

March 2, 2021, Council Meeting  
Minutes

The regular meeting of Clarion Borough Council was held on March 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, Mr. Aaron, Mr. MacBeth, Ms. Logue, and President Lapinto. Solicitor Marshall, Mr. Preston, Mr. Sharrar, Mayor Whitling, Mr. Colosimo, and Secretary LaVan-Preston were also present. Ms. Schwabenbauer and Chief Peck were absent.

On a motion by Mr. Garbarino with a second by Mr. Aaron to approve the February 2, 2021, Council Meeting, minutes. The motion carried with a vote of seven yea.

President Lapinto stated a guest was present this evening and called on Mr. Jim Crooks.

Mr. Jim Crooks introduced Councilmembers to the new Downtown business owner, Betsy Dutoit, who opened Eagles Nutrition. Ms. Dutoit brought samples this evening. Mr. Crooks went in today for lunch, and it was very good and quite a few people were there. Ms. Dutoit has a degree and Masters in biology and forestry and is originally from St. Marys. Mr. Crooks encouraged Council to support the business and asked Ms. Dutoit for comments.

Ms. Betsy Dutoit introduced herself and stated she was originally from St. Marys, attended Duquesne for pharmacy and then switched to Biology at the University of Georgia for a Master in Forestry. Ms. Dutoit worked with the Wild Turkey Federation for almost 4 years but was laid off due to COVID. While working, Ms. Dutoit covered the entire State of Louisiana and traveled a lot, resulting in eating out and gaining 40 pounds. Then after stopping at one of these nutrition clubs down there, Ms. Dutoit fell in love with the drink, lost the 40 pounds, and felt good. After getting laid off from the Wild Turkey Federation and moving back to St. Marys, Ms. Dutoit opened a nutrition club there, ended up selling it, and then opened a store on Main Street. Eagles Nutrition offer meal replacement shakes, protein shakes that are 200 calories full of protein to keep you full and great for weight loss or protein shakes aimed to build mass aimed towards athletes, and loaded tea shakes. Ms. Dutoit demonstrated making a tea shake for everyone present. All the shakes are stevia-based and do not contain sugar. Also, in the kids' line, there are shakes that contain no red dye. Ms. Dutoit also brought along one of the best sellers called Funfetti Cake. Samples were provided to everyone present. Today, 150 drinks were sold and the lobby was full, which was awesome. The opening day was last Friday.

Mr. Garbarino asked what the hours of operation are?

Ms. Dutoit stated right now the hours are Monday through Friday 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. until 12 p.m. However, after being open for a little bit and figuring out how the town works, the hours may be adjusted to Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

President Lapinto thanked Ms. Dutoit for coming this evening.

Dr. Sanders Dédé inquired where the business is located?

Ms. Dutoit commented the old Yolicious/Book Nook building.

#### CITIZEN COMMENTS: Agenda Items

There were none.

#### ADMINISTRATION

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. Garbarino, approving the appropriations for the month of March, was carried with a vote of seven yea.

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

President Lapinto reported next Council needs to approve an engagement letter with Cohen Law Group for a flat fee of \$10,965, which will include a Franchise Fee Audit of Comcast and Cable Franchise Renewal Negotiations, and asked if this also included the other company?

Secretary LaVan-Preston stated this is just for Comcast. There is a separate agreement for the company that provides for the University

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. MacBeth to approve the engagement for cable franchise renewal services with Cohen Law Group for a flat fee of \$10,965, which includes franchise fee audit and renewal negotiations.

Dr. Sanders Dédé asked for the additional channels, BET and TV1, and asks for them every year.

Secretary LaVan-Preston will pass those channels along to Cohen Law Group. Also, in 2012, the minutes reflected that Cohen Law Group was authorized to complete renegotiation of the franchise agreement for the fee of \$8,900. Secretary LaVan-Preston checked the accounting, and was slightly higher at \$9,000.

Usually with an audit, President Lapinto reported the municipality usually receives money.

The motion carried with a vote of seven yea.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. MacBeth, approving Next Step's special event request for Walk for Life to be held May 15, 2021, subject to COVID-19 Warning and following CDC guidelines in place at the time of the event, was carried with a vote of seven yea.

#### BLUEPRINT COMMITTEE

Dr. Sanders Dédé asked Ms. Janice Horn, the newest member of the Blueprint Committee, to give a short report.

Ms. Horn stated Bridge Builders Community Foundations is holding their Week of Giving March 15<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> this year, which collects funds for Clarion, Venango, and Forest Counties. The website is [bbcfives.org](http://bbcfives.org), you can click on the 'Search Organization' in the upper right-hand corner, and then find the one you wish to donate towards. Ms. Horn commented Clarion Blueprint and Clarion Community Park are listed and people can donate to one or both. Other Clarion organizations listed are SAFE and the Millcreek Coalition. If a person wishes to donate, Ms. Horn also pointed out there will be a small pro-rated amount added to what he/she gives and all of it is tax deductible. The minimum amount to donate is \$25. Ms. Horn passed out some index cards with the information on how to give that week.

#### DESTINATION CLARION DOWNTOWN

President Lapinto asked Mr. Crooks for a report.

Mr. Crooks stated Destination Clarion Downtown has been on hold due to COVID and hopes to meet in March. The Committee will discuss flowers, a program to buy wrought iron planters to match the benches, working with Council through this process, and getting back to somewhat normal.

#### PUBLIC WORKS

On a motion by Ms. Roberts with a second by Mr. Aaron to give permission to bid the boiler replacement and building improvements projects at the library, upon approval by the Commonwealth of bid docs/specifications.

President Lapinto feels this is a good move but stressed the handicapped work needs done as soon as possible as that was to be completed last year.

Mr. Colosimo commented the State approved specs for both contract/bidding docs today and this work will be done by the end of summer.

The motion carried with a vote of seven yea.

On a motion by Ms. Roberts with a second by Mr. Aaron to accept John Knight, Sr.'s, resignation from the Public Works Department.

President Lapinto believes a date is needed.

Secretary LaVan-Preston commented his last working day will be March 12<sup>th</sup> and then he will start vacation and personal days so it will be mid-April.

Mr. Garbarino inquired if any more information was heard regarding the pension as to if he is eligible.

President Lapinto deferred to the Solicitor.

Solicitor Marshall understands Mr. Knight would not be eligible for a monthly pension at this time and can remove his accumulated contributions if he wishes.

President Lapinto stated monthly pension benefits are not available until 2023. Mr. Knight has the age but not the years of service. The pension will be there after that time.

The motion carried with a vote of seven yea, with President Lapinto adding with regrets as he was a long-term employee. The Borough wishes him the very best.

On a motion by Ms. Roberts with a second by Mr. Garbarino, approving to advertise to hire a full-time Public Works Laborer, was carried with a vote of seven yea.

Mayor Whitling inquired if the person's start date will be after Mr. Knight's final day?

Ms. Roberts feels it will be as the Borough will have to advertise, accept applications, review and pick out people to interview and offer employment. It will take a little while.

#### STORMWATER AUTHORITY

Mr. Aaron commented not much to report. The Stormwater Authority is almost at the third billing period. Ratepayers may still take advantage of paying for the entire year and receive a discount.

Mr. Colosimo stated the collections are going smooth.

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Aaron commended the officers on the situation with the high-speed chase in the Borough a week or so ago and also thanked all the other agencies involved. It was resolved within a couple hours and everyone was safe.

#### LIBRARY BOARD

Mayor Whitling reported there was not a quorum, but the members present did review the plans for the changes at the library.

#### HOUSING AND ZONING

On a motion by Ms. Logue with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé, accepting the resignation from Keaton MacBeth from the Zoning Hearing Board, effective immediately, was carried with a vote of six yea with Mr. MacBeth abstaining.

On a motion by Ms. Logue with a second by Mr. MacBeth to appoint Dan Gatesman to fill the vacancy on the Zoning Hearing Board to expire at the end of 2022.

Ms. Logue informed everyone that Mr. Gatesman is currently an alternate and has agreed to fill the vacancy.

The motion carried with a vote of seven yea.

Ms. Logue asked any Borough resident that may be interested in serving as an alternate member on the Zoning Hearing Board to contact the Borough Office. Two alternates are necessary and will be appointed by resolution.

On a motion by Ms. Logue with a second by Ms. Roberts, approving to send a letter to the State Representatives in reference to the impact of recycling on the Borough, was carried with a vote of seven yea.

#### RECREATION

Ms. Roberts had nothing to report.

#### SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary LaVan-Preston commented the Borough's 2020 books were closed in the middle of February. All the paperwork was provided to Sam Lynch last week to begin the financial part of the audit.

Secretary LaVan-Preston announced the Borough received the liquid fuels funding for this year in the amount of \$149,292.15. In 2020, \$160,804.04 was received, a difference of \$11,511.89. The money has been electronically deposited into the Borough's Highway Aid Fund. Secretary LaVan-Preston reported this funding is based on the gas tax and is much lower due to people working from home and not buying gas as often.

#### MAYOR'S REPORT

With a heavy heart, Mayor Whitling stated he plans, at the end of this term, to conclude his role as Clarion Borough Mayor. It has been an awesome experience and he appreciated the support that was received to get to the position and also the ton of support received throughout the time as being Mayor. The reason for this difficult decision ultimately comes down to putting his family first, which people with young children can understand how precious those years are. Mayor Whitling thanked Council for his/her support, Council President for taking him under her wing when he was getting started, Secretary LaVan-Preston for so much help, and Chief Peck for taking care of the police force and doing an absolute excellent job.

Also, Mayor Whitling cannot express how exciting it was to see this community rally around the local businesses during what was probably the most trying time this town has ever seen. Some businesses were lost, but the community preserved and continued to make Clarion great. Mayor Whitling again thanked everyone, stated he loved Clarion, and God Bless.

Council President Lapinto noted it has been interesting guiding Mayor Whitling along and stated this is also with regrets.

Ms. Roberts pointed out Mayor Whitling has a lot more months to go yet.

Mayor Whitling understands and just wanted to announce it now.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

CITIZEN COMMENTS – NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Patrick Reed, 2537 Miola Road, Clarion, started to address Council.

President Lapinto verified Mr. Reed does not live in the Borough.

Mr. Reed agreed but added he works at Clarion University and his friend owns property in the Borough.

Solicitor Marshall reported that the Public Comment Policy requires individuals to be a resident or taxpayer in the Borough.

Mr. Reed stated that the owner pays \$9,000 in taxes.

Solicitor Marshall commented that's him though.

Mr. Reed stated pointed out he is 91½ years old.

Solicitor Marshall understands and apologized.

Mr. Reed will bring him to the meeting next month.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

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Linda LaVan-Preston, Borough Secretary