

**CASTLE SHANNON BOROUGH
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

November 27, 2023

The following elected officials were present: N. Kovach, D. Swisher; K. Brannon; W. Oates; M. Randazzo; D. Seiler; D. Baumgarten; E. O'Malley. The following appointed officials were present: M. Foote, Borough Manager; K. Truver, Police Chief; P. Vietmeier, Code Official; J. Stanton, Borough Engineer. Borough Solicitor D. Biondo was absent.

Public Notice: Ms. Kovach announced that council met in executive session on November 20th and this evening at 6:00 pm for the purpose of collecting information or educating agency members about an issue.

Revisions or Additions to the Agenda: Mr. Foote noted an addition to the agenda of item IX. B. a resolution for a Local Share Assessment (LSA) Grant for the Castle Shannon Volunteer Fire Department. Mr. Swisher noted that the resolution and grant forms need to be submitted by November 30, 2023. Mr. Swisher motioned to add the item to the agenda. Mr. Brannon seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Public Comment – Agenda Items: Ms. Kovach opened the public comment for agenda items. Being none, the public comment section was closed.

Minutes: The minutes of the November 13, 2023 council meeting were presented. Mr. Brannon noted a correction that he had abstained from voting for the trash collection contract with Waste Management. Mr. Swisher motioned to approve the corrected minutes. Mr. Oates seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Administration: A discussion regarding current council vacancies and related matters was removed from the agenda until January when the new council takes office.

Chief Truver asked council to accept proposed resolutions as discussed in executive session and upon the recommendations of labor council and borough staff on two personnel grievance matters. Mr. Brannon motioned to accept the resolution for Grievance A. Mr. Swisher seconded; all in favor; motion carried. Mr. Oates motioned to accept the proposed resolution for Grievance B. Mr. Brannon seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Bid Opening & Contracts: Mr. Brannon motioned to adopt Resolution #739 and authorize the council president and borough manager to execute all documents related to a Local Share Assessment (LSA) Grant for \$310,000 for the Killarney Source Flow Project. Mr. Swisher seconded; all in favor; motion carried. Mr. Stanton explained the grant is through the DCED awarded by the Commonwealth Financing Authority for sanitary sewer work.

Mr. Swisher motioned to adopt Resolution #740 and authorize the council president and borough manager to execute all documents related to a \$125,000 LSA Grant on behalf of the CSVFD for replacement of garage doors at the fire station. Mr. Oates seconded; all in favor; motion carried. Mr. Swisher noted that this will be endorsed through Representative Dan Miller's Office and Senator Jim Brewster's office.

Civil Service Commission: Mr. Seiler motioned to appoint Kevin Brannon as alternate to the Civil Service Commission for a six-year term. Mr. Swisher seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Council Committee Reports

Public Relations/Communications – Ms. Kovach stated that council would like to work on making the council meetings more accessible for community participation.

Building & Ground/Public Works – Mr. Foote reported that the crew is continuing to prepare vehicles for winter maintenance.

Public Safety/Fire: Chief Reffner thanked council for approval of the resolution for the grant for the fire station garage doors.

Chief Reffner then presented the November Incident Report: 18 calls in Castle Shannon, 3 calls in Baldwin Township, and five mutual aid calls. This averages to a call every 1.5 days. There were two small kitchen fires in Castle Shannon this month, and both were quickly extinguished limiting the amount of damage. Mutual aid was received by Mt. Lebanon and Dormont fire departments.

In-house fire training was conducted November 13th with firefighters reviewing how to respond to incidents, Blue Card Command terminology, and radio communication; and also, on November 20th on new equipment placed into service, their location on the vehicles, and refamiliarization of existing equipment.

The CSVFD plans to send six firefighters to Essentials for Fire Fighting training in January. Membership increased in November with two new firefighters and one associate member. Total new members for 2023 is sixteen.

Chief Reffner thanked council for their support of the CSVFD.

Finance: Mr. Swisher reviewed the check registers for November 17th and questioned two charges for EZ pass fee. Chief Truver answered this was for turnpike fees for officer training. Mr. Swisher also questioned an expenditure to DISTRX Inc. on the November 20th check register. Mr. Foote answered this was for beacons for the scavenger hunt for Small Business Saturday. Mr. Foote added these can be used on an annual basis. Mr. Swisher had no further questions.

Mr. Swisher motioned to authorize the payment of all outstanding bills and invoices. Mr. Seiler seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Planning & Codes – Mr. Vietmeier stated that the property owner is working on securing an unstable sidewalk rail on Willow Avenue.

Mr. Vietmeier reported he has also spoken with residents on Poplar Avenue regarding a raccoon issue. Mr. Vietmeier has taken photos and plans to notify the property owner. Ms. Kovach noted that the borough has responded to this concern which was discussed at the November 13th meeting.

Library – Ms. Randazzo announced that the Castle Shannon Library Vendor & Craft Fair held November 18th was very successful and provided a \$1,265 profit. Ms. O’Malley added that a friend participated in the event and raved about the advertising and promotion the library provided. Ms. Randazzo thanked everyone involved.

The Dormont, Mt. Lebanon, and Castle Shannon Rotary will sponsor a poinsettia sale fundraiser for the library. Delivery will be either December 4th or December 11th. Multiple colors and sizes are available. More information is available on the library’s website.

Ms. Randazzo was proud to announce that the library has once again earned gold star status for literacy programming. The library has maintained a gold star status since 2019.

The Board of Trustees will be meeting on December 7th.

MRTSA – Mr. Swisher reported that the board met and approved the 2024 budget. Fees will increase slightly.

SHACOG – Mr. Oates attended the Board of Directors meeting on November 16th in Bethel Park. A special presentation was provided by the SHACOG CIRT (Critical Incident Response Team) Commander Giles Wright.

ACBA/ALOM – Ms. Kovach and Mr. Foote will be attending the general membership meeting on December 14th. Mayor Baumgarten received a communication from ALOM for the 2024 Community Banner Program. Ms. Miller has submitted the banner application.

Manager’s Report: Mr. Foote presented a listing of budget challenges for each fund for the 2024 budget. Mr. Foote stated that the 2023 budget contained some overly optimistic projected fund balances. The two largest factors that impact the general fund budget for 2024 are a 16% increase in healthcare costs and a trash collection increase of 103%. LED street light replacements expenditure was removed from the street lighting fund. ALCOSAN rates will increase by 7% over the next few years in the sewer fund. The capital fund has a projected \$1.5 million in highway maintenance projects. The new budget would include funding \$300,000 to a capital reserve account from the sewer fund and general fund. In reviewing all funds with the current tax millage, both the general fund and library fund would experience an operating deficit.

Mr. Foote reviewed the five-year contract with Waste Management which will be an automated cart collection program. Projected trash collection costs for 2024 is slightly over \$1 million. Waste Management will provide and manage the cart program. At the end of five years the borough will own the carts.

In terms of paying for the operating deficit, the projected budget includes an increase of the mill levy by 2.5 mills to be distributed with 2.425 mills dedicated to the general fund and .0750 to the library fund. Mr. Swisher stated that the garbage contract cost is beyond what was originally projected in the budget, and the health care cost increase adds another financial burden to the budget. Ms. O’Malley expressed her concerns about senior citizens who already have budget trouble in paying their real estate taxes. Ms. Kovach commented that unfortunately costs have increased, and the expenses have to be funded.

Ms. Miller asked what the 2.5 mill increase would be on an average home in Castle Shannon in terms of dollars. Mayor Baumgarten answered that for a home assessed at \$100,000, the increase would be \$250.00. Mayor Baumgarten added that council's choice was to have residents pay a monthly fee for trash collection, which would have been approximately \$300.00 annually; or to increase millage by 2.5 mills. Mr. Swisher stated that senior citizens would have an even greater cost if the trash collection was billed to residents.

Mr. Swisher motioned to authorize the borough manager to advertise the proposed 2024 budget. Mr. Oates seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Mr. Seiler motioned to authorize the borough manager to advertise Ordinance 936 identifying the tax levy for 2024. Mr. Swisher seconded; all in favor; motion carried. Mr. Brannon noted that this will be first increase since 2020. Ms. O'Malley questioned if the parks projects could be stopped to save money. Mayor Baumgarten answered that the parks are being funded by grants and bond funds.

Mayor's Report: Mayor Baumgarten congratulated the library staff and board on their gold status achievement and added that they do a great job.

Public Comment – Non-agenda Items: Jerry Coombs, Belleville Street – asked if Waste Management was going to provide and maintain the carts for trash collection. Ms. Kovach answered yes, and the borough will own the carts after the 5-year contract. Mr. Coombs questioned if a logo would be on the carts. Mr. Foote answered that the carts will have the borough's castle logo displayed. Residents must use the 96-gallon carts for two months, and then they have a one-time option to trade the cart in for a 64-gallon cart. Ms. Kovach noted that the borough's public works foreman and Waste Management personnel visited all problematic sites for the cart usage, and the company has assured us that those areas will be serviced.

Mr. Coombs was not happy to see the banners on Castle Shannon Boulevard displaying the Celtic knot. Mr. Coombs believes the Celtic knot is a religious symbol and should not be displayed in the borough.

The public comment section was closed.

New Business: Ms. Kovach reported that Small Business Saturday was very successful and well attended.

Mr. Oates motioned to adjourn. Mr. Seiler seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Approved as presented this 11th day of December 2023.

C. Michael Foote
Borough Manager

Nancy Kovach
Council President