

**Borough of Munhall
Regular Council Meeting
Minutes of Council
March 20, 2013**

The Regular Meeting of the Munhall Borough Council was held on March 20, 2013 in Council Chambers, Munhall Borough Building, 1900 West Street, Munhall, PA 15120. The meeting was convened at 7:00 PM, with Council Vice President Rob Falce presiding.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led under the direction of Munhall Cub Scout Troop #4.

After the pledge, Mr. Falce asked for a moment of silence for the passing of our Council President's Mother-in-Law and the Mother of one of our school directors, Susan Ballas.

The roll was called and the following members were present:

Robert Falce, Vice President [Acting President for this meeting.]
Richard Votedian, President Pro-tem
Harvey Inglis, Councilman
Dan Lloyd, Councilman
Bernie Shields, Councilman
Dana Ditillo, Councilwoman

Absent:

Joe Ballas, President

Also in attendance at the meeting were:

Raymond Bodnar, Mayor
Matt Galla, Borough Manager
Larry Billy, Public Works
Pat Campbell, Chief of Police
Ed Pletsch, Deputy Fire Chief
Nick Evashavik, Solicitor
Lindsey Jewart, Engineer

Preliminary Announcements:

None.

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Speakers:

Angelo Quaranta stated he had previously addressed Council about saving the Hays Mansion. He said that the foundation is now under contract with Dr. Draper to purchase the mansion. He noted they have begun some work to beautify the outside of the building and are getting ready for a total renovation. He introduced Jim Diebel.

Jim Diebel spoke and noted that in his year of research surrounding the Hays Mansion, he has discovered over 415 descendants. He noted he has set up a foundation to fund the purchase and maintenance of the mansion. He said a direct descendant has taken on the design lead. As part of his speech, he noted that United States Steel has agreed to sell them large parcels of land going down the hillside. He stated he would like to see this become a public park or facility.

Mr. Falce asked what the timeline was for this work to begin. Mr. Diebel said as soon as the condemnation can be lifted so that they can start fundraising. He noted they also want to ask for grants from organizations in the Pittsburgh area.

The Mayor asked how what they planned to do would affect the current development occurring adjacent to the mansion. Mr. Diebel said it would have no effect.

Mr. Shields said, "This is what we have always wanted... Someone to come in and get it taken care of. We don't want to tear it down, but we want to see progress. We are reasonable people here and we just want to see progress. The problem is, we are getting backed into a corner. We don't want to tear it down. You understand, the previous owner shows up, tells us something, and then doesn't show up to do the work."

Mr. Diebel said the house has been secured and is boarded up. He noted they tried to remove the graffiti. He said replacing the windows is not significant at this point because it is secure and no one is entering the house. He said they want to work methodically so that they do not have to go back and redo any work. He said the cleaning of the interior would begin tomorrow. He said he also hoped his website would become a useful PR tool and collaborative effort. He said, "We hope it will become our primary interface for fundraising and grant seeking."

Mr. Votedian asked, "When are we actually going to see construction vehicles up there actually doing some work and restoring the place?" Mr. Diebel replied, "Finding the 450 family members has taken quite a bit of work and we are working to put one foot in front of the other. Having the condemnation lifted will make an impact with the family. We are also going to Carnegie and other foundations in the area for grant money. When we get some grant money, we will begin working." Mr. Votedian countered, "We'd love to see it happen but we've been told that before."

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Mr. Falce asked when they actually planned to acquire the property. Mr. Diebel said they would not put themselves in peril while the house is condemned. Once the foundation closes on the house he said they would pay all the back taxes that are due. He said it was pretty significant that USS was behind their efforts.

Mr. Shields asked if this could be done while the house was still condemned. Mr. Diebel said it would be easier if the condemnation was lifted. Mr. Lloyd stated, "This has been going on for at least 5 years. If it meant that much, why did it fall into such bad repair? I mean, \$59,000 to administrative expenses and only \$5,600 in maintenance. That's not what the people up here are thinking. \$5,600 won't repair one room in that house. I mean, \$59,000 for administrative costs, what is that?" Mr. Diebel said it was a small stipend paid to himself and the expenses to run the foundation. He asked, "Do you know what it takes to set up a corporation?" Mr. Lloyd replied, "Yes, I know what it takes, having set up many."

Mr. Lloyd continued further, "If you had come here and showed us the money, we would consider rescinding it. The guy up there [Steve Chupinka, the developer building new homes] invested a substantial amount of money to put in infrastructure and can't sell the homes because of this house. It's not enough for me to only spend \$5,600 to fix up the property. We told you to come to the table with money so you can show us you have the means to take it off the condemnation list. I mean, I don't want to tear it down either. But it has been 7 years." Mr. Diebel responded, "But it has only been 120 days for me being involved."

Rebecca Petit Hays Shelton spoke. She said she was a descendent of the Hays family and she remembers visiting the mansion as a child. She said she fondly remembers the apple trees and the sour cherry tree. She spoke at length at how she remembered the house in its former years. She stated that when her last relative living in the mansion passed, his widow inherited the place and she, and the rest of her siblings had no say in what transpired. She said she is amazed at the efforts that have taken place thus far. She expects the place to be fantastic once it is restored. She said, "If you tear down Hardin Place, a piece of Pittsburgh history is lost forever. If you allow us, we will continue to bring it up to code and restore it to what it was once ago... a beautiful landmark for all to enjoy."

Mr. Shields asked the Code Enforcer, "Compared to last year, what is the difference?" Mr. Cannon stated that as of last week, nothing had happened. This week, they cut down some of the brush and boarded up the windows. Mr. Cannon also noted that he spoke to Angelo several months ago about what needed to be done. He also stated, "It will cost a lot more than \$5,000 to bring this up to code. There are about 15 windows that are broken."

Mr. Lloyd inquired about the legal formation of the foundation. Mr. Diebel replied that it is a 501(c)3 non profit. Mr. Lloyd pointed out to Council that the Borough would receive no property tax on a go-forward basis. We would receive the back taxes, one time, but no future taxes as the property would be tax-exempt.

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Mr. Votedian then stated, "I don't want to know about money you spent elsewhere, but what you spend on the home. I want to see progress beyond just cleaning up the grounds."

Mr. Shields said, "We have been here before." Mr. Diebel retorted, "But we haven't." Mr. Shields replied, "But we have. We have heard this same thing before."

Mr. Diebel then said the magnitude of work he encountered finding and indexing all of his relatives has been enormous.

More discussion ensued about whether to leave the property on the condemned list or not. At one point, Mr. Diebel challenged Mr. Lloyd and asked if he would spend money to buy a condemned property. Calling his bluff, Mr. Lloyd pulled out a \$100 bill, slapped it on the ledge of the Council desk, and told Mr. Diebel to take it.

Mr. Inglis made a motion to remove the mansion from the condemnation list and give the foundation until January 1, 2014 to make necessary repairs. If no such repairs were made, it would be placed back on the condemnation list. Mr. Shields asked if that would help. Mr. Diebel said it is hard to sell the house that way.

Mr. Inglis withdrew his motion.

The Borough Solicitor intervened and said that if Council was of a mind to rescind the condemnation, the foundation should be required to escrow the cost of the condemnation because by removing it and potentially having to put it back on at a later time will involve more legal fees, title searches, etc.

Mr. Lloyd stated, "I am not willing to move tonight. We can do it next month."

The Mayor asked if we would give them an answer next month. Mr. Falce said that we would.

Petitions / Public Comments on Agenda Items:

Donna Dreshman asked if Steel Valley School District was aware of the proposal to increase the wages of the crossing guard. She was told yes and she noted it did not come up at their workshop meeting. She was told that we were considering it and if we passed it, we would then officially notify them of such. She also asked where the donation to Park & Barrett Elementary Schools would come from. She was told miscellaneous expenses.

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Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Shields moved, seconded by Mr. Inglis to move the February 20, 2013 minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Reports from Borough Officials:

Mayor: "Well, according to the newspaper," said the Mayor, "It says Dan is going to be Mayor so I will address him as Mayor Lloyd." He reminded Council that at the May meeting, we would have the kids up here to run the meeting and would have our annual parade. He noted that May 27th is Memorial Day. He also noted the COG banquet is coming up on April 25th. "I think it will be at the Duquesne Golf Club so when everyone gets drunk, you can just roll on over the hill," he said. The Mayor also wanted to compliment Public Works on the excellent job they did on the roads.

Solicitor: Nothing to report.

Engineer: Submitted a written report. Stated once the budget gets together, we can move forward on the paving project. Awaiting from the Sewer Authority the roads they plan to dig up.

Director of Public Works: Nothing to report. Mr. Shields asked about the catch basin next to Dr. Bezak's office. Mr. Billy replied it is a County-owned line, which they are attempting to deny ownership of. Mr. Billy also noted that he discovered a buried manhole that is marked Allegheny County.

Police Chief: The Chief submitted a written report.

Fire Chief: Noted that the Fire Chief's Father is very sick. Said they had 27 calls, no injuries and that the #4 Fire Hall finally took down the Christmas decorations on Main Street. He also said they are in bad shape and are falling apart. Council noted we allocated money to refresh some of the decorations. Mr. Shields said, "When they are left up for 4 months, they deteriorate. They have to be put up and taken down at a reasonable time. If Public Works has to do it, we will, because we need to get them down in a timely manner."

Mr. Falce asked, "I understand there is an election tomorrow for the combined fire hall?" He was told that was correct.

Mayor Bodnar then said he was upset because when he went to a 4 PM mass at St. Therese, that was supposed to be a Fireman's Memorial Mass, there was only about 8 firemen at the church. He asked, "What the hell is going on? Where is everyone at? If Munhall doesn't belong, tell me what the problem is. This is such a beautiful ceremony and yet there were no flags, no axes, nothing. I am disappointed. If

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there is infighting, it is bad. I don't care if I make the firemen mad at me because this is a big deal. I'm not putting Ed on the spot, here."

Deputy Chief Pletsch said he represents Munhall Fire. He noted that the Steel Valley Firemen can't get their act together, and they really don't have much interaction with Ed, but that he would express the Mayor's concern. Pletsch also noted that he did not know that mass occurred. "Was it advertised?" he asked.

Mr. Falce thanked Troop #4 for attending the meeting.

Mr. Votedian said he had another comment about the Steel Valley Fire Organization, "It depends on who you drink with. If you don't drink with the right people, you don't know what's going on."

Code Enforcement Officer: Submitted a written report.

Sewer Authority: Absent.

Items for Consideration:

Mr. Lloyd moved, seconded by Mr. Inglis to ratify the payment of bills for the period from February 9, 2013 through March 19, 2013 in the amount of \$186,131.00 and approve the payroll in the amount of \$374,796.29 the same period per the following breakdown:

Administration/Council/Mayor/Bldgs	\$ 22,776.44
Police/Code/Dispatch/Sch Grds	\$223,276.42
Sanitation	\$ 24,231.75
Public Works	\$ 77,877.29
Social Security/Medicare	\$ 26,634.39

Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Inglis moved, seconded by Ms. Ditillo to increase the rate of pay for Munhall Borough crossing guards from \$8.25 per hour to \$10.00 per hour, contingent upon approval by the Steel Valley School District Board. If approved by S.V.S.D., the effective date will be the next regular payroll period following the adoption by Steel Valley School District. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Ditillo moved, seconded by Mr. Shields to adopt Resolution 2013-1 pledging continued support of the Steel Valley Enterprise Zone and endorsing the Enterprise Zone's application to the D.C.E.D. for continued funding in the amount of \$50,000. Motion carried unanimously.

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Mr. Shields moved, seconded by Mr. Votedian to adopt Amendment #11 to the Cooperation Agreement by and among the Boroughs of Munhall, West Homestead and Homestead and the Steel Valley Enterprise Zone Corporation. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Votedian moved, seconded by Mr. Lloyd to authorize a donation of \$200.00 to Park and Barrett Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization to help offset the costs of the combined Fifth Grade Celebration Picnic on Friday, Mary 24, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

Other Items:

The Mayor said he had another item he wanted to bring up. He said something needed to be done regarding the service of the Tax Collector. He said everyone is getting bombarded with calls from folks. He wants to know if Donna Mercuri can't give us some more hours of service. "Though she is not obligated by law," the Mayor said, "People deserve to know her regular hours and she needs more regular hours. This isn't meant to harm anyone, but she needs to be there to deal with all these tax problems."

Mr. Falce said he would like to see lines painted on Main Street again. Mr. Billy said the Chief of Police is not so keen on the idea because it really doesn't make sense. If someone mis-parks, it will affect all others parking around the vehicle.

Mr. Shields moved, seconded by Mr. Votedian to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM.