

**BOROUGH OF NORTHAMPTON
PUBLIC WORKSHOP MEETING
DECEMBER 3, 2020**

CALL TO ORDER: A Public Workshop Meeting of the Northampton Borough Council was called to order by President Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr. at 7:30 PM on Thursday, December 3, 2020. The meeting was held in Borough Council Chambers and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Council Members present at roll call were: President Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr., Vice President Keith Piescienski, Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr., Anthony Pristash, Thomas Gehringer, Kenneth Hall and Julia Kutzler and Robert McHale. Also present were Mayor Reenock, Solicitor Brian Panella, Borough Manager LeRoy Brobst, Police Chief Bryan Kadingo and Recording Secretary, Meaghan Case.

HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT:

No comments from the public were received.

Consider Request to Attend Virtual Training Session:

Code Enforcement Officer Keith Knoblach is requesting permission to participate in a training session designed for code officers, inspectors, etc. sponsored by the PA Construction Codes Academy. The training session will be conducted online on January 5, 6, 12 and 13, 2021, and the cost is \$395. Mr. Brobst believes this would be very valuable as an aid with the rental unit inspections.

Motion: A motion was made by Anthony Pristash, duly seconded by Thomas Gehringer and unanimously carried to grant permission to Code Enforcement Officer Keith Knoblach to participate in an online training session designed for code officers, inspectors, etc. sponsored by the PA Construction Codes Academy.

Consider Request of The Gospel Chapel:

The Gospel Chapel has refined their request for the use of a Borough park. They wish to use the Uptown Park on Saturday, December 19, 2020 from 6-8 PM for Christmas Caroling. The Christmas Eve celebration will occur on the church property.

Motion: A motion was made by Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr., duly seconded by Kenneth Hall and unanimously carried to grant permission to the Gospel Chapel to use the Uptown Park on Saturday, December 19, 2020 from 6-8 PM for Christmas Caroling.

Consider Approval of Eagle Scout Project:

We have received a request from Noah Hassler to place two Blessing Boxes in the Borough. A Blessing Box allows people to place non-perishable food in an enclosed box with a shingled roof and in a similar fashion, allows those in need to avail themselves of food. Mr. Hassler wishes to do this as an Eagle Scout project. He has listed several possible locations and is willing to agree with Council's wishes.

Motion: A motion was made by Anthony Pristash, duly seconded by Julia Kutzler and unanimously carried to grant permission to Noah Hassler to place two Blessing Boxes in the Borough as an Eagle Scout project.

Consider Preliminary Approval of 2021 Budget:

The budget that is being proposed at this time is radically different than the one that was previously distributed. Mr. Brobst had asked for that one to be returned to the Borough office to avoid confusion. However, only one Council person complied with his request. The budget being presented is **NOT** to be compared with the one previously issued. Mr. Brobst will answer any questions to the best of his ability. The budget does include a one-mill tax increase but most of the requests of the department heads have been met.

The following comments were made by council members:

Robert McHale reviewed several pages of the budget and asked Mr. Brobst for clarification on several items. He asked if any council members had any thoughts about possible decreases in any areas of spending. He mentioned Ted Veresink, the Borough's Health Officer and asked about the possibility of using State services for free. He also mentioned the possibility of using different services for our grant writing program, adding that we may not have the need for a community planner.

In reference to the ordinance adopting the fee schedule for 2021, he suggested making a motion adding an impound fee of \$40.00 per day plus any costs associated with towing fees for the new impound lot. Solicitor Panella suggested that it be added as an agenda item for the next council meeting.

He asked that both the rental fees and delivery fees be increased for use of the portable band trailer.

He also suggested that instead of real estate taxes being increased, we could implement a storm water fee based on impervious land.

Julia Kutzler said that we can't keep going for years without a tax increase. She is in favor of the 1 mil tax increase, adding that we need things in all departments and proper equipment is needed in all areas.

She suggested the possibility of cutting the position of our health officer and using the state services for free and also the position of the community planner, possibly using other services for grant writing.

She asked if we really need museums, adding that we have two and they don't pay to have them. They are rent free.

Anthony Lopsonski, Sr. suggested adding a permit fee for the grove area of Canal Street Park. He suggested a fee of \$200.00 and said that it should be included in the recreation fees.

Solicitor Panella said since these fees are not included in the budget, he suggested to possibly make a new ordinance with additional fees for the Canal Street grove area.

Motion: A motion was made by Anthony Pristash, duly seconded by Julia Kutzler and carried to approve the preliminary approval of the 2021 budget.
Robert McHale voted in opposition of this motion.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES:

Administration and Finance: Councilman Hall reported that billing for 2021 garbage collection will begin on December 18, 2020 for mail delivery on January 4, 2021. The 2021 budget projects a \$35 increase.

--Northampton Borough office will be closed on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020, and Christmas Day, December 25, 2020, as well as New Year's Day, January 1, 2021.

Building, Land and Recreation: Councilman Pristash reported that the annual Christmas tree at Main & Laubach was donated by Mr. Conrad Beck and although we did not have a tree lighting ceremony, the tree helps recognize the season. Mr. Brobst said everyone should drive by at least once and think a merry thought.

--The public works department is nearing completion of placing all holiday decorations where they can also be appreciated this year.

Code and Police: Councilman Piescienski reported that the Planning Commission will meet on Wednesday, December 9, 2020, to hear a review of the Specific Action Plan prepared by Community Planner Victor Rodite.

--A pre-construction and an escrow agreement have been prepared and signed for the Northampton Townhouses development. Accompanying the documents were two checks for \$10,000 each.

--He also reviewed the inspections for November.

Fire and Health: Councilwoman Kutzler reported that the Santa run for this year has been cancelled. As Mr. Brobst understands it, Santa will tour the town on December 12, 2020, starting between 12 Noon and 1 PM, to wave to the children.

--The ladder truck is in the Lancaster area for all the finishing touches to be added. A representative from Pierce will be coming to train the department on the proper use of the vehicle.

--Mr. Brobst is in the process of rescheduling a meeting with the animal control officer and other parties.

--She also reviewed the fire department calls adding that they responded to 49 calls in November and 581 calls to date. The fire police responded to 30 calls in the month of November. She added that all of our volunteers need to be supported.

Public Works and Sewer: Councilman McHale reported that a sewer committee meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, December 9, 2020, at 9 AM, to meet with the engineer and contractor for the main pump station upgrade. He added that they are two weeks behind schedule and he will update everyone on a revised schedule as they are planned.

--The following week, a meeting will be held in the area of Dry Run Creek to update the MS4 project. As of this date, a time and date have not yet been established.

--All the equipment to combat winter weather has been prepared and is ready for the first flake to **dare** hit the ground.

REPORT FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Kenneth Hall said he hoped everyone had a great Thanksgiving and stayed safe.

Robert McHale referenced Victor's newsletter asking about a Covid-19 administration strategy providing locations to administer the vaccine. Mr. Brobst suggested the Community Center as a possible location.

--He asked that Victor add new grant opportunities to his newsletter.

--He said that students from Lafayette College will be virtually presenting possible opportunities for the Borough at the Planning Commission meeting.

Keith Piesciensi said that he hoped everyone had a good Thanksgiving.

--He said that the streets in town are horrible.

--He informed the Police Chief that people are driving the wrong way on one-way streets.

Anthony Pristash gave kudos to the public works crew.

--He is not in favor of a 1 mil tax increase.

--He asked everyone to have the Christmas spirit especially this year.

Julia Kutzler thanked Noah and the Scouts for attending the meeting and for their donation to the Borough. She said they were a blessing to the community.

--She was very appreciative of the Gospel Chapel for holding the Christmas caroling event at the Uptown Park.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Brobst said that the next council meeting will be held virtually.

--He encouraged everyone to drive by and see the tree adding that it's beautiful.

--He thanked Conrad Beck of McKeever Lane for the donation of the tree.

--He wished everyone Happy Holidays.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

Motion: Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr. moved, seconded by Thomas Gehringer and unanimously carried to pay the bills as listed on A/P Journal #12, dated December 3, 2020, totaling \$127,444.54.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by Keith Piescienski, duly seconded by Kenneth Hall and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meaghan Case
Recording Secretary