Borough of Jefferson Hills

Regular Meeting of Council

September 14, 2020

The regular meeting of Council was called to order by President Bucy at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center, 925 Old Clairton Road. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Council Members Ielase, Reynolds, Ruscitto, Sockman, Steffey, Vice President Montgomery and President Bucy answered to roll call. Finance Officer Drager, Solicitor Gabriel, Chief Roach, Borough Engineer Glister, and Public Works Director Volpe were also present. Mayor Cmar and Borough Manager Stinner were absent.

President Bucy stated she is beginning the meeting with Agenda item number five.

MONTHLY BILLS:

Mrs. Ielase moved to approve the bills for the month of August be approved, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously

MONTHLY PAYROLLS:

Mr. Montgomery moved to approve the payrolls for the month of August be approved, seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

MINUTES:

Mr. Sockman moved the minutes of special meeting April 27, 2020 be approved, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved the minutes of agenda meeting August 5, 2020 be approved, seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ielase moved the minutes of regular meeting August 10, 2020 be approved, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Mrs. Steffey moved to appoint Graham River Productions on a temporary basis to provide live stream services for Council agenda meetings, Council voting meetings, and Planning Commission meetings at a cost of $350.00 per meeting, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved to prepare and accept proposals to provide live stream services for Council agenda meetings, Council voting meetings, and Planning Commission meetings through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

Mr. Sockman moved to adopt Resolution No. 13-2020 granting preliminary and final approval to the subdivision plan know as S-3-2020, Richard Plan of Lots Phase 4, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Steffey moved to approve “dry” or “non-occupancy” building permits to residents who applied and received approval for building permits prior to the Clairton Municipal Authority sewer tap ban on or about May 27, 2020 pending the Developer and property owner sign a “hold harmless” agreement absolving the Borough of Jefferson Hills of any liability in the event that the Clairton Municipal Authority does not allow a sewage connection, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Steffey moved to advertise for the vacant positions on the Environmental Advisory Council, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously.

Mr. Sockman moved to open the Public Works Parks Laborer position, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

Mr. Sockman moved to accept the Memorandum of Understanding between the Teamsters Local Union No. 205 and the Borough of Jefferson Hills regarding the Lieutenant position subject to the receipt of the executed Memorandum of Understanding from Teamsters, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ielase moved to promote Borough of Jefferson Hills Police Sergeant, Kevin King, to the rank of Lieutenant effective Monday, September 14, 2020, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved to purchase equipment and upfit for a 2020 Police Interceptor from Rally Specialist, Inc. in the amount of $7,230.59, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Steffey moved to accept the proposal of WatchGuard in the amount of $41,867 to purchase Body Worn Cameras for the police department under the PA COSTARS Purchasing Program (contract no. 012-073). Previously awarded federal grant funding will reimburse the borough at 50%, seconded by Mrs. Ielase. Mr. Reynolds stated he believed that because the current Chief is retiring soon and a new Chief will be starting, the decision should be delayed. Mrs. Ruscitto stated she feels the same. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

President Bucy YES

Vice President Montgomery YES

Vickie Ielase YES

Mr. Reynolds NO

Mrs. Ruscitto NO

Mr. Sockman YES

Mrs. Steffey YES

Motion to accept the proposal of WatchGuard in the amount of $41,867 to purchase Body Worn Cameras for the police department under the PA COSTARS Purchasing Program (contract no. 012-073). Previously awarded federal grant funding will reimburse the borough at 50%, carried 5-2.

Mr. Montgomery moved to accept proposal from Ford Business Machines for the lease of copiers in the amount of $12,924 per year, seconded by Mr. Sockman. Mr. Drager explained much our current costs with our current provider is due to overages in in printing and copying. He got three bids and Ford was the only company able to offer us unlimited printing and copying and at a lower price. Mr. Reynolds stated he’s voting no because Ford Business Machine’s service hasn’t been up to par as far as internet connections for the first few months of the pandemic. He doesn’t believe even if they are the lowest bidder that we’re getting the quality of service we deserve nor the residents. Mrs. Ruscitto is voting no because she didn’t see any of the bids or proposals. She asked how long is the contract? Mr. Drager stated it’s a 60-month contract for all companies who submitted a bid. Mrs. Ruscitto asked if there is an escape clause. Mr. Drager stated he believes it’s 80%.

Mr. Reynolds moved to table the proposal from Ford Business Machines for the lease of copiers in the amount of $12,924 per year, seconded by Mrs. Ruscitto. President Bucy asked Solicitor Gabriel if she can accept the motion to table this item in the middle of Roll Call? Solicitor Gabriel stated it’s the President’s discretion to entertain the motion to table because the first motion was not made final. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

President Bucy YES

Vice President Montgomery NO

Vickie Ielase YES

Mr. Reynolds YES

Mrs. Ruscitto YES

Mr. Sockman YES

Mrs. Steffey NO

Motion to table the proposal from Ford Business Machines for the lease of copiers in the amount of $12,924 per year, carried 5-2.

Mrs. Ielase moved to adopt Ordinance No. 880 to vacate and transfer the unnamed Alley near Second Avenue and Cherry Street in the Large area surrounded by Lot and Blocks 881-P-125, 881-P-121, 881-P-117, and 881-P-85 from the Borough of Jefferson Hills to Ned Trbovich Sr with all legal, advertising, and engineering costs being paid for by the requestor, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ielase moved to approve Application for Payment No. 1 from A. Liberoni, Inc. in the amount of $342,980.63 for work completed on the 2020 Road Program, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

Mr. Sockman moved to approve Application for Payment No. 4 from Swede Construction Corporation in the amount of $38,842.39 for the work completed on the Beedle Park Concession Stand (17-GEDF-09) Project, seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved to approve Application for Payment No. 6 and Final from A-1 Electric in the amount of $32,370.21 for work completed on the Jefferson Hills/West Elizabeth Sewershed ACT 537 Plan Capital Improvements Project Contract B subject to approval of the maintenance bond by the Borough Solicitor, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ruscitto moved to ratify the findings of the Public Hearings held on September 8, 2020 and to authorize the Solicitor to issue the necessary legal clearances to SHACOG in order to proceed with the demolitions of 1705 Collins Ave (Lot and Block 1274-N-256), 1013 Maple Street (Lot and Block 881-K-59), and 105 Sharp Street (Lot and Block 658-D-294), seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Steffey moved to purchase Refrigerator Merchandiser MCF8725GR from Allegheny Refrigeration in the amount of $1,148.00 plus tax for use in the Beedle Park Concession Stand, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved to adopt Resolution No. 15-2020 establishing policy in the Borough of Jefferson Hills to prevent nepotism, in actuality or appearance, to the fullest extent possible under law, seconded by Mr. Reynolds and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved to accept proposals for the Internal Financial Control Evaluations of the fire companies’ financial records through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

President Bucy stated that there are a few residents who submitted comments that do not have anything to do with Agenda Item number 29. They may not want to stay for the remainder of the meeting, so she is letting those residents go before Agenda Item number 29.

CITIZENS/TAXPAYERS COMMENTS:

Mr. Tom Donohue – 204 Fawn Drive. –spoke about current Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) updates. They are working with the President of the Montour Trail Council to reignite interest and negotiations to build a bridge to cross Route 51. They will also try to secure Grants. He’s asking Borough Council to help with the cost of the bridge design, not the construction. There is also a possibility to put in a sidewalk. The EAC is still working on getting a disability fishing platform built along Peter’s Creek. EAC is also looking at having a guided tour, approximately 2-mile hike, along Beams Run Valley between Chamberlin Road, Coal Valley Road, and Peter’s Creek. We would like to do this November 1st and would like to promote this on the Borough’s website with Council’s permission. Mr. Donohue stated he was excited to see on the agenda that he and two other people who have been working on the Environmental Advisory Council were going to be reappointed and then in tonight’s agenda it’s being open advertised and wondered why. President Bucy explained there are five positions and we want to advertise those on the Borough website to see if there’s others who want to volunteer, not to distract from you, Rick, and Terry. Then Council can appoint all five positions at the same time.

Ms. Ashley Bokus – 426 Wray Large Road- speaking about some fresh ideas as the newest member of the Recreation Board. – The most requested community polling she personally did was for a Farmers Market. Looking forward to the summer of 2021, if COVID-19 is less of a concern, a Farmers Market is easily achievable using one of the Borough parks. The Recreation Board would like to install hand sanitizers at the parks in the Borough.

President Bucy passed out information to the residents attending the meeting before moving on to Citizen/Taxpayer comments regarding Agenda item 29. The document is shown on the live feed for those attending virtually. Memo dated July 7, 2020, RE: Fire Department Training Guidelines, Borough of Jefferson Hills Resolution 12-2009 establishing and approving training guidelines for Jefferson Hills Borough Fire Departments as recommended by Jefferson Hills Fire-Rescue and Training Guidelines for the Municipality of Jefferson Hills Fire Departments was distributed. President Bucy discussed the issue regarding the Station number for Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company being changed during the probation period to 80 from 79. She received information from County 911, while Mr. Reynolds received different information when he contacted County 911. President Bucy stated another issue is the Linemen for GHVFC, we need to make sure they are up and running safely.

Al Brennfleck – 406 Gill Hall Road- speaking about Gill Hall VFC. He didn’t realize we were this close to having GHVFC designated.

Lori Danen – 3032 Thomas Jefferson Drive – speaking about concerns of possible closing of Gill Hall VFC. We should al be concerned about the safety and protection of our community. If Gill Hall VFC closes and a fire company is dispatched to my home from JHFR, that’s about 10 minutes away. Additionally, GHVFC has a beautiful banquet hall for residents to use, which neither of the other two fire companies have. Council should consider safety and protection of Gill Hall residents.

David Grimes – 1124 Gill Hall Road – Reinstating Gill Hall VFC to 911. He didn’t realize a lot of the issues have been cleared up and you’re working toward opening Gill Hall VFC.

Mr. Dave Oster – 6009 Walton Rd. – (read by President Bucy) - I hope that in considering reactivating the Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company at Monday's Council meeting, you will require that Gill Hall’s leadership publicly address your questions about their opposition to the merger. It just appears so reasonable that a merger is in everyone's benefit. A central command, common training, and access to all of the fire halls and one administrative organization are common sense actions that will result from the merger. For the first eight months of 2018 the Gill Hall Company was an active participant of the merger process. President of the merged organization was offered to Calvin Felix. But in August 2018 the Gill Hall Company walked away from the process with no public explanation. For two years, they have not publicly answered any detailed questions on the merger. They have not explained why the benefits of the merger will not provide better fire protection to the Gill Hall area residents than would be provided by an independent company. The ongoing lawsuit of the aerial truck should not prevent the Gill Hall Company from explaining their objections to the merger. They are separate issues. The Gill Hall Company deserves our respect and admiration for their 70 years of service, but that service will not end if they join the merged company, it will only be improved. Please require the Gill Hall Company to explain to you and all of your residents their objections to the merger before the voting of their reactivation.

Brian Hudson – 420 Old Clairton Road – Official response to the Power Point Presentation as Vice President of Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company. Option A – On the advice of their attorney the truck needs to be housed at GHVFC. Option B – the truck was purchased for fire protection for the residents of our chartered area, which is Gill Hall and the residents of Jefferson Hills, the truck will remain housed at Gill Hall VFC. Option C – Everybody loses, that’s not really an option. Option D – Floreffe has offered to place the truck in the old Matthews Bus garage. This is the same thing we have already discussed. Option E – The first bullet point, GHVFC has no issue with the merger. The second bullet point must also include GHVFC Line Officers will be responsible for the GHVFC Fire Fighters. The third bullet point must be amended. It must note that GHVFC has primary responsibility to provide fire protection for the area known as Gill Hall for which it was originally chartered and granted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The fourth bullet point we agree with and have no issue as long as we are officially recognized as Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company Station 1-79. The fifth bullet point, Gill Hall VFC does not want to be recognized as an adjunct or auxiliary, support, organization. We expect to be treated equally within the Borough of Jefferson Hills. All of the Fire Companies must recognize Gill Hall’s command structure. Mrs. Bucy stated the word adjunct or auxiliary was taken out already, that was already agreed upon. There was discussion regarding Fire Fighter Essentials and Interior certifications between Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Hudson, Mrs. Steffey, Mrs. Ruscitto, and Mr. Withers.

John Thatcher – would like to ask two questions. I would like to hear Gill Hall’s answer to the question Mr. Oster asked tonight. I never really heard an answer to why they still don’t want to consider the merger. Secondly, I would like to hear more conversation about the line officer qualifications for all the Fire Companies. For example, the very first thing we talked about during consolidation was requirements for line officers, not the fire fighters. We need to make sure the firefighters we put into the burning buildings stay safe and the people running command make sure they are safe. That’s why I think more discussion should happen about all line officer qualifications. Mr. Reynolds stated what is JHFR’s problem with Gill Hall wanting to remain independent? Mr. Thatcher stated Dave Oster probably said it best in his memo, that he thought joining the consolidation would be in everyone’s best interest and to provide the best most competent, efficient fire protection. Mr. Thatcher provided all the qualifications of the line officers for JHFR. Mr. Withers stated to Mr. Reynolds you must want to shut down Floreffe VFC because we’re not doing our job and you keep bashing the station. Mr. Reynolds stated he never once said that. Mr. Withers stated last year we responded to 327 calls in the Borough, so far this year we’ve responded to 216 calls. Mr. Withers stated he is selling Tee shirts and the proceeds will be donated to a resident in Jefferson Hills who is battling breast cancer and is in need. Mr. Hudson stated we have no animosity towards the members of 885, the issue is not with them. Our problem is it’s going on 20 months and we’re still closed. Two of the big stumbling points for us are, merging for the sake of merging doesn’t work. There is no cost benefit. The other stumbling point is that under the new organization there is a very real possibility that the truck could be moved to a different location that Gill Hall worked so hard to achieve. Those are just the two basic reasons why we felt at this time the merger doesn’t work for Gill Hall.

Mr. Reynolds moved to return Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company to their previous status prior to January 13, 2019 before they were deactivated by prior Council, seconded by Mrs. Ruscitto. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

President Bucy NO

Vice President Montgomery NO

Vickie Ielase NO

Mr. Reynolds YES

Mrs. Ruscitto YES

Mr. Sockman NO

Mrs. Steffey NO

Motion to return Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company to their previous status prior to January 13, 2019 before they were deactivated by prior Council, died 5-2.

Mrs. Ielase moved to approve option E of the Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company Probationary Plan – Phase 2, seconded by Mrs. Steffey. Mr. Reynolds is voting no because of the number; he doesn’t feel it’s right. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

President Bucy YES

Vice President Montgomery YES

Vickie Ielase YES

Mr. Reynolds NO

Mrs. Ruscitto NO

Mr. Sockman YES

Mrs. Steffey YES

Motion to approve option E of the Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company Probationary Plan – Phase 2, carried 5-2.

REPORTS:

Communications Relations Coordinator

* + - Report in the packet

Finance Director Mr. Drager reported:

* + - Low in the second Quarter.
    - Short about 11.1 million, mostly EIT because of COVID.

Public Works Director Mr. Volpe reported:

* + - Nothing further to report.

Police Chief Roach reported:

* + - JHPD is selling Tee-shirts in memory of Officer Dale Provins, and you can contact one of the Sergeants if you’re interested in purchasing one.

Mrs. Steffey stated a resident designed a yard sign that says Support Our Blue and has been selling them for $25. He’s been in contact With Kevin King regarding that money so it can go toward the account to establish a memorial for Officer Provins here at the Borough and also a scholarship fund.

Engineer Glister reported

* + - Nothing further to report.

President Bucy stated Mayor Cmar is absent and so is our Borough Manager. Mr. Stinner had surgery and will return September 21st. President Bucy personally thanked Mr. Glister who’s has been assisting her and Mr. Montgomery in Mr. Stinner’s absence.

Borough Solicitor Gabriel reported

* + - Stated for the record Council met in Executive Session prior to the meeting to discuss personnel and active litigation matters.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Mr. Montgomery stated Mike Puskaric, our State Representative, sent a letter today to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) demanding that the 108 taps that were agreed upon in January be honored by Clairton Municipal Authority. Clairton Municipal Authority has a meeting scheduled for this Thursday at 5:00 pm their address is 1 N State St, Clairton and the meeting is open to the public.

Mrs. Ruscitto stated she went through her packet and found the bids for the copying companies. A friend of her wants Council to know that we can have a failure to deliver clause. We’d be entitled to three years with a one-year renewal option. Mrs. Ruscitto thanked all the people who attended the meeting in person and virtually, she admires their dedication to the Borough and commitment to your cause.

Mr. Reynolds stated Keep fighting Gill Hall. We’ll eventually get it right.

Mrs. Steffey stated she wants to be clear with the vote regarding Gill Hall VFC tonight, they have the option to be up and running tomorrow. We understand they need to take this back to their governing body meeting on Wednesday, but hopefully we will have an answer as quickly as possible. Mrs. Steffey asked Mr. Drager and Mr. Gabriel if the Borough pays for both Workers Compensation and vehicle insurance for all three fire companies? Mr. Felix is shaking his head yes.

Mrs. Ielase stated it is Love Your Library Month and because of the pandemic the Library’s largest fund raiser was cancelled. This month they are asking for donations and all donations will have a pro-rated match by the Jack Buncher Foundation. They are hosting virtual story time for preschoolers, age 3-5 with Miss Sharon. They are offering virtual yoga for kids and adults. Fish for Fun Day was cancelled in May due to Covid. We are having Fish for Fun Day on September 26th from 9-2, this is catch and release. Prizes will be given for the three largest fish caught, there’s a raffle, and food. You can register the kids at Peters Creek and Waterman. Mrs. Ielase thanked everyone for attending online and in person. She encouraged Gill Hall to take advantage of this opportunity, you’re ready.

ADJOURNMENT:

President Bucy adjourned the meeting at 9:36 p.m. on motion by Mr. Sockman, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

John P. Stinner

Secretary/Borough Manager