

**Watson town Borough
Committee Meeting
December 15, 2014**

- OPENING:** The December 15, 2014 Watson town Borough Committee Meeting was called to order by President Miller at 7:30 PM. The meeting was held in Council Chambers.
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** President Harriet Miller, Vice President Ralph Young, Jack Marshall, Janet Rump, Dan Folk, Harry Hefty, Solicitor Ryan Tira, Mayor David Hontz, Borough Manager Edie Moser, Acting Chief of Police Richard Faux and Secretary/Treasurer Brendi Brooke.
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Buzz Reynolds, Ken Hollenbach, Mary Phillips, Sandy Hendricks, Becky Hontz, Terry Kirchner, Amy Pitou, Brent Frey, Gladys Klapp, Cindy Crozier, Matt Farrand,-Standard Journal and Liz Folk.
- 2015 BUDGET:** President Miller asked for a motion to approve the 2015 Budget in the amount of \$4,180,607.00. Janet Rump asked Edie for clarification of Line item 408.313 – Engineering Fee in the General Account. Edie confirmed it is for storm water. Sandy Hendricks of 411 Main Street asked for a breakout of wages; Edie explained whose wages are included in line items on the budget. Sandy asked for specific wages and Edie told her she needed to file a Right to Know request. The Mayor said they used to vote on it in public; he asked if that policy was thrown by the wayside. President Miller stated union wages are set in stone. The Mayor said he’s raised concerned prior regarding police wages without the input of the Mayor. He asked if raises have been granted to individuals and if they have why hasn’t Council been apprised and voted on those items. President Miller said she believes the Personnel Committee met and approved wages; she asked Jack Marshall, head of Personnel and it was concluded that the office personnel received a raise of .50 cents. Cindy Crozier of 307 Main Street said it’s very important for the taxpayers to know what’s going on in this town, i.e. Solicitor fees.
- There was a heated discussion regarding numerous things including the expense of a 24/7 police department, polling of the public regarding the police department and the results of a \$17,000.00 investigation. The Mayor stated “that investigative report told you exactly what I told you on June 11, 2013 and you paid \$17,000.00 and you refuse to review it; we had a vote in Executive Session that never made the meeting”. Solicitor Tira stated on behalf of Council “that’s not an accurate statement by the Mayor about the report and he’s not going to get into the details of that report”. The Mayor asked what was inaccurate about his statement to which Solicitor Tira said “what you told this Council on June 11, 2013

was not what was stated in the report provided by the investigator”. Many conversation were taking place making things inaudible.

In response to Mrs. Crozier, Edie said a financial statement for each account is included in the 3 packets provided to the public at Council Meetings. Each financial packet includes figures by the month and year to date.

Again, President Miller had to bring the meeting back to order because people continued to shout and call out of turn. The tape again became inaudible.

Janet Rump clarified that the budget allows \$270,000.00 for 5 full-time police officers but if “we” vote tonight for this budget, it does not mean we are voting for 5 full-time police officers. This budget is a “guideline”.

There was further conversation regarding wages and which employees fall under which category. Snow removal was declared to be “street salt”. Someone asked why “wages” can’t be lumped together, simplifying it to which Edie said things are set up according to the auditors instructions. Further discussion took place regarding numerous issues.

APPROVAL OF 2015 BUDGET:

Janet Rump made a motion to approve the 2015 Budget in the amount of \$4,180,607.00, seconded by Harry Hefty. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rump	- yes	Miller	- yes
Hefty	- yes	Folk	- yes
Marshall	- yes	Young	- yes

All in favor. Motion carried.

TAX ORDINANCE #2014-02:

Harry Hefty made a motion to approve Ordinance #2014-02 increasing the annual tax rate to 18.25 mills. Ralph Young seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hefty	- yes	Folk	- yes
Marshall	- yes	Young	- yes
Miller	- yes	Rump	- yes

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESOLUTION 2014-02R:

Harry Hefty made a motion to approve Resolution 2014-02R regarding the police pension. No contributions will be made by uniform employees. A second was made by Ralph Young. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Marshall	- yes	Young	- yes
Miller	- yes	Rump	- no
Folk	- yes	Hefty	- yes

Motion carried by majority vote.

**RESOLUTION
2014-03R:**

Edie said this resolution will reduce electric by 3.23% for businesses. She had Jim Harvrilla double check the math. Residential rates will stay the same. There was further discussion regarding electric, revenue neutral, the effect on Moran Industries versus Buzz’s, demand meters, etc. Gladys Klapp of 1037 Elm Street asked Council for fairness in their decision. Brent Frey said it’s senseless to change anything, his tenants will benefit; home and business owners will not benefit. President Miller said unfortunately no one wins, we want to keep business in Watsonstown and encourage business to stay in Watsonstown. She said this is the only way to give businesses a break and still make the amount of money needed to run the Borough. Gladys spoke of her electric bill and again asked for fairness. A motion was made by Harry Hefty, seconded by Dan Folk to approve Resolution 2014-03R. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Miller	- yes	Rump	- yes
Folk	- yes	Hefty	- yes
Young	- yes	Marshall	- yes

All in favor. Motion carried.

**LETTER
FROM
DR. CHOMAS:**

President Miller read a letter from Dr. Chomas concerning the possible reduction in the police force. He urged Council to maintain a police force in order to provide Watsonstown with 24 hour coverage 7 days per week. President Miller thanked Dr. Chomas for his letter.

**AMY PITOU –
GREENWAY
COMMITTEE:**

Amy Pitou spoke on behalf of the Greenway Committee. She said she has been in contact with businesses and they are very interested in landscaping with ornamental grass and small shrubs in the grassy area in front of the Family Dollar. She mentioned various things that need to take place in 2015 in order to move forward with the project. Janet asked if the Borough crew will be responsible for maintaining these plants and the landscaping for these businesses.

**MEETING
RULES:**

Janet Rump voiced her displeasure regarding a recent meeting which was held in Council Chambers without the Borough Manager’s knowledge nor to the knowledge of other committee members. She stressed the importance of following Borough guidelines and rules; she questioned the motive behind the meeting. Harry Hefty said it was a “meet/greet” session only. President Miller said she was asked to come and “meet” Amy Pitou

and that's what she came for. After a heated discussion, President Miller redirected the meeting back to the question of "who" will be responsible for the care of the landscaping in front of the Family Dollar.

**CARE OF
LANDSCAPING:**

Amy Pitou she and her husband, Terry Kirchner and anyone else that wants to volunteer to help will be taking care of the plants and shrubbery in front of the Family Dollar. Many people were speaking. Regarding the written agreement with the owners of Family Dollar, Solicitor Tira said he needs direction from Council in order to move forward; President Miller said Council wants nothing done with an agreement until after the first of the year. The money for this project is in the 2015 budget. President Miller said it should be put under old business.

**SECURITY
CAMERAS:**

Terry Kirchner stated he thought cameras should be put in every office at the Borough. He also thinks the employee handbook should state female employees do not ride in Borough vehicles with male employees. Edie confirmed there is no camera in her office nor the secretary's. Further discussion took place.

**WREATH
AT CEMETERY:**

Janet Rump asked if anyone knew who put the beautiful wreath on at the cemetery; the Mayor said it was not him. Janet said people had asked, possibly it was placed by the Cronrath's.

**SPAY
NEUTER
PROGRAM:**

Harry Hefty spoke of possibly sponsoring a cat spay/neuter program in the Borough. Cindy Crozier elated on programs that have been adopted in surrounding communities to spay and neuter cats as well as the two volunteer organizations she is involved with. President Miller directed Edie to check if there is \$3,500.00 in the budget for this project. It is to be put on the agenda for the January Council Meeting.

**EXECUTIVE
SESSION:**

President Miller said an Executive Session would follow tonight's meeting for litigation and personnel.

**TREE
TRIMMING/
REMOVAL:**

The Mayor said there appears to be continued work on dangerous tree removal and trees that interfere with power lines. He said he attempted to contact Dale Stahl regarding the work; Edie said the Mayor should call her. President Miller said any questions regarding the streets should be directed to the Borough Manager.

**STREET
SWEEPER:**

Dan Folk said he has found two different places to get parts for the street sweeper and getting prices. They hope to start the repairs on the street sweeper after the holidays.

**SNOW
REMOVAL:**

President Miller said the crew did a great job last week with the snow. Edie agreed and mentioned we were short crew members during the storm.

**VACATED
ALLEY IN
QUESTION:**

The Mayor said he received a call regarding the alley where Dick Cotner lives behind Becker's. Edie said she, Dan Folk, Ralph Young and Dale Stahl went and looked at the alley. Dale said it was never an alley; Edie said the maps were checked and it is not marked a vacated alley. It was always plowed as a courtesy; the group decided private driveways cannot be plowed. Edie called Mrs. Becker and asked if she is able to provide paperwork showing the area in question is a vacated alley. Janet Rump stated alleys don't get plowed unless there is 6 inches of snow; Edie and President Miller agreed. It was a Council decision years ago not to plow alleys unless there is at least 6 inches of snow.

**MAPPING
SEWER LINES:**

Jack Marshall spoke of the continued mapping of the sewer lines.

THANK YOU:

The Mayor said that he and Acting Chief Faux sent a package to a 5th grader in California regarding our area. The Mayor read a return thank you from the child.

**POLICE
DEPARTMENT:**

Acting Chief Faux spoke in detail regarding a report provided to Council members and the Mayor. He spoke in detail regarding Watson's crimes cleared rate versus Hughesville and the Pennsylvania State Police. He spoke on various subjects including the Borough's "police presence", police assistance with the fire department and ambulance. He continued with examples of recent incidents, complaints and accidents. He said 13 part-time officers have come and gone in recent years; they should be considered a supplement to the police department not a replacement for full-time police officers. He spoke of the stress involved in trying to cover shifts with the current 4 part-time police officers whom are employed fulltime elsewhere. He concluded that the residents of Watson deserve a full-time, 24 hour, 365 day per year police department; the reduction of the department will not be "if" but "when" tragedy will strike and an officer not be available. President Miller said she has been approached by 3 or 4 residents who stated they are willing to pay additional 2 mills of taxes for full-time police coverage.

NEWSLETTER:

Sandy Hendricks asked if the police department could start including police information in the newsletter for the residents. Faux said the monthly complaint and incident police log could be incorporated into the monthly newsletter.

**CHIEF OF
POLICE:**

Janet Rump spoke regarding the administrative experience and knowledge of scheduling and budgeting as requirements for the next Chief of Police in Watson.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM:

Acting Chief Faux spoke of 70 plus children representing 37 families are currently in the Christmas program. The department continues to take calls for those in need; officers are assisting as time allows.

POLICE:

Jack Marshall spoke regarding his recent comments regarding the police department. He said he has no personal agenda; he is looking into cutting expenses. He has no question regarding the quality of the department but rather can Watsontown afford it. Acting Chief Faux said the police department would be willing to look into those areas that can be cut back to save the Borough money, thus helping the Council to be fiscally responsible. Jack said would appreciate the police department assistance in this matter. There was further discussion regarding need for 5 full-time police officers in order to maintain a 24/7 department. Faux also spoke regarding the transporting of prisoners from prisons to court, etc. Other questions were raised regarding police coverage and our assistance to other police departments.

INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY CODE:

Jeff Kanezo said Marty will send the Borough dates that he is available to come and speak regarding the International Property Code.

3RD STREET PAVING:

Edie said UGI is planning nothing for 2015. Solicitor Tira said a letter should be sent to the water company to correct 3rd Street and a letter sent to UGI stating if further work is done by them, they are responsible for the full cost of repairing the street.

8th STREET RED LIGHT REPAIRS:

Brent asked who is responsible for the repair of the 8th Street red light. He said the fence and wire currently on his property is “getting old”. Edie said she will check into it and find out what Penn Dot meant by “temporary”. Williamsport Electric was mentioned, insurance coverage was mentioned. Edie will report back to Council on her findings.

RENTAL ORDINANCE:

Janet Rump asked if Council will be having a meeting to review the rental ordinance prior to a public meeting. Solicitor Tira said he is looking to Council to give direction on the rental ordinance before proceeding. Brent Frey asked what the problem was with the current rental ordinance. President Miller said Edie will provide Council with a copy of the current rental ordinance for the January meeting.

INTERVIEWS:

President Miller instructed Acting Chief Faux to proceed with setting up interviews with the potential full-time police officers. He is to advise Edie with dates; she will inform Council.

**PAYMENT
OPTIONS FOR
ELECTRIC
BILLS:**

Edie said she and Brendi recently met with West Milton State Bank and First National Bank regarding customer payment options for their electric bills. She would like to meet with the Finance Committee to get their opinion before taking the information to a full Council.

**FEES/
INTENTIONS
QUESTIONED:**

Brent Frey questioned the fees charged by West Milton State Bank collecting our electric bills (\$1,200.00), which benefits the entire community versus a possible spay/neuter program (\$3,500.00). Further discussion took place regarding why payment at West Milton State Bank is no longer an option for Borough residents.

**2015 MEETING
DATES:**

After a brief discussion, Janet Rump made a motion, seconded by Ralph Young to approve the meeting dates for 2015. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rump	- yes	Miller	- yes
Hefty	- yes	Folk	- yes
Marshall	- yes	Young	- yes

All in favor. Motion carried

**JIM SANDERS
REAPPOINTED:**

Jack Marshall made a motion, seconded by Ralph Young to reappoint Jim Sanders as the Borough's Sewer Enforcement Officer. Edie confirmed he is an independent consultant. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hefty	- yes	Folk	- yes
Marshall	- yes	Young	- yes
Miller	- yes	Rump	- yes

All in favor. Motion carried.

**COUNCIL
PRESIDENT:**

President Miller wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**EXECUTIVE
SESSION:**

Solicitor Tira had nothing further but reminded Council of the Executive Session following tonight's meeting, not to re-open to Public Session.

**THANK YOU-
STUDENT
COUNCIL:**

Edie read a thank you from the Warrior Run Student Council for Watsontown allowing them to hold their annual Homecoming Parade.

DONATION:

Edie said a donation was made on behalf of the Watsontown Borough by Uni-Tec to the Home Delivered Meal Program – Northumberland County Agency on Aging. She will send a thank you.

**BUZZ
REYNOLDS:**

Buzz Reynolds spoke regarding his attendance at meetings over the last 15 months and the range of issues discussed by Council during that time. He spoke of the “good old days” versus the empty store fronts that we have today. He spoke of the Right to Know process and the costs associated with asking for information. In conclusion he hopes somehow we can get Watsontown out of the newspaper and moving forward.

**LETTER FROM
WARRIOR RUN
COMMUNITY
CORPORATION:**

Edie said she was in receipt of a letter from Lyle Horn on behalf of the Warrior Run Community Corporation. They asked the Borough to reserve a certain section of the Canal Boat area so they can complete their original plan and purpose. They are concerned there is no coordination of efforts among various groups. They are delighted to work with others on their plans for the area but somehow must be put in touch with each other.

**ADJOURN TO
EXECUTIVE
SESSION:**

There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brendi L. Brooke
Secretary/Treasurer