

March 4, 2024 - 6:30 PM
REGULAR MEETING OF SWOYERSVILLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council President Cwalina calls the meeting to order.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call was taken, those present included Mr. Christian, Mr. Brown, Mr. Olejnick, Mr. Cwalina, and Mr. Majewski. Mr. Lamereaux & Attorney Yeager were noted as absent. Also present were Mayor Concert, Gene Breznay, Borough Manager, Dave Hampton, Street Commissioner, Ray Mackiewicz, Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer, Police Chief Wolinsky, Jake Dubaskas and Tyler Ruddy, Junior Council members and Barb O'Donnell, Council Secretary.

A motion was requested by Mr. Cwalina to accept the minutes from the February 5, 2024 Regular Council meeting. Mr. Christian requested to add an addendum to the minutes reflecting Fire Department & Kingston EMS call volume which was not available at last month's meeting. This information will be added under the Fire Department review presented during this meeting 3/4/24. A motion was made by Mr. Brown to approve the February 5, 2024 meeting minutes as presented. Motion was seconded by Mr. Olejnick. Vote was 4-0 in favor with Mr. Cwalina abstaining from the vote.

Monthly bills totaling \$45,275.77 were presented by Ms. O'Donnell, Council Secretary. A motion was made by Mr. Brown to approve the monthly bills and motion was seconded by Mr. Majewski. Vote was 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

-Kathy Breznay, Church Street, reported the Civil Service Committee met on 02/22/24 and Officer Positions that were in place last year will remain the same in 2024: Chairperson: Kathy Breznay; Co-Chairperson: Gene Gurnari; Secretary: John Menta. The Committee plans to review the Committee Handbook this year to determine if any changes are needed. Council was requested to share any issues or concerns regarding the handbook as needed.

-Jerry Kuczynski, 427 Shoemaker Street, shared his concern regarding a deteriorating wall around the Borough Building. With rain, water is leaking through the wall and flowing through a shed on Mr. Kuczynski's property. Pictures were provided for Council to examine. Mr. Hampton, Street Commissioner, will inspect the wall and make repairs if it is a job that the Street Department can handle.

BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT

-Mr. Breznay requested a motion and vote to participate in the Luzerne County paper shredding event. There are two dates chosen for 2024, May 11th & September 14th. Mr. Breznay shared that with Borough participation, expenses are reimbursable from Luzerne County. A motion was made by Mr. Brown to approve the Borough participating in the shredding event. Motion was seconded by Mr. Christian. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

-Mr. Breznay requested a motion and vote to replace the locking system on the Administrative Secretary door. The \$2,262.28 expense will be paid with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. Northeastern Security will perform the repair. A motion was made by Mr. Olejnick to approve the repair & expense. Motion was seconded by Mr. Christian. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

-Mr. Breznay shared with Council that the SPCA will change the Borough's billing type from per capita to per animal with Council approval. Mr. Breznay requested a motion and vote to approve the change which will result in an approximate \$2,000.00 savings. A motion was made by Mr. Brown and seconded by Mr. Christian. Mr. Breznay will forward a letter to the SPCA reflecting Council's approval. The effective date for the change will be the date of the approval letter.

-Mr. Breznay requested a motion and vote to approve Go Gov App (My Swoyersville) continuation for another year. The phone App allows residents to immediately receive Swoyersville Borough notifications and alerts. The cost is \$4,164.00 with payment made from the American Rescue Plan Act funds. Mr. Majewski questioned the volume of usage by residents and what App feedback has been received, if any. He shared he does not feel the App is cost effective as Swoyersville has other free sites online such as Swoyersville Next Door & Swoyersville Borough Town Hall that share the same information as the Go Gov App. Mr. Christian shared he has received a lot of positive feedback regarding the App. A motion was made by Mr. Christian to approve the Go Gov App and the motion was seconded by Mr. Cwalina. The vote was 3-1 in favor with Mr. Olejnick abstaining from the vote.

ZONING OFFICER/CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT

-Mr. Mackiewicz presented the Zoning/Code Enforcement Report for February 2024. Rental registrations and inspections are ongoing. Amusement taxes are being collected; amount collected to date is \$3,800.00. There are three Subdivisions currently in process. There are also two Cease and Desist orders being served for businesses zoned as residential. The noise concerns involving the Mine Reclamation Project starting time were addressed and appear to be resolved.

The property cleanup on Shoemaker Street is slow. Mr. Cwalina shared that he received a call from Ken Shefler, Swoyersville Code Enforcement Officer, who reported the property owner made requests to enter the home on 11 days between January and February 2024. A final deadline of 4/19/24 for completion of cleanup was suggested. Mr. Cwalina feels setting the date earlier (3/25/24) can be considered. Mr. Cwalina will follow up with Attorney Yeager regarding the issue of a final deadline.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance: Mr. Olejnick presented the January 2024 Treasurer's Report. **General Fund:** beginning checkbook balance: \$26,335.00; interest & revenues for the month: \$227,965.31; Transfers from PLGIT for the month: \$100,000.00 Transfers to PLGIT for Month: \$0.00; Expenses for the month: \$135,423.89; ending checkbook balance: \$218,876.72. **Liquid Fuels:** beginning checkbook balance: \$306.08; interest & revenues for month: \$51.73; Transfers from PLGIT for month: \$7,900.00; Transfers to PLGIT for Month: \$0.00; expenses for the month: \$8,060.64; ending checkbook balance: \$197.17. **Sanitary/Storm Water Assessment:** beginning checkbook balance: \$15,689.24; interest & revenues for the month: \$885.08; Transfers from PLGIT for month: \$0.00; Transfers to PLGIT for month: \$10,000.00; expenses for the month: \$3,781.06; ending checkbook balance: \$2,793.26. **Solid Waste Collection:** beginning checkbook balance: \$20,754.85; interest & revenues for the month: \$46,272.12; Transfers from PLGIT for month: \$0.00; Transfers to PLGIT for month: \$40,000.00; expenses for the month: \$10,524.86; ending checkbook balance: \$16,502.11.

Fire Department: Mr. Christian reported that in January 2024, Maltby had a total of 24 calls/runs; Broderick had a total of 16 calls/runs. Kingston Ambulance/EMS responded to 53 calls. For February 2024, Maltby had a total of 15 calls and Kingston Ambulance/EMS responded to 41 calls. The approved pay stipend was paid to volunteers who responded to 3 calls.

-A FEMA grant for \$96,000 was received and used for 12 air packs and a State Grant for \$13,200 was received and used for purchase of new gear.

-Mr. Christian requested a motion and vote to renew the Swoyersville Little League sponsorship for this year's season which will include a Swoyersville Little League sign; Swoyersville Borough sponsorship amount will be \$400. Kathy Breznay requested clarification on the amount as the meeting agenda states \$200.00. Mr. Christian clarified the sponsorship is for \$400.00, with a noted error on the agenda. A motion was made by Mr. Olejnick to approve the \$400.00 sponsorship. Motion was seconded by Mr. Christian. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

-Mr. Christian requested a motion and vote to begin the planning process for future applicant search to fill the Borough Manager and Administrative Secretary positions as current employees are tentatively planning retirement in January 2026. A motion was made by Mr. Brown and seconded by Mr. Olejnick. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

-Mr. Christian made a motion and vote to approve one additional handicap parking space in the Borough building's front parking lot. Motion was seconded by Mr. Olejnick. Vote was 5-0 in favor. The Street Department can add handicap strips & a sign. Mr. Majewski shared that additional handicap spots & a ramp should be considered in the back parking lot and suggested considering use of upcoming September grants for the project. Mr. Breznay, Borough Manager, added that paving along with adding stripes in the Borough Building's lots is planned within a few months.

-Mr. Christian extended a thank you to Dave Hampton and the Street Department for a quick response & repair involving a pothole issue on Rear Hughes Street.

Police Department: Mr. Brown presented the Police Department report for February 2024 which included a review of Crossing Guard hours. There was a total of 149 calls for service, 5 motor vehicle accidents and no school crossing guard duty reported. Fees collected totaled \$464.26. A motion and vote were requested by Mr. Brown to place monies in the appropriate funds. A motion was made by Mr. Christian and seconded by Mr. Majewski. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

-Mr. Brown provided an update on WVSA projects within the Borough. Mr. Breznay forwarded Information regarding the projects on Mountain Road to Andy Reilly. The WVSA Engineer is going to review/evaluate the issue. Gene Breznay is going to reach out again to Andy Reilly to see if WVSA can come and camera the sewer line to determine how large and long the pipe/line is.

Street Department: Mr. Olejnick reported the Street Department needs a new demo saw. Valley Power Equipment quoted a purchase price of \$2,091.67. Mr. Olejnick made a motion to approve the purchase of a demo saw for the purchase price quoted. Motion was seconded by Mr. Majewski. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

-Mr. Olejnick shared that the old ambulance garage in the rear parking lot is currently used by Dave Hampton, Street Commissioner, for equipment storage. The building needs repair or replacement. Mr. Cwalina shared that Ken Shefler, Code Enforcement Officer, is planning to inspect the building in the next few days. Mr. Olejnick suggested Mr. Hampton get three quotes for replacement for consideration in the event the building cannot be repaired.

Parks and Recreation: Mr. Cwalina reported that the Parks & Recreation beginning account balance is \$7,417.26. The following events were shared: Wildflower Make & Take 3/23/24; Paint In The Park 5/4/24; Movie In The Park 6/28/24; Car Show, tentatively 6/29/24; Flamingo fund raiser sale, June & July; Wing Fling, 7/27/24 – 7/28/24; Movie in The Park, 8/2/24; National Night Out, 8/6/24; Movie in The Park, 8/30/24; Wyoming Valley West Marching Band Concert, August 2024. Event information can be located on the Parks & Recreation Facebook page. A meeting was attended by Ryan Binkley on February 27, 2024 to discuss options for grating and back filling the former softball field. Dave Hampton will be replacing basketball hoops this week.

Liaison: Mr. Majewski shared a few resident concerns that he received. The bus stop located at Slocum/Church Streets is reported to have drivers going through the stop sign between the hours of 7:00-8:30 am. The concern was discussed with Chief Wolinsky.

A large pothole located at the end of Gillespie Street was reported. Mr. Majewski spoke to residents on both sides of the street and took pictures. The issue was discussed with Dave Hampton, Street Commissioner who will be following up with repair to the pothole. Also, at the beginning of Gillespie/Watkins, the "No Outlet" sign is obstructed by a telephone pole. Mr. Hampton has the issue on his list and will be following up to address it.

Attorney Yeager: No report provided.

Mayor Concert: Mayor Concert shared that there are a few street signs throughout Swoyersville that need to be replaced. The Swoyersville Kiwanis Club will purchase the signs. A partial list of signs needed was given to Mr. Breznay. There are also stop signs that need to be placed. A list of locations was also provided to Mr. Breznay. The Police Department can check the locations and if stop signs are needed, the current ordinance for parking will require an amendment.

There were no weddings performed in February 2024. The first Coalminers/Veterans Tribute Monument (Coalminers) is being ordered this week. The Easter Event will be held at the Borough Building on 3/24/23. Those interested in participating can contact Mayor Concert directly. The 125 Hometown Celebration is being moved to Roosevelt Field and will be held on 6/1/24, 11:00-08:00 pm & 6/2/24, 11:00-04:00 pm. Musical entertainment is planned along with two bounce houses, food trucks and vendors. Non-profit organizations are welcome to participate. Use of Police and Street Department is needed for the event. There will be a community parade held at 1:00 pm on 6/2/24. Mayor Concert will provide a copy of all receipts along with an event report. It is noted that the event is not a fundraiser and any monies left over will be divided between the Swoyersville Sailors and the Swoyersville Little League. Mr. Christian recommends no cash for any donations made.

Mayor Concert shared that the Recreation Board has requested a letter from Council approving the event. Mr. Majewski made a motion to approve the mayor's 125 Hometown Celebration and for Mr. Breznay, Borough Manager, to forward an approval letter to the Recreation Board. Motion was seconded by Mr. Olejnick. Vote was 5-0 with Mr. Christian's yes contingent on approval of the Parks & Recreation Board.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM BOROUGH COUNCIL

-No additional comments offered from Borough Council or Junior Council members.

MEETING OPENED TO THE PUBLIC

-Kathy Breznay, Church Street, questioned the donation amount remaining for the second (Veterans) monument. Mayor Concert shared there is currently \$300.00 in donations toward the second monument. The Kiwanis Club has a donation check for \$200.00 that will be turned in. Ms. Breznay reported there are a few Veterans banners that have come down recently due to winds. Dave Hampton will be working with the committee to have the banners re-hung in addition to hanging a new banner. The Kiwanis Club would like to participate in the 125 Hometown Celebration. Ms. Breznay will share a list of what the Club would like to consider doing for review to avoid duplication of activities.

-Charlie Jones, Watkins Street, wants to clarify that the Parks & Recreation Board does not have the authority to approve the 125 Hometown Celebration event; however, since it involved use of Roosevelt field & it was a Borough event, the board wanted to be sure there was Council approval.

-Matthew Lamereaux, 64 Barber Street, shared that since the Wing Fling took place, not a lot of information has been shared about how the event did. Mr. Lamereaux had requested a copy of the Wing Fling financial report from the Borough; however, was informed that there was not one on file. A Right to Know form was completed by Mr. Lamereaux and a copy of the Parks & Recreations Committee's financial spreadsheet was provided by the Committee. Upon review of the spreadsheet, Mr. Lamereaux expressed that he feels it does not add up or make sense. Several questions were presented regarding the financial data. Mr. Lamereaux questioned if financial reports & meeting minutes are required to be turned into the Borough Manager monthly to have on file. If yes, why was this report not available when he first requested it? Charlie Jones, Parks & Recreation Board member, shared that a committee report is provided on a monthly basis to the Borough Manager along with a copy provided to Council. The report summary is read each month at the Borough Council meeting. Mr. Christian questioned if the minutes could be added to the Borough's Website for residents to view. Gene Breznay will inquire about adding a tab where Park & Recreation Committee minutes can be downloaded monthly.

Mr. Majewski acknowledged Mr. Lamereaux's concern that the financial report requires clarification & asked Mr. Jones to meet after this Council meeting to review a few items. Mr. Majewski also initiated a conversation regarding the use of Venmo as a payment method (not FDIC insured) during events. Mr. Jones shared how Venmo works with immediate transfer of funds into the Board's account. Mr. Breznay noted the use of Venmo was discussed with the Borough's auditor. There were no issues noted with use of Venmo as an acceptable practice at events. In addition, an independent annual audit will also include a review of all committee event reports & includes review of payment methods. Issues identified, if any, are reported to Council.

Mr. Lamereaux is interested in joining the Recreation Board and has made several calls to members of the committee; however, has not received a call back. Mr. Christian clarified that Recreation Board members are appointed by Council and there is a cap set on membership. When someone leaves the Board, Council will appoint a new member. Mr. Lamereaux is encouraged to reach out to the Borough if interested in the possibility of becoming a Recreation Board member.

-Mr. Cwalina questioned if Mayor Concert submits a monthly report to the Borough. Mayor Concert confirmed that he does submit monthly reports. Mr. Cwalina asked Gene Breznay to provide a copy of the report to Council members.

-Angeli Nause, Recreation Board member, shared her frustration & disappointment with what she feels is ongoing questioning of the Recreation Board financials & reports. Recreation Board members are volunteers who dedicate a lot of their personal time each month hosting/working events for the residents of Swoyersville along with working hard to improve parks throughout the Borough. The Board meets monthly where all committee issues, including financials, are discussed openly and honestly. Reports are provided to the Borough Manager monthly and are also read at Borough Council meetings. Rec Board Committee meetings are held every third Wednesday of the month and are open to the public. Residents are encouraged to attend & learn about all the Committee does and also to volunteer at the many events that are held.

Mr. Christian shared his frustration with how the committee is being treated and requests that it be recorded in the minutes that he recently met with Parks and Recreation members who shared they feel that targets have been placed on certain committee member's backs from some representatives from the Borough. Mr. Christian shared that if members feel they are targeted his recommendation would be to obtain an attorney to address the issue. Mr. Christian does feel that there is an issue with the Committee always being questioned.

Mr. Cwalina commented on all the events that have been held by the committee and stressed how appreciated the wonderful work performed by the committee members and resident volunteers is. Mr. Cwalina encouraged all to work together to continue to provide Swoyersville residents with ongoing events, activities, and park/recreation improvements.

-Jerry Kuczynski questioned if Recreation Board events are advertised? Mr. Cwalina shared that events are advertised on social media, radio stations and television. Mr. Cwalina shared that a large banner for the Wing Fling is also used to advertise.

-Mr. Christian shared that No Nonsense Neutering will start picking up again with Trap/Neutering/Release service. Mayor Concert reported that 9 cats were trapped this year so far.

-Ryan Binkley, Recreation Board member, addressed a statement that Wing Fling totals were not announced or shared. Mr. Binkley pointed out that the September Borough Council meeting minutes reflect that a report provided was provided by himself indicating that the Wing Fling totals were \$3,287.00 and that money raised will be paid out to pay any bills that the committee has not received.

-Mr. Majewski shared that he wanted to add onto what Mr. Cwalina shared earlier about all working together. He feels people are just being cautious and want to make sure Parks and Recreation have all the right tools to work with. He feels that getting together on the same page knowing what is going on with events is what everyone wants. Mr. Cwalina and Mr. Christian shared this needs to occur across all those committees/parties who hold events.

With no further issues or comments, Mr. Cwalina requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made by Mr. Olejnick and was seconded by Mr. Christian. Vote was 5-0 in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 7:44 pm. Next meeting will be held on April 1, 2024 at 6:30 pm.



Barb O'Donnell
Borough Council Secretary

Pete Cwalina, Jr.
Council President