

January 2, 2018, Council Meeting
Minutes

The regular meeting of Clarion Borough Council was held on January 2, 2018, in the Clarion Free Library. President Lapinto called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Everyone recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilmembers present were Mr. Zerfoss, Ms. Roberts, Mr. Aaron, Mr. Noto, Ms. Logue, and President Lapinto. Dr. Sanders Dédé was absent. Chief Peck, Mayor Parker, Solicitor Marshall, Mr. Colosimo, Mr. Sharrar, Mr. Preston, and Ms. LaVan were also present.

Mr. Aaron made a motion to amend the agenda to include the resignation of Natale Schmude and also to advertise for a part-time meter enforcement officer under the Public Safety Report. Ms. Roberts seconded the motion. The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Mr. Zerfoss with a second by Mr. Aaron to approve the December 5, 2017, Council Meeting, minutes. The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Agenda Items

Instead of waiting until the end of the meeting and with Council's permission, President Lapinto asked Mr. Crooks to make his presentation at this time.

Mr. Crooks addressed Council on issues in the Central Business District of Clarion Borough and asked Council to take a fresh look at the possible decision in removing the 3 parking meters on North Fifth Avenue or any parking meter that's being thought about. Every member on Council should be asking two questions: 1) how does this decision affect the tax revenue/tax base of the Borough and 2) how does this decision affect the safety of the residents? Mr. Crooks pointed out the Central Business District produces more tax revenue per square foot than any other classification within the Borough. Individuals may wonder how does this potential decision that may be made of removing these meters affect the tax base? Mr. Crooks stated the availability of close parking to a business is a lifeline to that business. While serving on Council years ago with Ms. Lapinto and Mr. Zerfoss, paid parking professionals met with Council about numerous things. On average, 1 meter parking space turns an average of 8 times a day. So, if you remove 1 of those spaces, you are removing the potential of 8 customers parking close to that business and 3 would mean a possible 24 customers that could be going into Bob's Sub along North Fifth. Driving to Rotary every Monday, Mr. Crooks drives down the alley and turns left onto Fifth and cannot tell Council the number of times people, including state police officers parking in those spaces, carrying Bob Sub bags back to the car. During the lunch hours, those spaces are very heavily used. Less customers means less sales, means less revenue to pay rent, means more vacant spaces, means lower property values, and lower tax revenue. When Mr. Crooks purchased the store from his father in 2000, it was appraised to be fair to everyone in the family. Of 3 appraisals, his father was very persistent the middle one would be paid, which resulted in \$312,000. However, the Tax Assessment Office assessed it at \$890,000. Mr. Crooks appealed this amount the first year and the assessment reduced to \$650,000. The Assessment Office explained the assessment is not dropped down to the appraised value, because the County has to give government, meaning the Borough, School District, and County

the opportunity to adjust down their revenue. Therefore, it is done in stages. The following year, another assessment appeal was filed and it was reduced to \$450,000, which Mr. Crooks felt was a fair value. Secondly, Mr. Crooks wanted to bring up the safety of the residents. Standing on Main Street and serving on Council many years ago, the number of meters was so many more compared to now. That expert also informed Council at that meeting that parking meter spaces slows traffic down. The drivers use more caution when he/she see somebody parked along the street. Mr. Crooks cannot imagine what it will be like for a driver coming up Toby Hill, seeing the green light ahead, and thinking he/she can make it if these spaces are gone. That is a very, very dangerous corner; fatalities have already occurred there. In meeting with PennDOT after that fatality, Mr. Crooks recalls PennDOT saying 4 or 5 things that could be done and how it would be taken care of, but nothing has ever been done. Removing those spaces and creating two lanes will not help an already dangerous intersection. Even when the white man comes up for the pedestrian to walk, Mr. Crooks stated there's not enough time to get across before the light changes. Some people think Council has an obligation to make Clarion a fast drive-through town and convenient for the motorist. This is not true. That motorist flying through town is not adding a dime to the Borough's tax base. If he/she wishes to go that fast and not be inconvenienced, he/she should jump on Interstate 80 and bypass town all together. Mr. Crooks has witnessed big trucks driving on Main Street going past CVS. The driver sees the green light on Sixth and farther down Main Street past Seventh and he/she speeds up to make those lights. It's just unbelievable. This has got to stop. Traffic needs to slow down. Keeping these meters will prevent Fifth Avenue from becoming a more dangerous intersection. Mr. Crooks wants to see a safer business district. The University's construction of the buildings along Main Street was amazing, but it would have been better if parking meters could have been placed on both sides of the street so that motorists could go into Starbucks. Mr. Crooks challenged anyone on Council to go down and see how fast the trucks are flying through that valley. Part of it is a police issue, because ordinances exist to handle that. Clarion Borough needs all the revenue it can get. Mr. Crooks thanked everyone for his/her attention and service to Clarion Borough. Each and every member makes a difference.

President Lapinto asked Mr. Aaron the status. It is not on the agenda.

As far as the safety aspect, Mr. Aaron commented this is to eliminate congestion, the bottleneck that is created because people are parked in those spaces and the turning lane does not move. The people driving straight across are unable to go anywhere, which creates a line of vehicles backing up.

Mr. Crooks commented so what if he/she has to wait another light.

Mr. Aaron isn't worried about the motorist waiting. If people could just be patient about waiting, then it wouldn't create a safety issue. It's a problem whenever someone is waiting and is in a hurry to get to a light, which is the reason the Committee has been trying to see if this will make a difference.

Mr. Ron Eustice, owner of Bob's Sub at the corner of Fifth and Main, commented his business will probably be the most impacted by the removal of the spaces. At one point, there were 21 parking spaces around the Hahne Building. If these 3 are removed, Mr. Eustice stated that will mean there are 5 left. Mr. Eustice explained that 3-story building has 15 units. There are 5 more parking spaces behind it. Removal will eventually affect the Borough's revenue. How much of an impact this will have on his business, Mr. Eustice cannot say. Only time will tell. If it has a significant impact, it will result with him laying people off, resulting in fewer wages, fewer taxes, and everyone knows the rest of the story. As far as safety goes, Mr. Eustice thinks Council will see the opposite. There will be faster speeds through that area, not slower. A good example is when a motorist is driving up Route 68, as soon as someone enters the right lane to turn into Wal*Mart, 3 other motorists speed by him/her. Traffic speeds up, and Mr. Eustice feels that's what everyone will see coming up that hill. Mr. Eustice appreciates everyone for taking the time to listen.

President Lapinto asked Chief Peck for any comments?

Chief Peck agrees with Mr. Aaron that the problem at that location is with backup, which creates a couple issues. People wishing to drive straight through cannot do so. And then when he/she is able to get there, he/she is forcing themselves to go through the light to beat the red. Chief Peck reported that is one of the most dangerous intersections for pedestrians in the whole county. The Public Safety Committee is trying to look at ways to prevent people from getting hit.

When jogging, Ms. Logue stated you never get the white walk symbol to cross there. It's so fast, it is just unbelievable.

Mr. Noto informed everyone the light has to go through the cycle. If you hit the button, a pedestrian has to wait for the system to go through the cycle and come back around for the call to walk. While this may seem to defeat the purpose of hitting the button, the flow of traffic has to be allowed.

Ms. Logue commented the worst place is at the corner of Main Street coming towards the library. Motorists have the green signal to turn down Fifth Avenue at the same time walkers are able to cross. Ms. Logue hasn't noticed the back-up problem on the north side, which is being discussed, and asked if it occurs at a certain time of the day?

Chief Peck reported it's between 4 and 5 p.m..

Mr. Noto inquired how the Committee will know that removing the parking meters and opening that up will increase the pedestrian safety. Agreeing with Chief Peck, pedestrian safety is a key point and that is a dangerous intersection. But how does anyone know that this will do the things wanted.

Mr. Aaron stated the Committee placed no parking bags on those meters to see if it would make a difference. So, it has been tested the last couple of months.

Ms. Logue asked if it helped and what was observed during that time?

Mr. Eustice noted it seemed as everybody parked there anyways and ignored the bags.

Mr. Crooks pointed out again that the experts Council invited in the past stated over and over again that one thing that parking meters do is slow traffic down, which is what the Borough needs. The traffic needs to be slowed down in the Central Business District. If it's an inconvenience, then it is. If 5 or 6 cars backup and a motorist has to wait 2 lights, then so be it. That doesn't happen that often on North Fifth Avenue, occasionally when people are getting off of work and the Courthouse lot is letting out. If a motorist wants speed, Mr. Crooks repeated then he/she can go down to I-80. Clarion Borough residents are so spoiled that waiting 2 lights seems outrageous. However, if anybody drives in a larger city, it's not so bad.

Mr. Zerfoss agrees with Mr. Crooks and Mr. Eustice that the parking spaces should stay, because traffic needs to slow down. Why does anyone want a motorist to hurry up and get through the Borough? If they want to go faster, he/she can go to Interstate 80. A couple years ago when the County Commissioners supported a bypass off of 2nd Avenue so individuals could bypass town, Mr. Zerfoss stressed this was wrong. Clarion Borough is trying to keep the businesses and town up and running. Mr. Zerfoss agrees 100% with these two owners.

Mr. Noto asked if there is any way to restrict parking in those spaces during that certain period where it creates a safety or backup problem? If there is a problem for a certain time period, maybe a different solution needs found so that the parking there is not prohibited at all times. This way it will not infringe on the safety and the businesses in the area. Mr. Noto asked if there is any way to look into that type of solution?

Mr. Eustice questioned if there is a way to take the greenspace and widen the whole area. There is 6' of grass along the highway that could be removed and everything could be slid over to eliminate the problems.

President Lapinto and Ms. Logue believe that is property owned by the County.

Mr. Noto noted this may open up a whole other can of worms.

When PennDOT was up in Clarion at those meetings in the past, Mr. Zerfoss stated to them that all that needs done is three signs put up that says wait, look, and run like hell. PennDOT was not too happy with his comments.

When a pedestrian gets the white man and he/she is walking from Main Street to Fifth Avenue on the south side, Mr. Crooks added the motorist has a green signal to turn down towards Wal*Mart. PennDOT indicated before they were going to try various things to try to help the

problem from fixing the curb cut to different types of buttons; however, nothing was ever done.

Several months ago in a meeting with PennDOT, President Lapinto commented all these same issues were raised. Discussion on installing signage was mentioned, however, it could not be on the overhead pole. Also, someone asked about a 4-way stop, but PennDOT assured everyone present that Clarion Borough would be calling within 2 weeks, because it would create a nightmare waiting for all the cycles. This was probably in September or October. It's very frustrating.

Mr. Crooks reported PennDOT has been trying to eliminate the vertical parking on Brookville's Main Street for 25 years. However, Brookville Borough has been able to maintain the parking and fight for the spaces.

President Lapinto doesn't understand years ago how the Borough never fought to maintain all the parking spaces that PennDOT removed in the business district. So, many businesses went out because of that.

If you look at Main Street, Mr. Crooks stated there is a huge yellow area where the parking along Main Street was removed. Mr. Crooks doesn't understand why that has to be like that. It would be great to add 3 or 4 spaces along the north side of Fifth as well as keeping the ones currently there.

President Lapinto reported this will be referred back to Public Safety for review. Again, nothing is on the agenda to take action on this tonight.

ADMINISTRATION

On a motion by Mr. Zerfoss with a second by Ms. Roberts, approving the appropriations for the month of January, carried with a vote of six yea.

President Lapinto stated the Treasurer's Report of Fund Totals and Budget Analysis are in the packet for informational purposes.

On a motion by Mr. Zerfoss with a second by Mr. Noto, approving the Council Meeting and Second Council Meeting Dates for 2018 as the first and third Tuesday of each month, at the Clarion Free Library unless otherwise noted, was carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Mr. Noto with a second by Ms. Roberts, appointing Kristin Clark to a 3-year term on the Zoning Hearing Board to expire at the end of 2020, was carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Mr. Noto with a second by Ms. Roberts to appoint Lee Krull to a 4-year term on the Planning Commission to expire at the end of 2021.

Mr. Noto inquired that all individuals have been contacted and agreed to serve another term?

President Lapinto stated yes.

The motion carried unanimously.

On a motion by Ms. Logue with a second by Mr. Zerfoss, appointing Jennifer Vinson to a 4-year term on the Planning Commission to expire at the end of 2021, was carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Ms. Roberts with a second by Mr. Zerfoss, appointing Jason Noto to a 3-year term on the Library Board to expire at the end of 2020, was carried with a vote of five yea with Mr. Noto abstaining as he would be voting for himself.

President Lapinto stated Council has the results of the 2018 Tax Anticipation Note in the amount of \$300,000.

Treasurer Colosimo reported six banks submitted proposals and recommends Council accept the lowest from First United National Bank at 1.35%.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Roberts, approving Resolution #2018-412, approving the proposal from First United National Bank for the 2018 Tax Anticipation Note in the amount of \$300,000 at the rate of 1.35%, was carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Mr. Zerfoss with a second by Ms. Roberts to appoint Susquehanna Accounting Consulting as the Borough's financial consultant for 2018 at a rate of \$190 per hour (\$5/hour increase from 2017). The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

President Lapinto reminded everyone Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC will complete 2017 audit for the price of \$9,975.

On a motion by Mr. Noto with a second by Ms. Roberts, approving the Student Honors Association at Clarion University's special event request for Color Run for Charity to be held April 21, 2018, at 12 p.m., was carried with a vote of six yea.

BLUEPRINT COMMITTEE

Mayor Parker, in the absence of Dr. Sanders Dédé, stated the Committee had a wonderful holiday concert on December 9th. It was very well attended and nearly \$300 was raised to be used towards another community concert. The hope is to bring people to Downtown and show them how beautiful Main Street is, shop in the stores, and go to dinner, before or after, the concert at the restaurants. Mayor Parker commended Dr. Dédé as she did a lion share of the work for this project. Dr. Dédé helped corral the talent, secured Hart Chapel, and was the unofficial master of ceremony at the performance.

Mayor Parker understands the senior housing complex on South Fifth Avenue by Hudson and Company purchased the vacant lot. This was a Blueprint sponsored initiative. Through the support of the Committee, Hudson and Company's application to receive their tax credits were received, which enables the project to be economically possible.

PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Zerfoss commented the Maintenance Department is in the winter mode now with plowing snow.

Mr. Zerfoss reported residents may dispose his/her Christmas trees at the Public Works drop-off location. All decorations must be removed.

STORM WATER AUTHORITY

Mr. Noto asked Mr. Colosimo if anything has been heard on the fly over that has been completed?

Mr. Colosimo stated the company is still processing the data. Nothing has been received yet.

PUBLIC SAFETY

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Roberts to accept the resignation of Natale Schmude as meter enforcement officer, effective December 26, 2017. The motion carried with a vote of six yeas.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. Noto, giving permission to advertise for a part-time meter enforcement officer for 29 hours per week at the rate of \$9.25 per hour, was carried with a vote of six yeas.

LIBRARY REPORT

Mr. Noto stated the Library did have tea with Mrs. Clause and it was a great success.

Mr. Noto stated forty-four children and parents attended in the Pajama Project Storytime, where 56 pairs of pajamas were gathered for kids in need, which he thinks was pretty good.

Mr. Noto announced the Friends of the Library Brew and Stew raised over \$1,700 for the library, which was a very successful event. The hope is making it an annual one.

Mr. Noto commented the Library received an annual anonymous donation of \$2,500, which is much appreciated. Also, Central Electric made a \$300 donation through their employee-designated donation fund to the Library. Mr. Noto noted the Library has been doing what it can to be able to try to raise money in areas. Mr. Noto pointed out, unfortunately, the library was notified the state aid formula for this year will be less this year than last year.

Mr. Noto lastly added wintertime is a great time to read.

Backing up to Public Safety, President Lapinto asked if Chief Peck had any comments.

Chief Peck thinks everyone knows that the second week of December there was a serious incident involving a stabbing in a domestic situation. Officer Fox responded and was assisted by the University Police, which Chief Peck appreciates their help as well. These officers made some split-second decisions that Chief Peck is very proud of. Chief Peck added he wouldn't have done anything different if he had been there himself. It was just not a good situation, and they all did a fine job. Chief Peck feels everyone should be aware of that.

Mr. Zerfoss thanked Mr. Noto for telling Santa Clause what he wanted for Christmas and didn't get it this year but maybe next.

HOUSING AND ZONING

Ms. Roberts stated the report is in the packet for everyone's review. One topic the Committee is still working on is the situation at the gas station on the corner of 2nd and Main, which is owned by Douglas Frampton. The Committee feels there are safety hazards with the sidewalk; and now that there is snow and ice, it may be worse. Since the Borough's efforts have become dead ends, it will be turned over to the Solicitor to see if he can get a resolution to the problem.

Mr. Sharrar reported the Borough received the land development application for the new Sheetz store, which was turned over to the County Planning. After that, it will come to Council.

RECREATION

Ms. Roberts had nothing to report.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary LaVan announced that the County did award \$19,700 to the Borough for the Paving Project at their December 12, 2017, meeting. This is a piece of good news.

MAYOR'S REPORT

As required on activities and performing marriages, Mayor Parker reported to Council he performed 24 weddings in and around Clarion during the year of 2017. It was an active year for weddings and, hopefully, it will pick up a little more in 2018.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

President Lapinto announced the following Committees for 2018-19, as follows: Public Works will remain the same with Mr. Zerfoss as Chair and Mr. Noto as member; Storm Water Authority will remain the same with Mr. Noto as Chair and Mr. Zerfoss as member; Recreation will remain the same with Ms. Roberts as Chair and Mr. Aaron as member; Public Safety will change with Mr. Aaron as Chair and Dr. Sanders Dédé as member; and Housing and Zoning will change with Ms. Roberts as Chair and Ms. Logue as member.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Non-Agenda Items

There were none.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. Zerfoss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Linda LaVan, Borough Secretary