

**Towanda Borough Council
February 3, 2025
Regular Meeting Minutes**

The Towanda Borough Council held its regular meeting at 724 Main Street, Towanda Borough Municipal Building on Monday, February 3, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Council Members Present: President Ryan Eberlin, Vice President Mark Christini, Jean Miller, Philip Roof, Joseph Saring, William Kovalcin, Jonathan Schulze, Michelle Hatch, and Gary Parks.

Others: Mayor Garrett Miller, Fred Smith (Borough Solicitor); Borough Officer Bryan Bellows, Code Enforcement Officer Barry Thrush, Borough Manager Stacy Schoonover, Administrative Assistant Angie Oliver, Fire Chief Bill Sheets, Eric Casanave (Stiffler McGraw Engineer).

Public: Jack & Pam Young, Thomas Bradford

PUBLIC COMMENTS/CONCERNS

- Jack Young spoke about the drainage underneath their driveway that has made the ground sink about 1.5 feet below the surface level and it has become a dangerous situation. This has been a complaint of theirs for years, but they said no one has ever done anything about it. Borough Manager Schoonover said that she and the Public Works Foreman, John Miller, went to assess the damage earlier, and John could easily fix it temporarily, but they would need the Borough engineer, Eric Casanave, to also assess it for a long-term solution. They reached an agreement that Casanave, Schoonover, and Matt Aikey, Water and Sewer Superintendent, would meet to go and reach a decision to fix this for the Young's.
- Tom Bradford had concerns about the Planning Commission and the Non-conforming use ordinance that could be enacted at the Council meeting along with his frustration in not being able to voice any concerns prior to the draft being passed.
- 'Flowers by Donna' shop owner, Donna Pozzi, sent a letter venting her frustrations about receiving a parking ticket. Upon returning to her shop after delivering flowers to a customer and arriving back to reload her van with more product, someone else was parked in the loading zone outside her shop. This forced her to park in a different area to reload the van which is when she received the ticket. She paid the fine but wanted to make the story known, also stating she hoped the other offender also received a ticket. Joe Saring spoke with Donna about the issue and stated he would like to refund her money, even though that is not what she requested. Council asked Barry Thrush to speak with Donna about the issue and clear the confusion up so this wouldn't happen again.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

W. Kovalcin made a motion to approve the January 2025 regular meeting minutes, seconded by J. Saring. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2025-2

Appoint Stacy Schoonover Secretary

After a discussion regarding the legality of holding multiple offices such as Manager, Secretary and Treasurer, Solicitor Smith stated that it was legal for the Manager to hold these offices simultaneously, although it is not the desired way to operate a Borough office. Schoonover informed everyone that this appointment was solely for governmental reporting purposes.

The motion to adopt Resolution 2025-2 was made by W. Kovalcin and seconded by J. Miller.

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: R. Eberlin, P. Roof, J. Miller, J. Saring, W Kovalcin, J. Schulze, M. Christini, M. Hatch, and G. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

RESOLUTION 2025-2 -- Carried unanimously

FIRE CHIEF REPORT

The detailed monthly report was included in the February packet.

Chief Sheets reported:

- January 2025 – responded to 21 calls – evenly split between the township and borough.
- Sheets informed Council that the aerial ladder on the truck was not working properly – will be repaired
- Reaching out to various companies for a new tanker once funds are allocated
- The old tanker would be kept for filling swimming pools

FIRE BOARD REPORT

Mr. Parks said the board met, but had nothing new to report.

MAYOR REPORT

- Mayor Miller thanked the Chief for his years of service
- Miller wanted Council to know about a situation that occurred at the end of January when a man was reportedly going to jump off the river bridge; Officer Vermilya responded to the scene and was able to talk the man down from the ledge of the bridge. Mayor will be adding a commendation to Officer Vermilya’s personnel folder
- Miller attended a presentation at the Towanda Area High School, sharing his experience as Mayor to the students, along with State Representative Tina Pickett. He stated that coming up in March, he and Manager Schoonover will be attending a mock interview at the school to demonstrate to the kids how interviews are conducted.
- The Mayor was approached by a couple of veterans that wanted to install a tall flagpole at the VFW on Bridge Street with a huge American flag and will price it on their own. They wanted the support of the Council members and wanted to inform the members of their intentions. They were also planning on painting the water tank up there with an American flag emblem, as well. Council was supportive of these projects for the veterans.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT

Chief Epler was absent; Corporal Bellows presented in his place:

- A DUI Rove operation was conducted in the Borough with 12 arrests.
- Continuing with meetings via Zoom for the Central Square project for the operating system. All officers have training scheduled this month for this at the Communications Center.
- Officers Hades and Hennessy did K-9 training in Scranton for Narcotics, article searching, and tracking.
- A 2025 Tahoe K-9 vehicle was ordered in conjunction with grant monies that are to be received. The vehicle will be built in March and 911 Rapid Response should receive it in April with the upfit happening shortly thereafter.
- Corporal Bellows did a presentation for young people at the Bright Beginnings daycare in LeRaysville; Bellows also attended the MHID (Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities) meeting in Wysox
- Cpl. Bellows also attended a grant writing seminar in Tunkhannock at the Dietrich Theater along with Manager Schoonover.

**TOWANDA POLICE DEPARTMENT
MONTHLY REPORT - DECEMBER 2024**

300	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	4	JUVENILE PETITIONS
49	TRAFFIC CITATIONS	0	K-9 SERVICE (BORO)
2	NON-TRAFFIC CITATIONS	5	THEFT REPORTS
12	DUI ARRESTS	4	ANIMAL COMPLAINTS
32	DISTURBANCE CALLS	2	VEHICLE DOORS OPENED
2	VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	9	WARNINGS ISSUED
2	OUT-OF-TOWN ASSISTS	8	MENTAL HEALTH CALLS
14	CRIMINAL ARRESTS		

POLICE COMMITTEE

Mr. Saring stated that the committee held their meeting and it went very well. There will be plenty of training for all of the officers in the near future, including Basic Narcotics: Search and Seizures and Interview Interrogations. He stated that all officers, regardless of whether they are part-time or full-time, must attend. He noted that the more trainings, the less liabilities are likely to occur. Mayor Miller stated that Officers Lantz and Bellows are masters at finding the most cost effective and best trainings, as well as some cost exempt trainings.

CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT

The Code Enforcement Report is included in the February packet

- B. Thrush stated that January was a slow month
- Council asked Thrush if the Mulberry Street school was boarded up yet and he stated no, it is not. Thrush stated that the owner has a deadline imposed upon him by the Ordinances and Borough Enforcement, and he is thinking it was the 24th of February. R. Eberlin made it known that Thrush should not have to deal with this issue by himself, and President Eberlin stated he wouldn't mind being a part of the enforcement committee. M. Christini stated that there are numerous properties that are vacant within the borough that should all be dealt with in the same manner as the Mulberry School, whether it be a certified letter or citation. Each ward has about 3 each that need to be dealt with, and they would prefer that Barry is not the only one confronting this issue with owners. Tom Bradford spoke up about repercussions for criminal mischief when Main Street storefronts have broken windows from vandals. He questioned if – to anyone's knowledge – any of the vandals have been prosecuted to set a precedent and to let the storefront owner know that they are not always to blame. Eberlin said he does not know that answer, but would like to find out.

PUBLIC WORKS/CODE ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Parks had nothing to report.

BOROUGH MANAGER REPORT

1. AUDITORS

Hallock Shannon (Borough Auditors) will be at the Municipal Building on February 11th and 12th.

2. GRANT WRITING CLASS

Manager Schoonover, Admin Assistant Oliver and Corporal Bellows attended the Grant Writing 101 seminar in Tunkhannock at the Dietrich Theater on January 31st.

3. THIRD WARD PARK TREE REMOVAL

G. Parks had informed Manager Schoonover that there were some tree limbs hanging over the fence at the park. The Public Works crew had cleaned them up before the storm hit the week before.

4. PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEES

The crew has been on the go non-stop with water main breaks with the most recent at the Courthouse. Manager Schoonover wants to extend thanks to her employees.

5. TURNBACK REVISIT

Casanave refreshed the Council members memories on the Turnback project that Penn Dot presented to Council. He reiterated that the terms and conditions have changed and they will not reimburse the Borough until after the work is done, unlike the last turnback project that the Borough was included in. This time, the road in question would then be the Borough's responsibility to maintain, as well as pay for any further improvements, etc. Mark Christini made it aware that the Borough would need to produce quite a bit of money up front, and if

the turnback ends up going over the projected budget, the Borough would be responsible for the difference. Since there is an issue with a pipe and drainage on the road that the Turnback would be focusing on, it would be much more costly, especially since the Borough would need to take out a line of credit for part of the construction but then would be reimbursed as it progressed for the amount that was borrowed. Casanave suggested the Borough do just a couple hundred thousand at a time and borrow money from an Infrastructure account, but the Finance Committee should discuss and go from there. There is a lot to consider regarding this decision and they will have a better idea after the Finance and Admin meeting.

BOROUGH SOLICITOR SMITH

Smith mentioned the Planning Commission and the Non-Conforming Use ordinance. He summarized the dental office on York Avenue issue that brought the Non-Conforming Use ordinance amendment about. He wants to amend the ordinance to say not only would the use be amended, but also the building and the lot – he wants to be certain all three would be taken into account when Non-Conforming Use is the subject. He provided examples that he supplied the Planning Commission with. He also informed the Council that after they give permission to advertise for a Public Hearing, the hearing will take place, then it will be taken before the Zoning Hearing Board. Then back to the Planning Commission and then will be adopted and enforced within the Borough.

J. Saring made a motion to advertise the hearing, W. Kovalcin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

BOROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

RESOLUTION 2025-3

Adopt Resolution 2025-3 appointing TCC delegates for 2025

The motion to adopt Resolution 2025-3 was made by G. Parks and seconded by M. Hatch.

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: R. Eberlin, P. Roof, J. Miller, J. Saring, W. Kovalcin, J. Shulze, M. Christini, M. Hatch & G. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

RESOLUTION 2025-3 – Carried unanimously

FINANCIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

A motion was made to pay the bills by W. Kovalcin, seconded by M. Hatch. The motion passed unanimously.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

M. Christini stated they are continuing work on amending the non-conforming use ordinance. He also informed the Council members about solar panels on a Borough residents' property that are on the ground as opposed to the traditional rooftop installation. After Solicitor Smith gave a brief synopsis of the issue, M. Christini asked Council how they would like to proceed regarding this subject and if they even wanted to proceed or drop it until something more comes from it. Council asked that the Planning Commission check out other communities and how they handled a similar situation. M. Hatch made a motion for Planning Commission to proceed with the solar panel issue, J. Saring seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously via voice vote.

M. Christini mentioned the vacancy on the Planning Commission board and asked people to spread the word about the vacancy.

RECREATION REPORT

W. Kovalcin said they are beginning work on Riverfest. They have a date set and the bands list going.

TMA/WTMA/REPORTS

M. Christini reported that Mr. Walker resigned and there are two wells in the TMA system and it is being addressed. One well is located in Towanda Borough and the other is in Monroeton. They need to abandon the wells and are working on that.

He stated Wysox Municipal Authority asked their solicitor to mirror the TMA rules and have the homes' wells inspected since they were never really inspected completely. The grinder pump issue is also still going on where the pumps were never paid for in most cases, so they are waiting for their solicitor to come back with a solution on each of those issues.

LIBRARY REPORT

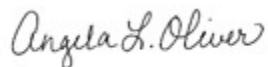
There was no meeting and nothing to report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Council entered into an executive session at 8:24 pm. They adjourned the executive session at 8:56 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by J. Saring. The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 pm.



Angela L. Oliver
Towanda Borough Secretary