

February 2, 2021, Council Meeting
Minutes

The regular meeting of Clarion Borough Council was held on February 2, 2021, 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 Mr. Garbarino, Ms. Roberts, Dr. Sanders Dédé (participated by phone), Mr. Aaron, and President Lapinto. Ms. Logue was absent. Chief Peck, Solicitor Marshall, Mr. Preston, Mayor Whitling, Mr. Colosimo, and Secretary LaVan-Preston were also present. Mr. Sharrar and Ms. Schwabenbauer were absent.

President Lapinto stated first on the agenda is to hear presentations from the individuals who have expressed an interest in the vacant Council position. Because next year is a general election year, this appointment will only be until the end of the year. Each person will be given 3 minutes to address Council, which will be timed by the official timekeeper, Mr. Aaron. At the end of the time, Councilmembers and the Mayor may ask each a question or the individuals can ask questions to Council and the Mayor. Going in order the letters were received, President Lapinto called on Michael J. Bauer, Jr.

Mr. Michael (Pete) Bauer, corner of 8th Avenue and Liberty Street, stated he was originally from Clarion, worked for the federal government for 35 years, and then moved back. Mr. Bauer has a great interest in Clarion coming back to what it once was. It seems to have lost a lot of business and a lot of opportunities, and Mr. Bauer would like to see if that could be regrown in some way if possible and feels his many years of experience with government bureaucracy will help. While living in an HOA, Mr. Bauer was on the Homeowners Board for 2 different communities managing multi-million dollar projects.

President Lapinto asked if anybody has any questions?

Mr. Garbarino asked Mr. Bauer what he did?

Mr. Bauer reported during his time with the government he worked in computer security, which started with typewriters and really advanced while there.

Mayor Whitling inquired what kind of multi-million dollar projects were done with the HOA.

Mr. Bauer stated he was the treasurer for the 2 different communities, which consisted of collecting the dues from 500 property owners and providing maintenance to the properties and grounds. Long-term contracts to repave were made to try to keep the dues as low as possible; however, unforeseen problems come up, like a tree that fell on his house.

Hearing no other questions from Council and none from Mr. Bauer, President Lapinto called on Keaton MacBeth.

Mr. Keaton MacBeth, 641 Liberty Street, stated his wife and he made Clarion Borough their home and are a young family just having their first child. The MacBeths' idea is to raise a family in the Borough. His wife is a member of the Blueprint Committee, and both want to see the Borough thrive. Without young blood in the Borough, there is no Borough. Mr. MacBeth stressed they want to see the town cleaned up and be a very attractive town for young families, like it was 20-30 years ago. Mr. MacBeth wants to see projects that make the Borough stand out so people say 'hey, we should raise our family here', just like the MacBeths have decided to do. Mr. MacBeth served on Borough Council before and has that experience. Mr. MacBeth wants to see the Borough thrive for the younger community, not specifically for them, but to see it for young families that want to move into the Borough and make a home so that the town can thrive.

Mr. Garbarino asked what Mr. MacBeth thought of his previous time on Council?

Mr. MacBeth stated he loved it and he learned a lot about the Borough and all borough functions as far as the nuts and bolts of it. For instance, something as silly as buying a police car, you think you just go and buy one, but it's not that simple. It was a very enjoyable experience.

Hearing no other questions from Council and none from Mr. MacBeth, President Lapinto called on Andy Montana.

Mr. Andy Montana stated he is the owner of Ace Montana Realty at 613 Main Street and lives in the rear of that building. After thinking all day, Mr. Montana decided to withdraw his name. Council has a lot of better candidates here and added he's a little selfish with his time.

Mr. Garbarino thanked and appreciated Mr. Montana for coming out.

President Lapinto also thanked Mr. Montana, announced Nathan Conway also withdrew his name, and called on Doug Dolby.

Mr. Doug Dolby, North Third Avenue, commented he retired from Commodore Homes, where he was the quality control manager. Mr. Dolby was raised in the Borough and remembers what it was like and what a joy it was to live here. When he and his wife got married over 30 years ago, they looked for a house in the Borough. At that time, you couldn't find a house in the Borough. It was literally impossible to find one. Everybody wanted to live in this Borough. Mr. Dolby stated residents cared about the Borough. The Dolbys moved out of town, but then 17-18 years ago, moved back into the Borough and built a new house on North Third Avenue. Mr. Dolby also remodeled 2 houses in the Borough, because, in his mind, he wanted to do something for this Borough. Mr. Dolby stressed he loves this Borough and has watched it go downhill at no fault of this Council but more it's in general a small town issue. After thinking and discussing with his wife every day, Mr. Dolby asked 'what can we do to make a difference'. This is one thing Mr. Dolby believes he can do and understands it's always easy to think that; but then sitting in that particular position, it's different. Mr. Dolby likes a challenge, loves and

cares about this Borough, and really thinks he can do something to make the Borough better. It breaks his heart to see the Borough going downhill. It is great to see young families like Keaton that live here, want to live here, and want to raise a family here. Mr. Dolby stressed he wants to make a difference and has some fresh ideas that may benefit the Borough. It has been a great life in the Borough, it's still a good Borough, it's still a good town, but what can be done to make it better?

Mr. Garbarino asked where Mr. Dolby lived before the Borough?

Mr. Dolby lived in Miola for 12 years. The Dolbys drove their kids to school, baseball, dance, and going back and forth 8-10 times a day, it started to add up. But that's what you do for your children. Miola was a beautiful place to live. Once land became available, the Dolbys decided to build a house in the Borough. It was challenging at times, but Mr. Dolby never regretted it.

President Lapinto asked if anyone else or Mr. Dolby had any questions?

Mr. Dolby stated he didn't have any, has done a lot of things in his life and knows how they work, and will give 100%. Mr. Dolby is willing to learn and listen to people and looks forward to a challenge.

Mayor Whitling inquired what Mr. Dolby did before retirement?

Mr. Dolby worked construction at Commodore Homes and Colony Homes and for the great Tony Lapinto at Jamesway when he was a kid. Mr. Lapinto was the most wonderful man in the world. At the time of his retirement, Mr. Dolby was quality control manager at Commodore.

President Lapinto asked for a motion to appoint someone to fill the vacancy on Council but stated if these individuals are truly interested in serving, there will be four positions plus the Mayor on the ballot this year. Individuals can pick up petitions this month.

Mr. Aaron made a motion to appoint Keaton MacBeth to fill the vacancy on Council. Mr. Garbarino seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations, on a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Roberts, nominations were closed. The motion carried after the following roll call vote: Mr. Garbarino, yes; Ms. Roberts, yes; Mr. Aaron, yes; Dr. Sanders Dédé, yes; and President Lapinto, yes.

President Lapinto again encouraged everybody if they are truly interested to please run, because young people are needed on Council.

Mr. Dolby stated he's not a young person but feels strongly that people come to the Borough and get on Council or a committee for the Borough knowing they are going to move away after.

President Lapinto, Mr. Garbarino, and Ms. Roberts don't believe that applies here. Most members have been 'a lifer'.

Mr. Dolby thinks over time a lot of people have moved in and out of the Borough.

At this point, the Affidavit of Residency was completed by Mr. MacBeth by Solicitor Marshall.

Mayor Whitling issued the Oath of Office to Mr. MacBeth; after which, Mr. MacBeth took his seat.

Also with the resignation of Mr. Noto, President Lapinto asked for nominations for Council Vice-President.

Ms. Roberts made a motion to appoint Ben Aaron. Mr. Garbarino seconded the motion. The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Roberts to approve the January 5, 2021, Council Meeting, minutes. The motion carried with a vote of four yea with Dr. Sanders Dédé and Mr. MacBeth abstaining as they were not present at that meeting.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Agenda Items

There were none.

ADMINISTRATION

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

President Lapinto stated the Treasurer's Report and Budget Analysis are in the packet for Council's review.

On a motion by Ms. Roberts with a second by Mr. Aaron to appoint The EADS Group, Inc., as Borough Engineer for 2021, at the rate chart included in the packet.

Secretary LaVan-Preston stated Mr. Colosimo reviewed the agreement and is comfortable with it.

Mr. Colosimo agreed and added most of the work being completed by EADS this year is already under agreement.

The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

BLUEPRINT COMMITTEE

Dr. Sanders Dédé had nothing to report.

DESTINATION CLARION DOWNTOWN

President Lapinto announced this is a new report that will be given each month. The Borough is very important and has become involved in Destination Clarion Downtown. A number of Councilmembers attended their last meeting. Jim Crooks did provided a report, which reflects that the Committee will not meet until March. The Committee is going to be working on flowers, trees, and possibly buying some planters.

Also, President Lapinto and Tracy Becker had a very good conversation today and hopes there will be support for the Chocolate Crawl that will be taking place this month. Tickets are available right now at the Chamber Office or calling 814-226-9161. There was a good discussion about Council and the Chamber working together on Autumn Leaf this year. While some were able to set up on private property and it was a good thing for the community, neither the Chamber nor the Borough received any money. President Lapinto commented the two entities need to work together to be involved.

PUBLIC WORKS

Ms. Roberts had nothing to report.

STORMWATER AUTHORITY

Mr. Aaron reported the Authority did approve Zelenkofske Axelrod LLC as their auditor, which will work nicely for the Borough to have a little continuity and be able to tie that right into the Borough's audit.

Mr. Aaron informed everyone officers were elected as well. The next meeting will be next week.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Aaron expressed gratitude to the residents and businesses for their outpouring of support for the Police Department over the holiday season. It really means a lot to the officers to know the community is behind them.

Also, on behalf of the Public Safety Committee, Mr. Aaron specifically thanked Service Master for sanitizing all the vehicles for first-responders as a way to just give back to the community. It is a fantastic business, and the Bells are a fantastic family.

Secretary LaVan-Preston added that included the Public Works Department as well.

LIBRARY BOARD

Mayor Whitling attended a meeting but had nothing to report at this time.

HOUSING AND ZONING

Ms. Roberts had nothing to report.

RECREATION

Ms. Roberts had nothing to report.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary LaVan-Preston stated the Borough is paying the final 2020 expenses and hopefully will be able to close the 2020 books in the middle of February. Once that is done, the papers can be prepared for the financial consultant to begin preparing for the audit.

Secretary LaVan-Preston reported the Borough's workers' compensation policy for the period of August 2019-2020 was audited in October. The Borough overpaid and will receive a credit of \$447 off the last quarterly payment of this term's policy. The payroll figures were under what was projected.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Whitling had nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

President Lapinto announced the following Committee changes: Rose Logue and Zach Garbarino will be on the Housing and Zoning Committee and Rachel Roberts and Keaton MacBeth will be on the Public Works Committee. President Lapinto informed Mr. MacBeth it's going to be a busy year as it's time to negotiate another contract.

CITIZEN COMMENTS – NON-AGENDA ITEMS

After verifying everyone received her email to the Borough Office this morning, Ms. Carla Magrini, tax collector for Clarion Borough, stated the letter concerned the compensation of tax collector and is not sure if this has ever been addressed in prior years or not. In attending the tax collector meetings and in discussions with other collectors, it seems like Clarion Borough's amount is lower than other municipalities. Currently, Ms. Magrini receives \$1 per bill that is collected, meaning the most that could be received per year would be \$1,420 (the number of tax bills). For 2020, Clarion Borough received \$822,000, and Ms. Magrini's 2020 W-2 shows her gross wages at \$1,340. Ms. Magrini proposes Council consider changing the pay scale somewhat. Most municipalities, as shown as part of the email, indicates compensation is 5% of the amount he/she collects. Not all municipalities were contacted, because there were too many. If Council would decide to change the compensation, Ms. Magrini commented it would need addressed before the 15th of February, which is a requirement of DCED. This would not affect the 2021 budget; it wouldn't be effective until 2022. If a municipality wishes to change compensation, the only time it can be done is every 4 years before the election. Ms. Magrini provided a copy of the resolution that Council would have to approve. A copy of the email is attached to the Official File Copy of these minutes. Ms. Magrini asked if anyone has any comments or questions?

President Lapinto stated this was addressed years ago and pointed out the comparison is like apples and oranges. Only 25% of the Borough is taxable, and there simply isn't the money to pay like there is in Limestone and Monroe Townships.

Mr. Garbarino verified those tax collectors would have received 5% of \$822,000?

Ms. Magrini commented he/she would get 5% of his/her total collection. Some months, Ms. Magrini only collects a couple of tax bills and just asks that her paycheck be held for a couple months.

Mr. Garbarino noted that means Ms. Magrini would go from \$1,400 to \$40,000 per year.

Ms. Magrini stated it would be \$4,000.

Mr. Aaron stated no, it would be \$40,000.

Ms. Magrini stressed she is not proposing to receive 5% but wanted to show Council what other municipalities are paying. Council could raise it to \$2 or \$3. If you take the average of how much she received this year and divide it by the number of tax bills, it's less than 1%.

President Lapinto inquired what Clarion County and the School District pay and if they give a percentage?

Ms. Magrini reported each gives an amount.

Dr. Sanders Dédé voiced concern that this should have been discussed previously before asking for a decision tonight. More discussion and research needs to be done. Also, what do the other entities she collects for pay, flat rate or percentage?

Ms. Magrini stated it is a flat rate; \$3.50 or \$1.50, depending on if it is per capita or real estate.

President Lapinto noted the other thing is this has to be done by February 15, 2021, and doesn't see it possible to do that tonight.

Ms. Magrini understands but didn't know if Council ever called special meetings or not?

President Lapinto stated that is not usually done, because it's very costly to advertise. President Lapinto received a number of phone calls from other members of Council and no one seemed to be in favor of it and asked if anyone wishes to have it referred to the Administration Committee.

Ms. Roberts commented no.

Mr. Garbarino feels it's too rushed to do by then.

Ms. Magrini informed Council this is her first term as tax collector and just found this out. If she runs and gets elected as tax collector again and would approach Council in 4 years in December to ask for this consideration, would the answer still be no.

President Lapinto stated no one can answer that question as it may be a whole new Council or at least some new members. If Ms. Magrini would come earlier, it would provide more time for consideration prior to making a decision. Also, it would be helpful to have a proposal.

Dr. Sanders Dédé agreed backup information is necessary as to what the increase would be based on.

Ms. Magrini can get the information for the school and county but was basing this on the discussion with other collectors and what he/she receives. The reason to attend tonight's meeting was to relay this information and to ask for consideration.

When the other tax collectors relay how much compensation he/she receives, Ms. Roberts asked if he/she indicated how much taxable property is in their municipality. Clarion Borough has a very low amount of taxable property in the Borough, whereas the other municipalities have a larger tax base and can afford 5-7%.

Ms. Magrini tried to obtain this information from the County prior to the meeting as every tax collector is bonded but that wasn't received.

President Lapinto questioned if Ms. Magrini asked for an increase from the County or School District or if their amount is satisfactory.

Ms. Magrini informed Council she did not. Most of the time, the municipalities are paid the same from the County and it may be a little different by school districts. A couple years ago, 2 tax collectors did go to the school and asked for a raise; however, it was not granted. That was when the aides were being left go so the timing was bad and the collectors never went back.

Dr. Sanders Dédé agrees with President Lapinto you can't compare Monroe Township to Clarion Borough.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. Garbarino, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Linda LaVan-Preston, Borough Secretary