

**WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH  
VIRTUAL ZOOM COUNCIL MEETING  
MAY 19, 2020  
6:00 p.m.**

**Call to Order**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Council Present:** President Cyndi Gilkey, Vice-President Eric Lucich, Robert Lark, Ron Preston and Mayor Debra Larouche.

**Others Present by Zoom or Conference Call:** Solicitor Robert Tesone, Secretary/Treasurer Sandra DeSantis, Street Department Senior Laborer Bobby Cochran, Richard White, Maleia James, David Moyer, Robert Rankin, Robert Lucich and Ray Lucich.

**Public Comments:** Mayor Larouche suggested using the raised hands icon on the Zoom site for any questions. President Gilkey said conversations could be muted unless wanting to speak to eliminate background noise.

**Note:** Due to technical difficulties, the meeting began once all council members were able to both hear and speak during the meeting.

**Minutes of March 17, 2020 and March 26, 2020:** Mr. Lucich made a motion to accept the Minutes, seconded by Ms. Gilkey with all in favor.

**Bills:** Mr. Preston addressed two checks that were sent to Solicitor Tesone for the same amount of \$1090.00 (one in March and another in April). Mrs. DeSantis explained to everyone that Solicitor Tesone emailed her late in March telling her he never received Check #14830 in the amount of \$1,090.00 dated 3/23/2020. She said she did email Council, Mayor and Solicitor Tesone today in regards to the explanation of this missing check via mail. She stated when there was a change over with the postmaster leaving in March and with the newly hired employees, the mail was either late or missing due to their issues. She said she submitted another check to Solicitor Tesone, Check #14830 in the amount of \$1,090.00. on April 6, 2020. Once she speaks with Solicitor Tesone as to which check he has received she will void the other check in her system. She also stated that as of March's Bank Statement, neither check has cleared. Mr. Preston made a motion to accept, seconded by Mr. Lucich with all in favor.

**Treasurer's Reports for March, 2020 and April 2020:** Mr. Preston made a motion to accept, seconded by Mr. Lucich with all in favor.

**Street Department Report:** Ms. Gilkey said she spoke to the Street Department employees regarding safety protection equipment with concern regarding coronavirus being transmitted through human waste in pump station areas. Ms. Gilkey said she thinks there will be grant monies to be reimbursed for this equipment. Mr. Cochran said there is a website for a half mask respirator, but an N95 mask should also be sufficient. He said if they can find the N95 masks, costs are approximately \$25.00 per box to purchase since they are sold in bulk. Mr. Lark made a motion to accept, seconded by Mr. Preston with all

in favor. Ms. Gilkey stated it seems every day something new is being heard regarding coronavirus, so it is better to err on the side of caution.

Mr. Cochran addressed the Lillibridge pump station, that it was shut down today, he had that pump pulled, cleaned out, and the pump is working fine as of now. He said he will monitor it, along with the upkeep on mowing, potholes, alleyways and also flags have been erected in the borough. Mr. Cochran also mentioned possibly renting the street sweeper. Mr. Lark said he and Mr. Preston will look at these matters in the next couple of days. Mr. Lucich addressed Mr. Lark in saying not to forget to include him on these decisions.

Ms. Gilkey questioned if there is anything regarding the Police Department that is pressing due to time constraints on the Zoom meeting. The Police Department Report was present. Mr. Preston said there was not. (Please Note: Upon numerous attempts Police Chief Jason Newton was not able to access Zoom meeting)

**Melissa Merchant-Calvert's Resignation:** Mr. Lark made a motion to accept, seconded by Mr. Preston with all in favor.

Ms. Gilkey addressed the four (4) Letters of Interest that were received. She suggested rescheduling this meeting at another time to meet those that are interested. Mr. Lark said he moves to appoint a person tonight, he said Melissa hasn't been with us since the January meeting which extended to June, that's six months in, that is ridiculous, he said. He stated no one is surprised and made a motion that the borough names someone tonight. Mr. Preston seconded that motion. Ms. Gilkey said she does not know Mr. Rankin who applied, Mr. Lark explained to her who Mr. Rankin was. Ms. Gilkey said there was a motion on the floor from Mr. Lark to appoint a person tonight. Mr. Lark and Mr. Preston were in favor, Ms. Gilkey and Mr. Lucich opposed. Ms. Gilkey stated she opposed due to not knowing all of the applicants and does not think she can make a fair decision without knowing them. Mr. Lucich said he has not met with anyone to make a final decision and there is no need to rush into this decision. Mr. Lark stated they know who all of these people are. Mr. Lucich said he does not know who all of these people are. Mr. Preston stated let's get this over with. Ms. Gilkey said since it is a tie, it has to go to the Mayor. Mr. Lark stated to have the Mayor vote to break the tie. Mayor Larouche stated she votes to move forward. She said her opinion is that if you were interested in being represented of our council you would have been attending the meetings on a regular basis, you would have made yourself known to us at an earlier date. She said she feels strongly that with the people that we have, we can go ahead and move forward. Robert Lucich angrily stated they are changing some people's lives without making them available, he thinks they are pushing a personal agenda, and ended with thank you very much. Mr. Preston asked if the motion carried with the Mayor's vote. She responded yes.

Mr. Lark said based on the Letters that have been submitted, he nominates Maleia James for the vacancy. Mr. Preston seconded that motion. Ms. Gilkey asked who was in favor of said motion, Mr. Lark and Mr. Preston voted yes. Ms. Gilkey said no, she said simply because she does not feel comfortable, that she does not know all of the candidates, not that she's not in favor of Maleia, but again she simply does not know all of these folks. Mayor Larouche said, doesn't it come into play here, why would somebody that is totally unknown to us think they are entitled to a seat, when they do not know Government policies or attended any of the meetings here. Mr. Lucich voted no. Mr. Lark stated it is a tie vote. Ray Lucich said, well the Mayor wasn't at previous meetings when she got voted in. Robert Lucich said being a personal friend and hanging out at Maleia's makes it a conflict of interest. Mayor Larouche said she does not believe she is a personal friend, and does not believe she is a conflict of interest. Mayor Larouche said she would like to hear again what Ray Lucich said about her being

appointed. She said she doesn't know what his referral was, that she was there giving a presentation, he took his Letter of Interest out, and she was appointed, and then ran for election and was elected. Ray Lucich stated that the Mayor was given the opportunity to be at the meeting and all of the other people should have that same opportunity. Heated discussions ensued, then Mayor Larouche said since she is the tie breaker, she supports Maleia James to be our next council member. Mayor Larouche said that Maleia James has devoted herself to the borough, it is nothing more than that. Robert Lucich responded with a Wow! Eric Lucich responded that Mr. Ron Dubrasky has twenty-five (25) years of experience, how is he not the better choice? Mayor Larouche questioned why wasn't Mr. Dubrasky at any of the meetings in the last few years since the new council has taken over? Ms. Gilkey stated they have to move on with the meeting.

Ms. Gilkey addressed Rick White's Fourth of July Celebration regarding fireworks and stated just about everywhere places have cancelled their fireworks due to the virus pandemic. Mr. White explained dates that could possibly work later in the summer, he doesn't know what Governor Wolf's phases mean for groups of people meeting and is hoping if the phase turns green then hopefully they can proceed. Mr. White said since they perform the fireworks on the borough's property he doesn't want to proceed until council has time to think about it. He said if they do not want to do it on the fourth of July and to wait until a later date that is fine. He said he can wait until the last minute to shoot the fireworks. Ms. Gilkey said she appreciated Mr. White being flexible.

Mr. Lark said they are planting flowers at the Memorial Park this Thursday and Friday morning. He said anyone who wants to help can show up.

Ms. Gilkey informed all that the Memorial Day Parade has been cancelled and the L-S-WM Pool will not be opening for the summer. She asked if anyone had any comments or wanting to add to that list that they are aware of. Mr. Lark responded no. No one else responded.

Ms. Gilkey addressed both the Braho and Wesex properties. Mr. Preston stated June 2, 2020 is the ninety (90) day extension.

Ms. Gilkey addressed that there will be an Executive Session after the meeting. Ray Lucich asked what the Executive Session was for. Ms. Gilkey asked Eric Lucich to address it quickly. Mr. Lark asked what the reason was for it and if Solicitor Tesone approved of it. Mr. Lucich said it was a request from a borough employee to discuss safety of public. Ms. Gilkey asked if it was a personnel matter. Mr. Lucich said not technically but it supersedes to the public, one of the seven reasons we call an Executive Session, he said. Mr. Lark questioned if it was a legal matter. Mr. Lucich said no, it's for the safety of the public. Mr. Lark said he doesn't think they are allowed to have it. Mr. Lucich stated there are seven reasons you can have an Executive Session. Ms. Gilkey said he can read one of the seven reasons and apologizes that this is not ideal but will do as quickly as he can. She said under the current circumstances she doesn't see any other way to handle it. Mr. Lucich read per the Sunshine Act to discuss certain public safety issues as to be likely to jeopardize a threat or threaten the public safety or prepared public protection, as per reason.

Mr. Preston said he would like to see resurfacing Garfield Street Extension and School Street, to be put out for bid. Ms. Gilkey said they could make a motion to seek bids without committing to anything. Mr. Preston made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lark with all in favor.

Council discussed the Zoom meeting timeline. Mr. Lark suggested a physical meeting wearing face masks and social distancing as long as there are twenty five (25) or fewer per meeting since this was a difficult way to have a meeting. Ms. Gilkey stated that this was the protocol during the time of the scheduling of said meeting and it was too uncertain as to having to cancel it at the last minute. Ms. Gilkey said she realizes it is hard for people using Zoom for the first time and may need practice first.

Ms. Gilkey addressed the funding available from Liquid Fuels Tax Reimbursement and General Fund. Mr. Lark stated the current monies in the Liquid Fuels Fund is \$31,100.46. Mr. Lark said they could use that money for the paving projects that Mr. Preston just mentioned which is School Street and Garfield Street Extension. We may have to convert some monies from the General Fund, but will not know that until we have the specifications and bids in place. Mr. Lark was told from Harrisburg, do not expect a similar amount of money next year due to financial changes, but it will be considerably less. Ms. Gilkey said that could be a starting point and then look at the funds. Mr. Lark agreed.

Ms. Gilkey asked Mr. Lark to address the appointment of a new Postmaster. Mr. Lark said Mr. Gorley was the Postmaster from 2003, he retired in March of 2020 and Mrs. Kapcewich is the new Postmaster as of the beginning of June. Her maiden name is Darlene Wagner, some people may know of her, she is from New Wilmington and will officially take over the beginning of June and it will be the first time they have a woman as Postmaster. Mr. Lark suggests that the borough send her a letter of welcome from West Middlesex that will be signed by the Mayor, and that we look forward to working with her for the next several years. Mayor Larouche said she would be glad to do it and represent the city.

Mayor Larouche questioned if anyone knows what is going on with the Wesex building, she said it seems to be getting worse and worse with the garbage. She stated her understanding is that we received a fine of \$1,000.00 and could they use some of that money for usage with Tri-County Garbage disposal and if he wants to continue that way so be it. She asked for anyone's thoughts on that matter. Mr. Preston suggests to keep citing him until he runs out of money. Mr. Lucich said he believes he owes quite a bit of money to both the power company and water company, and to add an average charge of \$50.00 an hour to cut grass and cleaning stuff up. Mr. Preston said he will call Judge Odem about payment plans from Wesex. Ms. Gilkey said she would look up his case number. Mr. Lark said his full name is Gregory Koledin.

Mayor Larouche said she would like to say how appreciative they have had for all of the applicants for the council seat and what she would like to entertain as the Mayor is to entertain a committee when the virus is over and all of the people who have shown interest in working for and with the borough get ahold of her and perhaps we can all join together for the betterment of the borough and form a committee so that way we can all be working for the same purpose, whether as on a council seat or as part of a committee, that way you can do what you want to do and perhaps work your way into a council seat by recognition. Ms. Gilkey said she thought that was a good idea. Mayor Larouche said she would love to work with any of the people that showed an interest. Mayor Larouche said she wants to wait for Governor Wolf's green phase since personally she would like to introduce herself to some of the local businesses and her goal is to see what they can do to re-invest the borough and she said she is so excited that they have received so many letters of interest. Mayor Larouche stated she really did vote her conscience, she said she did not vote my friend, she said I voted somebody I felt has given back so much to the borough and is going to be an asset, so that is clear. She said again, the invitation is out there for anybody to join me, thank you.

Eric Lucich said when are we going to decide to start making sure when everybody is back at work. Ms. Gilkey addressed if everybody thought that was a personnel issue. Mr. Preston stated that definitely is a personnel issue but that it is working quite well the way that it is right now. Mr. Preston said he doesn't see any deficiencies in the system at all. Mr. Lark stated that under the circumstances Mrs. DeSantis is doing a wonderful job and has not heard any complaints from anybody. Ms. Gilkey also stated that she is doing very well and keeping everything together, she is continuing to do everything for the citizens and the borough's needs. Mr. Preston stated he doesn't see any reason to take a chance on people's health, it's working fine the way it is. Mayor Larouche agreed and said she thinks she should continue to work from home until we are back in the green phase, she doesn't think there is any reason to jeopardize her health. Mrs. DeSantis thanked council. Mayor Larouche stated Mrs. DeSantis is doing a very, very good job and always available, and that is her opinion. Mr. Lark stated we will reconvene on this matter when the Governor moves us into the green phase.

**Adjournment:** 6:55 p.m. Mr. Lark made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Preston with all in favor.

**Executive Session:** 7:00 p.m.