**CASTLE SHANNON BOROUGH**

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

April 10, 2023

The following elected officials were present: M. Heckmann, J. Maloney; N. Kovach; M. Randazzo; D. Swisher; D. Baumgarten; E. O’Malley. Council Members R. Astor and B. Oates were absent. The following appointed officials were present: K. Stringent, Borough Manager; K. Truver, Police Chief; P. Vietmeier, Codes Official; D. Biondo, Solicitor.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the March 27, 2023 council meeting were presented. Ms. Kovach motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Randazzo seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

**Public Comment – Agenda Items:** No comments were received; therefore, the public comment section was closed.

**Public Hearings:** Mr. Heckmann discussed the PA American Water project on Willow Avenue and discussed options for road restoration (brick replacement or paving) from 3803 Willow Avenue to 3833 Willow Avenue. Mr. Heckmann noted that brick pavers tend to be louder, can become uneven and heave due to colder weather or standing water, require a longer restoration time but tend to last. Concrete or asphalt has a smoother ride, restoration tends to be quicker, and is more weather proof. The public hearing was advertised to obtain constituents’ comments. Mr. Heckmann opened the public hearing.

Kevin Brannon, Home Avenue – questioned whether the road restoration would be a brick overlay or if the bricks would be removed, and he suggested saving the brick for other projects. Ms. Stringent answered that the bricks would be removed.

Bryan Gigliotti, Poplar Avenue – stated he believes this section of roadway would be better paved. From a resident’s standpoint who lives on Poplar Avenue, bricks are noisy, uneven and pool water.

Santo (Sonny) Raso, Vice President of KOSD School Board and resident of Hastie Road – stated he appreciates the work that council and the mayor does for the community. Mr. Raso recalled when Castle Shannon Boulevard was pavers and were replaced with paving. Mr. Raso believes the brick should be removed since this is not a historic section of the borough, and concrete should be installed instead of asphalt. Mr. Raso questioned funding for the road restoration. Mr. Heckmann answered that the utility company is required to complete curb-to-curb road restoration when a street opening occurs.

Ms. Kovach stated that she loves the brick, however this section of roadway does not match the rest of the road. Perhaps with concrete or asphalt, the road could be widened for better parking. Ms. Kovach added that she would like to stockpile the bricks, if removed.

Mr. Maloney would also like to see the pavers removed in this segment due to wear and tear on vehicles. Mayor Baumgarten added that it is difficult to mark the streets for safety reasons such as painted lines/signage on pavers. Mr. Vietmeier stated that the brick section causes confusion for drivers as to where to stop and where to proceed. Mr. Heckmann noted that brick roadways can cause unsafe conditions for emergency vehicles traveling at high speeds to respond to urgent situations.

The public hearing was closed. Mr. Heckmann noted that there is no pending decision from council this evening and thanked everyone for their comments.

**Real Estate Tax Collector:** Ms. O’Malley reported March collections of $1,264,964.15 with a year-to-date total of $1,516,957.59. The discount deadline for borough taxes is April 15th.

**Council Committee Reports**

**Public Relations/Communications** – Mr. Heckmann stated that although the borough is not in the business of acquiring properties, some properties are appropriate for the public sector to get involved. Mr. Heckmann reviewed the property at 981 Castle Shannon Boulevard (Vitte’s) which includes four lots. The property has been listed for sale with price fluctuations for several years, and the building is in disrepair. The Vitte family closed their long-standing business in December of last year. This is an anchor piece of real estate, and a gateway into the downtown business district. This is among the largest parcels of contiguous acreage in a borough that is otherwise fully developed. Council does not want to see this property turn into something that is less than what the community deserves. Council has been in negotiations with the Vitte family and had the property appraised. The total net price the borough will pay is $500,000. The property is currently listed for nearly $800,000. After acquisition, the phase I plan is to renovate the parking lot with landscaping for approximately 25 public parking spaces. The building is in disrepair with roof, plumbing, mold, and health and safety issues. Council plans to secure grant funding to demolish the building, thereby not placing the cost burden on the tax payer. The borough is not a property developer and plans to prepare an RFP (Request For Proposal) to obtain a developer.

Meeting attendees questioned 1) if the parking lot would be metered; 2) does this property include Lawrence Music; and 3) if the parking lot would have access to Castle Shannon Boulevard. Mr. Heckmann answered that the parking will not be metered as long as the property is undeveloped. The acquisition does not include Lawrence Music. Access to the parking lot will remain on Myrtle Avenue with no left turn onto Castle Shannon Boulevard. Due to the access to the T-station, the property could be used as a transit-oriented development for a mixed use. As long as the lot is public parking, it is non-taxable.

Ms. Randazzo motioned to approve the agreement as stated to purchase four parcels (lot and blocks 191-P-198, 191-P-202, 191-P-204 and 191-P-206) associated with 981 Castle Shannon Boulevard from the Vitte family for $500,000. Mr. Maloney seconded; all in favor; motion carried. Mr. Heckmann publicly thanked the Vitte family for entering into this agreement with the borough. Mr. Heckmann noted that the current owners have thirty-days to vacate the property.

**Building & Grounds/Public Works** – Mr. Maloney reported that a contractor will be working on the municipal field by installing field conditioner, rebuilding the mound and batters’ box. Field conditioner will also be installed at Riehl Park.

Playground equipment is being received for Prospect Park’s transformation.

Mr. Maloney reminded residents that Hamilton Park is closed until construction is completed. Construction staging has started. Mr. Heckmann added that three sites are currently being renovated for the Parks Plan: Prospect Park, Chestnut Parklet, and the front of the library.

**Finance:** Mr. Swisher reviewed the check register for March 31st and questioned the capital fund truck expenditure line. Ms. Miller described the expenditures for truck purchases. Mr. Swisher also reviewed the check register for April 7th and had no further questions.

**Community Activities/Planning and Codes** – Mr. Heckmann introduced Michael Moog, who applied for the Codes Enforcement Officer position. Mr. Moog stated that he lives in Whitehall and had many friends growing up from Castle Shannon. Mr. Moog added that he is married with two children and one grandchild. Ms. Stringent added that Mr. Moog has a background in construction and owns a construction business. Ms. Kovach motioned to approve the hiring of Michael Moog as part-time Codes Enforcement Officer. Mr. Swisher seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

**Library –** Ms. Randazzo reported that the Board of Trustees will meet April 13th.

National Library Week is April 23rd – 29th.

The Annual Tiny Art Exhibition is April 25th from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm.

The library will be “Fine Free” as of April 23rd.

**SHACOG** – A current application cycle is open for police officers.

**ALOM –** Ms. Kovach and Mr. Astor will be attending the ALOM Spring Conference this week.

**Manager:** Ms. Stringent presented Resolution #728 to apply for a DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) Grant for $200,000 for a pavilion and stage on the library property. These improvements were included in Phase II of the Parks Master Plan, but they were not part of the bond financing. The grant requires a 50% funding match which will be obtained through a combined effort by the borough and library board fundraising. Ms. Randazzo motioned to adopt Resolution #728. Mr. Maloney seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Ms. Stringent presented a service order authorization from Lennon, Smith, Souleret Engineering to prepare a bid package for Phase II Wayfinding Improvements. Mr. Maloney motioned to authorize the appropriate officials to execute the service order authorization for $17,800. Mr. Swisher seconded; all in favor; motion carried. Ms. Stringent noted that grant approval was received for $255,000 for the project.

The 2023-2024 insurance renewal was received from Robert Simonin Agency. There was an 8% increase in premium, mainly due to auto coverage increases for additional vehicles. Ms. Kovach motioned to approve the insurance renewal for $86,336. Mr. Swisher seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

**MS4:** Ms. Stringent reported that the Saw Mill Run Stream Restoration contract was awarded to M & M Landscaping. A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for this week, and the borough is hoping for a 60-day project completion. Mr. Heckmann outlined the scope of the project on Saw Mill Run starting at Canal Street. The project is an unfunded federal mandate; however, an application for grant funding was approved.

**Keystone Oaks:** Mr. Raso was pleased to announce that the school district owes no bonds. Projects for Myrtle Avenue Elementary are coming along well – new HVAC system, gym renovations and new bleachers. Mr. Raso was also pleased to announce that Keystone Oaks School District would not be raising taxes this year. Data has indicated that there will be an increase in enrollments next year. Hamilton Place Apartments has provided good tax revenue. A new marquee has been placed at the high school, and high school graduation will be June 9th.

Mr. Heckmann stated that in the wake of the Nashville school shooting tragedy, municipalities are interested in opening a dialogue with the Keystone Oaks School District about changing security protocols. Mr. Raso replied that the board’s third-party contractor was discontinued. Four armed resource officers were hired for the middle school and high school. Ms. Randazzo questioned when the other two schools would have armed security guards. Mr. Raso stated the board plans to discuss this at the next work session agenda with the possibility of having those positions filled for the next school year. Ms. Randazzo was very alarmed that the elementary schools do not have this level of protection.

**Public Comment:** Nick Fortunato, Poplar Avenue – stated that he had addressed council a few years ago regarding an issue with water laying on the side of the road. This section of road is level and does not drain. Mr. Fortunato suggested that since work was being done on Poplar Avenue, perhaps this would be a good time to install storm grates and address the water ponding issue. Council agreed to have the site reviewed.

Mr. Heckmann closed the public comment section.

**Other Business**: Nothing to report.

Ms. Randazzo motioned to adjourn. Mr. Swisher seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Approved as presented this 24th day of April 2023.

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Katie M. Stringent Mark J. Heckmann

Borough Manager Council President