

PLYMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING-DECEMBER 12, 2023 at 6:00PM

WORK SESSION:

Ms. Eroh – Spoke to Linda Johnson, Plymouth Neighborhood Watch, who asked Ms. Eroh to thank council for their support during 2023. Ms. Johnson will be attending next month's meeting to announce events scheduled for 2024.

The planning agency will present the coats collected during the coat drive the Knights of Columbus. Thanked all who donated.

Mr. Kobusky – Reported that 3 boxes of coats were collected in the Borough building lobby.

Mr. Thomas – Wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Mr. Dixon – Thanked the young people who came to council meetings.

There will be a Bonnie & Clyde bingo at the St. Peter and Paul Church in Plains area of Wilkes-Barre on March 10, 2024. Doors open at noon and bingo starts at 1:00 p.m. Bingo benefits the Goodwill #2 fire company. For more information or for tickets please contact a member or the fire company. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

Mr. Cunningham – Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Stay safe.

Mr. Hogan – Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Hogan attended a class last week at the Luzerne County Conservation District. They talked about stormwater management. They are looking to have Plymouth Borough council members participate in their 2025 mitigation planning. This can be discussed at the next board meeting. This is how the county gets grants.

Thanked Santa Claus and Rudolph, whoever they may be, for their support in 2023.

Mr. Kobusky – Asked Mr. Hogan if he and Mr. Cunningham would be interested in being on that committee.

Mr. Hogan – Responded that they would.

Mr. Morehart – Wanted to make a correction to the agenda line item #3. The No-Nonsense contract is for 50 cats at \$40.00 per cat, for a total of \$2000.00. He just wanted to clarify that as the agenda reads a little differently. He stated the No-Nonsense efforts have made progress in town but there is still a long way to go with taking a bite out of the problem.

Boost Management grant money should be put in a non-bearing account to be better managed by the council.

Mr. Kobusky – Good idea. By doing this it will alleviate a heavier workload for the office staff. There is a process to handle that money and there will be some pretty big invoices coming through. We would not have to pay the invoices and then wait to be reimbursed. This would lessen the financial burden as well.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

Mr. Kobusky - There is \$2000.00 in the budget for No-Nonsense project.

The 2024 budget is completed and is hanging in the lobby. There will be no tax increase in 2024. He will highlight some items as there were some things added to the budget.

-Under expenditures - there is a new line item for official training in the amount of \$3000.00. There has been participation in seminars etc. We have been using the office line item number for training, but it now has its own line item.

-regarding raises, other than the contractual raises, I would like to increase our janitors' wages by an additional \$.50 per hour.

-under what used to be Pest Control Services under building operating expenses you will find \$2000.00 for the cat problem.

-under Vehicle Maintenance you will find that it was raised \$5000.00 because of the certification of the 3 engines and also maintenance on the 2 portable flood pumps that are critical pieces of equipment in the event of high water. One was serviced last year but both need to be done.

-the budget shows a \$10,000.00 donation for the library, but the amount will actually be \$7000.00. With the other \$3000.00 he asked the council that \$1500.00 be given to the Plymouth Historical Society and \$1500.00 to The Shawnee Cemetery Preservation.

-under General Liability and other Insurances there is a \$40,000.00 increase which brings the new cost to \$100,000.00.

Those are the highlights and after the budget hangs for 10 days we will vote on it at a special meeting after Christmas. If there are any questions or concerns, please contact me.

Mr. Thomas - Thanked Mr. Kobusky for all of his hard work on the 2024 budget.

Mr. Kobusky - states that the contract for the police is under review by our solicitor. The contract will be signed at the same special meeting as the budget. When we negotiated the police contract, they asked that their life insurance be raised from \$30,000.00 to \$50,000.00, death benefit.

Since all full-time employees get life insurance, we raised all from \$30,000.00 to \$50,000.00. This makes the processing easier and gives us a better rate.

We will be upgrading the office computer software and getting new computers. If the computers we have ran any slower they would go backwards.

He thought we would be opening bids tonight for the Main Street project but was informed that it will be at the January meeting with a requirement in the contract to have them done by 6/20/24.

Trees were trimmed in the back of the building where the new generator will be going. The cost for the trimming was \$1,100.00. The generator has to be brought in by a crane and the trees would have been in the way.

Mr. Dixon - asked Mr. Kobusky to explain the significance of the generator.

Mr. Kobusky - outlined the significance of the generator with the same information given at past meetings. The generator was paid for with COVID money.

About a year and a half ago we realized that this building was too small the way was built in the 1970's to house 12 full-time police officers. There are offices upstairs and downstairs and there is just not enough room. There is no room in the DPW building, none at the fire companies. In the 70's all officers worked downstairs. In the 90's when he first came to council you could buy a cruiser for \$10,000.00, put a siren and lights on it with some decals and put it on the road. Today a cruiser costs 45-47 thousand dollars and because of state mandates it could cost another \$35,000.00 before it can be put on the street.

There are 3 main reasons for buying property and this all came about when I was approached late spring, early summer, by the owner of the building. He asked if we would be interested in purchasing this property. We talked about it and discussed it with the solicitor. Before we could even consider it, the building needed to be appraised and inspected for any environmental hazards. That process took a while but is now completed. There is some asbestos on a few shingles. If we buy it, we will have to have the shingles removed before we tear it down. According to the inspector and the roofing contractor we use, it is a very small area and should not cost a ton of money to remove them. There is a sewer line that runs through the property (Phillips Fuel) from this building to Downing St. It is the main line for this building. Right now, we have access to the alley that runs from our driveway and goes out to Downing behind that property. We would lose that access which is critical for our officers to move around quickly. We have 6 cruisers that right now sit outside in the weather. The plan we have right now, in fact the only plan, is to put up another building on this side to house their equipment and possibly more office space. The appraisal was for \$350,000.00 and that was the asking price. We offered \$335,000.00 and they accepted. We saved \$15,000.00.

Mayor Coughlin- expanded on the building purchase. Our police force is growing, and we are just out of room for them. People ask why we don't hire part-time. We hire PT and other communities actively try to recruit them. It is a struggle to keep salaries in line. Mr. Kobusky hit the nail on the head. The time is right, the price is right, and it is time. Someone said let someone else buy it and maybe they will give us access to the driveway but what if they don't? I 100% support the purchase. Mr. Kobusky - if we don't buy this property, we will be forever landlocked.

Mr. Thomas - DPW could be accommodated as well.

Mr. Kobusky - we don't know what the future holds 10-15 years from now. What I am afraid of is that if this council passes this opportunity up, they will be kicking themselves in the butt. Ron shared story of the flood when the fire trucks, because they had nowhere to go, had to bring them up here and the firemen slept under tarps. You just don't know what can happen.

Mayor Frank Coughlin - discussed rumors about closing the fire department. He doesn't know how some of these rumors get started because the fire depts were never discussed.

Calls for November were down slightly. There were 288 calls. This will probably go up in December. We have 3 cadets graduating in May which will take us up to 12 FT officers. Thanked the officers for all of their hard work. He gave some holiday precautions. Use common sense by locking your cars, if you see something, say something. Make a place outside for packages so they are not seen after delivery. He had a disagreement with an associate at PennDot regarding the paving of Academy St. Academy St. Was taken off the paving list. They will try to fit it in next year along with Shawnee Ave over to Cherry St.

People have been reaching out to him and he apologized that because of his work schedule he has not been available. If you have questions, please contact the administrative offices.

He is working on the contract with Wyoming Valley West regarding the resource officer.

We are looking at buying another fire truck. The ones we have now are old.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Mr. Kobusky - On 1/2/24 there will be a reorganizational meeting. The regular meeting will still take place.

Meeting was called to order, by Council President, Ron Kobusky. A moment of silence was observed after the "Pledge of Allegiance".

All council members were present: Mr. Earl Cunningham, Ms. Alexis Eroh, Mr. Thomas Hogan, Mr. Adam Morehart, Mr. John Thomas, Mr. William Dixon and Mr. Ron Kobusky

Citizens requests and comments regarding the agenda items:

Karen Laskowski from Turner St. - asked for clarification that the building will be bought for \$335,000.00 and then there will be an additional cost to tear the building down.

Mr. Kobusky - yes eventually the building would be torn down. There is nothing in that building that will serve our purposes.

Ms. Laskowski - so buy the building for \$335,000.00 then more money to demolish and then more money to build a new one? It doesn't sound good for us as residents....

Mr. Kobusky - every project we do we get grant money for. We'll look for money to do this project too. If we have to go for money this year and then next year, we will. Currently there are 3 tenants in that building that pay \$700.00 rent total. If we bought it, then we can open a separate account with that money so we can use it when we're ready.

Mr. Thomas - there are state and federal grants available.

Mr. Kobusky - the money has to be available first.

Fred Merman from Beverly Dr. - Asked the location of the property.

Diane Williams from Main St - There are rumors because there is no transparency. This is the first time we are hearing about, It was dropped in our laps.

Mr. Thomas - we are transparent.

Mr. Kobusky - I am telling you now for the first time because the environmental study was just done last week... If there were issues, or it cost a lot then it would have been over. There are none so we can proceed.

Discussion ensued

Ms. Williams - so it's a done deal?

Mr. Kobusky - it has to be voted on tonight.

Ms. Williams - any idea what the future costs are for this?

Citizens requests and comments regarding the general items:

John Frey from E Shawnee Ave - spoke of the accident at the top of Cherry St. The pedestrian was wearing dark clothing, but it is also a bit dark in that area. Can someone be sent to take a look at it to see if it needs a light?

Mr. Kobusky – we can put a light anywhere we want. He asked Mr. Thomas to have the traffic committee go over and take a look.

Mr. Frey – the fact that there is no tax increase is magical.

Mr. Kobusky – we did not get crushed like other communities during COVID.

Mr. Frey – he would hate to see us get backed into a corner though by not raising taxes a little. Years ago, there was no tax increase, no tax increase and then we got like a 7% increase. No one wants to see taxes go up but the only revenue the government has is taxes. The more you want from the government the more you will be taxed. He would prefer getting a little tax increase compared to a large one. If you can maintain a little increase, then that is money in the bank.

Mr. Thomas – at the time it was an increase of 5 mils. You won't see that from us.

Mr. Dixon – if the people who don't pay their taxes would then the revenue would go up.

Mayor Coughlin – the borough does not have a sewer tax. Communities around us do.

Danielle Ryncavage from W Main St. - Bob Lusheski was the code enforcement officer and retired.

Correct?

Mr. Kobusky – yes, Bob retired. We had a new officer, but he left to go be the resource officer at Nanticoke area schools. Code enforcement will now be under the police department.

Ms. Ryncavage – when a tenant moves out of a property who inspects it?

Mr. Kobusky – Jason Humenansky of BHW inspects. He also inspects electrical permits.

Ms. Ryncavage – every time?

Mr. Kobusky – as needed.

Ms. Ryncavage – a person reached out to me about a property that was rented a few times and there is no heat or water.

Mr. Dixon – Why would they not reach out to us?

Mr. Kobusky – there is a process in place. If this person has a complaint they should go to the website, fill out a complaint for and forward it to us. They can also come here and fill one out. This process is monitored.

Mr. Thomas – they are being inspected.

Ms. Ryncavage – is there any type of report that i can look at? How can I find out which properties were inspected?

Mr. Cunningham – it is the owner's responsibility to request an inspection.

Ms. Ryncavage – are they cited?

Mr. Thomas – yes, they are cited.

Ms. Ryncavage – there is no way that the people next to me are calling for one.

Ms. Eroh – if you suspect someone got in under the radar call us.

Ms. Ryncavae – to Mr. Cunningham – are you the acting code enforcement officer?

Mr. Cunningham – No

Laura Keller – Library Director Plymouth Library – thank you for all of your support during 2023.

Have a wonderful holiday.

Most of you are aware that the state has not yet passed their 2024 budget. If it doesn't pass, then public libraries will not receive their state aid. It is not just given to any library. Certain standards must be met to get the money. The amounts were agreed upon in the summer, but the fiscal code

language has not yet been passed. This is concerning to her. In 2023 we received \$51,000.00 in state aid. Our operating budget was \$135,000.00 to pay for 5 people that keep the doors open. Congress is in session this week for the last time this year. She was in touch with Lisa Baker and Alec Ryncvage. She asked council and any resident to reach out to their representatives and voice your concerns. We will be ok for a bit but is concerned about the future of 2024. There is a leak in the roof of the Capitol and there will be no voting during the first few months of 2024. She plans to continue expanding programs at the library. She requested feedback regarding programs and services.

Greg Cromer - photographer - does aerial photography and showed a picture of Plymouth as taken from the air. Cited pricing and sizes available. Handed materials to council for review and possible purchase.

Karen Laskowski from Turner St - it has been established that Mr. Cunningham is not the code officer but it has been rumored that he is and has been riding around in a police car with a badge around his neck. It is said that he is driving around taking pictures

Mr. Kobusky - he is the EMA coordinator. That car is eventually going to go to them. It will be stripped, and new decals will be put on. Code enforcement was always under the police.

Ms. Laskowski - Pictures of him getting out of a car with a badge.

Mr. Cunningham - I am the EMA coordinator, and that badge identifies me.

Ms. Laskowski - it is perception. He is driving around a police car with a badge.

Mr. Kobusky - you will see him in that car, and you will see the police in that car when it is ready.

Ms. Laskowski - PA state code says that code enforcement falls under DPW.

Mr. Thomas - I did code enforcement for 8 years and it does not fall under DPW.

Ms. Laskowski - state code says it does.

Mr. Thomas - I am telling you, it does not.

Ms. Laskowski - state law supersedes any council law.

Mr. Kobusky - yes it does but does the state have a law about grass? We do. They enforce our laws.

Mr. Thomas - we have ordinances for code enforcement, and we enforce those ordinances.

AGENDA VOTING:

Motion made to purchase the property at 128-130 Downing Street, Plymouth, PA 18651 from Rhyle and Gary Stull for \$335,000.00.

Motion: Mr. Dixon

2nd: Mr. Cunningham

Vote: 7 Yes

Motion made to approve regular meeting minutes from October 10, 2023 & November 14, 2023.

Motion: Mr. Cunningham

2nd: Ms. Eroh

Vote: 7 Yes

Motion made to approve the 2024 TNR Agreement between Plymouth Borough and No-Nonsense Neutering. According to the agreement, Plymouth Borough agrees to pay \$40.00 for up to 50 feral cats to be neutered/spayed in 2024.

*On the question: Mr. Hogan asked if the borough would receive vouchers?
Mr. Morehart answered: Yes.

Motion: Mr. Morehart
2nd: Ms. Eroh
Vote: 7 Yes

Motion made to approve Property tax refund payment of \$6.43 to Mr. Paul Thomas due to a reassessment of his property affecting his 2023 taxes.

Motion: Mr. Dixon
2nd: Mr. Cunningham
Vote: 7 Yes

Motion made to approve payment of \$2,602.39 to Central Square for 2024 Maintenance agreement of the Metro-Alert Software for the police.

Motion: Mr. Thomas
2nd: Mr. Cunningham
Vote: 7 Yes

Motion to pay invoice from Golden Business Machine for four work stations for the police in the amount of \$5,536.00.

Motion: Mr. Dixon
2nd: Mr. Morehart
Vote: 7 Yes

Motion to approve payment of \$8,799.00 to AmTrust Financial Services for the 2022 workers comp audit.

Motion: Mr. Cunningham
2nd: Mr. Thomas
Vote: 7 Yes

Motion to pay Freedom Systems Corp. \$1,695.00 for the 2024 Network Maintenance Support.

Motion: Mr. Dixon
2nd: Ms. Eroh
Vote: 7 Yes

Motion to accept the November Fire and police reports.

Motion: Mr. Cunningham

2nd: Mr. Thomas

Vote: 7 Yes

Motion to pay the monthly bills:

GENERAL FUND: 23-869GF – 23-944GF

LIQUID FUELS: 23-160LF – 23-176LF

RECREATION FUND: 23-040RF – 23-044RF

Motion: Mr. Dixon

2nd: Mr. Morehart

Vote: 7 *Yes

*On the question: Mr. Thomas votes yes to pay all bills except for 23-828GF which is his insurance reimbursement because he has a contractual interest.

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Cunningham

Respectfully submitted:



Gail Burdulis,

Plymouth Borough Secretary

Approved February 13, 2023