

Borough of Munhall

Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 15, 2023

The August 15, 2023 meeting of the Munhall Borough Council was called to order by Mr. Brennan at 7:01 pm in Council Chambers.

Present:

Richard Brennan, Council President
Maureen Fry, Council Member
William Hanna, Council Member
Kevin Ondo, Council Vice President
David Younkings, Council Member

Absent:

Jason Stein, Council Member
Richard Votedian, Council Member

Others:

Seth Abrams, Borough Manager
Glenn Coles, Fire Chief
Greg Evashavik, Solicitor
Thomas Fullard, Chief of Police

Reports

President's Report: Mr. Brennan asked for a moment of silence for Plum Borough. Safety was stressed for everyone and appreciation was noted for first responders and for everyone who puts themselves out there to be a community.

President Brennan stated that the Borough has begun the budgeting process and that it will be a public process. He indicated that there is not much in the way of surplus or extra funds to spend going into 2024.

Also announced was an update regarding discussions with Legal Tax Service. LTS will be implementing a new bill design in the 4th quarter of 2023 that will include any and all past due amounts for an account.

Police Chief's Report: Report is on file. The chief read the arrest statistics and announced that the two new officers are now on patrol. The chief handed Council a request to purchase new handguns for the department.

Solicitor's Report: The solicitor reported on information he researched about bottle clubs and BYOB establishments. Bottle clubs can be totally prohibited by a voter referendum. The Borough could also seek to regulate such clubs by amending the zoning ordinance. President Brennan asked if any bottle clubs currently exist in Munhall. Chief Fullard and Mr. Abrams indicated that there are not any current bottle clubs in the Borough.

Sewer Authority Report: Report is on file.

Fire Chief's Report: Chief Cole's report is on file.

Motion to approve the meeting minutes: Motion to approve the July 18, 2023 minutes as presented. Motion by Mr. Hanna. Seconded by Mr. Younkins. Motion passed 5-0.

Speakers: None

Public Comment:

Donna Onda asked questions on Motion #3. She asked when the summer help would be working. Mr. Abrams responded that one employee has already left for school and the others would be leaving within the coming weeks. Mrs. Onda asked if the two new employees to be hired had their commercial driver's license (CDL). Mr. Abrams responded that he does not believe that they have CDL's. Mrs. Onda followed up by asking if the Borough was paying for them to get their CDL's. Mr. Abrams responded that the Borough does not pay for employees to be trained for CDL licensure, and that these employees would not be driving CDL required vehicles. The Borough currently employs approximately 2 CDL qualified drivers for every vehicle available. Mrs. Onda asked when the Homestead refuse contract begins. Mr. Abrams responded that the contract takes effect on September 1, 2023. Mrs. Onda asked if anyone seated at the dais knows the two candidates named in item 3. Mrs. Fry indicated that she does know one of the candidates. Other members know the candidate's father. President Brennan stated that Council did not know the names of any of the candidates until the week prior. Mr. Brennan indicated that he spoke with Mr. Bickey, the immediate supervisor, and that Mr. Bickey was unaware of any relationship. Mrs. Onda continued her questioning by asking how many candidates applied. Mr. Abrams responded that dozens applied and that interviews were done on a rolling basis until 2 highly qualified candidates were found. Dozens of resumes were reviewed, but only 10 or so people were invited for initial interviews.

Business Items:

1. Motion to add an item to the agenda. Motion by Mr. Younkins. Second by Mr. Ondo. Motion passed 5-0.
2. Motion to approve a resolution approving participation in the CDBG program from July 2023-July 2027. Motion by Mr. Younkins. Second by Mr. Ondo. Motion passed 5-0.
3. Motion to pay the bills for July, 2023 in the amount of \$275,428.90. Motion by Mr. Younkins. Second by Mr. Hanna. Motion carries 5-0
4. Motion to approve the payrolls for the month of July, totaling \$292,268.55. Motion by Mr. Younkins. Seconded by Mr. Hanna. Motion carries 5-0
5. Motion to approve the hiring of Patrick Butler and Anthony DeMartino as full time employees under the Public Works contract, subject to the terms of the CBA, effective 21 August 2023. Motion by Mr. Younkins. Second by Mr. Hanna. Mrs. Fry commented that she supports the hiring of Mr. Butler, but cannot support the hiring of Mr. DiMartino because she knows him. Mr. Younkins asked the solicitor if knowing a person constituted nepotism. Mr. Evashavik stated that knowing a person does not constitute nepotism, and that nepotism is in fact not illegal. Mr. Ondo stated that he had an issue

because as the chair of the public works committee, he was not involved in the interview process. Mr. Hanna referred to the employee handbook regarding the topic of nepotism and recommended that council members not be involved in the hiring because it removes any real or perceived nepotism. Mr. Ondo responded that he is a proponent for hiring public works staff. Mr. Hanna stated that the Borough Manager should be doing the hiring along with the supervisor and that Council's role is that of oversight, not direct involvement. President Brennan stated that council should take up further discussion on hiring practices. Mr. Ondo suggested tabling the motion. Mr. Ondo asked the Manager if the individuals were already hired. Mr. Abrams responded that the individuals were made conditional offers contingent on Council's vote. Mr. Evashavik clarified that individuals are not hired until Council votes to approve. Mr. Abrams stated that every employee who has been hired, from police officers to public works to administrative staff that every employee has been made a conditional offer as a matter of practice. Mr. Evashavik stated the candidates should be separated and voted on separately via roll call.

a. Mr. Abrams called the following roll call vote:

i. Approve the hiring of Patrick Butler

Mrs. Fry: Yes

Mr. Hanna: Yes

Mr. Ondo: Abstained

Mr. Younkings: Yes

Mr. Brennan: Yes

Motion to hire Patrick Butler passes with a roll call vote of 4-0 with 1 abstention.

ii. Approve the hiring of Anthony DeMartino

Mrs. Fry: No

Mr. Hanna: Yes

Mr. Ondo: Abstain

Mr. Younkings: Yes

Mr. Brennan: Yes

Motion to hire Anthony DeMartino passes with a roll call vote of 3-1 with 1 abstention.

6. Motion to approve the proposal by the Borough Engineer for the evaluation of the structure at 1900 West Street at a cost not to exceed \$30,430. Motion by Mr. Younkings. Second by Mr. Hanna. Ms. Fry requested a presentation from Mr. Protin as she felt there was not enough information to make a decision. Motion carried 4-0 with 1 abstention.
7. Motion to approve the publication of the draft strategic plan and to establish public hearings. Motion by Mr. Younkings. Second by Mr. Hanna. Mrs. Fry asked if the motion could be amended to include public input. Mr. Abrams stated that public hearings are by definition including public input and that it would occur. Motion carried 5-0
8. Motion to approve the appropriation of \$20,000 in forfeiture funds and to trade in the current handguns owned by the Borough towards the purchase of new guns for the police department. Motion by Mrs. Fry. Second by Mr. Ondo. President Brennan asked if the guns would be turned into the company that is selling the guns. Chief Fullard stated that the weapons could be turned in or could be purchased by an officer for the same value as the trade in. Motion amended to read: Motion to approve the appropriation of \$20,000 in forfeiture funds and disposal of current weapons under the supervision of the Chief of Police. Motion by Mr. Younkings. Second by Mr. Ondo. Motion carries 5-0

Public Comment:

Mrs. Fry stated that Mrs. Keifer complemented the public works department for their assistance with disposal of larger items. Mrs. Fry announced that she would like to begin having meetings with residents about the parks and playgrounds.

Mr. Abrams provided an update on the playground construction at Trautman and at Vine. Construction is proceeding. Mr. Abrams announced that the new Borough website is up and running and that recently he began posting "Manager FAQ's" to answer resident questions about larger government functions. He encouraged residents to submit their questions.

Mrs. Ellis, Harvey Ave. Ext., stated she is having an issue with a neighbor and a humming sound coming from a pool filter. Chief Fullard indicated that complaints need to be made to the department when it is occurring. Mrs. Ellis stated the police have visited and did nothing. Chief Fullard asked the resident to meet with him after the meeting.

Nathan Dyrud, E 10th Ave, thanked Asst. Chief Caterino for their quick responses to items. He announced a resurgence of activity around the library which is causing some safety issues after events, especially at Andrew, McClure and the cross streets.

John Barca Jr. asked about the cost of the study at 1900 West St. He asked if any grant money had been sought. Mr. Brennan announced the funds were coming out of the general fund. Mr. Barca asked if the Council as a whole approved the letter that was sent to the School Board regarding opposition to the construction of a new elementary building. Mr. Brennan states all members were in favor. Mr. Hanna indicated that he was not in favor of the letter. Mr. Barca asked if it was the best time to spend \$30,000 from the general fund to perform a study of the building. Mr. Hanna responded that it is the correct time because the Borough needs to be aware of issues with the building, including any potential safety issues for the fire department before any further decisions can be made.

Mrs. Fry complemented Mr. Hanna for his understanding of, and work on, the finances. She stated a desire to work within our budget and not to take a TAN loan in the future.

Additional discussion items

None

Adjournment: Mr. Younkins made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 pm. Mrs. Fry seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Seth Abrams
Borough Manager