

COALDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
221/223 THIRD ST., COALDALE, PA 18218
October 10, 2023, 7:00 PM

Budget Meeting: 5:30pm – 6:30 pm Revenue and Expenditures were discussed.
Executive Session: 6:30pm – 7:00pm Personnel matters were discussed.

Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order by Council President Claire Remington followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Solicitor Robert Yurchak, Council President Claire Remington, Council Vice President Yvonne Stoffey, Councilman Jacob Adamitis, Councilman Francis Hutta, and Councilman Wayne Figner, and Mayor Eric Ramirez were present. Councilman Ken Hankey Jr., Councilwoman Angela Krapf, and Junior Councilperson Cadence Krapf were absent.

Attendance: There were 15 members of the public, 1 representative from PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and 1 reporter in attendance.

Public Participation:

- Officer Kevin Soberick, serving as Coaldale's EMA Director, provided an update on the Borough's Hazard Mitigation Plan which started in the beginning of 2023. There was an initial backlog, however, requirements were completed to meet the deadline. Officer Soberick stated that completion of the borough's plan makes Coaldale eligible for FEMA Funding, including funds to combat blight and obtain assistance from JT Cray. Without a plan, Federal funds would be unavailable. He recommended that the borough appoint JT Cray as the Deputy Director at another meeting. He stated that the Hazard Mitigation Planning is a very extensive process, and the borough will need to reach out for continuity plans and financials required for plan for Mitigation Study in March of 2024. Benchmarks between now and March will need to be met. The firm for the County study is Tetra Tech and would be happy to assist municipalities struggling so that deadlines are met. Officer Soberick stated he was aware that the borough is in the budgeting process now and recommended the addition of a \$2,000.00 - \$3,000.00 line item for Emergency Management. This was added to the Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez's To-Do List and the Borough Secretary Jill Figner would need to return a signed letter to be up to date. Then all that would need to be done would be to schedule a time to meet to discuss the planning portion.
- Dennis Vavra, 123 Fisher Ave., addressed two issues.
 - His first concern related to the 2013-28/13/13 Quality of Life Ordinance; he spoke of the accumulation of rubbish and garbage, the overgrowth of weeds and grass, the number of unlawful motor vehicles parked on streets and yards. He asked if fines and penalties were still in effect. Council President Claire Remington assured him that they were and informed him about an agreement being negotiated with Systems Design Engineering (SDE) to provide code enforcement and rental property inspections.
 - His second concern was regarding the Fisher Ave. project. He appreciated the roadwork that had been complete, but he was concerned that water runoff was eroding driveways. Claire Remington did check the project during a heavy rain but did not observe a problem. She stated she would be willing to revisit Fisher Ave. with Dennis Vavra to see exactly what was in question. She also stated that this year's project was a temporary solution, but Fisher Ave. is on the list for milling next year.
- Cheryl Horos & David Brode, 121 First St., addressed three issues.
 - They presented a complaint about neighbors double parking near 120 First St. and in front of fire hydrants. Claire Remington said it's a police matter and Borough Secretary Jill Figner explained the process of filing a complaint.
 - Their second concern was about a dog continuously barking, to which Claire Remington explained that there was an ordinance for that issue as well and introduced them to Officer Mike Snischak.

- Their third concern was in reference to chickens, which the Council President said would be addressed.
- Gina Brossman, AT&T 1020 Blakeslee Blvd Dr E, Lehighton, PA 18235, discussed Cell Phone Plan.
 - She informed Council that there was a different wireless solution for first responders. She informed Officer Joe Krebs that the Police Department was eligible for First Net Phone Service for Cells and Wi-Fi Hotspots. Vice President and Chair of the Police Committee Yvonne Stoffey read the quote; for two Cell Phones and two Wi-Fi Hot Spots, the cost would be \$ 150.96 per month. First Net enables service even during times of crisis when lines are unavailable.

Approval of Previous Minutes: Motion made by Frank Hutta to accept August and September meeting minutes. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.

Treasurer's Report / Approval of Bills:

- **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to accept Treasurer's Report. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to pay the bills when money is available. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- **Motion** by Frank Hutta to pay off the Light Loan. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.
 - Per Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez, the pay-off is \$76,310.00, paid in two annual installments of \$3,000.00 each. The pay-off would eliminate the interest paid. Bob Demyanovich asked if the money was from the demolition account; it was confirmed that it was a separate account.
- **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to pay the second installment of \$10,00.00 to the fire company. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.
- **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to pay the Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) of \$77,730.00 for the Police Pension Fund. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.
 - Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez explained to Bob Demyanovich that the payment is annual, the amount is based on actuarial results, and that the borough receives a State allocation of approximately \$50,000.00.
- **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to outsource payroll to ADP. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.
 - Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez explained that the ADP reduced the rate from ADP \$88.15 to \$66.11 per payroll during the first year and months four and five would be free. She also confirmed that the employees would have online access to their information.

Police Report: Read by Yvonne Stoffey.

- October 2023: Total money collected was \$1,297.50; Total miles patrolled were 2,162; and Total number of calls for service was 86.
- **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to accept Police Report. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.

Mayor's Report: Given by Mayor Eric Ramirez.

- The Mayor is researching the Crossing Guard issue at the school bus stops. He invited parents to attend the Council Meeting to their express concerns. He requested reports of incidents at the five bus stops from Officer Joe Krebs; he spoke with the Panter Valley School District about the issue and will have a report next month.
- The Mayor declared Trick or Treat to take place on Halloween, October 31st from 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

President's Report: Given by Claire Remington, President

- **COMMITTEES:** Committee reassignments were included in the Meeting Packet emailed to Council members.
- **CONDUCT:** Inappropriate conduct during Council Meetings would be met with a verbal request for decorum followed by a police escort out of the meeting if necessary.
- **INSURANCE CLAIM:** A claim is being filed to recover the cost of the forensic audit that was required because of the theft from the prior Treasurer.
- **QUOTES FOR AUDITS:** A motion is needed to request quotes for the remaining audits.

- **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to accept request quotes for the remaining audits. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- CAMERAS and C.H.O.S.E.: The cameras at Borough Hall and the Borough Garage have been changed for viewing at the Police Station only. However, there is also a camera at the C.H.O.S.E. Building at the Complex. The Borough needs the police to make arrangements to gain access to that camera to see what is happening at the playground, especially since there has been vandalism at the playground. The chief got a grant for the cameras and the building belongs to C.H.O.S.E. but it is on borough property. The fire company provides reports. We would like to see an audit and at least quarterly reports on their finances and activities. A motion is needed to send a letter for an audit, to request quarterly reports on finances and activities, and to gain access to the cameras. Wayne Figner inquired about enforcement of the requests. Claire Remington indicated a letter would be emailed and sent both regular post and certified.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to send a letter for an audit, to request quarterly reports on finances and activities, and to gain access to the cameras. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.
- KLINES HILL UPDATE: Inspector Fees of \$35,000.00 to \$40,000.00 will be needed to pay for an engineer to inspect the project. President Claire Remington contacted Kurt Bauman of NEPA to get a grant for the inspector fees. The project is supposed to start Spring 2024. Hadesty presented a Quote of \$10,950.00 to trim trees on the south side of Klines Hill going back 8 feet. No action required at this time but if we get an ice storm, we won't be able to get at them.
- MISSING INVENTORY: One Wi-Fi Hotspot and four tires and rims for the white police truck are missing. Council President is looking through documents to see when they were purchased and how much they cost.
- OFFICE HOURS: We are trying to accommodate everyone. Barbara Fairchild of DCED has been working with Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez and Borough Secretary Jill Figner; both are working extra hours. We are finding out about things that have not been done for years. It will take a while, but the whole town will benefit. Office Hours are posted, Jill Figner is currently working 6 days a week plus extra hours to get things done and meet with DCED. That will need to change after a scheduling discussion with Barbara Fairchild and the new Drop Box is installed. There has also been talk about hiring a part-time office clerk.

Secretary's Report: Given by Jill Figner.

- COMPUTER PALS: The miscellaneous details have been approved but Lacey and the police also need new computers. If we move to participate in the DCED StMP Program the cost would be covered 90/10 by DCED, however, that will delay the technology upgrade. CPALs could provide the Wide LG Monitor for the Treasurer but recommends a sturdier version because it would be mounted near the copier. Lacey Gonzalez will decide after she sees what he recommends.
- SYSTEMS DESIGN ENGINEERING (SDE): AN agreement for Rental Inspections and Code Enforcement is being negotiated with SD. Keith Showalter of SDE forwarded their lawyer's recommendations for revising our ordinance. They recommend that our Solicitor review the changes and make recommendations. Luis Negron of SDE said to combine the prior proposal with the recommendations for the entire proposal. A motion was not needed until after the Solicitor had reviewed the changes to the Ordinance. Once approved, the Ordinance could be revised, and Council could vote on hiring SDE to manage our rental inspections and Code Enforcement.
- COURSE VECTOR: Course Vector web design company recommended by PSAB, per Dan Wieksner's introduction. The website would be set up by them but managed in-house by us. The cost of the design is approximately \$1,000.00 and \$600.00 per year, which is almost exactly what we are currently paying for a website that is not functioning well. The only delay is our final design submissions. Any additional feedback can be added until next Wednesday 10/18.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta for Jill Figner to finalize design and to get the project started. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.
- DIVERSIFIED TECHNOLOGIES BILLING SYSTEM: 3rd Quarter Billing had adjustment and penalty errors. Diversified stopped payment entries until after 7/26, resulting in a backlog of Sewer Transmission and Sanitation Fees. All of Sewer Transmission and half of Sanitation payments were entered before I resigned. While I was not working at the borough, Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez entered payments. In one batch of 311 July payments were entered in September so manual discounts were entries. However, only 149 adjustments were cleared. When penalties were processed for the for the 3rd Quarter, the report also picked up penalties from the 2nd Quarter. There are still

errors and program issues. The Histories have errors. Once again, Diversified (our new billing company) asked me not to enter data so the 4th Quarter Billing will be late because the histories are off, I do not want to send out bills lacking discounts and having doubled penalties. We likely run a stand-alone billing without prior balances but with adjusted discount date, due date, and penalty. We had a phone conference with Diversified's management, we're hoping for a 2024 1st Quarter fix. DCED Peer Consultant Barbara Fairchild suggested giving Diversified a chance to fix the problem. However, it is good to keep in mind that even though MuniBilling was going to charge \$12,000.00 for one year, we will have already paid over \$10,500.00 to Diversified without the 2023 1st Quarter. If Diversified continues to have issues, because of the amount of time invested into researching these issues, we might want to consider a different billing company. My purpose is to make the Council aware of the situation and to respond to the question, why is Diversified working for others and not us? The answer might be attributed to different programmers, or the way the borough's history was transferred. Diversified is very helpful but this has been ongoing issue ever since I have been working with Diversified. Rich Murphy asked about an announcement on Facebook about the delayed billing. There is a message on the answering machine, but an announcement on Facebook would not be posted until property transfers were complete to be sure billing went to the new homeowners and Diversified provided more information.

- MATERIALS BID CONTRACT: Signatures are needed.
- SHERIFF SALE: 23 W. Ridge St. Finals will be sent to Sheriff.

Solicitor's Report: Given by Attorney Bob Yurchak.

- AMENDED ORDINANCE: While speaking with the Actuary about another matter, he asked if the borough ever passed an amendment to the ordinance about the Police KIA. It was proposed in 2019, but Attorney Robert Yurchak does not believe it was adopted and it needs to be addressed. Attorney Robert Yurchak will get a copy to everyone but needs a motion to advertise.
 - Motion made by Frank Hutta to advertise amended ordinance. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- ZONING ISSUE: The 1974 Zoning Ordinance, as amended, allows livestock only in Special Use Areas in Coaldale. Chickens are not allowed anywhere in the borough except in Open Space Areas by the Rod and Gun or by Radocha's. The Ordinance will be addressed when the Code Enforcement Agreement is finalized.

Fire Report: Given by Jake Adamitis.

- SERVICE CALLS: Fire Chief reports 24 calls for October 2023: 1 structure fire, 1 dwelling fire, 1 brush fire, 1 mutual aid call, 5 automatic aid calls, 2 public service calls, 1 downed tree, and 10 Quick Response Service (QRS) calls, 2 EMS assists, and 134 calls YTD.
- TAMAQUA AMBULANCE: Tamaqua Ambulance is requesting a line item of \$5,000.00 for Assistance to Tamaqua Ambulance in the budget or they might need to disband. If they disband, our QRS disbands because Tamaqua Ambulance manages that. QRS responds to keep people alive until the ambulance arrives, but QRS cannot transport patients to the hospital. QRS Certified Staff is from Tamaqua Ambulance. Jim Rose of DCED will investigate a study for merging services; Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez needs more information.

Code Enforcement/Zoning Report: None

Jr. Council Report: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Buildings/Complex: Given by Frank Hutta / Caire Remington.

- BOROUGH HALL: Ventilation is needed in the Tax Collector's office. Claire Remington would pick up a ceiling fan and LED Light from Lowes for \$150.00 and Robert Kenesky Electrical Contractor could install it for \$345.00.
 - Motion made by Frank Hutta to purchase and install fixture. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- COMPLEX:
 - Expert's Roofing submitted a quote of \$49,923.00 for windows replacement is available for everyone to review. Bob Demyanovich asked, where the windows were going to be replaced and expressed concern

- about spending nearly ¼ million dollars on roof and now another \$50,000.00 without expenses covered. Discussion of selling the building followed.
- SCHOOL CONTRACT: Council has still not received a copy of the Contract with the School for use of the Complex. So, we do not know how much we are to get paid. Claire Remington inquired about receiving a payment and if payment was up to date. Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez stated that last year was paid in advance. However, the contract renewed in August and the school requires an invoice, but she can't send an invoice until she knows the amount to charge. Claire Remington stated that the contract was needed to consider income vs. expenses because the taxpayers are funding the building and we are not making a profit. Last year the rent was approximately \$6,000.00. This year the school is renting more space, so rent should increase to approximately \$15,000.00. However, the past president has not presented the contract to the Council. Solicitor Robert Yurchak will contact the school to get a copy of the contract.
 - FACILITY RENTAL: The Council still has not received a rental schedule, the books, the records, or the keys for Complex from the past president. Claire Remington had a letter sent but only received a negative response. Nothing has been handed over. Frank Hutta stated that we need to post a schedule in the hallway so that everyone can see it. Borough Secretary Jill Figner explained that people have been waiting to hear from the past president since July. Wayne Figner asked if Attorney Yurchak could address the matter. Frank Hutta also stated that Proof of Insurance Certificates are necessary.

Demolition/Grants: None

Finance/Utilities: None.

- Wayne Figner requested Budget vs. Actual Quarterly Reports.

Handicap: None.

Memorials: Given by Claire Remington.

- Veterans Banners and Flags will be removed for the winter the day after Veteran's Day.

Police: Given by Yvonne Stoffey.

- OFFICER IN CHARGE:
 - **Motion** made by Yvonne Stoffey to make Officer Krebs the Officer in Charge. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried unanimously.
- TRAINING: Officer Krebs' Request to attend Command Leadership Program from 1/15/24 through 1/19/24 at a cost of \$795.00.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve and pay for training. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- LICENSE PLATE READERS: The equipment has not been working for at least a year. The Council was unaware because emails were going to the Chief who was not working. Rottet Motors conducted a diagnostic service at a cost of \$90.00. The cables are burnt. Meanwhile, we also received a service renewal proposal of \$2,340.00 from Vigilant Solutions for the upcoming year. Both Officer Krebs and Jill Figner had difficulty reaching the company. The service contract was paid last year but we do not know if the equipment damage covered. Officer Krebs spoke with them months ago and they installed a new program, but cameras would not work. Wayne Figner stated that we should not renew the contract this year. Officer Krebs will contact the Tamaqua Police Department to determine who provides their service. Discussion followed about the cost vs. benefit of the plate readers, and it was determined that they benefit the borough.
- VERIZON CELL SERVICE: Currently the borough pays for cell phones and Wi-Fi Hot Spots but only one was being used by active-duty police. One Hot Spot was returned, but the other is missing. Discussion to cancel Verizon and switch to First Net followed.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve switching to First Net. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.

- **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to cancel Verizon. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- **GAS CARDS:** Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez confirmed that gas cards are distributed when expired cards are returned.
- **POLICE RIDE-ALONG:** A request was received for a Police Ride-along, but the Police Committee decided not to approve it at this time. Claire Remington stated that Policies and Procedures need to be put in place and a letter from the Police Academy should accompany the request. Attorney Yurchak stated that a waiver needs to be signed. Rich Murphy suggested checking with the Tamaqua Police Department. Officer Krebs indicated that he would speak with them about their procedures but stated he was also familiar with the procedures used in a city, which required background check and approval from the Council.
- **CHIEF:** Bob Demyanovich stated that the chief has been receiving Workman's Comp and Heart and Lung benefits for almost two years and asked how long it was expected to continue. Solicitor Robert Yurchak indicated that answers would be forthcoming next month.
- **ANNOUNCEMENT:** The Fire Company will be selling cheesesteaks on October 14, 2023, from 11:00 am to 5:00pm at their Craft Vendor Show and Flea Market.

Police Pension: None

Recreation/Memorial: None

Streets: Given by Frank Hutta.

- **APPLICANTS:**
- **2023 ROAD PAVING PROJECTS:** Finished for the year.
- **LIQUID FUEL AUDIT:** Upcoming and being prepared for.
- **WATER RUN-OFF PROJECT:** Minus the paving the project is complete on Earley Ave. between 4th and 5th Streets.
- **INVENTORY:** The Borough Garage Inventory for insurance purposes is being worked on.
- **WINTER PREPARATION:** Radocha submitted pricing for snow removal as follows: 10-wheel dump truck gvw 62,000 pounds \$89.00/hr., triaxle dump 73,280 gvw pounds @ \$98.00/hr., 4-yard loader @ \$120.00/hr., 3-yard loader @ \$110.00/hr. and 1-yard loader @ \$99.00/hr.
 - **Motion** made by Jake Adamitis to accept the pricing. Seconded by Frank Hutta and motion carried **unanimously**.
- **2024 ROAD PAVING PROJECTS:** Discussion is underway, input will be accepted. Projects not completed in 2023 will carryover to 2024.
- **LIQUID FUELS:** The estimated allocation funding to the borough is \$71,718.22. The Schuylkill Paving Agreement needs a signature.

Old Business:

- **PARKING ORDINANCE:** Discussion Tabled until November Council Meeting.

New Business:

- **2024 BUDGET:** Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez indicated that Revenue is projected at \$919,375.00 and Expenditures at \$994,718.68. We are still working on the budget, but we need to close the gap of \$76,000.00.
- **DCED PEER CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATIONS:** Presented by Jill Figner per Peer Consultant Barbara Fairchild.
 - Approve online autopay and credit cards with Heartland for Diversified Billing.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
 - Standing Policy to approve payment of outstanding bills to avoid penalties & interest charges.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
 - McGriff Brokerage Agreement \$541.00 payment sent but agreement needs a signature.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.

- All correspondence and Mail processed through the Borough Secretary.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- No Cash Policy: All payments to Borough by check, credit card, or money order
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- Amend Ordinance to show no Refunds on Curb Cuts & Street Excavation
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
- DCED STRATEGIC PLANNING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (STMP) REVIEW: Given by Jim Rose, Local Government Policy Specialist.
 - The STtMP is a 50/50 grant program that helps municipalities with funding to hire from list of consultants to review operations and finances and make recommendations. Coaldale would receive a 90/10 grant.
 - The approximate cost of the consultant is \$60,000.00. Based on the 90/10 split the cost for Coaldale would be approximately \$6,000.00.
 - DCED would provide a boilerplate Request for Proposal (RFP) to be completed by Borough Secretary Jill Figner, Treasurer Lacey Gonzalez, and DCED Specialist Jim Rose.
 - Part 1: Approximately 60 Recommendations from the Consultant would be provided.
 - Part 2: The borough would qualify for a 90/10 split to cover the cost of acting on recommendations, such as computer updates, ordinance updates, and specialists to speak with fire and ambulance service would also be funded 90/10.
 - **Motion** made by Frank Hutta to approve StMP. Seconded by Jake Adamitis and motion carried **unanimously**.
 - STATEWIDE LSA GRANT: Specialist Jim Rose also recommended that the borough investigate the Statewide LSA Grant as it might possibly help with the engineering costs on the Klines Hill Project.

Adjournment: Motion made by Frank Hutta at 9:45 PM. Seconded by Wayne Figner and motion carried **unanimously**.

SUBMITTED BY:

Jill Figner, Borough Secretary
Submitted for Approval on November 14th, 2023.

