

## CATAWISSA BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES:

**Date: Monday, May 7, 2007**

Present: Don Stewart, John Sabol, Dottie Linn, Barb Reese, Ed Rhoades, George Romania, Linda Kashner, Mayor Harold Kitchen and Attorney McDonald.

### Call to Order:

- Don Stewart called the meeting to order.
- Pledge
- Roll Call: Don Stewart, John Sabol, Dottie Linn, Barb Reese, Ed Rhoades, George Romania, Linda Kashner, Mayor Harold Kitchen and Attorney McDonald.
- Reading of Minutes: Motion to dispense with the reading of and to approve as written the minutes of March 5, 2007, April 9, 2007 and April 23, 2007.
- Motion: George Romania      Second: Dottie Linn      All in favor.

### Code Enforcement Report – Jim Haney

- Not present for report.

### Correspondences:

Received an email from PSAB that an unnamed organization was going to different boroughs checking for ADA compliance and demanding changes. They asked us to please make sure that we are ADA compliant. Training for Columbia County Public Safety on May 7 at 6:30 PM. Could be cancelled because of low registration. Catawissa Watershed Rivers Conservation Plan will meet on May 9, 2007 at the Catawissa Twp Municipal Building.

### Water Department Superintendent

- Cindy Bachman had nothing to report.

### Waste Water Treatment

- Dale Shobert absent.

### Road Department

- Bids due by 5/17/07 to Clair for the street project. So far we received one bid of \$32,750 for repaving Balschi Avenue.

## Police

Officer Hardin reads letter of resignation from Adam G. Lawton effective May 1, 2007. Motion to accept resignation from Adam G Lawton by Ed Rhoades Seconded: Barb Reese. All in favor.

## Police and Emergency Response Chairman

- 105 Activity reports for last month.
- A big thank you to Sergeant Tony Kopitsky for getting the grant for on-board cameras in the police vehicles.

## From Mayor Harold Kitchen

- PA Clean Water Waste illegal dump site.
- Audit report for the Municipal pension is available to the public at the Borough Office.
- A study for a stop sign on Cemetery and Shuman Streets, the west bound lane.
- Motion: Dottie Linn Second: John Sabol All in Favor
- Office Mark Hardin to complete the study.

## Community Improvement, activity centers and recreation

- Heritage Trek – Canada – Coming down the weekend of the Halloween parade.
- To benefit the Halloween parade there is discussion of a train ride.
- A small farmers market to come to Catawissa
- Catawissa Military Band will be playing 6/12/07, 7:00 pm at band shell.

## Property Supply and Building Maintenance

- Ed Rhoades reported that Cameron Waters put a new roof on band shell.

## Finance, Pension and Insurance

- Submitted application to Benicon Cooperative Type Medical Insurance. Waiting for the bid to come back to see what it would cost borough for health insurance vs. the health insurance we have now.

## Special Projects Reports: (Citizen's Committees)

- No report

## New Business

- Read resignation letter from Janet Erb. Effective 5/31/07.
- Motion to accept Janet Erb's resignation. Motion: Dottie Linn Second: John Sabol All in favor.
- She will be paid for her remaining vacation and personal days.
- The board would like to offer her: 2 months severance pay 6/1-7/31/07 along with her health insurance being paid by the borough.
- As of 8/1/07 she would be eligible to purchase her health insurance at a discounted rate for retired members of the borough.
- Question by Dennen Casey (citizen): Why is Janet getting a severance package? Has anyone else ever received a severance package? Answer: No answer Mr. Stewart stated that he was unsure because he was on vacation.
- It was questioned that they already agreed to give Janet her severance package when that has to be decided at the board meeting. Attorney McDonald explained that the board had an executive meeting to discuss what to do for Janet Erb. The board did not make any decisions and nothing was voted on or approved by the board.. Mr. Rhoades tried to explain why they felt they needed to give Janet Erb a severance package.
- Mr. Levan (citizen) stated why we should give Janet Erb a severance when she walked out on the citizens in our time of need.
- Attorney O'Connell asked who will assist Dr. Romancheck with getting the appropriate information.
- Question-Has anyone asked Janet to assist Dr. Romancheck? Answer by board: Janet is on vacation but she would help when she could.
- Question-Is Janet going to be there tomorrow 5-8-07 when Dr. Romancik is there? Answer: Janet is on vacation.
- George Romania stated that he, Linda Kashner and Barb Reese would be there to assist Dr. Romancik. George stated that Dr. Romancik is intelligent enough to know what is going on.
- Tracy thanked them for taking the time to help Dr. Romancik.
- Question: (By Attorney O'Connell) Why would she be the only one to get a severance package? She only had 3 more years until she could retire with full benefits. She was under pressure and it cost her to quit.
- Mr. Rhoades stated that is it unethical to rescind the severance package.
- Question: Was it offered to her? Answer: none
- Attorney O'Connell stated that would be a violation of the Sunshine Law. Which states offering something that hasn't been approved by the council.
- Mr. Rhoades tried to explain what happened. There was a meeting with 2 (Barb and Dottie) council members and Janet Erb. They discussed her vacation, sick and personal time and her retirement.
- Attorney McDonald stated that this is not a violation of the Sunshine Law.
- James Bender (citizen) stated that Attorney McDonald tells the board to use financial prudence. Mr. Bender stated that it would be a good idea if Attorney McDonald suggests the same thing with this issue.
- Question: Could they separate the severance package? Answer: yes.
- They would have to amend the motion.
- Question: Is there anybody that is willing to amend the first motion?
- John Klinger (citizen) stated that he is a businessman and he never heard of any of this severance.
- George Romania made a motion to offer Janet Erb her personal, sick and vacation days. Along with getting her insurance at the borough's price. (Not paying her 2 months or giving her health insurance). John Sabol seconded the motion. All in favor.
- This motion will trump the first motion stated Attorney McDonald.
- Question by Carol Westgate (citizen): Is this going to be in writing to Janet Erb, if approved by council? Answer: Yes.
- Accept resignation of Suzanne Hermanski
- Motion: Barb Reese Second: Dottie Linn All in favor.

## Borough Manager

- Question (Ed Rhoades): Would you like me to read the job description? Answer: Yes
- Ed Rhoades stated that we couldn't afford to NOT have a Borough Manager. This is what we have wanted, what we really need.

- Question (Wayne Levan): Do you actually expect to find a borough manager? Answer: George Romania stated that Berwick hired a manager. He also said believe it or not the people on this board do not have the expertise that is needed to run the borough.
- Question (citizen): Will the borough require the manager to live here in the borough? Answer: No, that is not part of the job description. I may be mentioned during interview process.
- Question (citizen) what is the borough managers' annual salary? Answer: \$40,000-\$50,000. The average cost in PA is \$43,000.
- Attorney O'Connell asked if the borough manager would be involved in the electric. Answer: Yes, they would be involved in the electric.
- Linda Kashner stated that Shane Pepe offered his assistance if we need it.
- Motion to approve job description for a Borough Manager
- Motion: Dottie Linn        Second: John Sabol    All in favor.
- Motion to advertise job description for a Borough Manager
- Motion: Ed Rhoades        Second: Dottie Linn    All in favor.

### **Website**

- Mr. Rhoades was directed to set up a website. Mr. Rhoades explained what was being done to the website and that we have as a webpage. They will host 2g and we will have 200 emails. Our website name will either be Catawissa.us or Catawissa.gov.
- John Klinger (citizen) offered to donate a website for Catawissa Borough.
- Tracy asked if we had to go with the company that has done some of the work? Answer: Yes, Shaun Raup has done all of the work and is only charging us for the host. We will keep John Klingers offer in mind for next year.

### **Bill approval by department head and committee chairman**

- Linda Kashner asked for a policy to have all bills signed by the department head and committee head. Invoice will have a stamp with account number and places for signatures. This will help ensure that bills will be charged to the proper account. Motion made by Linda Kashner. Seconded by Barb Reese. All in favor.

### **Hire temporary for secretary position**

- Linda Kashner made a motion to hire a temporary for the secretary position. Seconded by Ed Rhoades. All in favor.

### **Grass cutter for the summer**

- The borough council would like to hire Brandon Traugh to cut the grass for the cemetery.
- Tracy Shickley asked why it cost so much to cut the grass \$7,000-\$8,000 per year. Tracy addressed Harry Young regarding the cost. Harry had no idea of the exact amount.
- Question (citizen) who has the deeds to all 3 cemeteries. Answer: No one really sure. The Union cemetery is owned by the town stated Mr. Stewart. Other than that, we do not know.
- Attorney McDonald offered to check into the deeds at the courthouse. A motion is not needed for him to check on deeds.
- Question (citizen) why does it cost so much for cutting grass. Answer: The borough cuts the 3 cemeteries and 5 more properties that we bought from the flood.
- Jim Haney suggested that he looks into the deeds of all of the cemeteries. Attorney McDonald stated that would be great and Jim would also be cheaper.
- Last year the "union" cemetery's wall was falling down and the state fixed it.
- Question (Tracy Shickley): Why can't we hire a town kid to cut grass and pay him \$5.00 an hour? Answer: For liability reasons.

- Question (citizen) could we hire an independent contractor? Answer: We can have the new borough manager look at this.
- Motion to hire Brandon Traugh. Motion made by Dottie Linn. Second by Ed Rhoades. All in favor.

### **Finance committee**

- Linda Kashner appointed to the finance committee.
- Applications for full time street/laborer are being accepted. Linda Kashner, George Romania and Ed Rhoades will go over the applications.

### **Unfinished Business**

#### **Sewer Ordinance**

- Table until Dr. Romancheck has the chance to review the issues.
- Motion to table: Barb Reese Second: Dottie Linn All in favor.

#### **Parking Ordinance**

- Advertisement done incorrectly.
- Attorney McDonald stated that signs would be up on the streets. Correction: there was a decision that there will not be signs but that there maybe placards.
- Placards for businesses. Each business will get 3 placards.
- Will decide at next meeting.

#### **Retirement Gift**

- A discussion regarding a retirement gift for George Cunningham.
- Motion to rescind the retirement gift of watch for George Cunningham.
- Motion: Barb Reese Second: John Sabol All in favor.
- Motion to purchase and engraved clock for George Cunningham
- Motion: Barb Reese Second: John Sabol All in favor.

#### **Electrical**

- 14 meters tested to date. Not going to test anymore meters. The 14 meters came back at 100%.
- George and Harry shared a scenario: An 8ft section of electrical heat, the thermostat on the floor, the home had no insulation, and the dryer was running. The electrical had high usage. Approximately 1200 kW that month.
- George stated that the borough maybe wrong with the rate being high but we had to look at both sides.
- Another scenario: At the last meeting a lady stated that her electric bill was high and she lived on the corner apartment at the high rise. Where as her neighbor lived in a middle apartment that her electric bill was cheaper.
- Dr. Romancheck will be at the borough 5/8/07 from 10:00 AM on with a meeting at 7:00 PM with the citizens committee. There will be additional dates to follow. Discussing when he will meet with "everyone". The dates are either 5/11 or 5/18/07. After discussion it was decided that May 18 would be the best date for Dr. Romancheck to come.
- Attorney O'Connell asked the borough to put an advertisement in the Press-Enterprise so that everyone will know. It will also be posted on the borough door.
- Barb Reese also stated that the Southside News is free. Barb Reese volunteered to put an ad in the Press-Enterprise.

**Other Questions**

- Question (by citizen): Who wrote the job description for Borough manager? Answer: Ed Rhoades, George Romania and Linda Kashner.
- On behalf of the citizens they thanked the three board members.

**Financial Committee**

- Question was asked, "Who is on the Finance Committee? George Romania, Linda Kashner and Barb Reese.
- Will there be another committee created for the citizens to be involved in after the electrical situation is under control? George stated, "Yes he would be happy to do that."
- John Sabol gave a report on the general fund which is as follows:
- General fund \$184,940.93 of which \$68,872.37 is a reimbursement from FEMA/PEMA for flood of 06.
- Electrical \$140,490.22
- Sewer \$57,748.22
- P/R \$8,748.97

**Bills:**

- Administrative \$39,374.01
- Police \$3,909.28
- Streets \$2,444.27
- Senior Center \$133.31
- Electrical \$3,712.80 - Interim Bills \$143,745.11, for a total of \$147,457.91
- Sewer \$7,596.18
- EMS: Interim Bills \$1,391.27
- General Fund Reserve - Interim Bill \$58.28
- Total bills paid \$57,169.85, Interim bills paid \$179,030.78 for a total of \$236,200.63
- Motion to approve Bills: Motion: Dottie Linn Second: Barb Reese. All in favor.

**Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn: Motion: Dottie Linn Second: Linda Kashner All in favor.

**Next meeting**

5/18/07 at 6:00 with Dr. Romancheck at Catawissa Fire Hall.

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