

May 18, 2009, Council Meeting

A meeting of Clarion Borough Council was held on Monday, May 18, 2009, in the Borough Office. President Wilshire called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. All Councilmembers, with the exceptions of Messrs. Herman and Hopkins were present. Also present were Messrs. Ragon and Stutzman, Chief Hall, and Mss. LaVan and Freenock.

ADMINISTRATION

Resolution No. 2009-287, approving 2009 CDBG Application, was unanimously adopted following a motion by Ms. Leonard with a second by Ms. Vavrek.

Resolution No. 2009-288, Fair Housing Resolution, was unanimously approved on a motion made by Ms. Moore and a second by Ms. Vavrek.

Resolution No. 2009-289, directing the President of Council to apply for any and all energy saving grants available through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, was unanimously approved following a motion by Mr. Zerfoss with a second by Ms. Leonard.

Ms. Freenock explained that the renewal notice for the Borough's UPMC Health Insurance coverage contained a 46.2% increase. Attempts were made to negotiate with UPMC but those attempts were unsuccessful. Better coverage is offered by Highmark at a rate slightly higher than what is currently paid. All employees have completed the necessary paperwork so that there will be no lapse in coverage. If approved by Council, the new insurance will take effect June 1st. The coverage is in accord with both labor contracts. Ms. Vavrek made a motion, seconded by Ms. Moore to change insurance carriers as stated. The motion carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was the proposal that all non-union employees who participate in the Borough's health care coverage pay 5% of the monthly premium via payroll deduction spread across both pays per month, commencing June 1st.

Mr. Zerfoss stated that this is wrong; if the Borough was contemplating such a move, it should have been done in January when pay increases went into effect. He stated that his son, Shawn, will be affected if the Arbitrator makes police contribute.

Ms. Vavrek stated that now is a good time to ask for contributions as June 1st is the renewal date for the insurance. Ms. Moore stated that just about every other employer requires employees to contribute to health care costs.

Ms. Freenock stated that she and Mr. Ragon have discussed this matter. They both recognize the state of the economy and its impact on the Borough. Neither has a problem with paying the 5%.

Ms. Vavrek made a motion, seconded by Ms. Leonard, to have all non-union participants in the Borough's health care coverage pay 5% of the monthly premium via payroll deduction spread across two payrolls per month commencing June 1st. President Wilshire called for a roll call vote as follows: Ms. Leonard: yes; Ms. Vavrek: yes; Ms. Moore: yes; Mr. Zerfoss: no; and President Wilshire: yes. The motion carried.

President Wilshire then stated that a conference call was held with Attorney Richard Miller from Campbell Beatty Durant in Pittsburgh. Attorney Miller's rates are significantly lower than what is being charged by Reed Smith. In addition, it is thought that representation from the western part of the state would be better as issues here are significantly different than those back east. There is a program through the League of Cities whereby the Borough would receive several free phone calls and be billed at a reduced hourly rate, similar to the TEAM program through the Borough's Association.

A motion was made by Ms. Vavrek, with a second by Ms. Moore to change firms for labor law issues from Reed Smith to Campbell Beatty. The motion carried by a vote of four yea, with Mr. Zerfoss voting no as he feels that the Borough is paying someone to fight the employees.

PUBLIC WORKS

Ms. Vavrek noted that a part-time summer employee has been hired. Mr. Stutzman discussed clean-up day; there was a truck fire that resulted in no damage but did increase the time worked that day.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chief Hall stated that following review by the Public Safety Committee, two amendments have been drafted altering the fines for violations of the snow ordinance and snow removal from sidewalks. Ms. Leonard made a motion to advertise the proposed amendments. The motion was seconded by Ms. Vavrek and carried unanimously.

HOUSING AND ZONING

Mr. Zerfoss made a motion to advertise two ordinances, one dealing with recreational fires and the other with outdoor furnaces. The motion was seconded by Ms. Leonard and passed unanimously.

RECREATION

Ms. Leonard noted that softball play-offs are being held at the Park. The pool is filled and opening day is May 30th.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Ms. Freenock stated that the Revised Official Sewage Facilities Plan Special Revision Study has been completed and will be on display for 30 days. Thereafter, the Revised 537 Plan will be prepared by PAWC.

OLD BUSINESS

Jason Dailey, the Peer Review Consultant engaged by DCED, presented his final report concerning his review of the Public Works Department. Overall, he is of the opinion that the Department works well and hard and that much is accomplished given its small size. He feels that electrical expertise is lacking and suggested training be pursued. He also suggested that overtime for budgeting purposes be based on actual hours.

Mr. Dailey also discussed the conflicts that arise due to the fact that the foreman's position is in the bargaining unit. It creates difficulties for the Borough Manager and for the Foreman. He stated that this is the case 80% of the time. Mr. Stutzman stated that if the position was removed from the bargaining unit, he would be precluded from picking up a shovel; he is sure that the union would grieve. Mr. Dailey agreed.

Mr. Dailey suggested using an excel spreadsheet to track paving projects; he feels that all roads in the Borough could be repaved over a 10-12 year period (possibly 15 years if prices continue to escalate). He also thinks that an equipment replacement plan should be developed. Samples of both are included in the final report.

Finally, Mr. Dailey disagreed with the Susquehanna Report stating that a palm reader is not a viable option for the Borough. The Public Works staff is small and there are other timekeeping alternatives available. Ms. Freenock stated that the Borough was awarded a grant with the help of Mr. Brian Hayden, from DCED, who is present. The purpose of the grant is to purchase a new computer for Public Works and also software that will be an inventory system and also a work order system. It may also have some payroll applications.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, on a motion by Mr. Zerfoss with a second by Ms. Moore, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy K. Freenock
Borough Secretary