

March 14, 2011

Towanda, PA

The regular monthly meeting of the Towanda Borough Council was held on Monday, March 14, 2010 at the Municipal Building, 724 Main St., Towanda. The meeting was called to order by Jean Miller followed by a moment of silent prayer and the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. The roll was called and recorded as follows:

PRESENT: Mrs. Clark, Mr. Klinger, Mr. Kovalcin, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Roof

ABSENT: Mr. Christini, Mr. Long, Mr. McLinko, Mr. Sweitzer

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Sharon Kaminsky, speaking on behalf of the First Friday Committee, asked Council for permission to hold a 5K run on the Merrill Parkway on Friday, April 1, 2011. She asked that the parkway be closed from 5:45 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.

Chief Osman recommended that they also contact the Fire Police and PennDOT regarding the event.

Mr. Klinger made a motion seconded by Mr. Kovalcin to approve the request of the First Friday Committee to hold a 5K run on the Merrill Parkway on April 1, 2011 with the closing of the street from 5:45 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. Motion carried.

Mayor Miller thanked the Committee for its work and for focusing on bringing people back to downtown Towanda.

Anne Sturzen, Towanda Business Association member, told Council that the Association supports Council's decisions and ideas regarding parking in the downtown and had submitted a letter to Council with other ideas and suggestions from the Association.

Mr. Frawley told Council that the proposed ordinances that had been advertised for consideration on the 7th have to be readvertised for consideration at the April Council meeting due to the snow storm that caused the March 7th meeting to be cancelled. He noted that one of the proposed ordinances being considered is to remove the "forgiveness" portion of the three-hour parking violation.

Mrs. Sturzen noted that one of the suggestions the TBA came up with was to have the parking enforcement officer in uniform. She said the Association did not mean in full uniform but something that someone would immediately recognize as the enforcement officer—patch on shirt, etc. She said that Sturzen Furniture and Wilcox's have offered to pay for it. Cindy Wilcox said it is the same people everyday parking on Main St. She asked how many reserved parking spaces are available since the Borough raised the rates. Mr. Fairchild said quite a few.

Mr. Kovalcin asked how many hours does the parking enforcement officer work and Mr. Fairchild said she is only part time and it is 20 hours every two week. Mrs. Wilcox asked if the police could ticket violators too.

Cindy Wood said she pays for parking for her employees and tenants on Bridge St. and she said it is not fair to us for those workers who park on Bridge St. and only pay a parking fine and do not rent a space.

Mrs. Clark asked if those who park there are tenants in the buildings on Bridge St. and Mrs. Wood said NWHs has six employees who won't park where they can't walk right to the office. She said Ms. Wells has been working with them trying to get spaces for them. She said they should be fined everyday. Mrs. Wood said she felt one hour parking on Bridge St. would be a good idea.

Mrs. Sturzen asked about the possibility of removing the reserved signs on the parking spaces on the Merrill Parkway that are not being rented and free them up for all day parking.

Mr. Fairchild noted that when Council increased the parking rental fee it lost about 100 renters but now about half of them have come back and the others we hope will come back so we are reluctant to take down the reserved signs on the Merrill Parkway.

Mrs. Clark suggested a parking map that shows the rental spaces that could be distributed to businesses and individuals to make it easier to find a rental location.

Mrs. Wood said she felt a full time person is needed to control the parking situation downtown. She also suggested that maybe the enforcement job could be sub-contracted out and that person(s) would make their money based on a percentage of how many tickets were issued and payments made. Mr. Fairchild said that might be something that could be looked into.

Pat Taylor, Second St. asked how much are the parking tickets and Mr. Fairchild said overtime parking fine is \$20 and if paid within 24 hours it is \$10. Mr. Taylor said that amount should be increased. Mr. Kovalcin said Council is considering that option.

Mr. Wilcox asked "what about repeat offenders" and Mr. Frawley said the ordinance could be written that subsequent fines within a certain period of time would be increased.

Mr. Frawley said that a great deal of the problem with downtown parking is the business at the Court House and even though the Borough has not been successful in the past, it is time to bring the issues to the attention of the County commissioners again. He suggested that the TBA attend a commissioner's meeting and voice their concerns.

Mr. Fairchild said the Borough has talked to EMTA about a shuttle service but they want to be paid. Mr. Fairchild said he would be willing to meet with the commissioners again to discuss the issues.

Mr. Fairchild also told the group that the Borough is looking into an automated pass system for the lot behind the Boro Hall. This would become a long-term (up to 8 hours) parking area for a fee. This area would try to accommodate the people who use the Court House.

Mr. Fairchild also said that the Borough owns some land on Elm St. (Plank Rd.) that could be used as shuttle parking. Mrs. Clark said something like that could be used for employees of the downtown not visitors.

After further discussion, Mrs. Miller told the visitors that Council would be studying the parking situation downtown and work with the Towanda Business Association and the Chamber to hopefully find some solutions to the problems. She thanked them for attending the meeting.

Joe Doherty, BCVMPA told Council there were no issues to bring before it at this time. He asked if there were any questions for him. Mr. Frawley asked how much money had been received in donations and Mr. Doherty said he did not have a report at this time but would have one next time.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES

Mrs. Clark made a motion seconded by Mr. Klinger to approve the minutes of the February meeting as written. Motion carried.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Roof reported that there have been 36 calls to date this year. He reported that the tower truck has a few leaks in the hydraulics which need to be repaired. He said he is getting quotes for this.

Chief Roof reported that Bruce Johnson has stepped down as an Assistant Fire Chief 3 and he said that he and Assistant Chief Sheets appointed Jerry Webster to fill his term for a year and a half. He asked for Council approval of this appointment.

Mr. Kovalcin made a motion seconded by Mr. Klinger to approve the appointment of Jerry Webster as Towanda Fire Department Assistant Fire Chief 3 to fill the unexpired term of Bruce Johnson who resigned. Motion carried.

FIRE BOARD REPORT

Mr. Klinger said there was nothing to bring before Council.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Miller reported that the Department hosted a training for "Survival 101) that will be taught to school students. Also he noted that several of the officers have completed their annual training.

Mayor Miller thanked the Borough crew for the great job they did with snow removal during last week's storm.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Osman reviewed his written report with Council. He noted there were 6 DUI arrests in February and 6 criminal arrests.

Chief Osman reported that the 2006 vehicle is down—no forward gear. Waiting for Sherwood Groves to come and tow it and diagnose it. Also the rear arm on the SUV had to be replaced and the gold unmarked vehicle has an issue with the antifreeze.

Chief Osman said he has been working with Mr. Frawley on the police Civil Service Commission update.

POLICE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mrs. Miller said most of the issues have been covered. She said the Committee did discuss replacing a vehicle next year—probably the SUV.

CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT

Mr. Fairchild told Council that Mr. Haight was home due to illness.

Mr. Fairchild reported that the Mulberry housing project was approved by the Borough's Zoning Hearing Board and Trehab is no making application for funding.

CODE ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE

No meeting.

BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Fairchild reported on the following items:

- Still awaiting DCNR confirmation of the grant for the veteran's memorial park. The application is being reviewed by the new administration as well as the \$5M RACP grant.
- Will be holding an internal meeting regarding the administrative part of the codes codification update before the next Finance/Administrative Committee meeting.
- With regard to parking, when the angle parking was laid out for Park St. we pretty much knew that large vehicles would not work if parked on both sides of the street. There is enough room for standard size vehicles on both sides. We need to prohibit vehicles over 18 feet long. Not sure about the language at this point. Another idea would be to only allow compact cars on one side.

Mr. Frawley noted that the same problem exists on lower Bridge Street and these could become liability issues and should be addressed promptly.

Mrs. Wood suggested putting the handicapped parking space in the first two spaces on lower Bridge St. and not on Main St. and have the vehicle part parallel to the curb.

Mr. Frawley said the Borough needs to make a determination of what the length of the vehicle will be and put it altogether so it can be done as an ordinance.

Mrs. Miller said this issue would be put on the agenda for next month.

- SCI/YMCA renovation project is about 85% complete. The Borough will finish the parking lot in the spring. Great project.

Mrs. Clark said the YMCA had a good turn out for it fundraising kick off at which time it met with many potential investors. She thanked Nick Hurley for donating the food for the breakfast.

- Control prices were lifted on electricity costs at the end of 2010. Have been looking at several suppliers and brokers and would like to recommend that the Borough go with Chamber Choice for its supplier. This is the same group that the school district and County went with. This is a guaranteed savings program and right now their discount rate is 14% below Penelec's Price to Compare.

Mr. Kovalcin made a motion seconded by Mr. Roof to approve Chamber Choice as the supplier of electricity for the Borough accounts. Motion carried with Mr. Klinger abstaining as he is employed by Penelec.

- Bids for the Streetscape Phase 4 project were rejected for the second time and have been rebid with bids to be opened on March 21 and hopefully awarded at the April Council meeting.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Mr. Frawley asked Council to authorize him to readvertise the two proposed ordinances to be considered at the April meeting.

Mr. Klinger made a motion seconded by Mr. Kovalcin to authorize the Solicitor to readvertise the two previously advertised proposed ordinances for consideration at the April 4, 2011 council meeting. Motion carried.

Mr. Frawley said he has "lived" with police civil service rules and regulations for the past month. He said he attended a very informative seminar on the subject, had consultation with experts on the subject and held several conversations with the police chief. He said he has about 90% of the draft completed and have it ready for the Police Committee to review and invite the members of the Civil Service Commission to attend the meeting.

Mr. Kovalcin made a motion seconded by Mr. Klinger to approve a joint meeting of the Towanda Police Committee and the Towanda Police Civil Service Commission to review the draft of the revised Police Civil Service Rules and Regulation. Motion carried.

Mr. Frawley said he talked to a merchant downtown who raised the idea about putting some benches on Main St. like the ones that will be put along the Merrill Parkway. Mrs. Miller said she had received a couple of calls about it too—especially from senior citizens. Mr. Kovalcin said we had issues with the couple of benches we had on Main St. Chief Osman said since the curfew ordinance was amended the loitering issue is not as bad.

Mrs. Clark said maybe the downtown merchants could get together and purchase some for in front of their businesses. Mr. Fairchild said he would like to see some benches on Main Street. He said they run around \$2000 each to buy and install. He offered that if the merchants purchase some the Borough would install them. He said he would check prices and report back at the April meeting.

Mrs. Wilcox asked if they would go curb side or building side and Mr. Fairchild said that would have to be decided because there are pros and cons to each.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mrs. Clark made a motion seconded by Mr. Klinger to authorize payment of the bills for the Towanda Borough General Fund and special Borough funds as listed on the "List of Bills". Motion carried

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Klinger made a motion seconded by Mr. Kovlacin to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Borough Secretary