

**FOREST CITY BOROUGH
MINUTES
MONDAY – December 4, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER: (President Robert Lesjack).

Vice President Cost called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. filling in for President Lesjack who joined the meeting by telephone.

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

ROLL CALL:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None offered.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ADMINISTRATION: (Joann Matarese)

Councilwoman Matarese made a motion to accept the Minutes from November 6, 2023, seconded by Councilman Scalzo, all responded “aye”, motion carried.

Councilwoman Matarese offered a motion to accept the November, 2023 Treasurer’s Report with cash receipts totaling \$96,342.09 and Disbursements totaling \$111,669.51, 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 presented. The Sewer Budget was approved with a seven to zero vote following a motion from Councilwoman Joann Matarese and seconded by Councilman Scalzo.

The General Fund budget was tabled by a motion from Councilwoman Bean and seconded by Councilman Scalzo. A roll call vote found six in favor to table and one opposed (V.P. Cost). In order to get the budget approved before the end of the year a special meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 18 at 1:00 p.m.

Approval of the Engagement Letter from Brad Murray, CPA to perform the 2024 Audit for \$6,000 was questioned by Councilwoman Lazier who had spoken with Brian Kelly, the borough’s previous auditor. Mr. Kelly stated that his initial proposal of \$8,000 was negotiable and could be lowered and should be accepted because of his ten years of audit services to the Borough. Ms. Vannan added that Mr. Kelly’s firm had audited the borough for 12 years, but that Brad Murray had served as the primary auditor as an employee of Mr. Kelly’s firm until two years ago. When he left Mr. Kelly’s employ to start his own business, Tom Burke replaced Mr. Murray as the auditor for the borough under Mr. Kelly. Ms. Vannan also stated that this was discussed with V. P. Cost last year and was told to seek other prices when Brian Kelly’s contract ended with the 2022 audit. Mr. Murray originally proposed \$7,500 which was approved by council at the November meeting, then lowered the price to \$6,000 after contacting the USDA and finding out that they no longer required a “Yellow Book” audit, so he could lower the price to \$6,000. Councilwoman Lazier said that Mr. Kelly would bring his price down to \$6,500. Councilwoman Lazier made a motion to table the approval of the Engagement Letter from Brad Murray. Seconded by Amy Bean, a roll call vote found seven in favor, none opposed. The approval was tabled for further discussion.

Without a vote to pass the budget, Resolution #15 – 2024 Tax Levy with no tax increase was also tabled by a motion from Councilman Degonzague and seconded by Councilwoman Bean, approved in a roll call vote seven in favor, none opposed. Resolution #15 will be revisited at the December 18th meeting.

Councilwoman Matarese made a motion to advertise the 2024 Reorganization Meeting, seconded by Councilwoman Lazier, the motion carried with seven in favor, none opposed.

Councilman DeGonzague made a motion to table the 2% rate increase for the clerical staff because the budget had been tabled. It was seconded by Councilwoman Matarese, all voted yes in a roll call vote.

Councilwoman Matarese presented a resignation letter from Secretary/Treasurer Vannan, given earlier than planned by request from President Lesjack so that “there is enough time to find a suitable replacement”, seconded by Councilwoman Lazier. All voted in favor and the resignation was accepted. Last working day will be March 29, 2024.

A motion was offered by Councilwoman Matarese to advertise the position of Secretary/Treasurer. Councilman DeGonzague seconded the motion. All voted in favor in a roll call vote, none opposed.

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PUBLIC WORKS: (Councilman Scalzo)

Councilman Scalzo gave an overview of the November 2023 Public Works Report: November Recycling donations - 185; cleaned storm drains on Dundaff Street, closed Kennedy Park and the Dog Park for the winter, received 102 tons Anti-skid from Prince Excavating @ \$23.04/ton; set out the Christmas Decorations; set-up the Christmas tree & lights in Gazebo; and put up Xmas trees on Main Street.

Councilman Scalzo provided an update on the work to be done on the three drainage projects. He's been in touch with JHA and will meet with the property owners around the three locations that may be impacted by the projects in early 2024.

The 2% rate increase for maintenance and janitorial staff was tabled until the 2024 General Fund Budget is adopted.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS: (Councilwoman Lazier)

Councilwoman Lazier had nothing to report on Buildings & Grounds.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: (Councilwoman Bean)

Councilwoman Bean reported that four more Façade Program checks were issued to the following business owners for work completed on Frugal Living & Interfaith, McAndrew Law Office and Simpler Times.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Bean to advertise the 2024 meeting schedule for the FCOTAT. Seconded by Councilman Scalzo, the motion carried seven in favor, none opposed. It will be run in the Forest City News and posted on the Borough Website.

Council member Bean also reported on the Christmas Event held in Pentecost Hall on 12/2/23, citing all of the volunteers and contributors who helped to make this a successful event.

PARKS & RECREATION: (Vice President Cost)

V.P. Cost reported that a \$100 restitution payment was paid by one of the perpetrators who vandalized the BBQ pit at Kennedy Park.

Vice President Cost announced the upcoming events to be held in Kennedy Park for 2024:

Soup Cook-off – February 24 from 11:00 to 2:00 p.m. with registration at 10:00 a.m., on-line pre-registration will begin on February 1st, \$5 to sample, bad weather date is 2/25/2024;

March 24 – Easter Egg Hunt – 1:00 p.m.;

Vendor Markets on May 19th, July 21st & September 15th - \$15/space non-refundable;

August 4th – Chicken BBQ

October 26th – Trunk or Treat – 1:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the Parks & Rec committee will be January 15th at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd floor, in the Borough Council Chambers, in the Borough Building.

COMMUNITY SAFETY & HEALTH: (Councilman Christopher DeGonzague)

Councilman DeGonzague made a motion to advertise Ordinance #522-Parking & Traffic. Councilwoman Bean seconded. A roll call vote found seven in favor, none opposed. Discussion followed explaining that although it was approved previously to be advertised, some additional changes were made and it was not ready for inspection. Solicitor McAndrew talked about some of the issues she and Councilman DeGonzague faced in developing this ordinance. Some of those issues included congestion on Higgins Street, scheduling large truck routes, some streets becoming one direction, increasing the fines for parking violations and failure to pay parking tickets.

Councilman DeGonzague reported that a proposal for security cameras inside and outside of the borough building is being prepared by Ray Urban, New Era Security, Inc. Mr. Urban recently upgraded the security camera system at Kennedy Park.

Councilman Degonzague congratulated everyone on a job well done with the 3rd floor Christmas Event and the Christmas Tree lighting. Thank you to Marissa & Family for the donation of the Christmas trees; thank you to Nick, Wally, Kyle and Steven Mikloiche for picking up the trees and Nick, Steven; Fred Cicilioni, & John Zasik for putting lights on the trees; to all the Forest City students who decorated the small trees; to Joann Matarese sharing her rock painting skills; Bob Lesjack & Amy Bean for getting everything set up; Parks &

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Recreation & DG's for support and donations; Dave Sr. & Dave Jr. Trichilo (Zazzera's Mkt) for their donation, Anthony & Elegante's for the pizza, Fred & Katie Cicilioni for their support, Pastor Tim of Cornerstone Church, Lauren F.C. Librarian, the Historical Society and Barbara Mihelc & the FCAES and all of the businesses in town whose donations and support made this a great event for the kids in our community.

CODE ENFORCEMENT: (Councilwoman Lazier)

A resignation letter dated 11/21/23 was submitted by Stephanie Sojka-Reisch, vacating the position of Code Enforcement officer. Councilwoman Lazier made a motion to accept the resignation. The motion was seconded by Councilman Scalzo. All responded in favor, none opposed. Her last working day was October 11, 2023.

MAYOR'S REPORT: (Mayor Christopher Glinton)

Mayor Glinton presented the November 2023 Police Report.

A motion to approve the 4% pay raise for full-time police officers was made by Councilwoman Lazier and seconded by Councilman DeGonzague. This pay increase is mandated by the contract with full-time officers. All voted yes in a roll-call vote, none opposed

Council opted to table the 2% rate increase for Part-time police officers until the 2024 Budget is adopted.

Mayor Glinton announced "Free Parking" on Main Street for the holiday season to begin immediately and end on January 2, 2024. He extended his wish for a Merry Christmas to all.

NEW BUSINESS:

A motion to approve a ½ page Christmas Greeting ad at a cost of \$120 in the F.C. News was made by Councilman DeGonzague and seconded by Councilman Scalzo. A roll call vote found seven in favor and none opposed.

As noted by Councilman DeGonzague, the cost of installing security cameras inside and outside of the Borough building is being prepared by Ray Urban. Mr. Urban is also working on the security camera system at Kennedy Park.

CORRESPONDENCE:

A signed agreement from Vandling Borough indicating their acceptance of the rate increase for the Salt/Cinder mix to \$75/load, approved at their council meeting on November 20, 2023.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS & QUESTIONS:

Mr. Mike Norella, Dundaff Street, questioned why there was a problem with the selection of an auditor. In business that's how it's done, you seek the best price. Mr. Norella asked why the price hadn't been lowered before the borough got a better price and how it could be now, "this is gouging".

Mr. Joseph Woody, Main Street, pointed out some of the issues with truck deliveries going west on Grand Avenue, making the turn onto Higgins and ripping up the pavement. He suggested making parking on one-side of Center street allowing for better turning ability, contacting NEP about moving one of the poles and several other suggestions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Reminder: 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.

Due to the January 1st New Year's Day Holiday, the Bi-Annual Reorganization Council meeting will be held Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn offered by President Robert Lesjack and seconded by Councilwoman Matarese, all replied "Aye", the meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.