

October 6, 2020, Council Meeting
Minutes

The regular meeting of Clarion Borough Council was held on October 6, 2020, as advertised, in the Assembly Room of 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 Ms. Roberts, Dr. Sanders Dédé, Mr. Aaron, Ms. Logue, and President Lapinto. Mr. Garbarino and Mr. Noto were absent. Chief Peck, Mr. Colosimo, Mr. Preston, Solicitor Marshall, Mr. Sharrar, Mayor Whitling, and Secretary LaVan-Preston were also present. Ms. Schwabenbauer was absent.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé to approve the September 1, 2020, Council Meeting, minutes. The motion carried with a vote of five yea.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé, approving the September 15, 2020, Council Meeting, minutes, was carried with a vote of five yea.

Mr. Aaron made a motion to amend the agenda to add an item under Storm Water Authority concerning appeals to Borough property. Ms. Roberts seconded the motion. The motion carried with a vote of five yea.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Agenda Items

There were none.

ADMINISTRATION

On a motion by Dr. Sanders Dédé with a second by Mr. Aaron to approve the appropriations for the month of October. The motion carried with a vote of five yea.

President Lapinto commented the Treasurer's Report and Budget Analysis are included for Council's review.

President Lapinto reminded everyone the next Council Meeting will be held on Monday, November 2, 2020, at 7 p.m. at the Clarion Free Library. There is not enough space at the Borough Office so the decision was to hold it Monday.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Logue, approving the Wreaths Across America's special event request to be held December 19, 2020, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. – riderless horse to use 2nd Avenue to cemetery, subject to COVID-19 Warning and following CDC guidelines in place at the time of the event, was carried with a vote of five yea.

President Lapinto stated next are a set of items relating to the CDBG allocation.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé for approval to set the project portion of the FFY 2020 CDBG allocation at \$105,591 (100%) and the administrative portion of the FFY 2020 CDBG allocation at \$0.00 (0%).

President Lapinto asked Mr. Colosimo to explain this motion.

Mr. Colosimo believes that the Borough has enough administrative funds in other years of the program to where Council can dedicate this year's allocation solely towards the project portion.

The motion carried with a vote of five yea.

On a motion by Dr. Sanders Dédé with a second by Mr. Aaron, approving the Clarion Borough Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) Statement of Goals for FFY 2020, was carried with a vote of five yea.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Roberts, approving Resolution #2020-452, approving the FFY 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application and attached three-year Community Development Plan (CDP) and for submission by Clarion County to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), was carried with a vote of five yea.

President Lapinto commented Council received the bid results this evening for the installation of the Main Street light poles Contract #2020-3. The apparent low bidder is M & B Services in the amount of \$37,011.81. Clark Electric was the only other bid in the amount of \$41,820. President Lapinto asked Mr. Colosimo for any comments?

Mr. Colosimo stated M & B Services bid paperwork checks out, they are a responsive bidder, and recommends Council award this to M & B Services.

On a motion by Dr. Sanders Dédé with a second by Ms. Logue to approve the award of Clarion Borough Contract #2020-3 installation of Main Street light poles to M & B Services, LLC in the amount of \$37,011.81. The motion carried with a vote of five yea.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé to give permission for Clarion County to drawdown CDBG funds for engineering (\$6,756.45), advertising (\$1,312.48), and wages for Todd Colosimo for the period of May 16, 2020, to October 2, 2020, (\$1,794.40).

Ms. Roberts asked why the County is drawing down the funds?

President Lapinto stated the County is the administrator of the CDBG program and are the only ones allowed to drawdown funds. These are expenses that Clarion Borough paid, which will be drawn down to be reimbursed.

The motion carried with a vote of five yea.

President Lapinto commented the next two items on the agenda are requests for support letters. At the Administration Meeting with Ms. Roberts, Mr. Noto, and Mayor Whitling, President Lapinto expressed her displeasure with what has been going on this year. It seems that Clarion Borough is receiving a lot more requests for support letters than in the past. The requests are not being received in a timely fashion. Mr. Colosimo is receiving a call or email asking for the Borough's support for a project. President Lapinto stated then to find out the Borough isn't aware of what the project is. Grants are being written without Borough input at all. President Lapinto has relayed to individuals that this is not a good practice and is not fair. The question becomes how can Council vote on something when no one knows what the project is? People say this won't happen again, and then it does over and over. President Lapinto added the request is coming to Mr. Colosimo for the support letter and the organization needing it in 2 days or a week, which is not enough time for Mr. Colosimo, Mr. Sharrar, and Secretary LaVan-Preston to find out the details of the project, which again the Borough has not been involved in. This is total disrespect to the elected officials around this table. At the Administration Meeting, a policy was put together. In the future, President Lapinto informed everyone any requests for support letters must be in a written form, must state the project, and the details of the project not just a copy of the grant application. Secondly, it must address how it affects and if it is or isn't in compliance with the Borough's zoning. Third, and most important, does this project affect the residents of this Borough in the affected area? Once Mr. Colosimo receives the request, and all three have had a chance to review it, ask questions, and are satisfied, then it will be discussed at the monthly meetings of each committee so each Councilmember and the Mayor know what the project is. Right now, President Lapinto stressed Council is not aware of some of these projects. After and if Council is satisfied, then the support letter will be placed on the agenda for Council to be approved or disapproved. President Lapinto apologizes for having to state this at an open meeting, but it seems to be the only way to get the word out. Quoting Mr. Sharrar, President Lapinto stated it seems that these certain individuals are finding it easier to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission.

Dr. Sanders Dédé asked if the guidelines will be forwarded to entities that normally ask for support letters.

President Lapinto verified it would. The Borough employees go out of his/her way to help people any way possible. Council want projects to occur but also has to know exactly what he/she will be voting on. It is important to have time to review everything and not just hurriedly push it through.

Mr. Colosimo concurs with President Lapinto. It would be nice to have a fuller picture of some of these projects. Some proposals are pretty large and could have positive impacts but also negative. The Borough needs to be aware upfront.

Mr. Aaron thinks a policy is good for anybody that would be requesting a support letter from the Borough and would actually lend that letter more credibility. If not, just send a form letter.

Ms. Roberts added a representative could also attend in case anyone had questions someone would be there to address it.

Moving on, President Lapinto stated the first request is for a support letter for the Clarion County Adventures NAP application, which is an example of what she mentioned.

Dr. Sanders Dédé reported this was tabled, and Council asked for extra time in September.

Secretary LaVan-Preston thinks Dr. Sanders Dédé brought this up at the second meeting in September; however, the request was not received until after the August meetings. Therefore, the committees didn't get to discuss it until September.

Mr. Aaron stated that was for the park.

President Lapinto agreed with Mr. Aaron and thought this grant was for the playground. All of a sudden after receiving the application, two more projects were included; one of which was an Eagle Nest Overlook, which would require taking two pieces of taxable property off the Borough's tax rolls. Someone mentioned 'that's only 2 pieces of property'. But as Council begins to work on the 2021 budget, it can matter. The Borough's taxable property was 27% for many years. However, President Lapinto was recently informed by some officials it may be as low as 24-25%. Removing two pieces of property is very important to the Borough. Borough Council very diligently tries to maintain the real estate taxes. President Lapinto fully supports the playground project but cannot support this Eagles Nest project, which no one knew anything about. Through investigations, President Lapinto also was informed not to worry about it as the project will be completed 5-10 years down the road. The application indicates the property acquisition to be February to April 2021. If someone is going to purchase that property, what is the plan for it, just to sit there? President Lapinto encouraged anyone looking at plans for that property to look at the zoning as it's an R-1 area, which is very restrictive. Council needs to protect the R-1 areas. President Lapinto asked for other comments?

While it's not about the money all the time, Mr. Aaron stated this could have an impact on traffic in the Borough as that is a key intersection and is a one-way street. Depending on access to these properties and how that might change in and around that area, it is already a busy intersection right now. That needs to be included in the overall consideration as well.

President Lapinto repeated something is wrong with this as to why do you purchase properties if it isn't going to be developed 5-10 years?

Mr. Aaron feels it's a full adage of assuming.

Hearing no other questions, President Lapinto asked if anyone want to make a motion?

Since it will affect the grant that has already been submitted, Dr. Sanders Dédé made a motion to approve the support letter as it will support the activities and the park, which is definitely wanted but is not so sure on the other pieces included in the letter.

President Lapinto feels this is total disrespect for Council to not to have been informed about those projects that are in the Borough.

Mr. Aaron asked if the motion is for all three then?

Dr. Sanders Dédé stated yes.

If the Blueprint Committee is supporting the park and pushing the way for the park, Ms. Roberts questioned Dr. Sanders Dédé why their entity has anything to do with it?

Dr. Sanders Dédé stated she is right. Another part of this is the Blueprint Committee does not have any money and received their funding only through grants. The majority of the money to buy the property for the park is attributed to Ms. Janice Horn and the Miles Brothers. But the Committee needs to have money to develop the property and formed a fundraising committee that came back with a report of applying for the Neighborhood Assistance Program, which involved outdoor recovery for Covid-19. This application would provide a way to receive money for equipment and items on the property. As President Lapinto stated, Dr. Sanders Dédé reported the application was due in 2-3 days. The Blueprint Committee provided a support letter. However, Dr. Sanders Dédé didn't know about the other projects included.

President Lapinto inquired if this provides tax breaks for individuals donating?

Dr. Sanders Dédé confirmed that people that donate money can receive tax credits. Individuals donating can choose which project his/her money will go towards.

Ms. Roberts questioned if Council has to approve the support letter for all or nothing?

Mr. Colosimo drafted several different support letters as an option for Council; one including all three; one for the park and the loop trail interpretive projects; and one for the park only. Each of those letters include a zoning consistency statement. However, at this point, Mr. Sharrar and Mr. Colosimo only feel the park and the loop trail projects are in compliance with the Borough's land use regulations, planning, and zoning. They fit under park or public playground. As more information is trickling in, the Eagles Nest will be located entirely in an R-1 area, which as President Lapinto stated is the most restrictive zone, and neither can say it's in compliance without further research.

President Lapinto definitely supports the playground and the loop trail but not the Eagles Nest. It seems like Council is missing some information on this one.

Mr. Aaron started to make a motion.

Solicitor Marshall interjected and understands there is a motion already on the floor to approve everything. Right now, it is waiting for a second.

Dr. Sanders Dédé pointed out it can die now, because it has not been seconded.

Ms. Logue questioned if it could be seconded followed but a motion or if it should just die?

Solicitor Marshall stated that is up to Council. If nobody wants to second it, it will die for lack of a second. At that point, a new motion could be made.

Secretary LaVan-Preston commented the motion died due to the lack of a second.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Logue to approve the support and planning consistency letter for Clarion County Adventures NAP Application for the Clarion Multi-Generational Park and the Experiential Outdoor Learning Space along the Clarion Loop Trail only. The motion carried with a vote of five yea.

President Lapinto stated the second support letter is for the GlassWorks Pedestrian Safety and Freight Access Improvements Project. This is Phase II, and the Borough was fully aware of it.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Logue, approving the support letter for GlassWorks Pedestrian Safety and Freight Access Improvements Project Phase II, was carried with a vote of five yea.

BLUEPRINT COMMITTEE

Dr. Sanders Dédé had nothing to report.

PUBLIC WORKS

In the absence of Chairman Noto, Ms. Logue announced leaf pick-up will be every Monday and Tuesday, beginning October 12, 2020, through November 24, 2020. As a reminder, the leaves are to be placed curbside and no limbs or branches are to be included. There is no need to call.

STORM WATER AUTHORITY

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Logue, giving approval for adjustment to IA figure for the Borough's Veteran Drive property whereas an additional 1,622 square feet of IA was discovered through the appeal process, which will result in adding \$3 per month to the fee for that property, was carried with a vote of five yea.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Roberts to give Todd Colosimo permission, on behalf of the Borough, to file storm water appeals for all Borough properties.

Mr. Aaron stated this is more of a self-check to make sure that no one is paying more of a fee than is his/her share; whether that be the taxpayers as to a Borough fee or a resident next to one of Borough property. It's an internal control for the Borough as well.

The motion carried with a vote of five yea.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Aaron announced trick-or-treat hours in Clarion Borough will be October 31, 2020, which is a Saturday this year, from 6-8 p.m. Anyone wishing to participate should leave his/her porch light on.

Mr. Preston stated the fire company will not be having a parade this year but will be giving candy out in front of the fire hall.

Mr. Aaron asked everyone be respectful to property owners' wishes on how he/she handles it and encouraged everyone to make it a good, safe time for all.

LIBRARY REPORT

There was none.

HOUSING AND ZONING

Ms. Roberts stated the Housing and Zoning Report is in the packet for everyone's review.

RECREATION

Ms. Roberts had nothing to report.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

As President Lapinto stated earlier, Secretary LaVan-Preston commented Council will begin 2021 budget preparations this month with permission to advertise at the November Council Meeting.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Whitling pointed out last week was obviously a little bit different than what the traditional ALF usually is. As everybody knows, it's been a very different year. In speaking with a few business owners last week, Mayor Whitling reported he/she had good days. The owners seemed to be pretty encouraged. Mayor Whitling thanked all that were able to participate.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Non-Agenda Items

Ms. Elisabeth Fulmer, 21 South 7th Avenue, reported the storm drain in the alley beside her house seems to be a little higher than the curb built next to it. That is a tight corner already. If a motorist hits that curb/storm drain, it causes damage to tires.

CORRESPONDENCE

Secretary LaVan-Preston read a thank you note from Clarion Little League for all the Borough has done this season to ensure the opportunity for area youth to learn and enjoy both softball and baseball.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé, the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Linda LaVan-Preston, Borough Secretary