

Jim Thorpe Borough Council
2018 Public Meeting
November 16, 2017
Minutes

Meeting called to order by President Gregory Strubinger at 6:30 p.m. in the Memorial Park Hall, 103 East Tenth St, with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for the men and women serving our country.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Curtis Jackson (a)	John McGuire	Thomas Highland
Joanne Klitsch	Jay Miller	Kyle Sheckler
Gregory Strubinger	Mayor Michael Sofranko	Police Chief Schatz
Manager Maureen Sterner	PSM Vince Yaich	
Solicitor James Nanovic	Boro Secy McClafferty	

President Strubinger said the purpose of this meeting is the 2018 Budget and to put this out for advertisement to adopt. As part of the budget we are planning to improve some of our buildings. Some of the projects have been talked about over the years. Some of the facilities are not currently adequate. One phase of the project is to move the Borough office/Police department into the Memorial Hall. The offices will occupy a portion of the upper section of the hall. We will still have a 200 to 250 seat hall and the kitchen will remain as is. The Police would be put in the lower area of the hall.

President Strubinger said the second plan is to move the Public Service garage out of the Memorial Park. Once that building is all moved the building will be taken down and the land will be given back to the park.

President Strubinger stated what does that mean for impact on the residents taxwise. In the proposed Budget for 2018 there is a proposed tax increase.

President Strubinger said the other item that the Borough is taking on is the High Street Wall project. This is in need of immediate repair, part of the budget is addressing the wall repairs. The wall project is approximately \$450,000.00 which will increase the taxes for 2018 approximately .6 mills. The projects regarding the Borough office/Police/Public Service garage would increase the budget another 1.41 mills, for a total of 2.01 mill increase. There are no utility increases for 2018.

President Strubinger said what that will mean for the residents in the Borough is: a median home valued at \$139,400.00 would be assessed at 50% of that value, which would be \$69,700.00. It would cause the taxes to increase about \$140.10.

President Strubinger said the current Borough office/Police department, will lease the property out. We would be diligent in who we would allow to lease the space.

President Strubinger said with the increases in health care and wages, he believes Council has been very responsible in trying to keep the millage down.

Sal & Blane from Spillman & Farmer gave a 20-minute presentation to everyone. They explained the feasibility study that they completed for the Memorial Hall complex.

Louis Hall asked what is the square footage for the current Administration building?

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Sal said 3600 square feet

Louis Hall said that with enhancing the Police Dept., he agrees downstairs will be more secure. How about expanding the Borough office in the current building?

Sal said they did look at this. This would need major renovations because the Police dept. facilities would not meet the needs for the Administration. There are some ADA issues at the current building; there is not a second exit on the Administration side, that would be needed.

President Strubinger said we would still be maintaining two buildings, but we would get rent for the current building.

Mr. McGuire said when we built, we did downsize the building. We were supposed to have a meeting room on the back and we didn't want to encroach on the park. Having the Police and the Office together is for the safety for the Police and the office people. We have to look forward. This building gives us the opportunity to do this. We could use the hall as a community center, give it back to the residents.

Bill Malatak asked Sal if he was made aware, that over the bank on 10th Street there is a flooding issue. The Borough has spent money on the plans, they did get two estimates for repairing it.

Sal said the expansion should not contribute any more or any less to that issue, there is no more pervious coverage being done.

Connor Rodgers asked if he could be informed about the grant for the Stormwater runoff.

Borough Manager Sterner said we are looking into the Set Aside grant, this has been submitted. They have to do a presentation to NEPA next week on the grant application, she is not sure how long it will be until the Borough hears something back on the application.

Edith Lukasevich, Councilwoman Elect, said she compliments Council on moving forward with moving the Borough garage over town. Her concern is the Memorial Hall, she is having a hard time accepting the things you want to do with the building. This was built for the entertainment of the people of Mauch Chunk. She is concerned, will they still be able to have nice weddings here? She knows they need more office space and the Police need more room. Taking away Memorial Hall and making it into offices and rent the Borough building, she has mixed feeling on this.

President Strubinger stated so everyone knows since 2013 through 2017 the Borough subsidized the hall operations in the amount of \$320,000.00 to make the events take place. The tax payers were subsidizing and paying for most of the events that were held in the hall.

Maggie Lukasevich asked if the Senior event will still be able to be held at the hall?

President Strubinger said it is possible.

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Sherry McHugh stated the Memorial Hall is for the community. How much more is going to be taken from the community? This is a huge decision and this should be a vote from the residents. The debt is not going away, you don't need a \$2 million-dollar office/Police dept.

President Strubinger said what we are going to do next is approve the advertisement of the 2018 Budget. Does anyone have any questions concerning the 2018 Budget? The budget will be under review for 10 days, if you would like to review it please stop in the office.

Michael Rivkin asked when will the millage increase go into effect or does this have to go on the ballot? The 2018 Budget, is there a 2017 comparison report with the 2018 budget report?

President Strubinger said we can make that available.

MOTION: John McGuire second Kyle Sheckler to advertise the 2018 Budget.

COMMENTS:

Borough Manager Sterner said this will be considered at the Dec. 14, 2017 meeting.

Cheryl Cinicola – Heydt asked if this budget is adopted, are you saying you are moving forward.

President Strubinger said if we adopt the budget, we will be moving forward with the plans that were presented this evening.

YES 6 NO 0 ABSENT 1 Curtis Jackson

MOTION: Jay Miller second Joanne Klitsch to go into Executive Session – Personnel.

YES 6 NO 0 ABSENT 1 Curtis Jackson

Into executive session at 7:37

Back at 8:25

Municipal Fire Department

Kevin McArdle, Captain Diligent Fire Co. as a captain of the fire dept. he has praise for Council's support, we are treated fairly from the Borough. As Captain of the Fire Dept. he would like to be included in the decision-making process, as should the officers from the dept. Eliminating any members based on the application errors is not a good way to get new members to join a dept. Is there a problem in the fire dept. yes, but discussing that here is not the place? He informed Council if this continues, he will not be a leader in the dept., but he will respond to fires as a fire fighter to protect the citizens in the Borough.

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Chris Gunsser, Captain Phoenix Fire Co., the whole application process for a fire fighter does not make any sense to him. He wants to know the reason for the application, there was a waiver section that he did not sign and he brought this the Fire Chiefs attention, he brought it to Council, the Chief told him to cross this out, so he crossed it out. This has not made the fire dept. better. He has written grants for the fire dept. over \$500,000.00. We are here to help the citizens in Jim Thorpe.

Bill Mullen asked Council to explain to the people present how the Municipal Fire Dept. is going to work. Who is going to be in control if something gets broken?

President Strubinger said it will be the Fire Chief, in that regards nothing is changing, as far as who is running the dept.

Mr. Sheckler said the Fire Chief will have total charge of the maintenance of the vehicles. Everything is pretty much the same but Council is appointing officers.

Bill Mullen asked if the fire fighters have any say in who the officers are going to be?

Mr. Sheckler said that will be the Fire Chief and the Deputy Chief.

Thomas McClafferty said what you are saying, the Borough is not getting involved in the fire dept. but yet the Borough is, the applications that are being tossed out, why we were they told by the Fire Chief to cross that part off on the application?

Mr. Sheckler stated Council has the position to appoint or not to appoint.

Nick Shorten asked why can't the fire members chose the chief and captains, why has that changed?

Mr. McGuire stated there is a leadership issue, one that disturbs him business wise is not passing the audits. The real shame to him is, pure arrogance. There is a system that you have to follow to make sure everything was done right. How many audits was it done wrong? Then you reverse to make it look right and take money out of the fireman fund to pay back that fund. That is awful business. All that looks like is that you stole money and he is not accusing you of that. You didn't get receipts and yet you ask for a check from the relief organization. You didn't follow it again. That is a leadership thing. When a leader says screw it, I'm going to do it the way I want to do it, the leader has to change. He has been on the Emergency Service Committee for the past few years. One of the first things was to relieve Bill Diehm as Chief because he was stifling the young people in the membership. Then after Bill came off of an injury no one talked to him about this. That was back stabbing. He asked Bill if he wanted to step down and put a new Chief in. So we put a new Chief in. Chief quits in 6 months, now we put Bill back in. He called Bill out for being a nice guy. He understands the guys show up for 50% up the calls, he understands that stuff. Then it comes to training, so everyone is trained. Yet a kid goes to the Mason fire, with a fire truck that he can't run for the call. Who trained him? That goes back to the person that is the leader. This is against the SOP's to take that fire engine out of here. This all goes from leadership down. He has had a leadership role, and if he didn't do it then somebody underneath him didn't do it and it came back to him. Leadership has to change. There are a lot of problems talking to the current deputy chief he is a dictator. You have a problem with Vince. We have meetings and we give you the opportunity to talk, nobody talks.

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Chris Gunsser said just for your information it was your deputy chief's idea to replace Bill, 3-4 years ago, it was his idea, he had them do the dirty work.

Mr. McGuire told Bill to discipline, his answer was if he does that he will lose volunteers. He doesn't want to lose volunteers. We don't want to be involved with this, he respects volunteers because you have a great mindset to take care of the town. But when it is focused on your way and only your way, it's the old guys against the new guys. This fight has been going on in every community forever. No Council wants to be involved with it. He got to the point if you send a fireman down there and he can't run the truck and every second counts at a fire we could lose a block or we could lose a life. If he was responsible for that he'd put a gun next to his head and shoot himself, that is how he would feel. If the people aren't trained well enough. To go down there and run that fire truck, and put it in place. Then to say a cop wouldn't let him down there, what cop would stop anybody from going to a fire, no cop. That all goes back to discipline. Hearing about kids that are out after hours on calls, young kids, out after their curfew. Leadership needs to change in the Fairview's. The applications went out and Bill was told only cross out this line period. We didn't want to cause a big riff. When did it cause a big riff, it was from the leaders at the Fairview's, they crossed it all off. One guy even redefined it. Where can you go fill out an application for anything and cross out something you don't like in the application. Then expect people to accept your application. This is the new ordinance, this is a Municipal Fire Dept. You now need to re-apply. If you don't like the application how would you agree to anything else.

Kay Henritz said these are young kids, you should start over, give the new applications to them, they are willing to volunteer their time, she thinks this is a witch hunt.

Tom Lager said the application seems defective, you should give provisional status until Dec. 31 of 2017, give them the correct application to fill out and submit. Give them the proper application to fill out.

Council discussed the Fire dept. for several more minutes and became heated.

MOTION: Kyle Sheckler second Jay Miller to accept the following Fire dept. applications:

Kenneth Patrick McArdle	Jake Newton	Ryan McArdle
Mollie McArdle	Kevin McArdle	Eric Marzen
Frank Lorah		

YES 6	NO 0	ABSENT 1 Curtis Jackson
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MOTION: John McGuire second Thomas Highland to adjourn.

YES 6	NO 0	ABSENT 1 Curtis Jackson
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Adjourned at 9:23 pm

Respectfully submitted


Louise McClafferty, Secretary