

MUNICIPALITY OF BETHEL PARK

MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Date: January 9, 2012

Time: 7:30 P.M.

Location: Municipal Building

1. Roll Call

Present: Council Members Allen, Dixon, Gibbons, Hannan, Harrison, McLean, O'Brien and Pape

Absent: Council Member Moury

Also Present: Mayor Morton; William Spagnol, Manager; Robert McTiernan, Solicitor; Judith Miller, Assistant Manager; Robert Cygrymus, Director of Community Services; Police Chief John Mackey; Gerard Duke, Municipal Planner; Mark Romito, Finance Director; Mike Smith, Environmental Engineer; Jean Statler, Municipal Engineer

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Chair Announcement

Executive Session of Council was conducted on Monday, December 19, 2011, to discuss personnel and contractual issues.

Reports of Officials

4. Librarian's Report

Library Director, Christine McIntosh, stated that the Bethel Park Public Library provides services to inform, inspire and enrich the community.

Ms. McIntosh announced computer classes each week on topics such as Using Windows 7, using your new laptop, how to email, Power Point, Kindle or on your digital camera. On Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. during the winter a program called 1-2-3 Play with me. It is free play with educational toys for young children and their parents.

She also mentioned that they will conduct a program on SAT/ACT Comparison on Thursday, January 19, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. High school students and parents can learn about both exams. This seminar will be presented by a trained exam prep professional.

Aesop's Fables, presented by Sadecky Puppets will be held on Saturday, January 21, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. 12 fables will be performed by puppets. This cost is \$10 per family and must be paid when registering.

There will be a teen makeover program on Thursday, January 26, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. for teen girls.

During the month of January, the library's winter reading program is going on for school aged children where they can earn raffle tickets for each book read and receive a prize each time your report (once a week).

For more information on any of the programs and services offered by the library, visit the website at www.bethelparklibrary.org

5. Police Chief's Report

Chief John Mackey announced the results of this years food drive including the South Hills Interfaith Ministry and St. Valentine bulk delivery, and the Adopt-a-Family program. Chief thanked the sponsors for their generous donations. He also thanked Council Members Jack Allen and Lorrie Gibbons, and all the people that donated their time including the Club Spirit from Independence Middle School, the Bethel Park Fire Department for use of their facility and the Public Works Department for their help in distributing the food.

The Citizen's Police Academy commences on January 19 with the largest class ever. If anyone would like to sign up for next year, they can contact the Police Department. The Leap Program also begins on January 19.

Chief said that the Police Department has partnered with Crime in American program to provide a Community Resource Guide. The guide contains crime prevention tips and resource information on Bethel Park and Allegheny County. The cost of the guide was incurred by very generous donations of our local businesses. These guides are available at the Records Room in the Police Department, at the Library, and some of the businesses such as Pasta Too or Evey Hardware. Chief Mackey thanked all the business that helped with this program.

Chief reminded the residents about scam phone calls from people soliciting for money. He urges the public to be very careful and not give out any personal or banking information. If you get a call and believe someone is attempting to scam you, once they hang up and before you make a phone call, dial *57, then call the police and they can attempt to handle it from there. There is a very small fee to use the *57 feature

6. Fire Chief's Report

Deputy Fire Chief Robert Brown introduced Lt. Tom Kelton. Lt. Kelton will be attending upcoming Council meeting to give the monthly Fire Chief's report. Deputy Fire Chief Brown announced that Fire Chief Dan Moore retired as chief and the new Chief is Dave Gerber. He then provided the 2011 fire report including a break down by Ward. He then gave the fire report for the month of December 2011. He announced that Bingo continues every Saturday evening at the Brightwood Fire Hall and Fundraising letters will be mailed out in early March. He asked that the public be generous and although the Municipality provides assistance in many ways, they do not assist financially.

7. Mayor's Report

The Mayor wished everyone a Happy New Year and then announced the 90+ Club birthdays for January.

At this time, Mayor Morton announced the Christmas Lighting Contest winners and presented those in attendance with certificates.

8. Approval of Minutes

Regular Council Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2011.

Motion by Mr. Hannan and seconded by Mrs. Gibbons to approve the Regular Council Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2011. Motion Carried 8 - 0. Council Member Moury absent.

9. Council Reorganization Meeting Minutes of January 3, 2012.

Motion by Mr. Hannan and seconded by Mrs. Gibbons to approve the Council Reorganization Meeting Minutes of January 3, 2012. Motion Carried 8 - 0. Council Member Moury absent.

10. Bills and Payrolls

Motion by Mr. Hannan and seconded by Mrs. Gibbons to approve the Bills and Payrolls for the Municipality per Bill List #010912 in the amount of \$610,890.89. Motion Carried 8 - 0. Council Member Moury absent.

11. Residents' Comments (non-agenda items only)

Reid McGibbeny, 305 Allandale Drive, Bethel Park. Mr. McGibbeny spoke on the budget situation. He said he listened to Council Members give all kinds of excuses and explanations on the budget. He feels in every budget there are stationary items. He listed items that Council put into the budget that could be what is causing a problem today. They are Millennium Park, the original Community Center, and the Community Center addition, all of which he believes

was unnecessary. He feels that delaying or cutting the street program is the worse mistake you'll every make because it is the first sign of decay in a community.

Steve Bronco, 5962 Irishtown Road, Bethel Park. Mr. Bronco spoke on behalf of the Citizens Tax Petition Committee that was formed to give the voters of Bethel Park the opportunity to repeal the unnecessary 34.4% tax increase passed by Council in November. Their goal is collect the necessary signatures to require Council to repeal. If Council fails to do so, this item will be placed on the 2012 election ballot as a referendum. He wanted to inform citizens that certain Council Members are spreading false information and scare tactics about cuts in essential services. He feels there are plenty of non-critical and non-essential items that can be reduced or eliminated in the budget and feels the Council Members should look at. He asked that residents call the Tax Petition Hot Line at 412-475-8065 to sign or circulate the petition. They will be stationed outside both entrances of the Library on January 14, 21, 28 and February 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Allen wanted to address an article in the Almanac last week regarding the Bethel tax hike sparks protest by clearing up the matter of free lunches and travel expenses for Municipal officials and staff by saying we have no free lunches. A Christmas lunch is held every year for the employees with monies taken from the vending machines. Mr. Allen said in the fourteen years he has been on Council, Mr. Harrison attended this particular luncheon every year except for this year. He does not feel that it is a coincidence that the article ran in the Almanac right afterwards. As far as elected officials attending the Christmas luncheon, a contribution was made by Mr. Moury so that Council could attend and mingle with staff. He wanted to pass this information along as he felt it was an unjust service done by the Almanac.

GENERAL POLICY AND FINANCE

12. Citizens' Comments – General Policy and Finance

None

13. General Policy and Finance Items

Collective Bargaining Agreement with Teamsters Local 205

Motion by Mr. Hannan and seconded by Mrs. Gibbons to approve the five-year labor agreement with Teamsters Local 205 as set forth in the Municipality's final offer, as ratified by the Bargaining Unit, with final contract language subject to the Municipal Solicitor's approval. Motion Carried 8 – 0. Council Member Moury absent.

Mr. Harrison said that Mr. Bronco said there is information out about services being eliminated and he does not know who is putting that information out, but Council has not had any discussion about what items will be discussed. He repeated his charge. He feels that we have a very competent staff, but you have to recognize that staff serves at the pleasure of Council. At any time, 5 votes could

tell them goodbye. They have no contract and they know that when they take the job. He stated that twice in his professional career he was threatened with termination because he did not do as he was told and he appealed to competent, professional upper manager explaining his position and he survived until retirement. Staff works for politicians and he sure these politicians do not operate in same manner as competent professional people. He bases this on the fact that staff recommended a 57.3% increase in the real estate tax and he believes that they were reflecting the will of the power base. In speaking to a senior staff member, Mr. Harrison said he was told that the increase is needed to retain the present character of the community. He generated a letter to thank the Almanac for alerting the people that the proposal was to increase the real estate tax 57.3%. Council held the mandated public hearing presenting the 57.3% increase. Ten minutes before the November Council meeting, Mr. Moury announced that the increase which would be presented on the floor would be 34.4%. Staff members and Council were in the Caucus Room at the time and Mr. Harrison said that he was the only one that reacted to this announcement. He later met with three senior staff members and asked them what they knew and when did they know it. They admitted that they knew about the 34.4% late in the day on November 14 but did not let him know. He said that logic indicates that the other Council Members knew about the proposal. If they did not know about it, one would expect them to question the change and no one did. If Council Members decided on the 34.4% out of his view, then he alleges that illegal action may have taken place. He feels that if other Council Members did not know about the 34.4% increase, he alleges they are irresponsible for not speaking to the issue in the Caucus Room. The 34.4% increase was approved by Council over his single vote of no. If Council acted responsibly, one has to presume that adequate services will be provided at the 34.4 taxing level. The 34.4% increase is valued at \$1.4 Million. He said that Mr. McLean, at the December meeting, said that the reserve in the budget for 2012 is one and three-quarters million. Staff estimated that the reserve at the end of 2011 is three-quarters of a million, therefore if three-quarters of a million is okay in 2011, why is not good in 2012? If that is the case, it would free \$1 Million. The challenge would only affect .4 million, 1% of the budget. He feels we can find savings there without draconian cuts.

Mr. Dixon said he does not understand what Mr. Harrison's point was. He said that Council deliberated for many hours to get this budget right. Mr. Harrison's only suggestion for a cut was to eliminate our contribution to the Veterans' luncheon. Mr. Dixon said no one from the community has given suggestions and is imploring the citizens of Bethel Park to give guidance. Every year when Council does the budget, no one ever attends. This year two people attended, but no suggestions were given. Mr. Dixon reminded everyone that there will be a budget hearing in Council Chambers on Monday, January 23, 2012, which is open to the public and again asked people to come out to give ideas. He said however, you cannot help by eliminating \$1,000 dollars here and \$1,000 there because that will not do. You have to be looking at more significant items. He said we get a lot of political rhetoric from Mr. Harrison, but no concrete solutions to the budget issue.

Mr. Pape talked about how previously Mr. Harrison wanted to build a 700 foot road for \$5,000. Council went out for bids on this road and it would have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mr. Pape stated not to believe the figures Mr. Harrison gives.

Mr. McLean stated that he has only been on Council for a year and a half and was able to experience the process from the beginning. He said that the process begins in the summer and Council goes through it together and individually and look for anything and everything to make changes. He said that there are no illegal meetings taking place. He has not or would not attend one. So the suggestion that there might have been an illegal meeting is wrong and not helpful to the process. Council is trying to find a way for the Police Department to be funded, the roads maintained and garbage picked up and while Council worked on this, they received no comments from the residents. He does not care how we hear the ideas, whether it is a petition or a referendum, just so we hear from the people and we will do that on January 23rd. He said he had made a commitment to everybody in the community and would like the same commitment in return. He suggests that people examine the budget, be genuine, be open-minded and use common sense. He stated that the one thing that upsets him is the idea that people thinks there is a 34.4% increase in taxes which is incorrect. This was based on a .75 mill increase. If your house is valued at \$100,000, that means an additional \$75 per year.

Mr. O'Brien thanked Mr. McLean for explaining what the correct number is. Mr. O'Brien, as chairman of Public Works and Maintenance, explained the time and cost involved in doing the twelve snow routes, and how cutting one route would increase the time to plow and salt a route. He said by signing the petition, there is a possibility that the routes could change and keep in mind that new neighborhoods have been added in the last 10 years which means there really could be thirteen routes, but Council decided to stay with twelve. He then gave a breakdown of the mileage of municipal, county and state roads included in the twelve routes. One truck does approximately 11 miles and then described how long it takes to complete each route according to how much snow is on the ground and if we have to just salt or perform both salting and plowing. He then gave a brief synopsis of how much salt is used annually and what the cost increases have been in the last two years. He spoke about the cost of new trucks and condition of the older trucks. In addition, Mr. O'Brien said that a new hi lift is needed in the Public Works Department.

Requested Verbatim by Council Member Harrison:

Mr. Harrison said:

"In response to Mr. Dixon, I've made this, many times contrary to what he likes to tell the people and I am going to make it again. Each Council Member gets paid \$250 a month for a reason that I absolutely don't know. The Mayor gets \$350 a month. Seems to me the time has come for us to make our contribution to help with the budget, so once again I am going to review the suggestion I made many times. In fact, I've made it in a form of a motion and it never gets a second

that we forego our monthly pay to aide and abet resolving the trouble. And the other thing I'll just mention that none of these people seem to recognize is that they still want to talk about the \$1.4 Million where I claim you only have to talk about \$0.4 Million because I've seen we've bit down the rainy day fund. I think we all hope the economy is going to get better, so I don't see the need to put that \$1 Million in the rainy day fund and if you don't put it in the rainy day fund, for 2012 then you are looking at \$0.4 Million that has to be found somewhere and not the \$1.4 Million. Thank you."

Mr. Hannan said:

"Don brings this up every four years that Council get rid of your salaries, get rid of whatever you spend your time on. It is a broken record, he has done it every four years. There is, bringing it out of the files, there's a special meeting about 15-20 years ago where only Mr. Pape and Mr. Harrison showed up to pass a resolution to do that. And Don well knows, it's against the law to do what he suggests. We can donate it back, that's true, but it's still going to show up as payroll because it is against the law to do what he is asking us to do. It is against the Pennsylvania State Constitution to what he is asking us to do. And, Don, yourself, you've been on this Council, how many years, Don?"

Mr. Harrison said:

"Starting 39 years (unintelligible)."

Mr. Hannan said:

"Imagine that, 39 years. Let's run it to 40. So what is 40 times, let's say he takes \$3,000 out of it. Don, you've taken \$100,000 out this town in your career."

Mr. Harrison said:

"That is not true."

Mr. Hannan said:

"It's pretty damn close."

Mr. Harrison said:

"When Council raised the..."

Mr. Allen said:

"Don, Jim has the floor. Thank you very much."

Mr. Hannan said:

“Don, you’ve taken, you bring it up all the time because you know fairly well it’s not going to go anywhere. Makes you look good politically. You’re a political master at this. But you know it is not going anywhere so you always bring it up. It’s like, and to quote Mr. Moury who can’t be here, he is out of town on business, he made the offer to, he’ll give up his when you give up yours. And I think the same thing here is, Don, you’ve had your day in the sun here on this pay issue. You had the opportunity. You keep mentioning it, but you don’t come through with it. You keep bringing it up, but you don’t do anything about it. I mean, it’s the rhetoric of the political maybes and it’s very sad, I mean, the Community deserves better. The Community deserves better than that. They deserve people looking out for their best interests. Thank you.”

Mr. Pape said that the average home in Bethel Park is assessed at \$116,000 which comes to \$7.25 a month. Garbage collection is approximately \$180 a year per home which is paid through taxes. He said we could turn off street lights, cut the Police Department three or four policemen and cut people from Public Works. None of this would happen if we increase \$7.25 per month. He said he is receiving phone calls from people who are incorrectly informed. He then talked about what the outcome would be if we could not properly salt and plow our roads. He asked for the residents input on January 23 and said Council Members are taxpayers also.

Mr. McLean said that Mr. Harrison mentions the reserve and how he chastised Council saying they should be increasing the taxes even more to cover the reserve. He then explained the way in which the reserve works in the budget and his suggestion is that on January 23, someone from staff go over what the reserve is and how it functions within the budget. Then we could have a sensible discussion on what it should be in the budget and how it should work.

Mrs. Gibbons reminded people who will attend the meeting on January 23rd that there is a copy of the Budget in the Library. She said if anyone has questions on the Budget before the meeting, they should contact any of the Council Members.

Mr. Allen stated that the Budget is also online at www.bethelpark.net

Mr. O’Brien then complimented staff. He said he has had the opportunity to work with many of them for the past 20 years and even if he does not always agree with them, they are hard working, dedicated people, an honest part of this community who take their jobs very seriously, and most of them care deeply about this community. He compliments their hard work on this budget and some of them for many, many years of service.

Mr. Dixon wanted to correct something he said earlier. He said he may have referred to the meeting on January 23 as a hearing, it is not a hearing. It is the Council Committee meeting and a budget meeting. He followed up on what Mrs. Gibbons said by saying that when he suggested input from the residents, he means to please research the budget, and bring ideas and suggestions to the meeting.

PLANNING AND ZONING ITEMS

14. Planning and Zoning Items

None

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE ITEMS

15. Health Safety and Welfare Items

None

PUBLIC WORKS AND MAINTENANCE ITEMS

16. Public Works and Maintenance Items

None


Mr. O'Brien welcomed Mr. Pape back. He then announced the Fourth Annual Allegheny County Christmas Tree Recycling Program that runs from January 3 through January 22. Residents may drop off trees daily between 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. at the wave pool parking lots at South Park.

Mr. O'Brien then acknowledged Recreation Director Chuck Stover and his staff for their hard work on the very successful First Annual Blood Drive held at the Community Center during the holidays. 70 people donated blood. He said they look forward to doing this again next year and hope to have 100 donors.

Mr. Hannan congratulated Mr. McLean as a life-long and one of the founding families of St. Louise de Marillac Church. Mr. McLean wrote a short history of St. Louise parish in a recent church bulletin.

17. Adjournment

Motion and second to adjourn at 8:55 p.m.



Manager