

MINUTES
WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH
ZOOM AND REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 15, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Others Present: Solicitor Robert Tesone, Secretary/Treasurer Sandra Ricci's recording via Zoom, Street Department Senior Laborer Bobby Cochran via Zoom, Police Chief Jason Newton, Fire Chief Rich Garrett, WMVFD President Adam Garrett, Rachelle Newton, Harry Kornbau, Ray Lucich, Bill Novak and Robert Lucich.

Public Comments: None

Minutes: Mr. Lark made a correction to the Minutes of May 25, 2021 on the last page where "comments were made by Mr. Robert Lark and Mr. Robert Lucich", Mr. Lark said that what he said was that "I had a constitutional right to express myself and I will continue to express myself". Mr. Lark said that is what he said and that is what he wants in the Minutes. Ms. Gilkey asked if anyone had an issue with that amendment. Ray Lucich said that is not the way he heard it, Mr. Lark said that is the way that he said it and this is not Public to be heard so he has no right to speak right now. Ms. Gilkey said they do have the recording of the meeting. Mr. Lark asked Mr. Preston if what he said was correct regarding his constitutional right statement, Mr. Preston confirmed. Mayor Larouche said she remembered something to that effect. Mr. Lark said there was even laughter from the back of the room. Ms. Gilkey said she did not think it was a significant change and asked if anyone on Council had a problem with Sandy adding that to the Minutes. Ms. Gilkey stated that Ms. Ricci was not able to attend, that the recording is being conducted via recorder and Zoom. Ms. Curry made a motion to accept the Minutes of May 12, and May 25, 2021, seconded by Mr. Preston with all in favor. Mr. Lark asked if the motion was adopted unanimously, Ms. Gilkey confirmed. Mr. Lark said there are a few statements in there that he will refer this to his Attorney since it was a defamation of character. Mr. Lark stated when you accuse someone in public of lying it's called defamation of character and will be referred to his Attorney since they have now adopted the Minutes and that there were no objections. Ms. Gilkey stated the motion has unanimously passed and the Minutes are accepted. Mr. Lark thanked Ms. Gilkey.

Bills: Ms. Gilkey said there was a pro-rated check made out to the late Maleia James for January and February of 2021 and that check will presumably go to her Estate which will go into her Estate checking account. Mr. Lark made a motion to accept the Bills, seconded by Mr. Preston with all in favor.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Gilkey read the Treasurer's Report account balances. Mr. Lark made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Mr. Preston with all in favor.

Street Department Report: Mr. Cochran read the Street and Sewer Department Reports. Mr. Cochran addressed a resident's ditch between his home and the school and when it down poured yesterday, he had a lot of water from that ditch into his home. Mr. Cochran spoke to him, has videos and pictures and was wondering who to contact regarding the responsibility of that ditch. Ms. Gilkey said she honestly does not remember. Mr. Preston said the last he knew it was the school's responsibility. Ms. Gilkey said as a starting point the resident should contact the school. Mr. Cochran said he could temporarily fix the situation until the school was notified, Mr. Lark and Ms. Gilkey agreed. Attorney Tesone advised to be careful and Ms. Curry said if they did some of the work, they may be responsible and it might bite us. Attorney Tesone said if it's not our road then it's not our responsibility. Attorney Tesone said since the culvert is on the school's private road, then it's the school's property. Ms. Gilkey said never mind, they will switch gears and to tell the resident it is the school's responsibility. Mr. Cochran addressed the alleyways with water problems and temporarily using gravel. Mayor Larouche said on her personal thoughts, she has personally contributed \$400.00 and it was washed away again and at some point, it would be nice to have it black topped or something solid because it's never ending. Mayor Larouche said maybe somebody here could advise her regarding water coming into her basement and house and the house next to her coming down from Route 318. Ms. Gilkey suggested since it's a state road, to contact them. Mayor Larouche confirmed PennDOT. Mayor Larouche asked Council to look at her alley the other day. Mr. Cochran said he raked as much as he could to make it somewhat smooth as far as potholes, etc. but as soon as it rains again it will be the same and an ongoing battle. Council and Mayor discussed further. Council discussed high grass in the Borough. Mr. Cochran stated a letter was sent out to Braho's and they promptly cut their property shortly after the letter. Mr. Lark stated that Guttman's property is mowed by the Borough every year since they aren't in the area and they find it easier for the borough to mow it and then they pay. Mr. Lucich asked Mr. Cochran if he cleaned out the storm drains, Mr. Cochran confirmed. Mr. Lucich requested three around Garfield Street Extension. Mr. Cochran said he will check those again and make sure that they are cleared. Ms. Curry asked how the project is coming with clearing out the septic tank. Mr. Cochran said he hasn't heard anything but that there were two or three companies that he contacted and they didn't want to do the job. Mr. Lark said there was only discussions with no votes. Mayor Larouche said she thought they were going to contact the State Park to see who they use. Ms. Gilkey asked Mr. Cochran to find the contacts regarding maintenance at State Parks with rest rooms like that. Mr. Cochran said he would call around to see what he can find out and let her know before the next meeting. Ms. Gilkey agreed.

Fire Department Report: Rich Garrett addressed the two permits for the Parade and Boot Drive. Mr. Lark made the motion, seconded by Ms. Curry with all in favor and the Mayor will sign where needed. Attorney Tesone said a motion should be made authorizing the Fire Department to participate in that Parade as to be covered by Workmen's Compensation. Mr. Preston made that motion, seconded by Ms. Curry with all in favor. Rich Garrett read the Fire Department Report and explained the Fund Raisers on their FaceBook page. Mayor Larouche said she thinks our Borough's FaceBook page should be monitored and she would do that and if anyone would share anything with her since she has more time and will work with Ms. Gilkey and Ms. Ricci. Ms. Gilkey said there is even things she can share from her own page. Adam Garrett said they are in the process of updating their general webpage since some people don't have FaceBook and it'll be easier to share. Ms. Gilkey suggested the Fire Department tag the Borough's webpage in there to save a step, Mayor Larouche said that was a good idea. Mayor Larouche said the same thing for the Women's Club, if they tag our page more information will get out.

Rich Garrett said he saw that Mr. Cochran put the hand towels dispensers and hand sanitizers up, and the hand sanitizer in the men's room came undone off of the wall. Mr. Cochran said he would remedy that. Ms. Curry said an Exit sign needs to be put up. Rich Garrett said he thought the door needed to be fixed before an Exit sign was put up. Mr. Cochran said he would fix the door. Council discussed further along with the purchase of Exit signs.

Police Department Report: Police Chief Jason Newton read the Police Report. Ms. Gilkey said there is an Animal Control Officer who was sworn in by Judge Odem who will be able to issue citations to comply with all of the other Municipalities for consistency as well as some of the dog law statutes. Animal abuse cases will still be handled by the Humane Society and their Officer. Chief Newton said people can still contact the Police Department for animal issues but if it's during the business hours of the Shelter and not related to an emergency they can call directly to the Shelter and either or.

Approval of GPI Invoice of \$1,875.50: Ms. Gilkey read the statement invoice requested. Mr. Preston made a motion to pay GPI the amount of \$1,875.50, seconded by Ms. Gilkey with all in favor. Mr. Lark addressed the issue of the rumor of Lillibridge's property being sold and that it was never really settled as to who owns the pump station. Mr. Lark said they will need to settle that before the new owner owns it and before we spend anymore money there and to explore that. Attorney Tesone suggested that Clay Falls from GPI may have information on that, Mr. Lark said he would contact Mr. Falls.

Quote for Brown's Masonry & Concrete in the amount of \$5,622.00 with an additional \$630.00: Mr. Lucich said he spoke with a gentleman regarding concrete and that the fire department could do all of the labor along with the street department. Ms. Gilkey said the street department could break up all of the concrete and this gentleman would remove it, Mr. Lucich confirmed and said that this gentleman would pour the frame and finish it. Ms. Curry said accordingly to Sidley's that's the hardest part, to do it correctly and not be a waste of money. Ms. Gilkey asked if the Fire Department was willing to help, Adam Garrett confirmed. Council, Mayor Larouche and the Fire Department Officials discussed further, along with prices for materials. Ms. Curry said she would get quotes on prices. Ms. Gilkey said she would like to get information so a decision can be made and a date can be coordinated with the Fire Department. Ms. Curry asked if they can vote as long as they don't exceed a certain amount of money as they did with the purchase of the televisions at a previous meeting, so as not to wait for another month. Ms. Gilkey said she feels they need more specifics. Mr. Lark said the prices are only good for thirty (30) days. Ms. Curry said she understood but to vote on a limit not to exceed a certain amount to move on. Council, Mayor and Adam Garrett discussed further. Ms. Gilkey asked what the amount should be as not to exceed. Attorney Tesone suggested \$4,500.00. Ms. Gilkey asked Mr. Cochran if he would be able to shift his hours to include some of the evening work for this project. Mr. Cochran said if it's after the end of June it will depend on his wife's work schedule because she works midnight, but if she has off, he has no problems doing that, as long as the schedules work out. Eric Lucich said if he's insured and Mr. Cochran is not available, he can drive the borough truck. Ms. Gilkey asked Mr. Cochran is that was advisable relating to a Union issue. Mr. Cochran said if it helps the Fire Department it makes everything better for some reason if I can't help. Ms. Gilkey advised contacting the insurance company for verification of insured. Ms. Gilkey told Mr. Cochran and the Fire Department to coordinate accordingly. Ms. Gilkey will participate with emails to figure out everyone's schedules and to make sure it's not over time for Mr. Cochran with a possibility of daily split shifts. Mr. Cochran said he could donate his time, but if operating the equipment would be a problem with that, that would be something different. Council and Fire Department discussed solutions to move the broken-up concrete.

Ms. Gilkey asked if someone would like to make a motion with a cap of \$4,500.00 between the gentleman Eric was talking about and Sidley with the use of the Street Department and the Fire Department and perhaps other Community volunteers that would make this happen. Ms. Curry made the motion, seconded by Mr. Preston with majority in favor and Mr. Lark abstaining. Ms. Gilkey asked Mr. Lark if he wants to state why he is abstaining, Mr. Lark said declined. Ms. Gilkey said the motion passed. Ms. Gilkey stated she would contact everyone for coordination.

Mr. Lark addressed the Grants under the American Rescue Plan Act and also the one from Mercer County Regional Planning. Ms. Gilkey referred to the American Rescue Plan that there is an online application they have to do and she reviewed it. Ms. Gilkey said that Ms. Ricci has indicated she is really pressed for time. Ms. Gilkey said she is willing to do it since she is off for some time from work and willing to work on it and will need input from Ms. Ricci and Attorney Tesone but is willing to do through and do it to complete. Ms. Gilkey stated the application will be for a total of \$84,049.38 which will be split up into two payments, first payment this year of \$42,000.00 and change this year and \$42,000.00 and change in 2022. Ms. Curry asked if they can fix the storm sewers and drains with said monies, Mr. Lark confirmed. Mr. Lark said he reviewed this with Council last week and explained to all on what these monies could and could not be used for. Ms. Gilkey stated in regards to Co-Vid monies, televisions were purchased for various reasons, one being for those aren't able to appeal for health reasons. Ms. Gilkey said they might want to look for bids for speakers, microphones and cameras. Mr. Lark stated they should also look for other health response issues due to Co-Vid 19 and some other situations that may arise in the future. Mr. Lark explained further monies received and monies payable via Liquid Fuels accounts. Mr. Lark explained storm sewer projects and paving projects along with the processes of submittals pertaining to monies in accounts. Mr. Lark presented work sheets to Council. Ms. Gilkey asked if anyone would like to make a motion to apply for the American Rescue Plan Act. Mr. Lark made the motion, seconded by Ms. Curry with all in favor. Ms. Gilkey said she would start the Application with input from Bob and Sandy. Mr. Lark said if Ms. Gilkey ran into any problems to contact Maher Duessel who are the Auditors for the County of Mercer as a service and they are willing to help Municipalities. Ms. Gilkey said she has been doing a lot of work with the Emergency Rescue Plan whether it be the rental assistance, funding for legal services and all other aspects of monies available so she is confident she can figure it out. Mr. Lark said as we prepare this list that we will only receive half of the money this year and the rest of the money next year, so we don't want to come up with projects that total \$84,000.00 now unless they are long term projects with a contract because we will over extend ourselves and better to adhere to this. Ms. Gilkey agreed. Mr. Lark stated the contracts can extend into 2024 and even 2026 as long as the contracts are signed in the timeframe. Ms. Gilkey requests that before the next Work Session, that Council make a list of priorities with guesstimated pricings for comparisons. Ms. Gilkey said she would like to see a bid for the remainder of the technology in the meeting room for community improvements, plus the community to take an interest in meetings to watch it on their phones or computers. Council and Mayor Larouche discussed further.

Mayor Larouche addressed the gentleman for grant writing. Ms. Gilkey suggested meeting with him at a Work Session. Mr. Lark said for what he was presenting there are no matching funds for this money. Mayor Larouche said she understood that, but for your information, the program for street and road improvements it is at a thirty (30%) match which at some point with perhaps with the \$17,000.00 that we received that has no restrictions could be used for the match. Mayor Larouche said at some point she will invite him to their meeting and she feels there isn't any problems in listening to what somebody has to say to help us. Mayor Larouche said do not have to contract him annually, but that he will work on a percentage. Ms. Gilkey asked Mayor Larouche to talk with her for setting this up at a Work Session.

Request for Approval for WMVFD of Solicitation Permit for September 11, 2021 Boot Drive: Adam Garrett stated that was included in the previous comments regarding the Parade.

Mr. Lark addressed the Community Development Block Grant, a Federal program with no matching funds and no fees. Mr. Lark said Mercer County is allotted monies and certain Municipalities can apply which West Middlesex Borough is included in the list for application. Mr. Lark said this is due on Friday, August 13th @ 4:00 p.m. Mr. Lark presented work sheets and explained eligible uses and ineligible uses with said monies. Ms. Gilkey said they need to start the application now. Mr. Preston made a motion to start the application process for the Community Development Block Grant, seconded by Mr. Lark with all in favor. Ms. Gilkey said she will look into that for involvement, what she will bring Sandy in on since she has indicated she has a lot on her plate right now, but she will do what she can. Mr. Lark said Mercer County Regional Planning will assist. Mr. Lark said this is also a political matter because they want to help as many people as they can and take credit for it since the Commissioners are up for re-election in 2023. Council and Mayor Larouche discussed further. Mr. Lark suggested possibly approaching our Auditors requesting them to do this for us. Mr. Lucich suggested hiring a part time person to help. Mayor Larouche said whether that girl is off or on she has absolutely nobody to do the work for her if she's sick or if she needs a holiday, that work is waiting for her, even if it's not a part time person but somebody that can help her fill in.

Ms. Gilkey addressed the Calvert abandoned car, which is simply moved behind the house. Mr. Preston said both cars (Calvert's and Dubrasky's) are still parked where they are at. Ms. Gilkey suggested contacting Jeff Richardson for violations. Council agreed.

Mr. Lark and Mr. Preston discussed street repairs.

Ms. Gilkey addressed Mr. Novak. Mr. Novak said Ms. Gilkey and he had spoken with Mark Longietti in February regarding two different types of grants to help with the roads. Mr. Novak said it would be very beneficial instead of wasting the \$200,000.00 that we have in the bank. Mayor Larouche said she would look into that by the request of Ms. Gilkey.

Attorney Tesone addressed the Zoning Hearing Board meeting where only Tim Webster attended from the Board so the man won by default. Attorney Tesone suggests naming two alternate people for the Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. Lark said Barb Lipinski and Linda Bollinger did not attend. Ms. Gilkey said Mr. Bollinger had just passed away and Mr. Lark said that Ms. Lipinski was out of town on emergency. Ms. Gilkey said they will discuss alternate people at the next Work Session. Attorney Tesone said to keep it safe keep the three people you have now, but name two alternate.

Ms. Gilkey addressed the television and mount that was purchased and she would price another in their price range that was voted on previously. Mayor and Council discussed further. Ms. Gilkey spoke of re-evaluating the Committee List.

Adjournment @ 8:02 p.m.: Mr. Lark made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Curry with all in favor.

