

Minutes
Borough of Elizabeth - Regular Meeting of Council
November 28, 2023. 7:00 PM

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Litigation & Personnel Issues

President Guffey called the meeting to order at approximately 7:12 pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Present: Mr. Buchina, Mrs. Cress, Mrs. Gephart, Mr. Rager, Mr. Smith,
Mrs. Turner, Mr. Guffey

Others Present: Solicitor Matta, Mayor Boucher, Mr. Craighead

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This meeting is being recorded for transcription of the minutes only.

VISITORS

Larry Ross recapped light-up night which went fantastic. He would like to thank everyone for doing a great job. Saturday December 9th they will have their last sip and shop event. On December 17th there will be a 2:00 PM matinee movie at the Grand Theater compliments of EADC.

Stephanie Ziakan asked if there are any plans to have another community meeting on the police decision. Mr. Guffey responded that there is not a plan for another community meeting. President Guffey indicated that we met in September and had the first meeting and since then we have been meeting and having discussions with questions and concerns and those questions have been resolved, with the budget needing to be approved we have decided to move forward. She indicated at the last community meeting there was no plan in place. She indicated that as a business

owner and community member she would like to have another community meeting. Solicitor Matta indicated that the Elizabeth Borough Council has taken more steps to reach this decision than other communities have done. Mrs. Gephart indicated that she does not necessarily disagree that it is a good idea for the borough to enter into an agreement with Elizabeth Township, but she would like to review the agreement further. Mrs. Turner indicated that she has asked for further public meetings. Mr. Craighead disagreed that the terms were not discussed with the public. Solicitor Matta indicated that the agreement would guarantee coverage of all shifts at a reduced cost to the borough.

At the public meeting the options were included in the public handouts and how much the coverage would cost under different scenarios. Chief Sombo spoke about the opportunity to have a full-time officer and indicated he was not given the opportunity to have the tools needed. We put out applications once and the full-time officer position was not filled because at the time the Borough was filling a position for a Borough Manager. He indicated that the PA State police were covering shifts that were uncovered. Chief indicated that he was never given the tools to be successful. Solicitor Matta indicated that the decision is being made to ensure that the borough has coverage for every shift at a lesser cost. Mr. Miklos indicated that he has had the opportunity to observe the police situation over the last 13 years. He indicated that police officers have the ability to make much more money in other municipalities and Elizabeth Borough will always struggle to provide coverage. The borough has the ability to ensure coverage and add resources like K-9, detectives, additional training and equipment that the borough cannot afford. We know from the documents that were handed out that the minimum tax increase that the borough was facing was approximately 2.5 mils. He indicated that you are not getting rid of your police department, but instead you are getting a larger department with more resources.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2023 Workshop Meeting and the October 24, 2023 Council Meeting.

Motion - Mrs. Turner
2nd Mr. Buchina
All in favor – Motion passed

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Motion to pay the bills as presented.

Motion - Mrs. Gephart
2nd Mr. Smith
All in favor – Motion passed

REPORTS

Mayor – Announced there will be free parking through January 7th. He announced that Chief Sombo will make a presentation to 2 officers at this time. Chief Sombo presented Officer Frank Barreiro and Officer Julio Medeiros Metals of Valor for their heroism and helping save the life of a female shooting victim.

Treasurer – Report is in the packet.

Solicitor – Nothing for the public session

Building Inspector - Nothing

Chief of Police – Report is in the packet.

Animal Control –

Borough Manager – Report is in the packet.

President Guffey indicated that motions 8,9, and 10 were changed to reflect resolutions needed and the proposed projects and their estimated costs for the grants.

Motion 8 – Resolution for \$445,665 for Duke Park

Motion 9 - Resolution for \$339,323 for sidewalk replacement from Ekin to 3rd Avenue
Motion 10 - Resolution for \$205,150 for paving of the borough owned portion of 3rd Avenue by Rite Aid to Dollar General

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Budget & Finance – We passed a preliminary budget that is on display for public viewing at the Borough Office. It proposes a 2.5 mil increase and we are working to look at options that keep that budget as close as possible to a zero increase in taxes.

Public Safety –

Public Works – Report is in the packet.

Parks and Recreation – Pursuing grant for Duke Park with new fencing, courts, pavilion, handicapped accessible sidewalks and lighting.

Ordinance –

Personnel –

Economic Development –

Planning – We will be setting up a meeting for lot revisions.

Old Business -

New Business

Motion to approve Motions 1-13 in one motion
Motion – Mr. Smith
Second – Mr. Buchina
All in favor
Motion passes

1. Motion to authorize applying for a \$100,00 Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) for 2024.
2. Motion to adopt resolution 2023-07 establishing the annual criteria for earned income credit eligibility under the Act 172 Volunteer Service Credit Program.
3. Motion to adopt Ordinance 2023-01 establishing Earned Income Tax and Real Estate Tax credits for Elizabeth Borough Volunteer Firefighters and emergency agency workers as allowed in PA Act 91.
4. Motion to accept the 2022 audit as prepared by Mark Turnley, CPA.
5. Motion to demolish property located at 227 Water Street, Lot & Block 1133-H-366.
6. Motion to demolish property located at 164 Center Avenue, Lot & Block 1133-R-278.
7. Motion to demolish property located at 225 McKeesport Road, Lot & Block 1132-A-337.
8. Motion to approve Resolution 2023-12 to apply for an LSA grant in the amount of \$445,665 for Duke Park improvements.
9. Motion to approve Resolution 2023-13 to apply for an LSA grant in the amount of \$339,323 for Sidewalk Replacement along Center Avenue from Ekin to 3rd Avenue.
10. Motion to approve Resolution 2023-14 to apply for an LSA grant in the amount of \$205,150 for Paving of the borough owned portion of 3rd Avenue from Market Street to the bridge.
11. Motion to agree to the revised agreement between Elizabeth Borough and Elizabeth Township for the Sale of the Elizabeth Borough Municipal Authority.
12. Motion to agree to approve Resolution 2023-07 between Elizabeth Borough and Elizabeth Borough Municipal Authority signifying its approval of the sale of the Elizabeth Borough Municipal Authority to Pennsylvania American Water, approving of the signing of all agreements and authorizing the execution of any documentation or instrument required to facilitate the transaction.
13. Motion to approve payment to Keystone Collections Group in the amount of \$1,860 to file 31 real estate tax liens for delinquent properties for tax year 2020.

14. Motion to provide Teamsters Local Union No. 205 with 3-month notice of intent to eliminate the police department as described in Article NO. 22 Section P of the Agreement between Teamsters Local Union No. 205 and the Borough of Elizabeth.

Motion to Approve Item 14

Motion – Mrs. Cress
Second – Mr. Smith

Comments – Mrs. Gephart indicated that her vote may have been different if she had more time to look over the specifics of the agreement.

Role call

Mr. Buchina - Y
Mrs. Cress - Y
Mrs. Gephart- N
Mr. Rager - Y
Mr. Smith - Y
Mrs. Turner - N
Mr. Guffey – Y

5 yes 2 no motion passes

15. Motion to approve the Joint Municipal Agreement for Law Enforcement Services between the Borough of Elizabeth and Elizabeth Township pending final negotiations and final approval of the Solicitor.

Motion to Approve Item 15

Motion – Mr. Smith
Second – Mrs. Cress

Questions or comments – Mrs. Turner asked if this was just for this portion. Solicitor indicated that is correct.

Role call

Mr. Buchina - Y
Mrs. Cress - Y
Mrs. Gephart- N
Mr. Rager - Y
Mr. Smith - Y
Mrs. Turner - N
Mr. Guffey – Y

5 yes 2 no motion passes

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Officer Frank Barreiro indicated that council is being lied to by the township. They do not have enough civil service candidates. They are the 5th lowest paid full time department, your taxes will go up and coverage will not improve.

Stephanie Ziacan has concerns of whether the township taxes we going to go up. She feels there is a need for another public meeting. She feels that this is very shady. There is a lot of public interest in the decision and she feels that is a slap in the face. Has the offer changed since the proposal was made.

Kathy Ormond indicated she is disappointed with police department. She reported that she has the license plate of the vehicle that she feels hit her vehicle. She indicated the officer would not take the plate number because they did not have a video. She indicated the chief called her up screaming at her and she could not get a word in. She stated they indicated to her they were not the CIA. She feels the township should come in and mor cameras should be installed. She indicated the damage with her car matched the damage on the truck.

Officer Julio Mederios spoke on regionalization across the country. We have a problem in the country of defunding the police. We all regionalize when we back each other up. He indicated that council has told the Chief

that he would get full-time officers. Give the chief the resources he needs and the part-time officers would add additional time to fill the shifts. Unless you write a contract that specifies the amount of hours that they will cover, you will not get the coverage. Give the Chief the tools he needs. He thanked everyone for listening, and asked that the public be heard when making such a big decision.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Motion to Adjourn – Mrs. Turner
Second – Mr. Buchina
All in Favor

ADJOURNMENT

Prepared by:


Mr. Timothy Guffey
Council President


Scott Craighead
Borough Manager