

**FOREST CITY BOROUGH  
MINUTES  
MONDAY MARCH 6, 2023**

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**CALL TO ORDER:** (V.P. Nicholas Cost).

Vice-President Cost called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., welcomed everyone. All stood for the “**Pledge of Allegiance**”.

Vice President Cost opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and reminding them that public comment is limited to five (5) minutes. Then asked for a roll call.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present: Vice President Cost, Council Members Bernie Scalzo, Amy Bean, Joann Matarese, Tracey Lazier, Mayor Ginton, and Secretary/Treasurer S. Vannan. President Lesjack joined a bit later by phone.

Absent: Councilman DeGonzague and Solicitor McAndrew.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No other comment was offered.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**ADMINISTRATION:** (Joann Matarese)

Councilwoman Matarese made a motion to accept the Minutes from February 6, 2023, Councilman Scalzo seconded. All in favor, none opposed.

Councilwoman Matarese offered a motion to accept the February, 2023 Treasurer’s Report with cash receipts totaling \$119,932.58 and Disbursements totaling \$108,278.51. Councilwoman Lazier seconded the motion. All Council members voted yes in a roll-call vote, five in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

President Lesjack joined the meeting by phone at this point.

Councilwoman Matarese announced that the total annual settlement from the borough’s Geisinger health plan for 2022 is \$3,52947, received 2/28/23. This refund is an annual claims experience credit and TLR return.

The annual Liquid Fuels allocation received 3/1/23 was \$57,776.90 and covers the cost of streetlights.

Reminder – Please turn in “Statements of Financial Interest”.

**PUBLIC WORKS:** (Councilman Scalzo)

Councilman Scalzo presented the Public Works report for February: light fixture replaced at the garage; storm drains cleaned on Dundaff Street; patched potholes, and changed the circuit breaker for Center Street lamp posts. Vandalism purchased 4 bucket loads salt/cinder mix - \$280.

Resignation letter from Louella Zender effective 3/3/2023 due to personal reasons. Councilman Scalzo made a motion to accept the resignation, seconded by Councilwoman Matarese, all responded “aye” and the resignation was accepted.

President Lesjack (via phone) made a motion to advertise for a full-time Public Works maintenance worker. Councilwoman Bean seconded the motion. All voted in favor, the motion carried. Ads will go in the Forest City News, the Tri-County Independent (formerly Wayne Independent & Carbondale news) and the borough website.

**BUILDINGS & GROUNDS:** (Councilwoman Lazier)

Councilwoman Lazier announced that the Rental Agreement Lease was signed with the Susq. Co. Historical Society & Free Library to expand the F.C. Library into the section of the Borough Building on the ground floor formerly occupied by the Area Agency on Agency effective March 1, 2023.

When asked about the Pentecost sign over the stage, Councilwoman Lazier replied that she had texted Tony Wilcox to find out when he would be starting and was waiting for his reply.

**COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** (Councilwoman Bean)

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The minutes from the Action Team's February 2023 meeting and the agenda for March 2023 were distributed. Councilwoman Bean shared the Action Team Survey results with a display. Announced that the plans for the Biker's station at Kost Tires may now be on the Trailhead at Center Street. More information in the future. The Trailhead Arch is ready to install. The Action Team is applying for several grants and hope that the borough will be able to provide some matching funds toward the development of the Center Street Park as more information becomes available.

Councilwoman Bean made a motion to create a resolution to recognize the Center Street Green space at the top of Center Street behind the borough building as an official "Pocket Park". Seconded by Councilwoman Matarese, all voted in favor. Resolution #4\_Center Street Pocket Park will be prepared for the next meeting following review by the solicitor.

Reminder – "Easter on Main" is on April 5<sup>th</sup> from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. An Easter Egg Hunt will be held on the William Penn Apt. grounds. A request for additional police coverage was responded to positively by Mayor Ginton.

Councilwoman Bean also announced that a S.T.E.A.M. program called "Race to the Library" will be held on Friday evenings at the Forest City Library at 4:30 p.m. This is free program for ages 8 to 16, please register at the library. The big race day is May 19<sup>th</sup> at 4:30.

**PARKS & RECREATION: (Vice President Cost)**

Vice President Cost reported that Winterfest at K.P. was a great success. 17 great soups were available, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner was A.J.'s, Carbondale, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place-Mike Flood, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place-C.G. Peterka. Due to weather conditions and a lack of ice, the Ice Fishing Derby was cancelled. The next event at K.P. will be the Easter Egg Hunt on April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00 p.m. Donations are being accepted for this event. Pre-registration is required, "Please check us out on Facebook" and the borough website.

Thank you to Assistant Chief Dzanis and the FCPD for catching a juvenile on an ATV ripping up the grass at the park. Charges will be filed.

A proposal from Brian Fitzsimmons, President of the F.C. Baseball & Softball Assoc. to purchase Custom Infield mix for the Upper Field at Kennedy Park. Cost of the mix is \$3,540 from Martin Stone Quarries. The total with the cost of installation is \$5,000. Councilman Scalzo made a motion to approve the purchase & installation of Custom Infield mix in the upper field at K.P. from Impact Fee funds. President Lesjack (by phone) seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed with six members in favor, none opposed.

**COMMUNITY SAFETY & HEALTH: (Councilman DeGonzague)**

Councilman DeGonzague was unavailable, however he submitted notice of the County Burn Ban – effective Saturday, March 18 through Sunday, April 16, 2023.

**MAYOR'S REPORT: (Mayor Christopher Ginton)**

The February 2023 Police Report was distributed for Council review.

The cost of implementing a new record management system was discussed, but determined it was not needed yet, so item was tabled. The system they have will work with the new equipment but a cost increase is anticipated and so other options will be considered at that time.

Request to purchase computers for two police vehicles \$12,328 plus installation bringing the total to \$14,228 plus the cost of AT&T unlimited data at a cost for two vehicles \$73.98/month. This purchase would be approved and replace the budget line item for the Live-Scan finger print unit. A motion was made by Councilwoman Lazier and seconded by Councilman Scalzo. A roll call vote was taken finding all six council members in favor of the purchase. Chief Foley will finalize the purchase.

Chief Foley indicated that he is working with the school on the proposed traffic controls at the school. He will provide a diagram when it becomes available.

Chief Foley presented a new hire for consideration Part-time officer Neal Kokatay at a rate of \$18/hour pending the completion of physical/psychological exams. He was interviewed by the Personnel Committee.

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Councilwoman Lazier made a motion to approve the new hire, seconded by Councilwoman Matarese, all voted yes in a roll call vote, effective 3/6/2023.

**SOLICITOR'S REPORT:** (Marissa McAndrew, Esq.)

Solicitor McAndrew was unavailable for this meeting. See Continued Business for an update on the FCAES request for additional funding.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

Griffin Pond Animal Shelter sent a letter of thanks to the Borough for a \$500 donation made to the Shelter as requested by Chief Foley in return for the Shelter's help with animal issues in the borough.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

A "Letter of Interest" was submitted to Council from Robert DeGonzague to serve on the Planning Commission. A motion was offered by Council Member Scalzo and seconded by President Lesjack. All voted in favor and the motion was passed.

The 2023 Proclamation designating April as PA One-Call 811 "Safe Digging Month" was presented for Council's approval. A motion was offered by Councilman Scalzo and seconded by Councilwoman Bean. All replied "aye", none opposed. The motion carried.

**CONTINUED BUSINESS:**

Susq. County Commissioners announced in a letter that the decertification of the Endless Mountains Visitor's Bureau and the creation of the new Susquehanna County Tourism Agency is official. The announcement asked that any communication from the EMVB should be directed to contact the County office. Susquehanna County Resolution 2023-02 was adopted on February 22, 2023 by the County Commissioners at a public meeting.

Any further discussion about tree removal previously addressed at the February meeting was again tabled.

Five (5) applications for the Code Enforcement position were received. The Personnel Committee are scheduling interviews.

At the advice of two separate auditing firms, Solicitor McAndrew issued a request to the FCAES for additional information since what was previously provided by them was insufficient to satisfy the auditors' recommendations. FCAES' request for additional funds cannot be honored until more information is made available. No response from the FCAES has been received as of this date.

**CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENT:**

John Kameen, F.C. News, asked if the ice would be removed from the curbs, "It has become dangerous for people to get over these ice piles, will Mikloiche be called in?" Vice President Cost replied, "That is not being planned this time, more snow may be coming and he will call it in when it seems necessary." Mr. Kameen responded that he felt for safety reasons, it should be done. V.P. Cost answered, "Not at this time."

Jean Ruhf, Executive Director EMVB was given the floor and offered information about the Visitor's Bureau and the way they could serve the county and why municipalities needed to hold off on their support of Susquehanna's efforts to form their own tourism group. The many things offered by them could be seen on their website and she encouraged everyone to look at what her group has done in the 60+ years they've been serving Susquehanna County. Ms. Ruhf said she was visiting as many places as she could to encourage communities not to adopt a resolution in support of this separation. County Commissioner Judith Hershel who was in the audience, rebutted Ms. Ruhf's comments, noting "85% of the municipalities in Susq. Co. are already on board with this shift. The County has held the required public meetings and gotten the support of 89% of the population. The Resolution has already been passed by the County and we are moving forward."

Jennifer Matarese was granted the floor and offered her support for the future of "Our Community Center", stating that she had submitted letters to the F.C. News which had gone unpublished, so she since has put her thoughts out on Facebook and the new OCC website. She spoke for five minutes and shared her compelling thoughts on living in a community where everyone should be accepted as they are and her feelings of being

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fearful of people who don't believe in or support her freedom to be who she is. "The LGBTQ community is here, but I do not feel safe in this town." She noted that she has been negatively attacked by a few people and said, "This community has raised me and others, please be kind to me and even to those people you don't like."

Jim Wisekal, 600 Railroad Street, reported that the road in front of his property is getting worse, the crack is now a hole. The Asphalt is pulling away from the man hole cover and the dirt is eroding. The road is sinking around the storm drain running toward the fire hall. Run-off coming down Grand Ave. is missing the drain. Councilman Scalzo things have gotten worse since UGI dug up that corner. Vice President Cost said that it would be looked into to see if a solution can be found.

Paul Kalasinski, representing the American Legion, asked if a road closure could be requested for the Memorial Day events. Ms. Vannan responded that it was previously requested and is already in the works.

Brian Fitzsimmons began by thanking Council for approving the purchase of Infield mix for the K.P. Upper field. He then voiced his concerns about "Our Community Center", asking if the mayor should be identifying himself as the Mayor of Forest City when he is publicizing his connections with the Center. Mr. Fitzsimmons asked what is the definition of the center? Regarding a survey that was mentioned, who actually participated in it? No organization or business that he spoke to had received a survey. The Main Street Coordinator owns the building, who chose the building? In what capacity is he acting, as Mayor with full support of the council or as an individual business owner who will benefit from the Center?

County Commissioner Judith Herschel responded to some of these comments, saying, "We live in a country where people have the right to gather, as a rural area, there are few places for us all to gather freely. You're either on board or not, but we don't need your or anyone's approval – this is going to happen."

Discussion continued, getting a bit heated until Vice President Cost ended it by asking if there was anyone who had anything else to comment on.

Councilwoman Bean extended thanks to Jean Ruhf for attending the meeting and providing additional information about the EMVB, stating that "Even though the Resolution was passed, I still have questions." Councilwoman Bean went on to offer her thoughts about the OCC. "I've been at the school about the nonsense with "BLM" – I believe that "All Lives Matter"! As for the OCC, most council members didn't hear about this, nobody knew this was happening." Mayor Ginton responded, "Amy, you knew about this, we discussed it at the Halloween on Main Pumpkin event." Councilwoman Bean, "Brian has valid questions." Commissioner Herschel added, "You don't have a legal right to stop it." Again, Vice President Cost ended the discussion and moved on to another resident.

Ron Heinle, a local resident spoke, "My child is transgender, on the honor roll, has a job at Zazzera's. As a parent, I love that my child will have somewhere to go where there is acceptance and support. This is needed for these kids, for everyone, to be part of one big group with no labels. This will make it easier for people to "come out" and be accepted for themselves.

With that, no one else asked to be recognized so Public Comment ended.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- a) The Memorial Day parade & service will be on Monday, May 29, 2023. A request will be submitted to Penndot for a road closure on that date. President Lesjack (by phone) made a motion to approve the Memorial Day activities and submit a road closure request to PennDot. Councilwoman Matarese seconded the motion. Vice-President Cost asked "All in favor?" all responded "aye". None were opposed.
- b) The next regular monthly Council Meeting will be on Monday, April 3, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Council President Lesjack made a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman Matarese seconded the motion. All responded "Aye" and the meeting ended at 7:05 p.m.