

JIM THORPE BOROUGH COUNCIL

APRIL 21, 2022

MINUTES

The Borough Council Special Meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. by President Gregory Strubinger with the pledge of allegiance, and moment of silence for Councilman Highland and his family, our first responders & armed forces and their families. The meeting was held in Memorial Hall, 115 East 10th Street, Jim Thorpe, PA.

Roll Call of Members & Officials

Gregory Strubinger
Michael Yeastedt
Michael Rivkin
Solicitor Nanovic - absent

Joanne Klitsch
Robert Schaninger
Mayor Sofranko
PSM Yaich - absent

Kyle Sheckler – arrived 7:08 pm
Jessica Crowley
Police Chief Schatz
Manager Sterner

President Strubinger explained the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Memorial Hall building.

Action

Amy Kubishin addressed the Council requesting the skating rink be restored. She believes the police can expand in the borough hall or the borough can purchase another building for them. She states the rink space is too large for the police to grow and for an archive area for borough records. She does not believe the upstairs of the hall can or should be used as a community center. The rink could be used for that. She gave examples of uses and stated skating is making a comeback in other areas. She believes council should let business people and others present proposals.

The following persons spoke in support of bringing back the roller-skating rink in the lower level of Memorial Hall:

Brian Evans; Debby Park; Jonathan Kalfas; Angela Kunkle; Franklin Klock; John Shigo; Lynn Hymphreys; Debbie Pare; Chuck Durning; Ayden Balent; Makenzie Snyder; Karlee Acevedo; Rock Acevedo; Heather Moore; Jeanine Snyder; Stone Bear Acevedo; Stone Acevedo; June McHugh; Shylah Acevedo; Brian Urso; Marissa Strohlein; Matt Ando; Adrian Collins; Bob Schaninger; Annette Law and Slate Rock Acevedo.

Comments included that a plan/proposal has been developed; there are no indoor activities for children; children need socialization and exercise; it will provide a place for tourists to go; year-round activity; the rink could be utilized for other uses; put the police upstairs in the building instead of preserving the community hall/center; consider allowing private interests and/or entrepreneurs to run the operation; allowing a private business to run it would take away borough control and cost too much for families.

Council inquired about the plan/proposal because they have not received one. Mrs. Kubishin stated there is not yet a plan. If council is willing to consider the request, then some people will get together to do a proposal. Greg Strubinger provided some background on the plans for the hall.

President Strubinger commented on inaccuracies on social media. He pointed out that Mrs. Kubishin posted that the borough had raised taxes last year in the amount of \$2,560,000.00. That is not correct. Taxes were raised 2.56 mills, not million dollars. Mrs. Kubishin stated she got the information from the Time News. When looking at the article, she did realize she misread the article and taxes were not raised millions of dollars.

President Strubinger commented on the Master Site Plan for Memorial Park and the upgrades that will be coming to the park. Attendees thought that was nice but that parks aren't really that important.

President Strubinger provided a brief history of the old park commission. Memorial Hall was constructed for the residents and was run by the park commission. Lack of membership on the commission and lack of use of the roller-skating rink are the reasons the rink was closed. Community participation dwindled to very few members. The responsibility of the Memorial Hall building then fell upon the Borough.

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President Strubinger stated it falls on the borough to be prudent with the limited funds we have and to engage in a business, that is risky. He asked if the borough has the ability to take that risk and said it is questionable to do that with taxpayer funds.

Councilperson Rivkin asked Mrs. Kubishin if she was putting together a plan. She responded that if Council agrees, she will get a group together to brainstorm; develop a proposal to lease the rink or form a plan that works for them and propose to council a lease or business proposal. Councilperson Rivkin stated for him, a proposal would be the next step he would need to consider this. Mrs. Kubishin stated she needs to know if they have a chance before they do one.

Councilperson Yeastedt said the plan is not just the roller rink, it is the whole building. Of the 1.9-to-3-million-dollar renovation estimates, you are probably looking at \$800,000.00 just to do repairs in the rink. He stated if we do the rink, we will lose all of our grant funds. All of the repairs will then fall on the taxpayers. That is a 10 mill increase in taxes just for repairs. Discussion with the United States Department of Agriculture, the agency who will be overseeing the grant and financing funds, brought forth we are on a timeline and there is a sense of urgency.

Brian Evans said that if there is a loss of money due to a project scope of work change, maybe that is a decision we need to make.

Councilperson Crowley stated she would like to see the rink be utilized somehow, or if we can't do the rink, asked if we can do some inside things for the kids.

President Strubinger informed everyone that the existing public service garage will be repurposed for recreation and could be an option.

Mrs. Kubishin said it was only a cinder block building and needs a new roof. President Strubinger corrected the type of building it is.

Mayor Sofranko thanked everyone for showing up. He stated he was impressed with the Panther Valley School District resident showing and the Penn Forest Township response of about ten residents. He will be sure the officials in those areas know about their attendance and concerns. He stated the residents have expressed that there is a need for recreation in Panther Valley, Penn Forest Township, Summit Hill and Jim Thorpe. Attendees brought a lot of good information and these other areas need to know this. He believes indoor activities can be good. His experience with the kids is that they just want to be left alone. He often sees them in the park and talks with them and that is what they express.

Mrs. Kubishin stated the kids need something to get them off the bad track some are on.

Councilperson Crowley said there is a lot of emotion; suggested we pause at this point and place this on the next Council meeting agenda. She asked if there might be a compromise if we can't get out of the grant.

Executive Session

No executive session is needed.

Adjourn

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, seconded by Michael Rivkin, to **adjourn** the meeting. There were no comments. Motion carried 7 to 0. The meeting ended at 8:44 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maureen Sterner, Borough Manager