

**Towanda Borough
Reorganization & Regular Council Meeting Minutes
January 2, 2024**

The Towanda Borough Council Reorganization & Regular Meeting was held on Tuesday, January 2, 2024, at the Borough Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

Present were Councilmembers: Mr. Kovalcin & Mr. Parks
and;

Councilmembers Elect: Mr. Eberlin, Mr. Roof, Mr. Schulze, Mr. Christini & Mrs. Hatch

Absent were: Mrs. Miller & Mr. Saring

Call to Order: Mayor Garrett Miller called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM, followed by a silent prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

OATH OF OFFICE (COUNCIL): Mayor Miller administered the Oath of Office to: Mr. Eberlin, Mr. Roof, Mr. Schulze, Mr. Christini & Mrs. Hatch

NOMINATIONS & ELECTION OF COUNCIL OFFICERS

- Mayor Miller opened the nominations for Council President.
Mr. Kovalcin made the motion to nominate Mr. Eberlin for President of Council, seconded by Mr. Schulze. There were no other nominations; nominations were closed with a motion from Mr. Kovalcin, second by Mr. Schulze. Mayor Miller called for a vote of Council; all were in favor unanimously. Motion carried. Mr. Eberlin is President.
- Mayor Miller asked for nominations for Vice-President. Mrs. Hatch made a motion to nominate Mr. Saring, seconded by Mr. Roof. Mr. Kovalcin made a motion to nominate Mr. Christini for Vice-President of Council, seconded by Mr. Schulze. There were no other nominations; nominations were closed. Mayor Miller called for a vote of Council: Mr. Saring received 2 votes and Mr. Christini received 5 votes. Mr. Christini is Vice-President.
- Mayor Miller congratulated the elected officers and turned the gavel to Council President Eberlin to officiate the remainder of the reorganization meeting.
- President Eberlin asked for nominations for President Pro Tempore of Council. Mr. Roof made a motion to nominate Mr. Kovalcin for President Pro Tempore of Council, seconded by Mr. Parks. There were no other nominations; nominations were closed with a motion from Mrs. Hatch, second by Mr. Christini. President Eberlin called for a vote of Council; all were in favor unanimously. Motion carried. Mr. Kovalcin is President Pro Tempore.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

Mr. Thomas Thompson, Vice President of Economic Development of the Central Bradford Progress Authority (CBPA) was present to ask for a resolution from Towanda Borough for approval of the issuance of bonds by the CBPA as a loan to The Guthrie Clinic. The principal amount is not to exceed 280 million dollars (bonds) including a series of tax-exempt bonds in a principal amount not to exceed 140 million. The Guthrie is using this money to finance a portion of the costs of a project relating to the affiliation of the Guthrie Clinic with Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital in Binghamton, New York. The approval does not impose any liability or affect the credit or taxing power of the borough in connection with the issuance of the bond.

RESOLUTION 2024-1

Approval of the Issuance of Revenue Bonds by the CBPA for a Loan to The Guthrie Clinic.

Motion made by Mr. Christini and seconded by Mrs. Hatch.

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: Mr. Roof, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Schulze, Vice-President Christini, & Mrs. Hatch, Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN: President Eberlin (He is on the CBPA board)

ABSENT: Mrs. Miller & Mr. Saring

RESOLUTION 2024-1 - Carried

APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES:

A motion to approve the December 4, 2023, regular meeting minutes was made by Mr. Kovalcin, seconded by Mrs. Hatch. Motion passed. A motion to approve the December 27, 2023, Special meeting minutes was made by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin. Motion passed.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT:

Chief Roof's incident report is included. He stated that they had 155 calls for the year which is average. He also stated that on the 3rd Sunday of the month, they are hosting breakfasts again at the fire company hall.

FIRE BOARD REPORT:

Mr. Parks stated they had a meeting and had nothing new to report.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

- Mayor Miller stated that the new Officer Wills was doing good.
- He did have several complaints about parking downtown, especially during the holiday season. People were shopping and getting tickets and he received complaints. The mayor feels we should look at the issue, particularly the block of Pine Street which seems to be the biggest issue. People not being familiar, people from out of town, and people that don't have cell phones with them. They go into the store for a couple of minutes and come out to see a ticket and very upset people. He talked to them as best that he could.
- He and Chief Epler discussed the upcoming snowstorm and the issues with vehicles left on the street abandoned, they feel that the ordinance needs amending. It hasn't been updated since 1975. They were looking at the ordinance Sayre has as a model. Sayre's ordinance is used to facilitate removing cars to become abandoned property that can be retitled and sold. President feels that the Parking Committee should look at this abandoned car issue and bring a recommendation back to Council.
- A motion was made by Vice-President Christini and seconded by Mrs. Hatch to take the abandoned car and parking issues to the Parking Committee (President Eberlin, Vice-President Christini, Mrs. Hatch, and Manager Hotaling are on this committee). Motion passed.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT:

Chief Epler reviewed his report:

- Towanda PD dealt with a bomb threat on Dec 13th. The threat was called into a business on Main Street, and after clearing the building and the investigation, the suspect has been charged and awaiting criminal proceedings.
- Officer Hennessy did K-9 training down near Wilkes-Barre Scranton this month which involved drug sniffs.
- The new Dodge patrol car is being finished up at 911 Rapid Response. It should be ready this week. The 2016 has been fitted with a remote kill switch to keep it from draining the battery.
- Officer Trevor Wills's training is proceeding, and I have hired another part-time Officer to help.
- We have signed the agreement for Central Square, our software provider. Because no one wanted to oversee collecting annual maintenance fees for the entire County, each municipality would pay them directly. This caused some to have to pay more, but it reduced our yearly fee.
- All Officers have completed yearly MIST (Mandatory In-Service Training) requirements.
- The Blue Santa program went well this year with 14 families being helped totaling 29 kids. Those involved were the Towanda Schools and Staff, the YMCA, and Officer Hennessy.

DECEMBER 2023 – Monthly Report

315	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	2	JUVENILE PETITIONS
15	TRAFFIC CITATIONS	0	K-9 SERVICE (BORO)
7	NON-TRAFFIC CITATIONS	4	THEFT REPORTS
0	DUI ARRESTS	1	ANIMAL COMPLAINTS
65	DISTURBANCE CALLS	4	VEHICLE DOORS OPENED
2	VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	3	WARNINGS ISSUED
1	OUT-OF-TOWN ASSISTS	17	MENTAL HEALTH CALLS
7	CRIMINAL ARRESTS		

POLICE COMMITTEE:

There was no meeting this month.

CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT:

Barry Thrush, Code Enforcement Report included.

- Mr. Thrush stated the permits have slowed down this past month, and there are some property maintenance issues. Also, he had some rental inspections last month.
- The Quality-of-Life ticketing is happening and the list from July 26, 2023, through December 28, 2023, is included (just under 40). He stated a few are abandoned properties and nine are in violation at the \$25.00 cost.
- Mr. Thrush presented a request for a handicapped parking spot in a residential area, and the homeowner requested it to be exclusive to him at the side of his house on Elizabeth Street. The front of his home (his address) faces Third Street. In addition, there is off-street parking at his home on the Elizabeth Street side. He stated to Mr. Thrush that he is afraid that other handicapped vehicles (particularly a neighbor across from him) might park in this spot "so he can't park there." However, President Eberlin stated that parking in that spot would create a visibility issue when someone is crossing Third Street. President Eberlin asked if he would be open to having the handicap sign on Third Street in front of his home, which would be the safest spot in President Eberlin's opinion. Mr. Thrush stated that the requestor wants the sign on Elizabeth Street because it is the shortest route to the door he uses (and easy for an ambulance crew to respond). It does create a visibility issue if you have a car parked on that section of Elizabeth Street (going up the hill is no parking area). We will follow up on snow plowing, sweeping, and other street maintenance activities that the borough crew does and report back, but President Eberlin strongly considers utilizing Third Street for the handicapped parking spot. Mr. Thrush will talk to the homeowner/requester on Wednesday, January 3rd.

PUBLIC WORKS/CODE ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:

Manager Hotaling, Mr. Parks (Chairman), Mr. Kovalcin, and Mr. Hatch

BOROUGH MANAGER HOTALING REPORT:

Manager Hotaling reported on the following:

1. Recap of 2023 and Goals for 2024

Manager Hotaling showed a PowerPoint presentation showing a recap of last year and the plan for 2024.

- a. In 2023, we welcomed new staff, IT Upgrades at the borough and police buildings, Infrastructure Improvements, façade improvements, painted the borough building, and increased the height of the mechanic's garage to enable working on the bigger trucks, newer used office furniture, new HVAC system in the back-office area, changing to LED lighting. We started work on the Parks Master plan project (\$85,000 in fund now). We held the yearly Concerts in the Park, Riverfest, our first Porch Fest (major success), and another successful year for the Pumpkin Roll. Currently, the Merrill Parkway mural project has started.
- b. In 2024, our plans and goals consist of adding two Full-Time Police Officers and a Public Works position, Upgrades for the Police Department/Public Works, purchasing new equipment and vehicles, finalizing the Parks Master Plan, Finishing the Murals on Merrill Parkway, Bigger Events/Tourism, Downtown Revitalization Master Plan Begins, More Stormwater & Infrastructure projects complete, new website finalized, more assets mapped into our iWorq's program, and Review/Modify Ordinances.

2. DCED Technical Assistance Grant-CEO Support

- a. Barry and Manager Hotaling met with Lisa Burns of PA DCED, and Cesare Forconi to tour the Borough and discuss the program and assistance. Ches has proposed to spend 1-day a week for four weeks. Focusing on the following topics/items each week:
 - i. Property maintenance inspections
 - ii. Code enforcement Quality of life issues-concentrate on a few blocks within the Borough
 - iii. Zoning and/or building compliance problems that the Borough would like to address.
 - iv. Review of any open items not completed in the first three areas listed above

3. Parks Master Plan

- a. Our summer intern, Jazmine, spent her few weeks of break assisting us with various items. She developed an online survey for community members to share their opinions on the new Park Plans to ensure we covered what the community requested.

4. Hospital Drive

- a. We are moving forward to vacate our portion of the road to Guthrie. Butler Surveying will begin completing the Boundary Map and Surveyor’s Description for the property.

5. SR 1039 Turnback Project-PennDOT

- a. Eric and Manager Hotaling were waiting on a few more answers from PennDOT regarding reimbursable interest when to expect reimbursements, and when the Borough becomes the owner of the street. Steve Kehoe with PennDOT did get back to us, and she feels comfortable with the answers he provided to move forward with the project. However, she has not heard back from Eric to see if he is satisfied with the responses. So, we will hopefully move forward with the agreement at our February Meeting.
 - i. Towanda Municipal Authority received a Small Water and Sewer Grant for \$492,142 to replace approximately 1,100 linear feet of sewer mains along this route to be utilized when construction is underway.

6. Planning Commission Vacancy

- a. The Planning Commission has a vacancy that has been posted on our website. We have at least one person interested, and the Planning Commission can make their recommendation to Council at their meeting this month.

BOROUGH SOLICITOR

- Solicitor Smith is working on some things. The Oil & Gas Ordinance draft went to County Planning and he has not heard anything yet. He will get it ready to advertise.
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BOROUGH SECRETARY

RESOLUTION 2024-3

Appoint Katrina Murray and Roger Hatch to the TMA (Towanda Municipal Authority) Board for a 5-Year Term each.

Motion made by Vice-President Christini and seconded by Mr. Kovalcin

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Eberlin, Mr. Roof, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Shulze, Vice-President Christini, & Mrs. Hatch, & Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Mrs. Miller & Mr. Saring

RESOLUTION 2024-3 - Carried

FINANCIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:

- There were no bills to be paid this month.

The following is an employment agreement resolution to continue to extend the services of Lauren Hotaling as Borough Manager:

RESOLUTION 2024-2

Employment Agreement between Towanda Borough and Lauren Hotaling to continue as Towanda Borough Manager.

Motion made by Mr. Kovalcin and seconded by Mrs. Hatch.

The roll was called and recorded as follows:

AYE/YES: President Eberlin, Mr. Roof, Mr. Kovalcin, Mr. Shulze, Vice-President Christini, & Mrs. Hatch, & Mr. Parks

NAY/NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: Mrs. Miller & Mr. Saring

RESOLUTION 2024-2 - Carried

UNION SUB-COMMITTEE:

Mrs. Miller was absent tonight.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT:

President Christini stated there was not a meeting in November or December. The next Planning is scheduled for January 16, 2024 at 7 PM.

RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Kovalcin stated he will have a lot of information next month.

TMA/WMA/CBPA REPORTS:

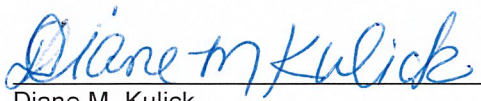
Included in the packet.

LIBRARY REPORT:

The November 9, 2023, meeting minutes were in the packet.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Christini. The meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM.



Diane M. Kulick
Towanda Borough Secretary