

**FOREST CITY BOROUGH
MINUTES
MONDAY – November 6, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER: (President Robert Lesjack).

President Lesjack called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and announced that an “Executive Session” was held at 5:00 p.m. prior to the regular meeting regarding personnel issues.

All stood for the “**Pledge of Allegiance**”.

OPENING REMARKS: **President Robert Lesjack**

A “Special Public Meeting” was held on October 23, 2023 to rescind the award of the bid for the borough building roof project that was made in error at the October 2, 2023 meeting; the Council thereafter voted to accept the lower bid from C&D Waterproofing for the borough building roof project, in accordance with the requirements of the Borough Code; the Council also held a work session for the 2024 General Fund & Sewer Budgets.

An “Executive Session” was held at 5:00 p.m. on this date prior to the regular meeting regarding personnel issues.

ROLL CALL:

Present: President Lesjack, V.P. Nicholas Cost, Council Members Bernie Scalzo, Chris DeGonzague, Joann Matarese, Amy Bean, Tracey Lazier, Mayor Ginton, Solicitor McAndrew and Secretary/Treasurer S. Vannan.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Eric Burns questioned how the Council had selected the higher roof bid that was subsequently rescinded. President Lesjack noted that Council felt that the distance was a factor in their decision and that concerns about response time favored the company located closer to the Borough. Solicitor McAndrew, who was not at the meeting when the bids were open notified council that the lower bid had to be chosen. Councilman Scalzo stated that the borough only hoped to get the most convenient services. President Lesjack noted, “Our error was found out and corrected.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ADMINISTRATION: (Joann Matarese)

Councilwoman Matarese made a motion to accept the Minutes from October 2, 2023, seconded by V.P. Cost, all responded “aye”, motion carried. Councilwoman Matarese offered a motion to approve the minutes from the Special Meeting on October 23,2023 seconded by councilman DeGonzague, the motion carried with approval from all, none opposed

Councilwoman Matarese offered a motion to accept the October, 2023 Treasurer’s Report with cash receipts totaling \$76,313.85 and Disbursements totaling \$252,093.91, which included a semi-annual payment to the USDA for the sewer loan - \$131,010. Council Member Scalzo seconded the motion. Motion carried in a roll-call vote with seven in favor none opposed.

Both the 2024 General Fund and Sewer Budgets were reviewed and Councilwoman Matarese made a motion to advertise the 2024 General Fund Budget, seconded by V.P. Cost, the motion carried with seven in favor, none opposed. Councilwoman Matarese offered a motion to advertise the 2024 Sewer Budget, seconded by Councilman Scalzo, all voted yes in a roll-call vote, none opposed.

Two audit proposals were submitted for Council’s consideration. The first from the current Auditor Brian Kelly & Associates for \$8,000, the second from Brad T. Murray, CPA, LLC for \$7,500. Councilwoman Matarese made a motion to accept the lower bid from Brad T. Murray, CPA for \$7,500. V.P. Cost seconded the motion. A roll call vote found six in favor, one, Councilwoman Lazier, opposed. The motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS: (Councilman Scalzo)

Councilman Scalzo gave an overview of the October 2023 Public Works Report: October Recycling donations - \$236; installed (2) umbrella leak diverters in the Borough Building attic; filled pot holes on Center St., Delaware St., Erie & Lackawanna Streets; replaced the gate post at K.P.; filled pot holes on Hudson St., removed the flags from Main St., collected \$367 for scrap metal; collected (3) loads of yard waste on 10/17 & 10/19; Repaired water run-off at the upper field at K.P.

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Approved the increase of cinder mix sold to Vandling to \$75/bucket load with a motion made by Councilman Scalzo and seconded by Councilwoman Matarese, roll call vote seven in favor, none opposed. Ms. Vannan will prepare a letter to Vandling so they have time to get into their November meeting for their approval.

One sealed bid was received for snow removal from Main Street curbs from Mikloiche Timber & Construction. The bid is \$5,000 per snow event. Councilman Scalzo made a motion to accept the bid from Mikloiche Timber & Construction. Councilwoman Lazier seconded the motion. All voted yes in a roll-call vote, none opposed.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS: (Councilwoman Lazier)

Councilwoman Lazier offered a motion to approve the non-refundable application fee of \$100 for the LSA State Grant to be used potentially for the borough building roof project and/or the East Side Main Street Sidewalk project if the application deadline could be met. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Bean. A roll call vote was taken finding seven in favor, none opposed. Ms. Vannan would follow up on this to find out if there was enough time to submit the application since the deadline is November 30, 2024.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: (Councilwoman Bean)

Action Team minutes from October 5, 2023 and agenda for November 2, 2023 were distributed.

FC Outdoor Town Action Team requested support for the application for an LSA State Grant for \$100 to \$250K to be used to continue the rehabilitation of the Center Street Pocket Park. The guidelines were distributed to council members. The application requires a \$100 non-refundable application fee but no matching funds. Deb McNamara is completing the application process that requires a resolution and approval from council.

Councilwoman Bean made a motion to authorize the \$100 application fee and approve Resolution #14_2023.

Councilwoman Tracey Lazier seconded the motion. All voted yes in a roll call vote, none opposed. Ms. Vannan will prepare Resolution #14 for submission with the grant per the template provided in the guidelines.

Main Street Coordinator, Paul Daugevelo reported that Halloween on Main was a great success. There were 38 participants, \$456 was raised from donations for Holiday lights from the pumpkin sponsorships. Businesses said they did well with wait lines to get in a few restaurants. The magician was well received.

F. C. School's Mr. Zack agreed to organize the Main Street tree decorating for the school kids on November 30 or December 1st, weather permitting. Wally & Kyle will pick up and secure them in the area next to Frugal Living and along the chain link fence. Paul Daugevelo and Councilman Cost will work on the trees donated by McAndrew Tree farm. Ms. Vannan will provide a letter to the McAndrew Tree farm recognizing the value of the trees and thanking them for their donation. Nick will pick up 8 sets of white lights for the small trees.

Activities planned for Saturday, December 2nd, Santa will be at the Historical Society from three to five. The Tree lighting will be at 5:00 p.m. with caroling by F.C. School students, followed by a band concert at the Historical Society building.

Councilwoman Bean recommended that council review policies & procedures, focusing on the Personnel handbook and job descriptions. Councilwoman Lazier asked if that will fall under the Personnel committee. Solicitor McAndrew noted that the goal is to streamline the existing policies and Councilwoman Bean will begin planning how that will be done.

Dr. Katie Zefran, Action Team, offered an update on the development of a Junior Board. The Action Team is drafting a resolution for Council approval at a future meeting. Announced that the Susq. Co. Room tax grant will be used toward the 2nd sculpture on the trail to Center Street Pocket Park. The 1st sculpture has been installed and lights and video surveillance are being added. She asked if the police could make some additional patrols until that is completed. The second sculpture will be on Erie Street in partnership with the F.C. Historical Society. The LSA Grant will be used to continue to rehabilitate the Center Street Park and thanked council for authorizing them to continue with that application. The LSA grant requires no match, only the \$100 non-refundable application fee approved earlier by council.

A suggestion was offered that if the façade program was to continue, a resolution be developed that required at least 50% of the façade be updated with stone or brick.

Gus Fahey, Valley in Motion, reported that 20 businesses had been "notice to proceed". Thirteen have been completed, three are in progress, another two should be finished before the end of the year. About \$7,000 will not be spent. The average project reimbursement was \$3,500. If a second year is funded, those who did not finish will be able to re-apply for the remaining funds.

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Councilwoman Bean stated that when the “Notice to proceed” is issued, it tells property owners that they must obtain necessary building permits. It was reported to her that one of the businesses failed to get the permits. “How does Council want to proceed?” President Lesjack said, “Well, if everybody else has complied then this business will need to furnish the required permits. Dr. Zefran added, “Council needs to appoint someone to enforce this.” Councilwoman Bean suggested this be handled by Safety & Health until the Code Enforcement position is filled. Discussion continued and it be suggested that Councilwoman Lazier act on this as she was assigned to supervising Code Enforcement.

Councilwoman Bean recommended a policy be created that would regulate all letters to businesses, public announcements, and social media that must be pre-approved by Council.

PARKS & RECREATION: (Vice President Cost)

V.P. Cost offered the Parks & Recreation Board Report – The Trunk or Treat event held at K.P. on Oct. 28 was very successful with around 350 kids attending.

Next event will be the 2024 Annual Soup Cook-Off, date to be determined.

COMMUNITY SAFETY & HEALTH: (Councilman Christopher DeGonzague)

Councilman DeGonzague announced that he and Solicitor McAndrew were working on Ordinance #522-Amendment to Ord.#498. No parking in certain areas, no parking on sidewalks, etc. The Ordinance will be ready to present at the December meeting. Solicitor McAndrew added that a Resolution will be developed to cover increases to some of the borough’s fines & fees related to Dumpster permits and pave cut fees.

Solicitor McAndrew asked everyone to support the fund raiser for Mrs. Heller’s Closet by attending a Purse Bingo at the school on November 11th, ticket price - \$25. This organization provides clothes and personal hygiene products to local students in need.

Councilman DeGonzague attended a training provided by the Susq. County Commissioners to collect an AED machine for the Borough building. Thank you to Commissioner Judy Herschel who contacted the borough office to ensure the Borough’s eligibility for this device. Councilman DeGonzague suggested that the Red Cross be asked to schedule a training and possibly open it up to the public. In the meantime, he asked permission to order first aid kits, children’s CPR-D-Padz and signage at a cost of \$200. Councilman DeGonzague offered a motion to make this purchase, seconded by Vice President Cost, the motion carried with a seven to zero in favor of the purchase.

CODE ENFORCEMENT: (Councilwoman Lazier)

Councilwoman Lazier stated that she had received a phone message on October 11 from Stephanie Sojka-Reisch indicating that she was resigning her position and “since I have not heard from her or spoken to her since, I will be in charge of the permits for now.” Stephanie Sojka-Reisch, 609 Hudson St. announced that she was advised by her Attorney to not comment on her current status as Code Enforcement Officer and said that she had not officially resigned and asked, per her attorney’s advice, that a special meeting be held with council and her Attorney. Solicitor McAndrew offered to arrange the meeting.

Councilwoman Lazier noted that at least one eye-sore on Center Street is gone. Councilman DeGonzague thanked Ms. Sojka-Reisch for efforts on that demo project.

MAYOR’S REPORT: (Mayor Christopher Glinton)

Mayor Glinton presented the October 2023 Police Report.

Mayor Glinton reported that the Steamtown Marathon on October 8 went well and thanked volunteers and the officers who worked this event. He also noted that a Drug Take-back was held at the F.C. Emergency Services on October 28, very successful as well.

Mayor Glinton announced and congratulated Patrol Officer Jennifer Esterline for recently completing a 40-hour course “Law Enforcement & Community: Crisis Intervention Team Training”, adding that “She is a great asset to the department and thank you for a great job.”

A quote for a tire purchase for the 2017 Ford Explorer was given to Council – Kost tires (4) tires w/alignment - \$803.31 or (20) tires w/alignment 0 \$450.99. Councilwoman Lazier offered a motion to purchase the four tires for a savings of \$95.67. Councilman Scalzo seconded the motion. Roll call vote taken, seven in favor, none opposed.

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F.C. Regional School District Board agreed to an increase for police coverage at school events from \$100 to \$125. This increased the compensation to officers to \$100 per event. Councilwoman Lazier offered a motion to approve the increase, seconded by V.P. Cost, the motion carried seven in favor, none opposed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Renew 2-year membership with the GFCBA - \$175 – motion offered by Councilwoman Lazier and seconded by V.P. Cost. Roll-call vote approving the renewal was seven in favor, none opposed.

Resolutions #12 & 13 to approve SCHRA’s application to PennDot for an MTF grant for sidewalks on the East-side of the 600 Block of Main Street, authorizing SCHRA to administer the grant, represent the borough and a Co-Op Agreement between the borough and SCHRA. Councilman DeGonzague made a motion to adopt Resolution #12 & #13. Councilwoman Matarese seconded the motion, all voted in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

A request from Cornerstone Bible Church to advertise their upcoming holiday events on the white board from 11/17 to 12/11 – Councilman DeGonzague made a motion to permit the use of the white board, seconded by Councilwoman Bean, the motion carried with “All in favor”, none opposed.

CORRESPONDENCE:

The Forest City Branch of the Susq. Co. Free Library asked council to consider a donation to the local branch to support their activities in the community. V.P. Cost made a motion to approve a \$500 donation, seconded by Councilman DeGonzague, seven responded yes, none opposed in a roll call vote, the motion carried.

The F.C. Area Emergency Services requested that Council approve the annual \$10,000 Impact Fee contribution for 2024, to be paid in January. Councilman DeGonzague offered a motion to support the distribution of funds, seconded by V.P. Cost, a roll-call vote found seven in favor, none opposed. The letter also requested Council’s consideration for assistance with the cost of roof repairs to the Emergency Services building which are expected to be between fifty and sixty thousand dollars, the request was not considered.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS & QUESTIONS:

Eric Burns complained about the ATVs on his road, stating that, “my quality of life is ruined, I can’t even open my windows, the sound resonates through my house.” V.P. Cost said that it will be brought to the attention of Mayor Ginton and the police again. President Lesjack commiserated with Mr. Burns, saying that they also have annoyed him and he’s “tried to reprimand them, to no avail”. Councilman Scalzo asked Mr. Burns (PSP Trooper) what the State Police response would be. Mr. Burns answered, “I’m here as a private citizen, not as an officer.”

Jason Obelenus, 612 Railroad Street, asked why Council was doing away with the Main Street Coordinator. Councilman DeGonzague replied that they were eliminating the position for a year due to budget constraints, but would revisit it for 2025. Mr. Obelenus replied, “Why not just don’t pay yourself?”

Paul Daugevelo, Main Street Coordinator, confronted Council saying, “I’ve been here doing this job for a number of years and had to read it in the Forest City News that my position was being eliminated. This council should have had the decency to call me to discuss this, the courtesy to at least give me warning, but I had to hear it out on the street. I’m here to express my feelings of disgust and dissatisfaction with this council. I was not treated fairly.” Council offered no response.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The garbage fees will increase from \$18.50 to \$19 per month for January 2024 and will be effective in the bills that go out in February.

The next regular monthly Council Meeting will be on Monday, December 4, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn offered by V.P. Nick Cost, seconded by Councilwoman Matarese, all replied “Aye”, the meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.