

**Towanda Borough  
Regular Council Meeting Minutes  
March 4, 2024**

The Towanda Borough Council Regular Meeting was held on Monday, March 4, 2024, at the Borough Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA. The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by President Eberlin.

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

**Absent:** Mr. Roof

President Eberlin stated there is a letter in the packets from the Police Civil Service Commission recommending we hire **Clinton V. Vermilya** for the open police officer position. He asked for a motion to pass **Resolution 2024-6** to do so. Also, he thanked Chief Epler and the Civil Service Commission and stated that they breezed through this as they had a great candidate, therefore this is just an official recommendation to council.

**RESOLUTION 2024-6**

Approve Civil Service Commission and Police Chief, Randy Epler's recommendation to hire Clinton Vermilya as a Full-time Police Officer.

Motion made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mrs. Miller.

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

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

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Mr. Roof

**RESOLUTION 2024-6 - Carried and is Effective March 4, 2024.**

Mayor Miller did the swearing-in ceremony for full-time Police officers Trevor A. Wills and Clinton L. Vermilya and Council offered congratulations to both.

**CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:**

Mr. Cain Chamberlain, Executive Director of Endless Mountains Heritage Region, Inc. was present and gave a description of the organization and the different things they are involved in. He came to the meeting to give information concerning their Endless Mountains Gravel Bikepacking Loop (EMGBL). It's a 430-mile bikepacking loop through the 4 counties. They started working on this 2 years ago as gravel bicycling has become a big thing across the country. They are trying to bring a self-supported cycling race event on the loop and would like to start it in Towanda Borough. Because it is a multi-day event, he wanted to talk about arranging parking for the participants. The loop will start in Towanda on September 21st (Saturday) down by the tourism center. Mr. Chamberlain was concerned about parking during the week. President Eberlin recommended sending this to the Parking Committee and they will come back to Mr. Chamberlain with 2 or 3 options. He stated that we would find a solution as starting and ending in Towanda is a big deal. This event is expected to draw between 100 to 200 participants. They will have open registration once they get things like the parking sorted out. President Eberlin stated that the parking committee will brainstorm and come up with a solution on the parking for them.

**Kali's Mission**

President Eberlin noted a letter from Kali's Mission was on the table thanking Manager Hotaling and the Borough for donating the 2007 Jeep Commander to Kali's Mission. Mr. & Mrs. Parks stated they can now do 2 trappings at the same time in different locations with this second vehicle. They appreciate Council's generous support of the program.

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

A motion to approve the February 5, 2024, Regular meeting minutes was made by Mr. Saring, and seconded by Mr. Parks. Motion passed.

**FIRE CHIEF REPORT:**

Chief Roof was absent and the incident report is included. Mr. Parks stated it was a slow month and that they are continuing to explore new tanker trucks.

**FIRE BOARD REPORT:**

Mr. Parks stated they had a meeting and had nothing new to report.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:**

- Mayor Miller thanked Council for hiring the newest full-time police officers.
- The Recreation Board is busy planning for the Riverfest to be held on June 20th through 22nd, 2024.

**POLICE CHIEF REPORT:**

Chief Epler reviewed his report:

- Officer Hennessy did K-9 training in Scranton for 2 days which involved article search and tracking.
- Towanda PD dealt with a threat this month at the high school. The threat is still being investigated.
- Officer Clinton Vermilya is ready to move to full-time status.
- A DUI rove was conducted in conjunction with the Superbowl.
- Officer Wills did weapons training and house clearing with the tactical team in the Valley.
- Still working on getting 3 bids for a camera system.

President Eberlin stated that the Police Civil Service Commission minutes for their January 17, 2024 Meeting were included in the council packets.

**FEBRUARY 2024 – Monthly Report**

345	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	2	JUVENILE PETITIONS
32	TRAFFIC CITATIONS	0	K-9 SERVICE (BORO)
3	NON-TRAFFIC CITATIONS	8	THEFT REPORTS
3	DUI ARRESTS	3	ANIMAL COMPLAINTS
52	DISTURBANCE CALLS	0	VEHICLE DOORS OPENED
4	VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	5	WARNINGS ISSUED
0	OUT-OF-TOWN ASSISTS	18	MENTAL HEALTH CALLS
6	CRIMINAL ARRESTS		

**POLICE COMMITTEE:**

Mr. Saring stated that they looked at another town’s ordinance on abandoned vehicles, junk cars, and cars with no plates that might be sitting in their borough. There are a few things that he marked that should be tweaked a bit to fit our Borough. Solicitor Smith will review them and they will get together to discuss.

**CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT:**

Barry Thrush, Code Enforcement Report included.

- Permits have been steady this month.
- Barry met with Matt Gorman from Code Inspections to discuss dealing with 3 problem properties located in the borough and moving forward with them.

**PUBLIC WORKS/CODE ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:**

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

Mr. Parks stated they had a meeting and they gave the information to Solicitor Smith and he will bring that up in his session.

## **BOROUGH MANAGER HOTALING REPORT:**

Manager Hotaling reported on the following:

### **1. Public Works Superintendent**

- a. Manager Hotaling thanked the staff, especially the Public Works crews who stepped up and took over many responsibilities that had to be delegated during this transformation in the interim.
- b. Matt Aikey started today as our new Public Works Superintendent. She was very excited to have him here with us! Matt's background is working in Municipal Government holding several positions within the Public Works Department from Old Lycoming Township; including the Sewer Department Superintendent, to Director of Public Works, and Manager for the Township. His experience and his accomplishments working in those roles align with the goals and vision that Manager Hotaling has for the Borough, and she feels very fortunate to have him.

### **2. Central Bradford Regional Comprehensive Plan**

- a. We are advertising the RFP to hire a consultant to complete the joint Comprehensive Plan between the Borough, Towanda Township, and North Towanda Township. We were awarded a Municipal Assistance Program grant through DCED to complete this project. We will be opening bids on the 28th. Consultants may contact me or Diane for a copy of the RFP.

### **3. Borough & TMA Audits**

- a. Hallock and Shannon PC were only able to begin the audit on February 28th due to illnesses to review our accounts. They will be back this week to finish up. So far, all our accounts look good.

### **4. Borough Paving Projects**

- a. John Miller, James Kithcart, and Manager Hotaling toured the Borough with Steve Kehoe from PennDOT to look at a few paving projects this year. We just received the estimates and will determine this month which streets we will solicit bids for in April.

### **5. PennDOT Green-Light-Go**

- a. Manager Hotaling submitted a grant to PennDOT for a traffic study for the three traffic signals on Main Street. This is to address the timing between signals and determine if changes need to be made. HUNT-EAS provided a quote for \$18,500 and if awarded, PennDOT will cover 80% of the costs. We have had several complaints about the timing of the lights.

### **6. Community Facilities Program Grant**

- a. DCED announced the Community Facilities Program Grant to cover community/recreational center improvements. This program came out of COVID-19 funding from the Federal Government. Through our Parks Master Plan, we discussed adding onto the SCI building to provide a second gymnasium, with an upper-level walking track. Manager Hotaling met with Randi Morse and Doreen Secor with the YMCA, and Darin Rathbun with HUNT-EAS to submit a grant in April. The grant allows for up to \$2M without matching funds toward planning and construction projects.

### **7. Junior Council Proposal**

- a. TASD High School Math Teacher Cassie Smith and Manager Hotaling met to put together a proposal for a Junior Council to discuss with the principal to begin in the fall of next year. Students must do community service hours and this would be a great way for them to gain experience with Council, and the different committees we have, attending meetings, giving updates on what they are doing, and possibly making a project come to fruition. Manager Hotaling is looking forward to this.

## **BOROUGH SOLICITOR**

Solicitor Smith asked for Council's permission to advertise an ordinance to vacate the entirety of Hospital Drive (Township RD T-590) in Towanda Borough as a public thoroughfare. It is a little strip between the hospital and Pratt Avenue that has two owners. Neither of the 2 owners is going to lose access to their respective lands. There is a provision for a hearing to be held if anybody complains about it. A motion was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mrs. Hatch. Motion passed. Solicitor Smith will advertise the ordinance and Council will look to adopt it at the April Council meeting.

Solicitor Smith asked for Council to authorize him to sign a settlement of stipulation (**Resolution # 2024-7**) that is being prepared and signed off on by Towanda Area School District and the County. Guthrie Towanda Memorial Hospital filed with the Bradford County Board of Assessment Appeals an application for the exemption from real estate taxation of several properties it owns located in Towanda Borough at 37 Pratt Avenue (Tax Parcel Nos. 49-

073.01-010-000-001 and 49-073.01-012-000-000) and 417 Main Street (Tax Parcel No. 48-086.04-214-000-000). The first exemption filing was in October 2020 and this was denied for tax year 2021.

A "Stipulation" was proposed and will be filed with the Court after approval by the governing bodies (Bradford County, Towanda Borough, and Towanda Area School District) of the taxing entities. The terms of the stipulation are that the property at 37 Pratt Avenue (Tax Parcel Nos. 49-073.01-010-000-001 and 49-073.01-012-000-000) will be reclassified as "exempt" from real estate taxation but will remain subject to a prior agreement between Guthrie (then known as Towanda Memorial Hospital) and Towanda Borough providing for payments in-lieu-of taxation, and the property at 417 Main Street (Tax Parcel No. 48-086.04-214-000-0000) will remain classified as taxable at an assessed value of \$17,750. After review of the full text of the Stipulation and the proposed Order of the Court to adopt and approve same, the approval of the Stipulation is deemed to be in the best interest of Towanda Borough. If this resolution is approved, Towanda Borough will hereby accept and approve for submission to the Court the Stipulation and approve the entry of the proposed Order in full settlement of the Appeal, authorized by the Solicitor, Fred N. Smith, Esquire, to execute the Stipulation on its behalf.

A motion was made by Mrs. Hatch and seconded by Mr. Saring to Approve the Joint Settlement Resolution 2024-7.

#### **RESOLUTION 2024-7**

Approve Joint Settlement Stipulation to Settle Real Estate Tax Appeal by the Robert Packer Hospital. Vacate the Entirety of Hospital Drive (Township RD T-590) in Towanda Borough as a Public thoroughfare.

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

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

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

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Mr. Roof

#### **RESOLUTION 2024-7 - Carried**

#### **BOROUGH SECRETARY**

Secretary Kulick had no business to discuss.

#### **FINANCIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:**

- A motion for the bills to be paid for February was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mr. Parks. Motion passed.

#### **UNION SUB-COMMITTEE:**

Mrs. Miller stated that there will be meetings starting soon for the Public Works & Clerical Agreements.

#### **PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT:**

Vice-President Christini stated there wasn't a meeting in February.

#### **RECREATION REPORT:**

Mr. Kovalcin stated that the Committee is currently receiving donations to go toward Riverfest (June 20, 21 & 22). They are hearing from vendors and bands. Plus, the quality of the rides and the number of rides will be better. The Saturday finale will be a Nashville recording artist who will perform, and a world-class magician will be walking around doing tricks in the crowd for the show Saturday. Duck races will be held and the quality of the food truck will be better. Also, the fireworks finale will be bigger this year.

#### **TMA/WMA/CBPA REPORTS:**

Included in the packet is Resolution 2024-8. This resolution is to appoint Jonathan Schulze to CBPA (Central Bradford Progress Authority) as a board member (behind Ryan Eberlin).

A motion was made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mr. Saring to carry the resolution.

#### **RESOLUTION 2024-8**

Appoint Jonathan B. Schulze to CBPA (Central Bradford Progress Authority) as a board member.

Motion made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mrs. Miller.

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

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

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN: Mr. Schulze

ABSENT: Mr. Roof

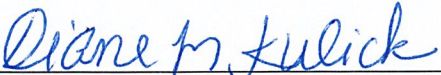
#### **RESOLUTION 2024-8 - Carried**

**LIBRARY REPORT:**

The January 11, 2024, meeting minutes are in the packet.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Saring. The meeting adjourned at 7:37 PM.

  
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Diane M. Kulick  
Towanda Borough Secretary