

CATAWISSA BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY February 7th, 2022 - 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

- The meeting was called to order by Council President, Sue Helwig.

ROLL CALL:

- Present were: Sue Helwig, Kevin Ferris, Jeffrey Fleming, Roy Klinger, Gary Steinruck, Andrew Detwiler, AJ McKenney, Mayor Todd Burke, Attorney Anthony McDonald

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

- Council President Sue Helwig reported the following:
- An executive session took place on February 2nd, 2022 at 3:30 p.m. regarding labor relations/ personnel and legal advice.
- Council is looking for a larger space to hold meetings
- Possibility of Zoom meetings, but need to look into microphones and a tv before this can be done.
- Ms. Helwig commented on comments made in the Press Enterprise, as guest to be heard at last week's meeting and in 30 seconds.
- Ms. Helwig gave a report on the meeting that was conducted with the Pension Auditor.
- Ms. Helwig reported Council only spent 90 minutes with Labor Attorney going over multiple issues.
- Council is trying to get more store fronts, less vacant properties and things for residents to do.
- Ms. Helwig expressed Council would like to hear feedback if you like or don't like what they are doing.

READING OF MINUTES:

- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to dispense reading of and approve minutes of the previous month's meeting. All Aye

GUESTS TO BE HEARD:

- Guest Daniel Johnson read a prepared statement on the behalf of the Catawissa Property Owners and Tenants Association regarding the Rental Ordinance and discriminatory comments made towards tenants by former Council. The Landlords and Tenants Association ask that Council repeal this ordinance and use the ordinances already on the books to sight properties.
- Guest Daniel May agreed with everything Daniel Johnson said. Mr. May talked about expenses involved with being a landlord. Mr. May stated being a landlord is not a get rich quick scheme and maybe Council should consider landlords a great asset and business partner. Mr. May also asked Council to rescind the entire unnecessary, poorly written and offensive ordinance.
- Guest Barry Wittig stated no one wants to come in his home because he will defend it, that's the bottom line.
- Councilman Kevin Ferris commented he feels the same way.
- Guest Louis Carl expressed his concerns with opening the police contract which is going to cost money. Mr. Carl feels this could cost the Borough more money in the long run and running a chance of not winning. Mr. Carl commented about State Police and ambulance availability.
- Councilman Kevin Ferris stated there was no talk of eliminating any police officers at all. Mr. Ferris stated there is some wording that was questionable. Mr. Ferris stated it is insignificant changes and probably is not offensive to anyone at all.
- Councilwoman Sue Helwig stated it will be nice to work together. Guest Barry Wittig stated you almost have to work together. Mr. Wittig expressed his concern with things getting dangerous.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- The Borough received notice from PIRMA that our application for the Loss Control Grant was not selected this year.

MAYOR:

- Mayor Todd Burke thanked everyone for attending the meeting.
- Mayor Burke commented on needing a bigger space for the meetings
- Mayor Burke congratulated Chief Laidacker on his 21 years of service. Mr. Burke expressed how lucky the Borough is to have him.
- Mayor Burke stated Coffee with a Cop at Woody's Place was a big success, a lot of people showed up.

WATER:

- Water Authority Superintendent Cindy Bachman had nothing to report.

CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT:

- Council President Sue Helwig read the code enforcement report.

POLICE:

- Chief Laidacker reported for the month of January the department responded to (154) calls for service. Chief Laidacker read his report which stated the following:
- The check engine light is on in the 2014 sedan, and an appointment has been made for service.
- The Chief met with the newly appointed EMC to discuss the department's needs in case of an emergency in the Borough.

PUBLIC WORKS:

- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Jeff Fleming to discuss Chase Petty and Tyer Torres attending the PMEA Conference on Sept 7th-9th 2022 in State College. A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to table the motion until costs can be gathered. All Aye

PUBLIC SAFETY:

- A motion was made by Andrew Detwiler, 2nd by AJ McKenney to approve moving the Incident Command Post to the Catawissa Hose Company #1. All Aye
- A motion was made by Kevin Ferris, 2nd by Roy Klinger to approve the Request for Proposal and issue a Notice to Proceed to Peters Consultants for the repair of the dry hydrant. All Aye
- Council President Sue Helwig announced Council Vice President Kevin Ferris and herself have a conflict of interest and cannot participate in any discussion regarding the Landlord/tenant lawsuit. However, they can participate in conversation regarding the rental ordinance. Since Ms. Helwig & Mr. Ferris did not know where this conversation would go, the meeting was turned over to President Pro Tem Jeff Fleming. A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by AJ McKenney to discuss Attorney Anthony McDonald to review the Ordinance 02-2022 amending Ordinance 03-2020 Establishing a Residential Rental Property Registration Licensing and Occupancy System, Setting Forth Requirements and Obligations on the Part of Landlords and Tenants, Establishing a Manner of Enforcement and Providing Penalties for the Violation of Requirements. Attorney McDonald explained he would like to meet with a committee to review changes that the committee would like to make. Councilman Andrew Detwiler explained what the committee was looking to have done as far as advertising. Attorney McDonald suggested a time line to follow. A motion was made by Andrew Detwiler, 2nd by Roy Klinger to approve Attorney Anthony McDonald to review the Ordinance 02-2022 amending Ordinance 03-2020 Establishing a Residential Rental Property Registration Licensing and Occupancy System, Setting Forth Requirements and Obligations on the Part of Landlords and Tenants, Establishing a Manner of Enforcement and Providing Penalties for the Violation of Requirements. All Aye
- President Pro Tem Jeff Fleming passed the gavel back to Ms. Helwig.
- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Andrew Detwiler to approve the CPOA request for the (2) Borough business only parking spots to use for the safe exchange project. Chief Laidacker explained this is for safe exchange of children in custody cases, for people who purchased items from Facebook, Craigs List, etc. Chief Laidacker stated the project will be fully funded by the Officers of the Borough, the project will be at no cost to the borough. All Aye
- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Jeff Fleming to discuss the purchase of a 24kw or higher generator for the Catawissa Borough Police Department. Council President Sue Helwig stated this was an unbudgeted item. Ms. Helwig stated this is being requested from the American Rescue Funds and Council will be discussing that later. Attorney Anthony McDonald stated they can discuss it now. Ms. Helwig commented on how much rescue funds are remaining in county. Ms. Helwig listed the items/projects that came up to use the rescue funds for; sewer plant, HVAC for Community Center, PPE for Fire Department, generator for Police Station and the electric grid. A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by AJ McKenney to table the motion until a cost can be submitted for the 24kw or higher generator for the Borough Police Department. All Aye
- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Jeff Fleming to approve requesting American Rescue Funds from Columbia County. All Aye
- Water Authority Superintendent Cindy Bachman asked Council to keep in mind that the dry hydrant project has not been determined if the project will be funded from the grant. Ms. Bachman reminded Council that if the dry hydrant project is approved to be funded by the grant there is a 15% match.

UTILITIES:

- Committee Chairman Jeff Fleming read the Utilities Report including the closed electric balance in the amount of \$4859.96 and closed sewer balance in the amount \$347.75.

PARKS & RECREATION/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- A motion was made by Gary Steinruck, 2nd by Roy Klinger to approve submission of a \$3000.00 grant application to the Degenstein Foundation for the Summer Breeze Concert Series. All Aye
- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Jeff Fleming to approve Resolution 2022-02 regarding obtaining Banner Permits for the erection of banners across the state highways in Catawissa for events held throughout the year. All Aye Council President Sue Helwig stated we just need to know what we want to put on there.
- Council President Sue Helwig announced Economic Development Committee is planning to call a meeting of all vacant property owners to see why they're keeping their properties vacant. As reducing the vacancy rate increases the income to the Borough.

PROPERTY & BUILDING MAINTENANCE:

- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to discuss street paving. Councilman Gary Steinruck reported recommendations given by Mr. Kehoe with Penn DOT on streets that are in need of repaving. Mr. Steinruck reported there is \$69,930.00 in Liquid Fuels. Mr. Steinruck stated the Water Authority will be doing some work on South St. in the area of South 2nd to S 3rd. St. Mr. Steinruck felt it would be best to coordinate with Water Authority Superintendent Cindy Bachman when the Water Authority replaces a small lateral on South St from S. 2nd to and S. 3rd St. intersection. A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Jeff Fleming to repave South St from S. 2nd to S. 3rd St for the amount of \$52,704.00 to be paid from Liquid Fuels. All Aye
- A motion was made by Jeff Fleming, 2nd by Roy Klinger to discuss the Sewer Plant repairs. Councilman Gary Steinruck reported in October 2021 a motion passed to have Larson Design prepare a scope of work and bid documents for the sewer plant. A motion was made by Jeff Fleming, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to approve to move the plans Gary has to Larson design. All Aye

FINANCE:

- A motion was made by Gary Steinruck, 2nd by Roy Klinger to authorize the Pension Consultant and Plan Actuary to complete an actuarial cost study of the police pension plan at a cost of no more than \$1750.00 which would be paid from the police pension plan as an administrative expense. 6 – Aye, 1- Nay Andrew Detwiler Motion carries
- A motion was made by AJ McKenney, 2nd by Roy Klinger to approve the renewal of the Wright Flood Insurance Policy ending in 1267 at a cost of \$1997.00. All Aye Council President Sue Helwig suggested looking into larger deductibles to see if there may be any potential cost savings.
- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Jeff Fleming to approve the renewal of the Wright Flood Insurance Policy ending in 1280 at a cost pf \$1230.00. All Aye
- A motion was made by Andrew Detwiler, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to approve denying American Tower's request to adjust the terms of the contract. Council President Sue Helwig read the options American Tower gave the Borough. Attorney Anthony McDonald explained a copy of the original contract cannot be found. Attorney McDonald suggested to go back to American Tower and asked them to show the Borough something that the Borough signed that our escalator clause is up in 3-years. Then Council may want to rethink the decision. A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to table the motion until an original copy can be provided by American Tower. All Aye
- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Kevin Ferris to discuss using Summer Breeze Concert Series funds to help fund part of the Catawissa Hose Company #1 Carnival Concerts. After a brief discuss Council President Sue Helwig suggested writing this into the Degenstein Grant and giving some money to the Fire Company if the Borough gets the \$3000.00 grant. A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Jeff Fleming provided the Borough gets the grant the Borough supports the Catawissa Hose Company. All Aye

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

- A motion was made by AJ McKenney, 2nd by Roy Klinger to approve requesting vaccine status from employees, as allowed by law. Councilman Andrew Detwiler expressed he feels it is nobodies' business and what Council is going to be putting employees through with contracts the employees don't need any more crap. Councilman Kevin Ferris expressed his feeling of it is everyone's personal choice. Council President Helwig stated it was easier to manage covid requirements if Council knows everyone's status. Councilman Andrew Detwiler replied it is still no one's business. Guest Barry Wittig stated Council is taking away employees right. Employees have the right to decide if they want the vaccine or not. Councilman Kevin Ferris asked what is the benefits of knowing. Council President Sue Helwig stated it is easier to know what requirements will need to be followed for CDC guidelines. Guest Louis Carl stated it is 5 days

whether you are vaccinated or not. Guest Barry Wittig expressed his feelings that the vaccination doesn't matter. Attorney Anthony McDonald stated it is legal to ask employees their vaccine status and suggested a roll call vote be taken. Andrew Detwiler, Nay; Gary Steinruck, Aye; Sue Helwig, Aye; Kevin Ferris, Nay; Jeff Fleming, Nay; Roy Klinger, Aye; AJ McKenney, Aye Motion carries

- A motion was made by Gary Steinruck, 2nd by Roy Klinger to deny the step two grievance filed by the Chief of Police. All Aye
- A motion was made by Gary Steinruck, 2nd by Roy Klinger to repudiate the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Borough and the Police Association, dated August 10, 2021 and upon repudiation authorize the Borough to maintain the status quo of the collective bargaining agreement that expired on December 31, 2021, including 2021 wage rates until such time as a new contract is approved by the parties or imposed through interest arbitration. Attorney Anthony McDonald asked if Council ran this past their Labor Attorney. Council President Sue Helwig replied yes. Councilman Andrew Detwiler expressed his opinion that it is a waste of tax payers' money for something the Borough will lose in the long run. Councilman Jeff Fleming and Mayor Todd Burke stated they agreed. Roll Call vote was taken. Andrew Detwiler, Nay; Gary Steinruck, Aye; Sue Helwig, Aye; Kevin Ferris, Aye; Jeff Fleming, Nay; Roy Klinger, Aye; AJ McKenney, Nay Motion carries
- Chief Josh Laidacker asked Council President Sue Helwig where she got the numbers spoken in her report that the average Police Department is 13% of the budget. Chief Laidacker asked if it was the Bloomberg City Report. Chief Laidacker stated that's what it is and it says the 50 largest US cities is 13.6 percent. Chief Laidacker mentioned the figures are for cities not our region. Chief Laidacker stated he just wanted to make that clear. Council President Sue Helwig stated she would like to know when he says Council is not for the Police Department that is not what it is. Ms. Helwig went on stating the Labor Attorney did not want the security provision in the contract. Ms. Helwig stated to Chief Laidacker Council would love to work with him to get this figured out quickly. Councilman Andrew Detwiler stated that is not going to happen there is no trust between Council and any of the employees. Council went to the lawyers first and employees will go to their lawyers next. Mr. Detwiler stated Council killed any trust they may have had. Council President Helwig stated the contract should have never gone through in the first place. Councilman Detwiler responded with you can blame what you want on previous Council but this is in our hands now, going to the lawyers first and breaking that trust is on us. The conversation continued between Council President Helwig and Councilman Detwiler about their different views of the situation. Chief Laidacker stated it is too late. Chief Laidacker stated the only conversation that was had was when your representative came and asked us to give up part of our contract. Ms. Helwig stated yes, we talked to him about doing it. Chief Laidacker stated there was no prior communication and this was the first time he heard in a public meeting this evening about working together. Chief Laidacker explained how contracts work and are done. Chief Laidacker also expressed how he feels the people Council works for should have the facts. Chief Laidacker proceeded to ask Council President Sue Helwig what it costs the resident to have a full time Police Department. Chief Laidacker stated it costs the residents \$0.88 per day for 24/7 police coverage.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- A motion was made by Gary Steinruck, 2nd by Roy Klinger to discuss signing a contract with Larson Design. Attorney Anthony McDonald explained you do not have to sign a contract for professional services. Attorney McDonald said you can pick and choose an engineer for each project. A motion was made by Andrew Detwiler, 2nd by Roy Klinger to deny signing a contract with Larson Design. All Aye
- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd Jeff Fleming to discuss the Blight Program regarding 102 Main Street. Council President Sue Helwig suggested some things to be discussed; what to do with the property once it is obtained, the upkeep of the property, loss tax and utilities revenue. Councilman Gary Steinruck stated we are concerned about dressing up and getting rid of these properties. Why are we worried about losing a couple dollars in taxes and lights? Attorney Anthony McDonald replied that is not the worry, the worry is what is it going to cost to tear it down. Council President Sue Helwig told Attorney McDonald the Blight Program would pay for it. Guest Cindy Bachman asked if all other options have been exhausted. After more discussion, a motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Jeff Fleming to table the issue until more information can be gathered. All Aye
- A motion was made by Gary Steinruck, 2nd by AJ McKenney to approve Attorney Anthony McDonald to advertise Ordinance 01-2022 regarding Establishing Fees Payable to the Catawissa Borough Tax Collector for Issuance of Real Estate Tax Certifications and Duplicate Bills. All Aye

NEW BUSINESS:

- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to approve Catawissa Hose Company #1 non-emergency activities for 2022. All Aye
- Council President Sue Helwig reported the Borough did not receive any Letters of Interest for the Vacancy Board or Zoning Hearing Board.
- A motion was made Roy Klinger, 2nd by AJ McKenney to discuss A Memorandum of Understanding with Columbia County Conservation District. Attorney Anthony McDonald stated he would review the MOU. A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to approve signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Columbia County Conservation District. All Aye

FINANCE PAYMENT OF BILLS

- A motion was made by Gary Steinruck, 2nd by AJ McKenney to accept bills as written and any others that may arise before the next council meeting. All Aye

GUESTS TO BE HEARD

- Councilman Roy Klinger volunteered his services and scan tool to diagnose the problem is with the police sedan.

ADJOURNMENT:

- A motion was made by Roy Klinger, 2nd by Gary Steinruck to adjourn. All Aye

MEETING ADJOURNED

Submitted by:

Connie M. Cole, Borough Secretary