

RIDGWAY BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
Ridgway Municipal Building
108 Main Street, Ridgway, PA 15853
April 21, 2025

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, Abbi Peters, Steve Lawrie, Brent Kemmer, Zack Pontious, Chris Matheson, Ron Burkett.

Also in attendance were Borough Manager Mike Handley, Mayor Ray Imhof, Environmental Manager Josh Quattrone, Police Chief Ken Hinton, Fire Chief Jeff Yeager, and Recording Secretary Jake Mercer.

ABSENT: None

Councilman Steve Lawrie made a motion to approve the regular council meeting minutes as scheduled on March 17, 2025. Councilman Kemmer 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Public Comment

N/A

Bid Awards-2025 Street Paving Project

There were no bids today and the project will be re-advertised and presented at the next council meeting.

Finance Department

Councilman Matheson made a motion to pay the bills. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Mayor

Mayor Ray Imhof welcomed the boy scouts and their troop leaders to the meeting to learn about how local government works. He shared with council that he has had the honor of doing guest lectures at the Ridgway Area High School over the last couple weeks and described this as “pretty exciting.” There were about 25 students in each class. He talked about how local government works.

Imhof and Police Chief Ken Hinton are in the beginning stages of the civil service process. They have contacted the civil service board and are getting ready to conduct the civil service testing for the officers. Currently, no one is on the civil service list and the list must be maintained.

Police Department

Chief of Police Ken Hinton began his report by making a correction. He originally listed that there were zero DUI arrests and that was incorrect. There were four this month and a total of eight DUI arrests this year to date. He said that there have been adjustments made as it relates to the management system.

All officers from the Ridgway Police Department attended the defensive tactics and handcuffing techniques. This is a four hour class that is mandatory. Hinton noted that officers also attended this class last year and it was put on by Officer Shaffer from the St. Marys Police Department.

Hinton said that two part-time police officers Cox and Woodard were sworn in last month. He also said that they have received two more applications for part-time police officer roles. Hinton noted that Officer Justin Bolden is the field training instructor and Woodard is currently going through the field training program. Officer Cox will go through the field training program in the upcoming months. Councilman Lawrie asked if the state dictates the field training program. Hinton said that they do this every year as they go through handcuffing techniques and the other portion of the class has to do with gun retention and defensive tactics. He said that two and a half hours were spent on the class involving gun retention. They went over responding to a physical encounter with law enforcement on how they would handle their guns.

Hinton said that they have completed their first full month with the new RMS system. He said the reports are going to change. They have a new property evidence module which is going to maintain the chain of custody for all evidence as well as property. This was implemented on April 1. A new arrest report was implemented which is required by the state and federal government. Hinton said this will give more accurate numbers as monthly reports are run for the council.

Fire Department

Dave Parsons, Ridgway Volunteer Fire Department Treasurer, gave an organizational overview presentation to Council members. He began his presentation by going over the basics, such as the RVFD being a 501c3 organization, its members, their station locations, the makeup of the fleet, and their hierarchy from an operation and an administrative standpoint.

Parsons noted multiple sources of income for the RVFD include the Borough and Township budget and reserve, the Sara-Jane Stackpole Legacy Society through the Elk County Community Foundation, grants,

and account interest. He also stated a number of times that the department receives great community support through fundraising. Their biggest fundraiser of the year is the Ridgway Firemen's Carnival, followed by bingo, their gun bash, the Rock Valley Revival music festival, their direct mail campaign, and miscellaneous donations.

February 1 through January 31 is their fiscal year, and they file a Form 990 annually. Their total recent expenditures have reached 1.6 million dollars, as they completed refurbishments to Engine 44, Truck 411, and Utility 413. The Engine 44 refurb totaled \$50,000 and it came from the RFD's capital reserves. The other two refurbishments were completely funded by the department, and a DCNR grant. Their largest recent purchase was for their Engine 42 apparatus in the amount of \$397,500 and this purchase was completely funded by the RFD. They face debts from a \$74,000 state loan for the purchase of Engine 42 and a \$176,000 lease to own for new air packs.

The Ridgway Volunteer Fire Department aims to develop a five year capital improvement plan, and this is to address some concerns that they have moving forward. The biggest issue they face currently is the lack of manpower, especially during daytime response. Grants are also becoming more competitive, and there is an increase with wildfire demand. Fundraising fluctuations also present a challenge for the department. Additionally, their fleet is aging, and the cost of fire trucks is only increasing along with the cost of turnout gear. There are large gaps in what these costs were less than 10 years ago compared to what they are now, as Parsons noted during the presentation. All these challenges are not exclusive to Ridgway, as many fire departments across the country face these issues, especially those in rural areas. The five year plan has long term goals of establishing sustainability and financial planning, recruitment and retention of volunteers, training and development, equipment, apparatus and property maintenance upgrades, and continuing community engagement and support.

Councilman Lawrie asked what some of the biggest changes were as far as requirements to becoming a firefighter from when Parsons started to the present day. Parsons said training back when he first joined required 44 hours over two years, and now firefighters must have over 200 hours of training mandated by the state. The biggest requirement change he has noticed over the years has to do with training. Lawrie also asked about the lifespan of certain units. He said the bottles are good for 30 years as long as they are highly tested every five years and the packs have a much longer lifespan than they used to have. Council members thanked Parsons for his informative presentation.

Environmental Manager

Environmental Manager Josh Quattrone said both plants are running great, and he was happy to announce to the Council that Harrison Snyder has obtained his CDL license.

DCED Coordinator/Code Enforcement

Reports are in the packet.

Borough Manager Mike Handley announced that Code Enforcement Officer Chris Lindmar is now a certified Building Code Official (BCO).

Correspondence/Petitions

There were a few letters of correspondence received and there was one letter that Council took action on relating to the Glory Bound Christian music festival.

Councilman Matheson made a motion to allow the request for the use of a small dumpster with no fee for the Glory Bound Christian music festival. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilman Matheson made a motion to disregard any anonymous letters received as correspondence in the future. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Borough Manager

Borough Manager Mike Handley gave an update in regards to the Splash Pad Project going on at the Lyle G. Hall Community Pool. He announced that the Palumbo Charitable Trust just recently contributed \$20,000.00 towards the project, and contractors are currently working at the site now. The expectation is to have the splash pad fully functioning by the time the pool opens in early June. Handley thanked Ridgway YMCA Executive Director Mary Lynne Bellotti for her hard work to make the splash pad a reality and noted that Bellotti applied for the Palumbo funding.

Handley said that they are planning to put fencing along Oak Street at O.B. Grant Park and pointed out other upgrades that need to be made, including the signage at the park that is about 30 years old. Handley thanked Dale Fox for making a generous donation to cover the costs of those sign upgrades.

Handley announced that Cari Amacher has taken over the vacant position of Administrative Assistant in the Borough's front office. Her start date was April 1, 2025. The Borough thanked Laura Krise for her 28 years of dedication and service to the community as she previously served in this role. They wish her the best in all her future endeavors upon her retirement. "Thanks again for all that you did for our great citizens in our community," Handley said.

Handley stated that the Borough is a couple of weeks behind schedule as their street sweeper has been in and out of commission due to some unexpected transmission issues and electrical/mechanical failures. They are expecting to have the sweeper up and running soon. They are hopeful to resume removing the anti-skid in the Dewey and West End areas within the next couple of weeks. Handley added that they have been getting a lot of calls and complaints about the street sweeper not moving quickly enough.

Handley acknowledged that it may be time to get a new machine and the cost for the one that they need is about \$400,000. He said they could roughly get \$60,000 to \$100,000 back in a sale for the current model they have. Councilman Lawrie encouraged to evaluate a budget number and options for a new street sweeper. If ordered by the end of the year, the new street sweeper should arrive by 2028.

Finance Committee

Councilwoman Abbi Peters made a motion to approve a request by the Ridgway Chainsaw Carvers Rendezvous to use four dumpsters for the event. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilwoman Peters made a motion to approve a conditional request to use the Ridgway Mills warehouse and surrounding area for a three day festival to be held in late February early March of 2026.

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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilwoman Peters made a motion to adopt a property rental request form for future requests to use to the Ridgway Mills property. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilwoman Peters made a motion to transfer \$5,000 from trucked waste to the recreation fund to proceed with the purchase and installation for fencing around O.B. Grant Park. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilwoman Peters made a motion to increase the custodian/support staff to \$16 per hour. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Old Business

Councilman Burkett made a motion to approve a grant application by Resolution 2-2025 to acquire rubber matting at O.B. Grant Park. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilman Pontious made a motion to incorporate an in-person attendance requirement in order to participate in the public comment portions of the meeting as recommended by the solicitor. Councilman Kemmer 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

New Business

Councilwoman Peters made a motion to approve an application for county aid for a liquid fuels allocation request of \$7,000.00 (PennDOT) to be put towards the upcoming paving project. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilman Lawrie made a motion to approve subdivision proposal 01-2025 as recommended by the Borough Planning Commission. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Councilman Burkett made a motion to pay the estimated \$500.00 for the treatment of Japanese Knotweed along a portion of the Clarion River. 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

Councilman Kemmer: Aye

Councilwoman Peters: Aye

Public Comment

Tina Clancy was in attendance on behalf of the Ecumenical group and asked about the positioning of the dumpster for the Glory Bound music festival and the closing of a street for the event. Council said they will follow up with her on all of that and they let her know once a determination has been made.

Sara Anderson asked about the public comment policy. Specifically, about the sign-in sheet being taken away five minutes before the meeting starts. She asked if someone was allowed to comment after the sign in sheet is taken away. Handley said the purpose of having the sign in sheet is to allow an allotted time for public comment at the beginning of the meeting for items on the agenda.

Handley said if an individual misses the sign in sheet, they have another opportunity to talk about anything at the second public comment section near the end of the meeting. If an individual is not pre-registered, the Council can decide to postpone the public comment section to the next meeting depending on the topics of conversation. Handley said Council wants to give everyone a chance to participate in public comment and have made it accommodating for residents. The public comment sign-in sheet has been part of the Council procedure for years.

Anderson asked about the status of the property where the old hospital building is located, and Council had no updates regarding the property.

Council Discussion

At the conclusion of the meeting, Borough Manager Mike Handley explained how the meeting functions, and Mayor Ray Imhof, Chief of Police Ken Hinton, and Environmental Manager Josh Quattrone explained their roles to the scouts. As stated by Mayor Imhof, they were in attendance to learn about how local government works.

A resident asked about issues he has had with tractor trailers and the noise they make going down Montmorenci with their jake brakes. He was asking if anyone has addressed or has had concerns about this in the past. Chief Hinton said that if Council and the community would like to address then it can be addressed, and it would take an ordinance for anything to be enforced. He added that a lot of communities have crafted an ordinance of this nature due to heavy truck traffic.

Executive Session

N/A.

After there was no further discussion and no executive session held, President Steve Caggese motioned and adjourned the meeting at 7:06 p.m.