

RIDGWAY BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
Ridgway Municipal Building
108 Main Street, Ridgway, PA 15853
January 15, 2024

The Ridgway Borough Council meeting was called to order by Steve Caggese at 6:00 p.m. at the Ridgway Municipal Building.

PRESENT: Council members Steve Caggese, Ron Burkett, Abbi Peters, Chris Matheson, Zack Pontious, and Steve Lawrie. Also in attendance was Borough Manager Mike Handley, Chief of Police Shawn Geci, Fire Chief Scott Pontious, Environmental Manager Josh Quattrone, Solicitor David Pontzer, and Recording Secretary Jake Mercer.

Councilman Steve Lawrie made a motion to approve the regular council meeting minutes as scheduled on December 18, 2023. Councilman Burkett seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilman Ron Burkett made a motion to approve the organization meeting minutes as scheduled on January 2, 2024. Councilwoman Peters seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Bid Awards (O.B. Grant Restroom Project)

Borough Manager Handley shared with borough council that more local contractors bid on the project this year and that bids are over what they budgeted for but American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds can be used to cover the balance. There is approximately \$160,000 in ARPA funds left that they are required to spend.

Handley said this was put out as three separate bids for general, electric, and plumbing work that came relating to the project.

Daghir Construction came in with a bid of \$91,760 for general purposes.

For plumbing, Overdorf Snyder Mechanical Inc. bid \$35,098.

Northwestern Contracting and Maintenance came in with a \$12,000 bid for the electrical portion of the project.

According to Handley, \$130,000 was budgeted for this project.

After discussion was held by several council members on the state of the project moving forward, a motion was made to award the lowest responsible bidder as well as the allocation of the remaining ARPA funds.

A motion was made by Councilman Pontious with Daghir Construction coming in at the lowest bid for general purposes. Councilwoman Peters seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Abstain

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

A motion was made by Councilwoman Peters with Overdorf Snyder Mechanical Inc. coming in at the lowest responsible bid for plumbing. Councilman Lawrie seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

A motion was made by Councilman Matheson with Northwestern Contracting and Maintenance coming in at the lowest responsible bid for the electrical portion of the project. Councilwoman Peters seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

A motion was made by Councilwoman Peters to allocate the remaining ARPA funds towards the O.B. Grant restroom project. Councilwoman Lawrie seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Finance Department

A motion was made by Councilman Lawrie to pay the bills. Councilwoman Peters seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Mayor

Mayor Ray Imhof wanted to remind the community that Coffee with the Mayor will be held this Saturday at The Creative Cup from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. He complimented Ridgway Borough crews for the work that they did regarding snow removal recently.

Police Department

Chief of Police Shawn Geci said he is happy to answer any questions regarding his monthly report. Geci said over the next couple months that his officers will be participating in a PennDOT program involving DUI enforcement.

Geci shared with the borough council that he and members of his department will be attending training specifically relating to investigative interviewing and positive persuasion.

Geci said he spoke with a representative from Penn Highlands regarding the concerns with traffic from the new Ridgway Medical Building coming out on the train tracks as they exit the parking lot there. He said he and the representative will have follow-up conversations about the matter.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Scott Pontious said he is happy to answer any questions regarding his monthly report. Pontious said that they received 185 fire alarms over the past year. Pontious reminded the borough council that the annual fireman's banquet would take place at the North Broad Fire Hall on Saturday night at 6 p.m.

Environmental Manager

Environmental Manager Josh Quattrone shared with borough council that the water plant inspection went well. Quattrone said two belts are in the process of being replaced and they are anticipating the second clarifier to come in soon.

Correspondence

Borough Manager Mike Handley said that they had received two letters of correspondence, one from the Ridgway Ambulance Corporation along with the Ridgway Chainsaw Carvers Rendezvous director.

Borough Manager

Borough Manager Handley said that the director of the Ridgway Chainsaw Carvers Rendezvous is requesting to use the Ridgway Mills Property from April 24 to April 27 which is tentatively approved according to Handley.

Council discussed the logistics involving the Ridgway Mills site property, including Handley, Councilman Lawrie, and Councilwoman Peters discussing the challenges with parking for last year's event. After discussion, Handley said that it would be best to refer to the logistics of how the property will be used for the Ridgway Chainsaw Carvers Rendezvous to the Property Committee.

A motion was made by Councilman Lawrie to allow the use of the Ridgway Mills outdoor property for the Ridgway Chainsaw Carvers Rendezvous taking place on April 24 to April 27. Councilwoman Peters seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Borough Manager Handley gave an update on the ground lease agreement for a solar farm for one of the properties in the township. Handley said there will be a 10 to 15 minute presentation regarding this, and he recommended that the matter go to a committee level following the presentation.

Handley said that there is no rush to make a decision and that a decision would come in March at the earliest. Handley said there is a potential of making an average of \$80,000 a year with a certain criterion.

Handley shared an update regarding the flood mitigation project as he has coordinated with the Army Corps. of Engineers to come to the borough and review things. Handley said he is looking forward to the partnership with the township and invited them to sit in on the March council meeting.

Handley provided an update on the state sponsored senior center as he said that they have moved very quickly on the senior center. The Office of Human Services has approved the location for the senior center and a unisex restroom is ready for use. He said a program director that is paid for by OHS has been hired and a soft opening could take place in the next two to three weeks.

Committee Reports

Councilwoman Abbi Peters said that two personnel recommendations were made with a meeting involving her as chair, Councilman Zack Pontious, Borough Manager Mike Handley, President Steve Caggese, Police Chief Shawn Geci, and Mayor Ray Imhof.

The first recommendation that was made was to approve the six month contract to compensate Grow Rural PA up to \$6,000 for administrative expenditures related to the project management of the Ridgway Riverfront Master Site Plan with the option to renew it after six months for another \$6,000.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Peters to approve this recommendation. Councilman Burkett seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

The second recommendation made by Councilwoman Peters was to permit vetted borough volunteers to supervise the recycling center during offseason hours at the borough manager's discretion. Councilman Matheson seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye

Councilman Matheson: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilwoman Peters said two recommendations were made coming out of the Planning, Grants and Recreation Committee meeting attended by Councilwoman Peters (chair), Councilman Ron Burkett, Councilman Steve Lawrie, Mayor Ray Imhof, and Borough Manager Mike Handley.

The first recommendation was to approve an agreement with Herbert, Rowland & Grubic Inc. (HRG) to create a master site plan for the Ridgway Riverfront Project. Councilwoman Peters made a motion to approve this recommendation. Councilman Burkett seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye

Councilman Burkett: Aye

Councilman Pontious: Aye
Councilman Matheson: Aye
Councilwoman Peters: Aye

The second recommendation was to approve the advertising the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Ridgway Mills Campsite Concessionaire for the 2024 season. Councilwoman Peters made a motion to approve this recommendation. Councilman Matheson seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye
Councilman Lawrie: Aye
Councilman Burkett: Aye
Councilman Pontious: Aye
Councilman Matheson: Aye
Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Old Business

Resolution 01-2024: (Intergovernmental Code Enforcement Officer)

A motion was made by Councilman Pontious to accept the intergovernmental agreement with the Johnsonburg Borough to hire a full time Code Enforcement Officer. Councilman Lawrie seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye
Councilman Lawrie: Aye
Councilman Burkett: Aye
Councilman Pontious: Aye
Councilman Matheson: Aye
Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Advertise Ordinance 687-2024 DCED (Code Enforcement Officer)

Councilman Lawrie made a motion to advertise Ordinance 687-2024 DCED. Councilman Pontious seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye
Councilman Lawrie: Aye
Councilman Burkett: Aye
Councilman Pontious: Aye
Councilman Matheson: Aye
Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Resolution 02-2024: (Intergovernmental Agreement Community Economic Development Coordinator)

Councilwoman Peters made a motion to accept the intergovernmental agreement with the Johnsonburg Borough to hire a full time Community Economic Development Coordinator. Councilman Pontious seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye

Councilman Lawrie: Aye
Councilman Burkett: Aye
Councilman Pontious: Aye
Councilman Matheson: Aye
Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Advertise Ordinance 688-2024 DCED (Community Economic Development Coordinator)

Councilwoman Peters made a motion to advertise Ordinance 688-2024 DCED. Councilman Pontious seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Councilman Caggese: Aye
Councilman Lawrie: Aye
Councilman Burkett: Aye
Councilman Pontious: Aye
Councilman Matheson: Aye
Councilwoman Peters: Aye

New Business

Mayor Ray Imhof said to borough council that this is a special year for Ridgway as it enters its bicentennial year. He said that there isn't anyone better to represent the Ridgway Borough than the Ridgway Borough Council. Imhof then presented a proclamation for the bicentennial year to Council President Steve Caggese. The time capsule buried in 1974 for the centennial will be opened on Sunday, June 23rd according to Imhof.

Imhof then gave an update on Tree City USA as a tree will be planted on Main Street as part of Arbor Day that will be held on or about Friday, April 26. Imhof then made a proclamation that Arbor Day will be celebrated on this date and encourages all borough residents to plant a new tree.

Approval of Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

Councilman Matheson was appointed to the Ambulance Corporation Board.

Michelle Bogacki, Dave Giovanini, and Padraic McGrath received an extended four year term on the Borough Planning Commission.

Jeff Krieg received an extended six year term on the Police Civil Service Commission.

Steve Cleveland received an extended three year term on the Ridgway Public Library Board.

Dave Cicione and Tom Kontes received an extended three year term on the Zoning Hearing Board.

Donald Airgood received an extended five year term on the Ridgway Municipal Authority Board.

Public Comment

Peter Cooney from CM Real Estate spoke to the borough council about a private criminal complaint that he had received about building a parking lot behind 208 and 210 Monterey Avenue to alleviate the parking congestion on the road.

Cooney said that there is a pre-existing driveway and parking lot on 212 Monterey Avenue and that they added a space there but were shut down for the appeal due to the space being detrimental to the public welfare and altering the essential character of the neighborhood.

Cooney questioned how the space would be a detriment to the public welfare if it benefits his tenants.

A borough resident who lives on Monterey Avenue also addressed the criminal complaint. She cited that there is a lack of parking availability on Monterey Avenue. The resident also questioned how this parking space would be detrimental to the public welfare and altering the essential care of the neighborhood.

After these comments, Handley said this was not able to be approved per a zoning ordinance. According to Handley, there is not a dedicated driveway to the four unit commercial rental unit that these individuals were referring to.

Handley said he was unable to approve the zoning application. This determination was appealed and referred to the zoning hearing board. The Board did not approve the appeal and it was denied.

Cooney installed the parking lot anyway which ultimately led to the first criminal complaint being filed with the District Magistrate. The Judge agreed the space should not be there and found him guilty.

It was noted that the office received multiple community complaints about the unapproved parking in the back of the property. Handley said he is willing to work with Cooney to see what can be done about the second criminal complaint that was filed, but charges have already been filed.

Councilman Kemmer asked how much space is between the back of the building and the adjacent property line. Cooney said the space is thirty two and a half feet by fifty three feet. Councilman Kemmer asked how many cars can efficiently park at the space between the buildings and Cooney said only a few. Councilman Caggese asked about what Cooney's property lines are and Cooney clarified where his property lines are.

After no further discussion, the council adjourned the meeting before going into executive session at 7:08 p.m.