

**FOREST CITY BOROUGH
MINUTES
MONDAY – AUGUST 7, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER: (President Robert Lesjack).

President Lesjack called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., welcomed everyone and reminded everyone that the public meeting policy which will be strictly enforced. All stood for the “**Pledge of Allegiance.**”

ROLL CALL:

Present: President Lesjack, V.P. Nicholas Cost, Council Members Bernie Scalzo, Chris DeGonzague, Amy Bean, Joann Matarese, Tracey Lazier, Solicitor McAndrew and Assistant Secretary C. Stone. Absent: Mayor Glinton and Secretary/Treasurer Sharon Vannan.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

An Executive Session was held on Thursday, August 3, 2023 at 1:00 P.M. and August 7, 2023 at 5 P.M. to discuss potential legal issues.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

John Kameen asked if the executive session was for one legal issue or two separate issues. Solicitor McAndrew said she would discuss this topic later in the meeting. John Kameen questioned the \$1,000 donation from NEIC to F.C. Parks and Recreation and how it came about. Councilman Nick Cost responded that John Marino was doing an electrical inspection at the park and said what a beautiful place it was. John Marino then stated he would like to donate \$1,000. Vice President Cost thanked Mr. Marino.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ADMINISTRATION: (Joann Matarese)

Councilwoman Joann Matarese made a motion to accept the Minutes from July 3, 2023, seconded by Councilwoman Lazier. Motion carried with approval from all, none opposed.

Councilwoman Matarese offered a motion to accept the July, 2023 Treasurer’s Report followed by a second from Councilman Cost. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with five in favor and two opposed (Councilwoman Bean and Councilman DeGonzague). Councilwoman Bean stated that information was not clear on the treasurer’s report and she would discuss with Secretary/Treasurer Vannan. Items referenced were Check 9697 and 9699, paid to “employee”? What employee? Mileage reimbursement? Where did they go and for what?

Councilwoman Matarese offered a motion to authorize opening a temporary “Fire Escrow Account” by Resolution at HNB for insurance proceeds to be held until the property is complaint, a second from Councilman Scalzo. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with all in favor motion none opposed.

PUBLIC WORKS: (Councilman Scalzo)

Councilman Scalzo provided the July 2023 Public Works Report: Public works crew cleaned storm drains on Dundaff Street; trimmed trees at Kennedy Park, on Erie Street, near Rail Trail Parking and on Main Street; repaired the tire on Backhoe and patched a hole near storm drain on Center and Railroad Streets.

Councilman Scalzo offered a motion to approve a \$.50 rate increase for Public Works employee Kyle Keiper upon successful completion of his probationary period; Councilwoman Joann Matarese seconded. Everyone is satisfied with his work. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with seven in favor none opposed.

Councilman Scalzo offered a motion to approve the purchase of a used zero-turn mower with attachments for \$5,500, budgeted for 2023 under Impact Fees Heavy Equipment. Councilwoman Joann Matarese seconded the motion. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with seven in favor none opposed.

Councilman Scalzo discussed the work JHA has been working on with our stormwater issues. Their invoice is coming in late but should be available for the next meeting. Three should be available: \$5,500, \$4,400 \$75,000, These invoices are for additional work that had to be done on these proposals for projects on Hudson Street work, Sinkhole on Susquehanna Street and Upper North Main Street creek issues. Councilman Scalzo stated we have been looking for grants to help defray the cost. Unfortunately engineering plans need to be complete in order to apply for grants. Thus, the proposals from JHA are needed and so costly. Money is available in the stormwater/storm sewer account to cover this cost.

Sinkhole on SR#171 by Dollar General was the subject of a meeting with Bernie, Nick, Brian from PENNDOT and a representative from Lisa Bakers Office. PennDOT will do the work for \$18,000 or instead of a monetary payment the borough in return could plow Hudson Street for three years. V.P. Cost stated there is

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money available in the stormwater/storm sewer account to cover this cost so there will be no need for the borough to plow Hudson Street. To be added to next month's agenda.

Tabled was the agenda item to authorize the purchase of anti-skid at \$23.50/ton. Bernie questioned the amount in stock and how much would be needed. Solicitor McAndrew also questioned if this needed to be advertised? V.P. Cost stated it has never been advertised in the past. This item was tabled until questions could be answered. To be added to next month's agenda.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS: (Councilwoman Lazier)

Councilwoman Lazier offered the floor to President Lesjack to speak about wireless mics, he had three different types to choose from. After much discussion Councilwoman Lazier made a motion to purchase the ZTUGA YT8 UHF 8 Channels Desktop Gooseneck System from Amazon for \$299.99; V.P. Cost seconded. Roll call vote, all in favor none opposed.

Councilwoman Lazier made a motion to change the date of GFCBA's use of the third floor for a benefit to October 1, 2023. Councilman DeGonzague seconded, motion carried with approval from all, none opposed.

Two items on the agenda were tabled – Cameras & phones for the building. Councilwoman would like a buzzer system to get in the building but no investigation into this has begun. Please remove from agenda until asked to put it on by a councilmember.

Councilwoman Lazier asked Councilman Scalzo if the public works crew could fix the sidewalk to curb area along Center Street with weed barrier and stone/mulch? Councilman Scalzo will talk to the public works to see if they can do the work. Councilwoman Lazier stated Stephen Mikloiche would donate the supplies needed. Please add to next month's agenda.

Councilwoman Tracey Lazier made an Announcement: Addendum #1 – Bid opening for the Borough Building roof previously scheduled for this meeting is extended to Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at the regular monthly Council meeting. Sealed bids will be accepted until 3:00 p.m. on 9/5/2023.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: (Councilwoman Bean)

Councilwoman Bean handed the floor to Katie Zefran from the Outdoor Town Action Team to update council on the current activities they have been working on. Katie expressed the Façade Program is moving along with two more participating businesses in the works. She requested that council take into consideration budgeting \$50,000 to facilitate another Façade Program in 2024 when creating their 2024 budget. Councilman Cost stated that the town is starting to shape up with the completion of the businesses participating. Katie announced the next Mural Project will be done on Center Street on the North side of the Frugal Living building. Funds are currently being pursued.

Katie stated, **Jake Rosen** approached her at the June FCOTAT meeting about helping secure grant monies for the "Our Community Center." Katie statement to him was; a public survey must be distributed, completed, and reviewed for public interest in the project and the results turned over to FCOTAT by their October 8, 2023 meeting. Katie said that the Mayor Ginton and Gus Fahey responded there was a survey done and she asked to see the results. He stated it was more like a group of friends giving their views and ideas. Ms. Zefran stressed to them it must be a formal survey distributed to Forest City and neighboring communities. V.P. Cost thanked her for the update and reminded her that she is in collaboration with the borough and the borough is not supporting the "Our Community Center" project.

Councilman Cost asked Katie about the Pocket Street Park and whether the steps were included in the grant. She responded they were included. The work for the Pocket Park is much greater than the Grant secured so items will be pulled out that are available for other grants. Next Outdoor Town meeting will be September 7 @ 6 pm.

PARKS & RECREATION: (Vice President Cost)

V.P. Cost offered the Parks & Recreation Board Report: Fishing Derby and Chicken BBQ were very successful. A huge thank you to all that volunteered and donated. Frugal Living donated the large prize for the raffle for the second year in a row, a big thank you! The kids had fun and some large fish were caught including an 18 ½ inch largemouth bass. \$67 in donations were collected.

The last vendor market will be on Sunday, Sept 17, 2023. The Park's Concession stand will be open with food & beverages available for purchase. Please come out and show your support.

V.P. Cost asked for a motion for payment in the amount of \$600 to eliminate weeds at the lower & upper Little League/Softball Fields from Impact Fees for park maintenance, environmental support

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and down the sidewalk to the basketball court (this section added by councilman Cost). Councilwoman Matarese made a motion seconded by Councilman DeGonzague. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with all in favor motion none opposed.

Councilman Cost made an announcement that the Salvation Army food distribution will be at Kennedy Park concession stand on July 27th and August 17th from 1 to 3 pm.

COMMUNITY AND SAFETY & HEALTH:

Councilman DeGonzague commented on the severe thunder storm that we were having and told everyone to stay safe. Also, with hurricane season starting please be safe if you are traveling.

CODE ENFORCEMENT: (Councilwoman Lazier)

Councilwoman Lazier read the Code Enforcement report for July 2023 provided by CEO Stephanie Sojka-Reisch. Certified/return receipt letter were sent out for a property on Susquehanna Street. Correspondence with several property owners included letters and photos. Will be out scouting for high grass and placing door hangers on properties in violation.

MAYOR'S REPORT: (Mayor Christopher Ginton)

Mayor Ginton was not available for this meeting. In his absence Chief Foley and Assistant Chief Dzanis were available. The July 2023 Police Report was distributed.

A request from the mayor and the police department to approve the purchase an Inkless Fingerprinting System for \$1,023.75 – budgeted for payment with Impact Fees. Much discussion between Councilwoman Bean and the police about different systems to purchase. Councilwoman Bean had several cheaper models for the police to look at. Chief Foley's final response was that they were not inkless systems. V.P. Cost made a motion to purchase the inkless system for \$1023.75 Councilwoman Joann Matarese seconded the motion. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with five in favor and two opposed (Councilwoman Bean and Councilman DeGonzague). V.P. Cost did add that a \$20 fee would be charged to the public coming in to request fingerprints. Chief Foley agreed.

Chief Foley spoke about the Commendation presented to Officer Jennifer Esterline at Trail Town Festival for her participation in a medical emergency in Vandling. Council members agreed she was an outstanding officer with paramedic training.

Chief Foley read the Resignation from part-time patrolman Joseph Vasta – last working day - 7/2/23.

Councilwoman Lazier made a motion seconded by Councilwoman Matarese. Motion carried with approval from all, none opposed.

SOLICITOR:

Attorney McAndrew said that she received correspondence from Pat Coleman regarding the current Codes Officer. Attorney McAndrew read the correspondence, which indicated that Pat represented a property owner currently facing a property condition violation filed by Stephanie. Attorney Coleman said that Stephanie could not hold both offices of Codes Enforcement and Auditor and said that if Forest City continued to try to enforce the violations with Stephanie, Attorney Coleman would bring litigation against Forest City for breaking the law and ask for court costs and attorney's fees. Attorney McAndrew stated that Forest City was aware of the issue and had been addressing it privately for some time. She further stated that she realized the severity of the message from Attorney Coleman, together with the severity of the threatened litigation, and so she called two emergency executive sessions. Attorney McAndrew said that she would not disclose the contents of the executive sessions or answer any questions on the topic publicly – in that it was confidential legal advice. However, Attorney McAndrew did say that Forest City Borough Council made the collective decision not to act to remove Stephanie from her position.

Solicitor McAndrew read Resolution #7-2023 White Board regulations & fees. President Lesjack asked for a motion and a second. Councilman Cost made a motion seconded by Councilman Scalzo. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with all in favor motion none opposed.

Councilwoman Bean's Statement– As everyone knows Stephanie is our Code Enforcement Officer, I just want the public to realize everything she has been going through. The mayor has been trying to remove Ms.

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Reisch from her position as code enforcement officer and was involved in her removal several years ago and I feel it is important for the community to know what was going on.

The Mayor has an agenda himself; to remove Ms. Reisch from her position with the borough.

Councilwoman Bean stated the Mayor has asked three residents to make false accusations against CEO Reisch to create more conflict. She also added that the mayor had an office but never used it, yet when council needed to find a space in the Borough Building for the newly hired/appointed Code Enforcement Officer, Stephanie Reisch; Council decided to split the office between the two and asked that they both post what days and hours they will be in or need the office. They would also have separate files and desks. Mayor Glinton objected to the plan and has already had several conflicts during the past month.

Councilwoman Bean also stated that Mayor Glinton has an ethical conflict of interest in that his business partner, Paul Daugevelo works for the borough in a paid position as Main Street Coordinator and that they are both involved in establishing the “Our Community Center” in a building owned by Mr. Daugevelo.

Councilwoman Bean cited the information was gathered from her researching the PA Public Official and Employee Ethics Act. And recommended Council to do their own research and act.

Councilwoman Bean also stated Jacob Rosen was questioned on the validity of a survey he said was conducted which indicated the need for the proposed center at a prior council meeting from a local business owner. She said he should consider doing a formal survey which would include the input from the whole community.

Council President, Robert Lesjack and V.P. Cost then added that this would not be a subject that would be undertaken by the Action Team since it is a private business and Council has previously indicated it will not take any action supporting or promoting it.

NEW BUSINESS:

President Lesjack asked for a motion for Resolution #8, V.P. Cost made a motion to adopt Resolution #8-2023 Authorizing Susquehanna County Housing & Redevelopment to administer the application for the Grant for the east side of the 600 block of Main Street sidewalk. Seconded by Councilwoman Lazier. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with seven in favor none opposed.

President Lesjack asked for a motion for Resolution #9-2023 – COOP Agreement with SCHRA to admin grant; Councilman DeGonzague made a motion to approve Resolution #9-2023 seconded by Councilwoman Bean. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with seven in favor none opposed.

President Lesjack opened the floor for discussion about creating & adopting a policy to require “Child Abuse Clearances” on all employees & volunteers, [PA Child Abuse History Certification \(link\)](#), volunteers are free, employees - \$13. Councilwoman Amy Bean suggested they be State Police clearances, solicitor McAndrew stated that would be discussed when creating the policy. V.P. Nick Cost made a motion and Councilman Chris DeGonzague seconded the motion. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with seven in favor none opposed. Please add to next month’s agenda.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS & QUESTIONS:

Resident Paul Kalasinski questioned the council on the time the Garbage contract states as a start time. In recent months the garbage company has started picking up garbage at Mr. Kalasinski’s home on Lackawanna Street at 5:15 am. V. P. Cost asked Asst. Secretary Stone to have Secretary Vannan to check the contract and have Ms. Vannan call and get this straightened out.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

President Lesjack announced, due to the Labor Day Holiday, the next regular monthly Council Meeting will be Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. President Lesjack announced, National Night Out” will be August 8, 2023 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the F.C. Fire/Emergency building, 380 Railroad Street.**ADJOURNMENT:**

V.P. Cost offered a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Councilwoman Lazier, all responded in favor, none opposed. The meeting ended at 7:26 p.m.