

The Regular Meeting of the Donora Borough Council was held on January 11, 2024 at 6:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers of the Donora Municipal Complex. The meeting was called to order by Council President Cynthia Brice and following the Pledge of Allegiance, the following members were present: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell (via telephone), Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson. Also present were: Mayor Donald Pavelko, Street Department Dean Fronzaglio, Fire Chief Patsy Vince, Code Enforcement Officer Joseph Volpe, Chief Neal Rands, Borough Solicitor Steven Toprani and Borough Administrator Michael Thornton.

Opening of Bids

Minutes

Mr. Perrotta requested a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting held on December 14, 2023. Second by Mr. Berestecky. Mr. Perrotta questioned the sentence on page 549 of the minutes regarding the "add alternate." Mrs. Brice clarified that there is pyrite at the park and excavating needs to be done. She said this was a typo and also suggested that this be rewritten and placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Brice disagrees with the meeting minutes stating that parts of the conversation between Mr. Szakal and Mr. Nedrow were omitted. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky and Mr. McDowell (2): Nays: Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (4) Absent: (0) Abstain: Mrs. Pavelko (1) Motion rejected.

Mr. Perrotta brought to everyone's attention that there were meeting minutes from the special meeting held on December 28, 2023 that also needed approved. This was omitted from the agenda, so it will be deferred until the next meeting.

President of Council

Motion to approve the reappointment of the following borough officials: Mrs. Pavelko made a motion to reappoint Treasurer/Secretary Michael J. Thornton. Second by Mr. Perrotta. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. Thompson made a motion to reappoint Right To Know Officer, Michael J. Thornton. Second by Mr. Perrotta. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. Perrotta made a motion to reappoint Building and Street Supervisor, Dean Fronzaglio. Second by Mr. Berestecky. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. Perrotta made a motion to reappoint Code Enforcement and Zoning Officer, Joseph Volpe. Second by Mrs. Pavelko. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. Perrotta made a motion to reappoint Fire Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator, Patsy A. Vince. Second by Mr. Berestecky. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mrs. Pavelko made a motion to reappoint Borough Engineer, Robert Dengler from Gannett Fleming. Second by Mr. Berestecky. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. Brice made a motion to reappoint signature authority for signing borough checks: Borough Administrator, President and Vice President. Second by Mrs. Pavelko. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. Brice made a motion to reappoint borough depository bank, PNC Bank Monongahela Office. Second by Mrs. Pavelko. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. McDowell questioned why there was no reappointment for the borough solicitor. Mrs. Brice responded that they hadn't had time to talk to him regarding how he feels about the new council and how he feels about working here. Mr. McDowell asked when this would take place. Mrs. Brice said she thought this would happen at next week's special meeting.

Public Address:

Finance

Mrs. Pavelko read the Payroll Report for the month of December 2023.

Mrs. Pavelko read the Treasurers Report for the month of December 2023. Mr. Perrotta made a motion to accept the Treasurers Report for the month of December 2023. Second by Mr. Berestecky. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mrs. Pavelko read the Bill Report for the month of December 2023. Mr. Perrotta made a motion to accept the Bill Report for the month of December 2023. Second by Mr. Berestecky. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mrs. Pavelko read the Tax Collector's Report for the month of December 2023. Mr. Perrotta made a motion to accept the Tax Collector's Report for the month of December 2023. Second by Mr. Thompson. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mrs. Pavelko made a motion to authorize the Borough Administrator to seek depository proposals. Second by Mr. Perrotta. Mr. Perrotta clarified that the borough is seeking proposals because we may be able to get better rates even though the borough has been with PNC Bank for many years. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mrs. Pavelko made a motion to re-open the 2024 borough budget. Second by Mr. Thompson. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mrs. Pavelko made a motion to form finance advisory committee, to include borough residents only. Second by Mr. Perrotta. Mr. Berestecky requested an amendment to only have the finance advisory committee for 2024 (one year). Mrs. Pavelko said that she wants to form this committee with people that she believes can help the borough since there are boards for recreation and zoning. Mr. McDowell asked what the duties are for the board. Mrs. Brice said she contacted PSAB and they said that the borough can have a resident advisory board. They've asked a few people in the borough with financial backgrounds to give some advice on purchases, expenditures, where money can be cut, or where money can be saved. Mr. Perrotta clarified the advisory board will only meet with the finance committee so there are no sunshine law violations. Mr. Toprani asked if the

advisory board would be strictly advisory and council wouldn't be delegating any kind of duties? Mrs. Brice confirmed that they would have no authority. Council will ultimately make the final decision. Mrs. Brice said this will help with transparency. Mr. Berestecky asked if this will take place in 2024. Mrs. Brice confirmed. Mr. Brice does not agree with the one year term. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. McDowell and Mrs. Pavelko (4) Nays: Mr. Brice, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (3) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Solicitor Toprani suggested that the borough formalize the advisory committees by ordinance. That would define terms and also give future councils a template to follow. Mrs. Brice said the borough will draw up an ordinance. Solicitor Toprani suggested forming a one year board then something more permanent later.

Mrs. Pavelko made a motion to approve personnel wages. Second by Mr. Berestecky. Mrs. Brice clarified that specific employees need not be noted, however they are borough employees that are not covered by union contract. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Health, Sanitation and Code Enforcement

Mr. Perrotta read the Sanitation Report for the month of December 2023.

Mr. Perrotta read the Code Enforcement Report for the month of December 2023.

Mr. Perrotta read the Landlord Registration & Occupancy Reports for the month of December 2023.

Mr. Perrotta read the Street Opening Reports for the month of December 2023. Mr. Perrotta explained that more street openings were discovered. Also, the borough will be invoicing Columbia Gas. Mr. Perrotta stated that, with council approval, he could sign building permits as long as he does not accept any financial compensation since Mr. Volpe is not certified. This would be done at a later meeting.

Recreation

Mr. Berestecky read the Palmer Park Report for the month of December 2023.

Community Affairs and Municipal Building

Solicitor Toprani read the Banquet Hall Report for Mr. McDowell for the month of December 2023.

Mr. McDowell made a motion to approve the street department to clean/wax the ballroom floor. Second by Mrs. Pavelko. Mr. Perrotta stated that he doesn't feel comfortable taking street department employees away from street department duties to strip, wax and polish the social hall floor. He recommended getting quotes from different professional companies. Mrs. Brice stated that the street department offered to do the floors and that hiring a professional company would probably double the cost. Mr. McDowell said that he agrees with Mr. Perrotta that it is not the street department's job and that he would rather put it out for bid.

Mr. Perrotta made a motion to table this motion. Second by Mr. Thompson. Mr. Berestecky asked if council would approve the street department just cleaning the floors in the kitchen area to see how it would turn out. Mrs. Brice said it doesn't make sense to rent the equipment just to clean a small part of the floors. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. McDowell made a motion to establish a committee for future use of the DEC building. Second by Mr. Perrotta. Mrs. Pavelko stated that prior to the new council coming in, there were people who started the formation of this committee. She wants to work with the people who were already put on this original committee. Mr. Thompson asked if the borough still had the letters of interest. Mrs. Pavelko said she was contacted by Rev. Holmes and Scott Nedrow. They were supposed to be working with Mr. Szakal. Solicitor Toprani suggested reaching out to the original people who were interested in being on the committee and the borough could also advertise as well. Mr. Berestecky said the purpose of the committee would be to gather ideas to bring back to council. He also asked Mrs. Brice to remember that the zoning of DEC is conservancy. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Highways and Streets

Mr. Thompson made a motion to repair the street department's tri-axle truck utilizing the funds from the 2024 budget to pass inspection. Second by Mr. Perrotta. Mr. Thompson asked Mr. Fronzaglio approximately how much it would cost to get the tri-axle ready to pass inspection. Mr. Fronzaglio said he thinks it would be between \$2500 and \$3500. Mr. Perrotta stated that they have to be able to justify this particular line item for the budget re-opening. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mr. Thompson made a motion to repair the large excavator utilizing the 2024 budget funds for availability on future demolition jobs. Second by Mr. Perrotta. Mr. Thompson asked for an approximate cost. Mr. Fronzaglio said he would guess around \$1500 or \$2000. He said he hopes there's not a lot involved. Mr. Perrotta said he thinks this needs done because the biggest complaints in the borough are the police and blight. With the repair of the excavator, the borough would be able to demolish residential structures less than two stories high utilizing the borough crew. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Public Safety

Mr. Brice started by thanking the voters of Donora for supporting council. He said that he felt himself and Mrs. Pavelko would "take heat" for running for council. He said that current council would vote him back in as superintendent of police, but he decided not to go that route. Mr. Brice read the Police Report for the month of December 2023.

Mr. Brice made a motion to hire Josh Suppa as a part time police officer at a pay rate of \$22.00 per hour; to start immediately after all paperwork has been completed and reviewed. Second by Mr. Perrotta. A vote was taken to the call of roll: Ayes: Mr. Berestecky, Mrs. Brice, Mr. Brice, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Pavelko, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Thompson (7) Nays: (0) Absent: (0) Abstain: (0) Motion carried.

Mayor Pavelko swore in new hire Josh Suppa at this time.

Mr. Brice thanked Washington County DA, Jason Walsh. He and his staff were in town today (Jan. 11) and made a drug arrest.

Mayor

Mayor Pavelko said that this is one of the best meetings council has had in a long time and he loves the fact they are being transparent. The Mayor welcomed Josh aboard.

Public Officials

Mr. Vince – There were 219 calls and 85 of them were during the day between the hours of 7am and 4pm.

Mr. Rands- No report.

Mr. Fronzaglio – No report.

Mr. Toprani – Respectfully requested an executive session. There are three items of litigation to apprise council of.

Mr. Joe Volpe – He welcomed all the new council members. For the month of December 2023, there were 10 notices of violation, 6 were cleaned up and 4 ended up in non-traffic citations. There were 8 street openings, 9 lien letters and 6 occupancy permits.

Old Business

New Business

Mr. Perrotta brought up the commission expiration dates/vacancies. Mrs. Brice said they would discuss next week. Mr. Perrotta said he found nine that are already expired. Mrs. Brice said she would like a list put together of all the openings for the boards.

Non-Agenda Items

Ray Donaldson asked council for approval to burn two or three barrels of wet fire wood. Mr. Perrotta said the burning ordinance would have to be verified. He said this has been occurring for years on 12th Street and he's never known of an ordinance. Mr. Volpe asked Mr. Donaldson if he was referring to the outdoor wood burner at a neighboring house. Mr. Volpe stated that he's been in contact with the DEP. The DEP has visited the gentleman's property on several occasions and demonstrated that he is burning clean and dry wood. Mr. Volpe said that he's also visited the gentleman's property and he is burning clean and dry wood. He said he has no issues as the DEP expresses that code is being followed. Mr. Perrotta suggested researching the ordinances and see what can be done.

Scott Nedrow wants to address the concerns regarding the advisory board. He asked Solicitor Toprani to make sure it's legally binding. The Solicitor replied that this is the reason he suggested to have the advisory board on an interim basis to work together with council. He also wants to get the DEC committee organized. He said the DEC is a cornerstone property that needs dealt with in proper fashion. There are 400 different properties on the books in Donora that need to be dealt with. They need turned into cash and sold. He said if a citizen buys property and pays taxes, that's an addition into revenue. When the budget is exposed to the public, there's a lot of areas that need focused on from a productivity point of view and an accountability point of view. That is the objective of having an advisory board. It's a three million dollar business and it's not been run as such. There's been money spent that needs spent differently going forward. That's the objective of this council. People are needed on the advisory board. The real objective is doing the right thing for the borough. Making a better place to live, that's safer, and people working together. The auditors had suggestions in their letters to management, which is their evaluation of the books. Mike will try to get something together where we can have them either via call or in person to talk about them making some recommendations. Mr. Perrotta referred to Mr. Nedrow talking about the number of properties in the borough being alarming. We have to keep them on our insurance and the street crew has to maintain them. Mr. Perrotta worries about people getting injured. He hopes that the advisory board would make an effort to reach out to neighboring property owners so that maybe people could expand their yards. Commercial properties are going to be very difficult to deal with. The former Methodist church is a great example of that. Perhaps we could evaluate other properties too and see about putting them back to an economic use. Mrs. Brice addressed the citizens saying that if there is a borough owned property that is abandoned and they are interested in it, please reach out to the borough. She said she would be more than happy to work with people to gain ownership of said property and get it put back onto the tax roll. Mr. Nedrow said there are 500 some properties on the roll that are potentially rental properties in town. That would be a lot of money to the borough for rental registration fees. Mrs. Brice stated that our code officer is only part time so it will take some time to get things done. Mayor Pavelko told Mr. Nedrow that he would like to see him be the chair of the DEC committee. He assured the mayor that it will be a productive committee.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:26 PM