

Meeting Minutes

Alexandria Borough Council Meeting

Meeting at the Alexandria Firehall

August 14, 2023

Pledge of Allegiance & Prayer at 7:00 pm

Role Call – Vice President Joel Pheasant, Mike Peters, Jane Pilch, Rachelle Hopsicker, and President Judy Scott; also Ken Patterson, Clay from Insurance, Dain Davis

Motion to approve the minutes as presented made by Mike Peters, Vice President Joel Pheasant seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Authorization of Finances and Approval of the Bills – President Scott noted that the State workmans compensation fund is the \$10,000 figure and was paid for the entire year. What's been happening is our meeting schedules have conflicted so we paid for the year.

There is also a check to sign for Brandon Foster's \$75 a month fee – so can we retro pay him tonight and include that in the financial report? Is there a motion to accept? **VP Pheasant made a motion to accept and Mike Peters made a second. All in favor. Motion carried.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

N/A

REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Ken Patterson:

Just mowing grass and trimming trees, we're having trouble with the dog issue – President Scott hasn't heard anything yet, she shared that the dog duties are becoming problematic for the equipment. She said we love dogs, Ken does too, but please people clean up after your pets. President Scott said that they will look at the ordinances and hopefully be able to help resolve this issue.

He was going to fix the ditches at Simpsons and Lillibridges, but had to await a call.

Jane Pilch asked if he got the pile of debris by the Scout House and Ken said that he will take care of it.

President Scott asked if Ken had anything else he wanted to go over and he said no.

Jane Pilch asked about behind the Scout House sign/bulletin board – President Scott said that they are to remove it all together since they aren't using it. Jane said it's past it's prime. Mike Peters will ask at the next meeting.

Mike Peters:

In regards to Scouts – nothing to report right now.

Sewer – he said they just, last month, renewed an operators contract for another 3 years. We had J&J waste Water Services, but one of the John's is retiring and we think the son is stepping in to help – we were pleased with their contract. John Buskirk who's staying didn't raise rates or raise the contract to us. It's a similar contract, it's a no brainer for us because they do so much for us. We are happy to have them for another 3 years.

Fire Department – They are doing a bunch of things. They are getting the parking lot sealed, their tanker financing is now complete, they have a new boat on order through a grant, the ladder truck is 27 years old and it'll cost \$500,000 or a million years out, this building has electrical issues, updating wifi, looking at keyless entry system, and getting security cameras especially as they've had kids doing damage

INSURANCE REVIEW

Clay – couple pieces of housekeeping – renewal application, every 3 years needs done

Clay reviewed the details of the Insurance Application and highlighted any key questions.

Sporting events, fairs, events, etc. on the borough. Rachelle Hopsicker said that we have insurance on the Hartslog Day. With the joint ownership of the playground with Porter we are named as joint owners on their insurance. Has the borough ever requested copies of that to show – we've requested expenses from Porter, but we haven't requested the Insurance Policies President Scott said. She said they need those documents.

He asked if we have any current projects for the borough? We are don't have any projects that we've put out on big, but we've co-signed with the Water Authority their project. If we send out a bid packet to anyone just let him know if you need help. Clay can help put minimum insurance requirements and can get anyone on a level playing field to know what they are building for.

Are you involved in spraying for weed control or anything in the borough? Pres. Scott said no, but we were going to bring it up. Clay said that sometimes you may need a permit to do that. Pres. Scott said do we need a separate type of insurance for that? Clay said that likely the contractor would carry their own insurance. So as long as they are covered we are fine?

Clay asked any trails set aside for biking, atvs, etc. – not right now, but maybe ask again in a few months – Pres. Scott said.

The next thing he reviewed is Airs and Emission Coverage... any civil commotion, any assault and battery – read through disputes and claims, asking council.

President Scott asked when he said about land use rights, we are discussing boundary issues on the 300 block and Brewhouse Lane extension. Are there any disputes, claims or complaints on

wrongful using or land use lines... this is if someone is bringing claim against the borough, not the borough notifying a resident of their boundary issues.

Clay had briefly discussed with Judy about the land along the water and access to that in regard to liability. Is that solely being leased to the Borough? Yes. Basically, what you can do is that the land that would be owned and the easement to it you'll have liability coverage to that. Once the attorneys review everything they will likely require that you name the landowners with liability as well. It just protects them as well. So we would cover liability insurance for the land owners? Clay said they would still maintain their own liability insurance they'll just me an additional insured on your policy as well. They wouldn't want to cancel their coverage, but this would protect them additional in the event the borough was pulled into a lawsuit. It's land with some improvements on it, it's really simple on that end. If any fixtures are added to the land you can add those as well, it's pretty simple. This is nothing high risk or anything detrimental from an insurance perspective. How far are you into this process? It may be a 30, 60, or 90 day timeframe. We'd just need kept abreast of what's going on with it. When you get a copy of the easement, let me read over it so we can ensure the landowners are protected as well.

Jane Pilch asked what's the range of additional expense. Clay said really the expense only comes with additional fixtures. Really at this time it's just land – there may not be a charge on the liability end of it – borough's premium is based on roads, etc. Jane said if we make a big kayak launch, parking lot, etc. that's where the cost would increase to what range? It's not substantial – you're talking about a \$50 addition, maybe. As far as liability tha you have right now – the general you carry runs at \$858 a year – that is roadways, sidewalks, etc. So a location with that with minimal acreage it's not a large charge. President Scott, we want it to be a nature conservation and safe access to the river. President Scott said we are working with DCNR and taking things one step at a time. Clay referred to how nice the local kayak ramps are and how people are really utilizing them.

The replacement cost is coming in at \$74,000 and could reduce coverage amount on that building. You're looking at a replacement cost of like kind and quality. Now that I've been in that building and looking at it, I would do that on the Premium Savings. What are the thoughts of the board on that? Mike Peters said that'd be perfect. President Scott said that she is comfortable with that if you are. VP Pheasant is comfortable as well.

Location 2 corner of Canal and Bridge St. you have buildings, valuables, pavilion, reviewed the value of items and talked about the coverage disbursement. The coverage on the playground equipment may need to go up because the cost of playground equipment has gone up significantly. Clay asked if you have an idea to something comparable? Pres. Scott said around \$45,000 for the bigger unit and we have smaller units. If the slide gets hacked by vandals with, they replace all of it or part? Clay said they'd replace the section. You have a \$500 deductible. It is replacement value – if the area is repairable, they will, but if not, they will replace it.

Continued discussing insurance policy and coverage... talked over limits.

Tori Wilt arrived at 7:42 pm

Clay continued reviewing coverage... you are included in the Pennsylvania Borough's Association as well and there is a dividend of that.

He will reduce the value on the Scout House – 3% higher this year on the Premium change – a lot of that is property, but the building reduction will help offset some of that.

President Scott asked Clay to send council the coverage that's on the Porter/Alexandria Park.

Follow up on Grant Submissions

President Scott said that the project manager on our account for being awarded \$500,000 will cover our new grant application. She said it makes full sense that we are requesting the rest of our monies. This is for the Multimodal Grant – VP Pheasant said this is towards the flood mitigation. Tori Wilt asked this is for \$1.5 mil, President Scott said yes.

Dain Davis read the Engineers Report to clarify what this grant application is for, President Scott will have a meeting later this month for the stormwater drainage amounts. VP Pheasant, President Scott, and Dain Davis helped clarify the grants we're applying for...

Do we want a snapshot of all the grants we are applying for and what they are for...

President Scott said we got a phone call to apply for a mini grant – they've extended the deadline and it's through DCNR. We could apply for to help get us started on the boat launch program. Jane Pilch wants to know where the monies going and coming from. The mini grant closes in September President Scott said. Tori Wilt said what defines a mini grant? President Scott said this one goes between \$30,000 - \$300,000 and requires matching funds. Lucas asked how much matching funds we have in the Borough – President Scott said approximately \$45,000 – we have the American Rescue Plan money of \$37,000; Leslie has deposited it into our general fund and it's been there long enough that we can use in the best way we see fit. We want to use those funds to get more funds. We have to use that before 2024. Jane Pilch asked if President Scott had that conversation unilaterally and President Scott said yes, but she is sharing the conversation so that council can make the decision they see fit. VP Pheasant said when did they give us that money? 2021? Yes, so it's been quite some time. Jane asked about where the \$37,000 is now, President Scott said that Leslie put it in the general fund. We cannot use federal and state funds together – so that's something to keep in mind as well. But because the \$37,000 is in the general fund it is no longer federal. We asked for a waiver on the match of the Multimodal and got it. Tori Wilt do they agree to do the waiver because we're a small borough, is there any stipulation. President Scott said it's up to them. VP Pheasant – the people administering these grants, their job is to give out the job to those who need it. Jane Pilch asked about the matching and clarifying... it was clarified. President Scott said she doesn't want to do anything that could lose our community funding. Pres Scott thanked Dain Davis for his patience and graciousness as well. Dain said you go after some money and then you need enough engineering to come up with costs to go after.

If we can get it together and get on PennDOTs 2026 we can get it done.

VP Pheasant said was the Southern Alleghenies the one we can get for the boat launch. Pres. Scott said yes. She wants to ask council about two grants to apply for.

1. Boat Launch – mini grant – southern Alleghenies
2. LSA grant – the funding would be able to be applied to the stormwater project (applied for a different \$1.5 mil), traffic calming (applied for a different \$1.2 mil) – President Scott would recommend if we got the LSA grant we apply it to the stormwater project because it's intricate and we will likely need more funding.

VP Pheasant asked what did we first apply for? President Scott said the figures. VP Pheasant said it's possible we could get a lesser amount again and by applying for multiple grants and iterations of the same grant we could get the amounts we need. Pres. Scott agreed.

President Scott asked Dain Davis what his input is, he said put it towards stormwater. With the \$500,000 they'll try to assess the condition of the stormwater, their going to get to what's away for the PennDOT right away. They are going to stretch the money as far as they can. Get the big pipes taken care of and pipes to the river. They'll try to find problems that can be fixed easier with the one big Main Street pipe, fix it and flop to smaller pipes in the borough streets. VP Pheasant wants to ensure they don't ship more water to Main Street and then it can't keep up. President Scott said that already all the 200 block is getting taken care of, PennDOT is taking care of that, not us. Jane wanted clarification.

VP Pheasant is in favor of getting us to the goal of getting the things fixed and getting the funding that we need. We don't want to get started and not be able to get fixed what we need. Jane asked what areas we're talking about right now. President Scott said that right now isn't a final design discussion, our mission is to get the funding that we need. President Scott said that when we had the PennVEST meeting they said gather all of the options of funding before applying for them.

VP Pheasant makes a motion to gives President Scott the ability to proceed for the LSA grant on our behalf. Rachelle Hopsicker seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

President Scott asked about mini grant, is there a motion to apply for this? Mike Peters said can we use the federal dollars? What's the idea with it. Tori Wilt asked. President Scott said we've been blessed with the land and now it's in the design phase. We'd have to follow the specifications and requirements; the design would be part of the conversation with DCNR – they want to walk the property with us. It'll be a nature conserve – as far as how it's structured, we'd do whatever is required by DCNR, Huntingdon Conservation, etc. President Scott said it'd be compliant – Dain Davis said it'd likely have a small parking area and then you can use the ramp for innertubes and/or kayaks... it'd be similar to what's done in Mount Union and McVeytown. It'll be whatever Lucas comes up with – VP Pheasant said that Mike Vargo was willing to give us access on his property to go back in to get into the water and not the non-water area. What we

informally talked about with him was putting up a nice little fence so people didn't go onto his property. We'd have to secure that permission from him the same we did the lease of the property. What Dain's saying – trying to put in straight from her property won't be right into the water. President Scott talked about the clearing of the property to keep it nice, so people can picnic and walk to the river, etc. Dain Davis said you don't spend \$30k to put something in by the water and have it float away, it all takes engineering.

VP Pheasant said that I'm a big fan of kayaking and before that we'd innertube – Rothrock is coming out to do a river clean-up and help promote the area. I think it's interesting that when I was a kid we didn't see all that stuff – I'd love to see life in that again. Even as a future business owner

Jane Pilch said why do we have to spend \$300,000 to do this? VP Pheasant said I agree, but we don't have to go all out, but if we have an opportunity to do a nice area for people to picnic, etc. hopefully we can do it for less than \$300,000. The more funding we have available to us, the more accessible you can make it, better. President Scott said that in January DCNR will open up another grant and we are intending to apply for if council will want to.

Jane Pilch asked what else could we use the \$300,000 for? For sidewalk repair, for what? VP Pheasant said that's a reasonable question. Pres. Scott the TA Set-aside program we just applied for is the 600, 700 block traffic calming and street fixes...VP Pheasant said the DCNR grant can't be used for sidewalks, etc. Dain Davis said they used to have a program to put streetscapes in.

VP Pheasant said that the mini grant President Scott is asking for would not be used for sidewalks... now, could we use matching funds for some repair? That's possible. VP Pheasant personally I don't think we are at a stage to fix the sidewalks right before the stormwater drainage...

Tori Wilt asked if we are awarded the funds for the traffic calming, sidewalks, etc. all of that – I think we have a lot of projects, etc. in different directions. Mike Peters said that yea, but we won't know until we get grants and funds to do it. VP Pheasant said yea, the goal would be to get the funds and start the projects in a manner that feeds the water properly, etc. Starting our streetscaping and traffic calming at one end of town and slow people down coming into town then that helps the rest of town. We have to start somewhere. President Scott said that we did include the stormwater and curb ramps in the request so that every aspect is taken into account and connect the projects. All are welcome to review the grant applications. If council would like President Scott to send the grants submitted. Mike Peters makes a motion to apply for the mini grant. Rachelle Hopsicker seconded. Tori Wilt in favor, Mike Peters in favor, Rachelle Hopsicker in favor, VP Pheasant in favor, Jane Pilch opposed. Motion carried.

PILLAR BRIDGE

HRI would like a living tribute, a tree at the park. President Scott spoke with Karlie Shook, she understands the bridge will need maintained and preserved. Karlie will reach out and contact

some people that she'd like to work on the bridge. We aren't coming in and saying what to do at the bridge, but looking to what she would like to do.

Porter TWP Meeting Negotiations

Next Tuesday, 6:00 pm – Mike, yes. Jane, yes. VP Pheasant, maybe. Rachelle, no. Tori, no. President Scott asked if a different time is preferred by council... Tori not available after 6:00 pm the next three weeks. VP Pheasant is available at 7:00 pm – President Scott will ask Porter if that works and John Buskirk, Mike Peters will inform.

HARTSLOG DAY

Jane Pilch made a motion to have Hartslog Day. Tori Wilt seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Last year's letter that Rachelle requested council to write will need written again, she provided that to council.

DAILY NEWS

Jane Pilch felt the Daily News article was that we need to be careful not to shame people into compliance. Mike Peters asked about the article in the paper. Jane Pilch read the article... "Residents asked to Fix Properties". The person who wrote the article went a bit rough, I was surprised to see the article, I agree with Jane it made the town sound a lot worse with rampants problems. We have a couple people who are consistent issues, but I don't think it's a rampant problem in town. Most properties are well kept. When they write an article like this, they want the most attention. Rachelle Hopsicker said they will write what they want no matter what you say. VP Pheasant said they'll make it sound juiciest if they can. Jane Pilch read the quote. President Scott said if people don't maintain properties then all the monies we are applying for will not be looked at kindly. Tori Wilt said I think your intent was good to get people to clean up, and I think Jane's quote she just read is that council was spoken for saying about the maintenance fee. I get the end game to clean it up – but very well like Joel said she can just pull the pieces she wants. It may have ruffled some feathers in the borough that read it. VP Pheasant said that 95% of the readers that read it don't have the back story that we have. The Daily News hasn't had someone at one of our meetings in over a year, when the article came out I was very surprised by it. I was trying to read it from a neutral standpoint, but when I read it from a knowing what we deal with I do understand and feel the frustration. We can't asked them to unpublish an article or that we necessarily want them to. VP Pheasant said he would echo that in the future that we need to be careful what we post on Facebook, but also what we say to the paper because they can spin too. Mike Peters said years ago when I was president they quoted me and I called Rich Irvin because I was completely misquoted. It happens. Jane Pilch said we need to be extra careful to solve our thorny issues.

SOLICITOR REPORT

Jeff said the topic here is mostly the Smith encroachment on the alley. I have discussed with Greg Jackson, he shared a copy of the letter sent to Michael Smith – sent on April 13th – it's good letter that tells him he doesn't have a right to pile his stuff and park his vehicles in the alley. It gave him 7 days to remove them in which he promised the borough would pursue civil action and he would have legal fees. As of two weeks ago Greg hasn't heard anything. I think what we need to do is file that lawsuit which would enforce the private rights that the borough has on that alley by virtue that you own property on it. The borough has never maintained or plowed it so it is a private alley, not public. The law says any lot on a private alley has easement on that alley. Should you all choose to pursue it. Jane Pilch asked if the property we own is along the river? VP Pheasant said that no, it's the parking lot and may include the property gifted to the borough. Tori Wilt asked what it entails – Jeff said we file a lawsuit against the Smiths, it'd be served by the Sheriff, he'll have 20 days to respond to the Sheriff. We may have to frame the issues, have discovery, he'd have the right to take sworn issues also – then you'd go to trial – non-jury trial, just before a judge. We have a pretty strong case. Tori Wilt said it's pretty clear from many conversations – is there a concern of retaliation from him? President Scott, I understand what you're saying and I appreciate that question, but I can't think in that regard, but this is someone who's purposely abused the town and intimidated his neighbors. We can't let it continue because of the domino effect, if we don't deal with it, what if it happens elsewhere? I don't believe we are doing our due diligence if we allow that kind of behavior to continue. Tori Wilt said I get that, I worry about poking the bear. I do. Mike Peters said he appreciates her concern too, but like Judy was saying we can't let that be a deterrent – he's doing whatever he wants to. Tori Wilt said she worries about safety and retaliation. Mike Peters said it is legitimate given what he's already done. Mr. Stover said it will take a minimum of 6 months, straight forward, but hopefully a year from now we could have a firm trial date at least. Jane Pilch asked when and if this does go through – what and where will the borough be responsible for. Mr. Stover said there is a statute passed about a year ago that says the people using a private road must maintain it with their respective usage. You wouldn't even have to use it, but I think the borough would want to use it to enforce it. You'd want to have your maintenance down the road. Mike Peters said that's a good idea, to take our truck and that's our part helping take care of it. Tori Wilt asked do you think its in the best interest to go through with this? Mr. Stover said that I think we can win this. If you don't do anything he will eventually choke it out – if you don't want to lose it you want to do something. Jane Pilch would it be in our interest to ask the owners who border this as well, do you want this? Mike Peters said we have.

Rachelle Hopsicker made a motion to move forward with the litigation. Mike Peters seconded. Tori Wilt, yes. Mike Peters, yes. Rachelle Hopsicker, yes. President Scott, yes. VP Pheasant, abstained. Jane Pilch, abstained. Motion carried.

Jane Pilch asked about the alley. VP Pheasant said so when you walked back there today you can see the alleyway. Jane Pilch said that it appears as though the road ends and turns into people's

back yard. VP Pheasant but it's obvious their blocking it? Jane said, oh yes! She asked if we're willing to maintain the alley? Is it worth it? VP Pheasant says yes, it's worth it.

Fisher-Lane Property

Mr. Stover is drafting the details for the easement. President Scott asked if we're still able to apply for the mini grant while we're working to obtain the property – Mr. Stover said yes, he sees no problem there.

Code and Ordinance Enforcement

Mr. Stover doesn't have it completed yet, but within the next week. His assistant will correspond with Harrisburg with that.

Jane Pilch has the PA – IPL Grant funding source, President Scott told council that this is the one regarding the trees. Jane has reservations about that funding source. She would like to talk about it next month. We are past the deadline, no discussion needed.

Motion to adjourn, Tori Wilt. Jane Pilch seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.