

July 5, 2023, Council Meeting
Minutes

The regular meeting of the Clarion Borough Council was held on July 5, 2023, 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. Montana, and President Lapinto. Ms. Schmader was absent. Mr. Colosimo, Mr. Preston, Solicitor Marshall, Mayor Fulmer Vinson, Chief Peck, and Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston were also present. Mr. Sharrar was absent.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second Ms. Roberts, approving the minutes of the June 6, 2023, Council Meeting, was carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Mr. Garbarino with a second by Mr. Aaron to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2023, Council Meeting.

Dr. Sanders Dédé commended Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston on the great job with the minutes as that was quite a long meeting and the minutes reflect what happened at the meeting.

The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

Per Clarion Borough Council's prior authorization at the June 20th Meeting to proceed with the submission of the 2023 TA Set-Aside Grant Application for the Second Avenue Project, on a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé to amend the agenda to add under Administration to approve the EADS Services Authorization for the TA Set-Aside Grant Application and supporting documents in the amount of \$3,000. The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

President Lapinto reported Mr. Aaron, Mr. Montana, Mr. Colosimo, Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston, and she had the first meeting with Delta Development Group, and there is definitely a lack of information to the Borough. President Lapinto asked the following three questions for confirmation: 1) would Delta confirm that they are doing this application under the umbrella of the County, which Delta answered yes; 2) finding out from an exploreClarion reporter if Delta is successful in obtaining the grant on behalf of Clarion Borough, is the Borough responsible to pay Delta \$38,000, which Delta again stated yes; and, 3) would this come out of the grant funds or the Borough's General Funds, which Delta replied it would be from the Borough's General Fund and payable upon notification the grant is awarded. There were a lot of concerns and/or questions. However, Mr. Aaron asked the best question on if the Borough submits the preliminary grant on July 17th, and no other entities commit any funds to help the Borough pay for the engineering and fee for Delta, would the Borough be responsible for the fee if Council decides not to move forward with the final grant submittal in September, which Delta stated no. As of right now, the Borough has no commitments from anybody. President Lapinto stated Mr. Colosimo and Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston are concerned about the money. The engineering is estimated between \$150,000-175,000.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston briefly explained the grant opportunity to Sam Lynch, Jr., the Borough's financial consultant, who agreed that if no one else provides funding this could possibly result in an increase of taxes for the next year or two.

Along with Mr. Aaron and Mr. Montana, President Lapinto feels that the Borough should submit for the preliminary grant by July 17th and then wait to see if any firm commitments are offered to Clarion Borough to help with the upfront costs.

Ms. Roberts commented the commitments should be in writing.

President Lapinto agreed. Then Council will have to make a decision on submitting the final application by September's deadline.

Come September if the Borough hasn't gotten an agreement from any other entity to want to be involved with this project, Mr. Aaron added then Council could stop at that point and only have the EADS' engineering fees to pay for up to that point. By then, the Borough would have a little bit more of a piecemeal project to look at in the future.

If Council did back out, President Lapinto reported Council could look at the scope of the work and maybe do something on its own. There were concerns about the cemetery, and the fence that the Association was promised. In today's conversation, President Lapinto pointed out the fence is not included in the scope of the project that Delta reviewed. President Lapinto thinks Clarion Borough needs to wait and see if Clarion Township, Monroe Township, CL School District, and Clarion Area School District come up with some committed funds for the project. Council will then have to decide to go ahead with the project, go ahead in a modified way, or which way to go.

Mr. Montana agreed the Borough has until September 15th to say yea or nay. There are a lot of unanswered questions. Council has the opportunity to pull the plug up to September 15th.

President Lapinto informed all members of Council so each one knows what transpired today in the call and see what happens between the other entities and go from there.

Mr. Jim Crooks questioned if Council is looking for the other entities to come up with x-amount of dollars.

President Lapinto agreed. There are rumors of promises, but nothing directly to the Borough. President Lapinto stressed she does not oppose this project but feels the Borough needs information. President Lapinto, Mr. Aaron, Mr. Colosimo, and Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston have spent 3-4 hours on the phone trying to get basic information, and it's supposed to be the Borough's project. That's the concern.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston thinks the concern, too, is that Clarion Borough is 25% taxable. The residents in attendance on the 20th repeatedly questioned what expenses were involved, and the only thing mentioned was engineering. When Ron Wilshire,

exploreClarion writer, called the next day to state that there was a 2.5% fee calculated on the awarded amount owed to Delta from the Borough, it was quite a surprise. The Borough knew there would be incidentals. When President Lapinto reached out to see if that was indeed the case, it was verified the Borough would owe \$38,000 to Delta if successful. Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston commented that should have been stated that night. Clarion Borough Council has tried very hard to be transparent, which is why the residents were invited to attend to hear first handed what is being discussed. Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston thinks Council is doing his/her best to be fiscally responsible to all the citizens of Clarion Borough. If there is a tax increase, it will affect the entire Borough not just 2nd Avenue. Council is doing his/her best to find the answers, but is' been challenging.

Mr. Crooks verified Council would like a letter from each of the players as to x-amount of dollars each is able to contribute by September 15th.

President Lapinto stated yes. In discussion with the Cemetery several times today, the members feel there are graves still located in that area. President Lapinto asked if anyone has any questions or comments. Right now, the Borough is just in a holding pattern. In September, the decision will have to be made.

Ms. Roberts agreed with President Lapinto that Council definitely likes this project and would like to see it happen; however, it is going to be beneficial for more than just Clarion Borough. Also, this project was not included in the 2023 Budget. So, Clarion Borough is waiting for other entities to help out with the costs.

Mr. Garbarino agreed that essentially Council is not agreeing to anything at this point just extending the deadline for others to help before an obvious decision of yes is made.

Mr. Aaron commented it's a benefit naturally. The deadline for Council will be September 5th, 2 months from today, as there will not be another meeting until after the deadline of the final grant.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Agenda Items Only

There were none.

ADMINISTRATION

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

For Council's review, President Lapinto stated the Treasurer's Report of Fund Totals and Budget Analysis are included in the packet.

President Lapinto announced the second Council Meeting will be held July 18, 2023, at 7 p.m. at the Clarion Free Library. If it is not necessary, everyone will be notified.

President Lapinto reminded everyone the August Council Meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 2, 2023, at 7 p.m. at the Clarion Free Library, due to National Night Out.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. Garbarino, approving the special event request from Clarion Area Boosters for their bonfire to be held August 24, 2023, from 6-9 p.m., was carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Ms. Roberts with a second by Mr. Aaron to approve the additional request from Summer Fun Fest for a waiver of the open container on 6th Avenue from Main Street to Merle Road only on Saturday, July 8, 2023, and Saturday, August 5, 2023, from 6-10 p.m. The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Ms. Roberts with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé, approving Terra Works, Inc., Pay Application Number Five in the amount of \$158,886.66 for Contract 2021-3 Multi-Site Storm Sewer Project – Sunset Drive component with payment contingent upon review and approval of the pay application by the project engineer and submission of required project documentation by Terra Works, Inc., to Clarion Borough, was carried with a vote of six yea.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Ms. Roberts, approving the EADS Services Authorization for the TA Set-Aside Grant Application supporting documents in the amount of \$3,000, was carried with a vote of six yea.

PUBLIC SAFETY AUTHORITY COMMITTEE

Mr. Montana announced there is an EMS meeting scheduled for July 24, 2023, at 6 p.m. at the Clarion County Learning Center to listen to a guy from Ross Township as to how their Emergency Services Authority was formed and problems encountered along the way. Bill Henry and a few other people have agreed to help with this huge undertaking. After being away for a few days, Mr. Montana read in The Clarion News that he was elected Chairman of the Clarion Emergency Medical Task Force for the county, which he officially accepted with Ed Heasley, Jeff Smathers, and Steve Allison earlier today. It will be a rollercoaster.

BLUEPRINT COMMITTEE REPORT

Dr. Sanders Dédé had no report.

DESTINATION CLARION DOWNTOWN REPORT

Mr. Jim Crooks thanked Council again for the \$750 donation to the flowers. The Committee is looking forward to Autumn Leaf where the existing flowers will be replaced with mums. It will be beautiful.

PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Montana thanked the Public Works Department for addressing several storm sewer drainage issues in different areas of the Borough that were relayed to him.

STORM WATER AUTHORITY

Mr. Aaron requested, on behalf of the Clarion Storm Water Authority Board, for Clarion Borough to provide a letter of support and other supporting documents for the DCED MTF Grant Application for Tippin Drive and Gemmell Drive. The EADS Group attended the last Storm Water Authority Meeting

to discuss this grant opportunity for a project on Grand Avenue. However, that project needs to be done quicker, and so the Board prefers to apply for a small loan program with PennVEST. That means the Grand Avenue Project will begin in Spring 2024 if not earlier. Due to a new property owner along Tippin Drive, and possibly getting easements that were not achievable through the PA Small Water and Sewer Grant, and with this grant being large enough that Gemmell Drive can be incorporated to fix the condition of that road, Mr. Aaron stated the EADS Group was asked to apply for the grant for Tippin and Gemmell. In addition to the support letter, Mr. Aaron commented a copy of the Borough's audit is necessary.

President Lapinto asked Mr. Colosimo and Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston to take care of getting these materials.

Ms. Roberts clarified that a motion is not necessary.

Mr. Aaron and President Lapinto stated no.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Aaron announced one more time that National Night Out will be held August 1, 2023, from 6-9 p.m. and encouraged everyone to bring his/her kids out to the event. It should be a pretty good night.

Chief Peck plans to meet with The Clarion News and explore Clarion in the next couple of weeks to get the word out.

Dr. Sanders Dédé asked if it will be put on Facebook?

Chief Peck agreed that could probably be done.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston informed everyone tickets are still available for the buggy that the fire department is raffling off to raise funds for the event at the Borough Office and from any firemen and/or police officer.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. Garbarino, giving permission to request the Civil Service Commission to advertise to create a full-time police officer eligibility list, was carried with a vote of six yea.

LIBRARY REPORT

Mayor Fulmer Vinson commented the new library director, Rebecca Aharrah, has started and got to work right away. Ms. Aharrah's first board meeting will be held tomorrow.

HOUSING AND ZONING REPORT

On a motion by Ms. Roberts with a second by Dr. Sanders Dédé to accept the resignation of Karen C. Grosch from the Clarion Borough Planning Commission, effective immediately.

Ms. Roberts thanked Ms. Grosch for her many years of service and hopes she will enjoy being down

south.

The motion carried with a vote of six yea.

Ms. Roberts announced that a replacement is needed to complete the vacant term on the Clarion Borough Planning Commission with the term to expire December 31, 2026. Anyone interested should contact the Clarion Borough Office.

RECREATION REPORT

Ms. Roberts congratulated the 2023 State Champions Clarion Bobcats Baseball Team. Most of these boys began playing at the Paul A. Weaver Community Park, and it is great to see what they have accomplished. The team did a fantastic job.

Dr. Sanders Dédé added with accolades, which everyone present clapped for the team.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston announced the 2022 audit is still going on. The financial advisor has some personal issues and will be up as soon as he can to continue with it.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston reported the Borough's Liquid Fuels Tax Refund Audit Report for the period of January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2021, was returned from the State. There were no findings. It will be filed with the Liquid Fuels records.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Fulmer Vinson also congratulated the Clarion Bobcats Baseball Team on their State Championship win.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

In discussion with Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston, President Lapinto decided to make some committee changes at this time, which is very rare. Mr. Aaron will be Chairman of Public Works/Stormwater Authority Committees along with Mr. Montana, which makes sense. Ms. Schmader and Mr. Garbarino will be on the Housing and Zoning Committee. And, the final change is Ms. Roberts and Mayor Fulmer Vinson will serve on the Public Safety Committee along with Dr. Sanders Dédé, who will be the chair. President Lapinto announced the Administration Committee will stay the same.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: NON-AGENDA ITEMS

In reference to the work on Grand Avenue mentioned at the last Council Meeting, Dr. Sanders Dédé decided to drive down and really pay attention to everything that was accomplished with that grant. The work looks really good and enhances that neighborhood. Dr. Sanders Dédé reported one of the reasons it looks out of place is a theme that she has noticed since being on Council, the housing

needs to be taken care of. There are two trailers located there that need to be demolished. This area is heavily student populated. Overall though, Dr. Sanders Dédé thinks the contractor did a good job in making the street look very nice and commented it needs to continue the whole way down to Heidrick Street.

Mr. Jim Crooks asked how the fundraiser for the library at Mechanistic went?

Mayor Fulmer Vinson stated the Friends of the Library collected over \$3,000 and doesn't have the final figure yet. It was a wonderful event. Mayor Fulmer Vinson thanked everyone for his/her assistance.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

On a motion by Mr. Aaron with a second by Mr. Garbarino, the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Linda LaVan-Preston, Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary