the pool renovations. The quote for the feasibility study is \$49,200, and the grant will cover 85% of the costs for a request of \$41,820.

RESOLUTION 2024-12

Approve GTRP (Greenways, Trails, & Recreation Grant of \$41,820 from Commonwealth Financing Authority to be used for the (YMCA) SCI Pool Feasibility Study.

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

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Eberlin, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof, Mr. Saring, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Shulze, Vice-President Christini, Mrs. Hatch & Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

RESOLUTION 2024-12 - Carried

4. Beautify Towanda Day

- a. Saturday, April 20th was our second Beautify Towanda Day. Volunteers helped clean the sidewalks, weed, and clean the planters, and mulch the shade trees on Main Street. Thank you to all who came out to help! For next year, we should consider hosting the event in May again after the blossoms have fallen.

5. LLEGP Grant

- a. Three new in-car cameras and four body cameras have been ordered with Axon and should be here in late June or July. The total quote came in for \$60,691.80, and the grant will cover \$40,000. The remaining balance will be paid annually for the next five years.

6. Oley Art-Merrill Parkway PA Native Animals Mural

- a. Courtney will begin painting the week of May 13th for panels 11-34. Courtney and Manager Hotaling were recently interviewed by Maggie Barnes for Mountain Home magazine.

7. Curb Appeal Loan Program

- a. As a reminder for residents, we have a Curb Appeal Loan Program for up to \$7,500 and a maximum term of (5) years. Loans may be used for owners to replace sidewalks, exterior painting or exterior siding, and any other repairs that will improve the overall appeal and improvement to the neighborhood. The interest rate follows the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority rate which is updated quarterly. The current interest rate is 4.25%.

BOROUGH SOLICITOR

As stated by Manager Hotaling, Solicitor Smith and she had a discussion on the draft of the street opening permit ordinance procedures. Manager Hotaling will review it more and get together with the committee again. He is still working with the Planning Commission this month on the definition of guest, pre-existing grandfathered uses to tighten up.

There are some PennDOT requirements that we may have to run by the borough engineer to see if he has everything correct, and how specific we should be because if PennDOT changes their requirements we would have to amend the ordinance. He stated we have some urgency since line painting season is near. Solicitor Smith also is working on the Floodplain ordinance and has the template that we received from the state. We have until July 7th to approve this ordinance. He also is working on the abandoned vehicle ordinance amendments, and he has some old business with the Planning Commission to talk about at their next meeting on April 16th. They will also talk about a better definition of retail sales for guests. And, finally Manager Hotaling told him that we need to make some revisions to the TMA (Towanda Municipal Authority) because we have some new entities coming in.

BOROUGH SECRETARY

Secretary Kulick stated the borough clean-up is being held on Friday, May 17th and Saturday, May 18th from 9 AM to 6 PM. It has been advertised numerous times in the paper and is on the Borough website.

FINANCIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:

- A motion for the bills to be paid for April was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mrs. Miller. Motion passed.

President Eberlin called for an Executive Session at 8:00 PM to discuss organization and personnel structure. Executive Session ended and the regular meeting was continued at 9:05 PM.

UNION SUB-COMMITTEE:

Mrs. Miller stated that Lauren was going to contact with BeLinda Combs.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT:

Vice-President Christini stated there was a meeting on April 16th. Three things were talked about as Fred mentioned. The definition of guest under Chapter 325-16 C. (2). They talked about the non-conforming use change under Chapter 325-57 and discussed the definition of vacant under the vacant storefront ordinance Chapter 217-2. There were no motions made and nothing to bring to council formally. This will be covered in the Planning Commission Minutes.

RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Kovalcin stated that everything is going smoothly planning for the June Riverfest. He will keep council up to date. Also, they are working on the schedule for Concerts in the Park to start in June.

TMA/WTMA/CBPA REPORTS:


The March TMA and WTMA meeting minutes are in the packet.

LIBRARY REPORT:

The March 2024 meeting minutes are in the packet.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Saring. The meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM.



Diane M. Kulick
Towanda Borough Secretary