

Rochester Borough Council
Regular Meeting in the Municipal Building
November 20, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

Present: President Don Brothers, Vice-President David Alford, Toni Bucher, Sam Piccinini, Rico Elmore, Jodi Hemer, Mayor Keith Jackson, Solicitor Paul Steff, Sergeant Dawn Shane, Manager John Barrett

Absent: Chad Rape, Renee Simmons, Fire Chief Mike Mamone III

The regular meeting was called to order with the pledge of allegiance and roll call.

Persons in Attendance:

Albert Ellis, 311 Deer Lane, stated that he purchased 313 Deer Lane from Rochester Borough and there are unpaid taxes he feels the Borough is responsible for. Solicitor Steff stated that he has reviewed the file the Manager has regarding the sale of 313 Deer Lane and stated the sale is complete and there is nothing further for the Borough to address.

Korrtezz Martin stated that he was present for the purchase of 379 Ohio Avenue from the Beaver County Repository. Mr. Brothers stated that would be address later in the meeting.

Robin Redfern, Bags and Blessings, introduced herself and her organization to Council. Bags and Blessings is a non-profit organization that provides support for cancer patients. They have leased space at 421 Railroad Street and would like to be involved with the community. Council welcomed Ms. Redfern and her organization and thanked her for coming to Rochester.

Action Items:

Mrs. Bucher motioned to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2023 regular Council meeting and the October 25, 2023 and November 13, 2023 special Council meetings as presented. Mrs. Hemer seconded and the motion carried.

There were several bills that were questioned. The Manager will review the donation to the Rochester Lady Rams Varsity Basketball group. Mrs. Bucher motioned to pay all approved bills as submitted. Mr. Alford seconded and the motion carried.

BILLS:

Gen. Fund – Ck# 12227–12426 – totaling \$371,108.44.

Payroll (10/27, 11/10) – Ck# 5505-5529 plus Dir. Dep. and Elec. Pymts. – totaling \$110,586.06.

Council received for their review and consideration, an application from Tyler Schnerch to purchase 379 Ohio Avenue from the Beaver County Repository. Mr. Schnerch was not present and no action was taken.

Council received for their review and consideration, an application from Korrtezz Martin to purchase 379 Ohio Avenue from the Beaver County Repository. After some discussion, Mr. Alford motioned to approve Mr. Martin's request to purchase 379 Ohio Avenue from the Beaver County Repository. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Council received for their review and consideration, Ordinance 02-2023, an ordinance amending Ordinance 2-97, Appendix H, Streets and Sidewalks, Vacating a portion of Garfield Way. Solicitor Steff stated that all the proper notices were advertised and issued to the adjacent property owners. There have been no objections raised and Council was able to act as they deemed appropriate. Mr. Alford motioned to approve and adopt Ordinance 02-2023 as presented. Mrs. Bucher seconded and the motion carried.

Council received for their review and consideration, the Tentative 2024 Budget. The Manager had previously reviewed the effects of the Countywide property reassessment which will take effect January 1, 2024. The budget reflects a property tax rate of 7 mills with the Manager recommending repealing the 2 special property tax rates for debt service, 5 mills and fire service, 2 mills. The 7 mills represent a tax neutral adjustment from the current 37 mills due to the substantial increase in taxable property assessments in Rochester. There was discussion regarding breakdowns for certain reimbursements throughout the year and legal fees associated with the police arbitration case. There was also discussion regarding development in Rochester. Manager Barrett will contact Frank Vescio to see if he would be willing to come and speak with Council on how to best approach an organized development effort. Mr. Piccinini motioned to tentatively approve the 2024 Budget as presented for final adoption at the December regular meeting. Mrs. Hemer seconded and the motion carried. Mrs. Hemer motioned to authorize the Solicitor to advertise the tentative 2024 budget for public review and further advertise the necessary property tax ordinance establishing the 2024 property tax rate at 7 mills and repealing the special debt service tax and fire service tax. Mr. Elmore seconded and the motion carried.

Review Items:

Council received for their review, the minutes of the October 10, 2023 Rochester Borough Sewer & Maintenance Authority meeting.

Council received for their review, the minutes of the October 12, 2023 Rochester Area Joint Sewer Authority meeting.

Council received for their review, an email informing Council of the next Beaver County Boom meeting scheduled for December 12th at 10 a.m.

Mr. Elmore introduced Pamela Keen of The Genesis Collective. Mrs. Keen stated that her group works to support artists and their work, increase the public's access to art and creativity, and entrench art in and around community development in Beaver County. Mrs. Keen is very interested in working with Council to bring further recognition to the arts in Rochester. Council thanked Mrs. Keen for her interest in Rochester and looks forward to working with her group on some of their initiatives.

Mr. Elmore brought up for discussion, the hiring of a grant writer. He had previously presented resumes of 2 grant writers but one is no longer able to provide this service. He spoke with Ms. Samuels, from Texas, she is asking for a \$10,000 commission which she would then provide grant writing services for 7 to 10 grant applications. After some discussion, Mr. Elmore was asked to set up a video chat with Ms. Samuels and several Council members to further discuss her proposal.

Committee Reports:

Public Administration – Chad Rape, Chairperson

Council received for their review, the Expense and Revenue Report from January 1, 2023 through November 15, 2023.

Public Safety – Rico Elmore, Chairperson

Mr. Elmore stated that he spoke with Chief Mamone about paid firemen also providing code and zoning services to the Borough. Chief Mamone stated that was feasible if the Township and Borough agreed to the paid firemen he was requesting. There was further discussion regarding the fee increase proposed by Zoning Officer McGuire. This was tabled to explore additional options.

Police Department Report – Sergeant Shane stated that the Borough was awarded the COPS grant to add an additional officer. She asked if Council would be willing to approve the \$5,000 hiring bonus again to attract applicants. After some discussion, Mr. Piccinini motioned to approve the \$5,000 hiring bonus. Mrs. Hemer seconded and the motion carried. Sergeant Shane asked Council if they would consider putting in a new base station and 2 radios to replace the current equipment which is no longer functioning properly. The quotes she received was for \$989 to purchase and install the equipment. After some discussion, Mrs. Hemer motioned to approve the new base station and radios for \$989. Mr. Piccinini seconded and the motion carried.

Public Works – Toni Bucher, Chairperson

Mrs. Bucher had nothing to report.

Recreation – Renee Simmons, Chairperson

There was nothing to report in Mrs. Simmons's absence.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Jackson noted the condition of Hinds Street, the alley off of Lloyd Street, In and Out signage at the Borough's parking lot and some exposed wiring on Brighton Avenue where the decorative lights were.

Solicitor's Report:

Solicitor Steff had nothing to report.

Code Officer's Report:

There was nothing to report.

Fire Chief's Report:

Council received for their review, the October 2023 Fire Department report.

Manager's/Treasurer's Report:

Council received for their review, the October 2023 Treasurer's Report.

Old Business/New Business:

Mr. Alford asked about the status of the old Borough maintenance garage at the riverfront. There was discussion but no action taken.

Manager Barrett asked if Council would be interested in pursuing the Rite-Aid building for a new Library. The Manager was informed that the purchase cost and relocation costs would be an eligible expense for the County ARPA funds. After some discussion, Council was not interested in pursuing the Rite-Aid building.

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Submitted by,

John M. Barrett
Borough Manager