

**BELLEFONTE BOROUGH COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

**January 2, 2018 - 7:30 p.m.
236 West Lamb Street, Bellefonte, PA 16823
www.bellefonte.net**

CALL TO ORDER:

The January 2, 2018 reorganizational meeting of the Bellefonte Borough Council was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Acting President, Mayor Tom Wilson.

Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a moment of silence (to pay respect to fallen Armed Forces members and Council members who have passed).

SWEARING IN: Mr. Evan Duffey

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Randall Brachbill
Ms. Renee Brown
Mr. Evan Duffey
Mr. Jon Eaton
Ms. Melissa Hombosky
Mr. Douglas Johnson
Mr. Michael Prendergast
Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey
Ms. Anne Walker
Mayor Tom Wilson

EXCUSED: None.

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Ralph Stewart, Borough Manager
Don Holderman, Borough Assistant Manager

GUESTS: Emma Gonsalvez, *The Express*

NOMINATIONS:

President of Council

Mr. Johnson nominated Mr. Brachbill for President of Council;
Mr. Prendergast nominated Ms. Tosti-Vasey for President of Council;

Nominations closed. Voice vote for nomination of Mr. Brachbill: Mr. Brachbill, Mr. Duffey, Mr. Johnson voted to nominate Mr. Brachbill.

Voice vote for the nomination of Ms. Tosti-Vasey: Ms. Brown, Mr. Eaton, Ms. Hombosky, Mr. Prendergast, Ms. Tosti-Vasey, Ms. Walker voted to nominate Ms. Tosti-Vasey.

Majority vote elected Ms. Tosti-Vasey as 2018 Council President.

Vice-President of Council

Mr. Johnson nominated Mr. Brachbill for Vice-President of Council;
Nominations closed. Mr. Brachbill was elected as 2018 Vice-President of Council.

President Pro Tempore (serving in the absence of both the President and Vice-President)

Ms. Brown nominated Mr. Johnson for President Pro Tempore of Council;
Ms. Tosti-Vasey nominated Ms. Hombosky for President Pro Tempore of Council;

Nominations closed. Voice vote for nomination of Mr. Johnson: Ms. Brown, Mr. Duffey, Mr. Eaton, Ms. Hombosky, Mr. Prendergast, Ms. Walker
Majority vote elected Mr. Johnson as 2018 President Pro Tempore.

Mayor Wilson turned the seat over to Ms. Tosti-Vasey.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Brief discussion was held on distribution of draft minutes for review. Mr. Johnson would like to continue receiving and reviewing Council minutes prior to the meeting. He added that a motion was made and approved by Council to review the minutes prior to meetings. He was displeased that another course of action was taken.

**Mr. Brachbill moved to approve the Minutes of the December 18, 2017 Council Meeting, as amended;
Ms. Hombosky seconded the motion;
Motion carried.**

CONSENT AGENDA:

(The following items listed on the Consent Agenda are considered routine and will be acted upon by a single motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless members of Council request specific items to be removed for separate action).

None.

REGULAR AGENDA:

COMMUNICATIONS:

Written:

Informational Handout from PSAB Webinar

Mr. Stewart stated that the handout had some good information for preparing for a new Council. Budget reopening was touched on. He explained to Council that after reorganization, the budget may be reopened. The Pennsylvania Borough Code was also mentioned and is available online. Mr. Brachbill suggested a 15-minute work session before the next meeting to discuss the handout.

Patch Management, Inc. Letter

This contains sales information and was not deferred to any committee at this time.

Brief discussion was held on how the Borough obtains vendors for projects. Mr. Stewart offered that the Borough gets referrals from agencies like PennDOT or the Borough Association. Personnel attend workshops on paving and materials.

ORAL: None.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A Nittany Valley Joint Planning Meeting to be held this month (third Thursday) hosted by Spring Township. Meeting begins at 6 p.m.

Spring Creek Water Commission Meeting will be held at the Borough Council chambers on Wednesday, January 17 at 7 p.m. Council representation and alternate for this Commission will be discussed at the next Council meeting.

Bellefonte Safety Committee Meeting will be held the second Wednesday of January in Borough Council chambers at 1 p.m. This is a workplace safety meeting.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Wilson welcomed new Council members and thanked them for stepping forward to serve.

Mayor Wilson reported that he performed 22 weddings, 1 renewal and attended 6 rehearsals. This year he will be doing a wedding in Harrisburg at the State Capital Building.

Mayor Wilson also reported that the two-hour holiday parking policy was no longer in effect.

Christmas tree pick up will run through the month of January and will be collected on residents' normal day of trash pickup.

A change to the ash collection was announced. Ash collection will now be picked up on the day of residents' refuse collection. Ashes will not be picked up if they are warm.

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS:

ZONING/PLANNING:

HARB:

OLD BUSINESS:

Presentation 2017-2018 Borough Projects

Mr. Stewart explained the Borough organization chart. He stated that the residents are at the top of the chart and the Borough Council and employees are here to service the residents with the services the Borough provides. There are many services under the Borough's umbrella; i.e., refuse, fire, public works, water and wastewater operations, the Borough Authority, zoning enforcement, permitting through Centre Region Code and compost facility. The IDA oversees the armory property development and waterfront development. Both are underway. HARB, Zoning Hearing Board, and commissions such as Planning Commission, Shade Tree Commission were mentioned.

Mr. Stewart went on to explain that the Borough provides a high quality of life to the citizens and focuses on vibrancy and sustainability.

Budgeting was discussed, and resources are used wisely. Tax base through real estate revenue is a significant portion of resources. Water, refuse and water treatment are the funds able to be used to operate the Borough government. The state mandates this. Economic development was also discussed briefly. Improved recreation; i.e., parks and the incubator, were also mentioned. Mr. Stewart offered that the Borough encourages small business growth in the community. Walkway and bike path improvements were also included as high quality of life projects that help bring a diverse population to Bellefonte. Resources are sought out for many of these improvements. Connectivity to neighboring communities is desired.

The waterfront property brings promising prospects for the community as well as the armory parcel.

Being over 200 years old, Bellefonte's infrastructure is old and stormwater and piping can be a challenge. These will be issues to be dealt with by Council in the coming year. Improvement in downtown water pressure is ongoing. Code mandates that multi-family units are sprinklered. Pressure is key to maintaining these systems.

The water treatment plan project will be moving forward in 2018.

The Liberty Swing project was commended. This project provided high quality recreational opportunity to all residents. Mr. Stewart offered that this was an outstanding project and many people had a hand in its success.

At the end of 2018, the public works union contract will expire. There are two unions in the Borough, the police, and public works. Negotiations for a new contract usually begin mid-year, with hopes to have everything wrapped up by year end and ratified at that time. Mr. Holderman provided copies of the contracts to new Council members for review.

Mr. Stewart offered more information on the Pennsylvania Borough Code and the Bellefonte Borough Code which can be found online. The Bellefonte Borough Code contains local laws.

OTHER:

Council Code of Conduct was developed a few years ago by Council. Signature is voluntary.

Council-issued laptops were discussed. This was an attempt at paper reduction. Computers will be provided shortly as Council transitions. Personal computers and personal email use was strongly discouraged considering the Sunshine Law in the event of a Right to Know Request.

Budget reopening was discussed. It can be reopened from now until mid-February for reconsideration.

A new Council orientation is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, January 13, 2018.

Chief Weaver discussed the Borough Code book. He explained that Mayor Wilson oversees the police department. He invited Council members to contact him with any concerns or issues. Ms. Tosti-Vasey added that Chief Weaver has offered ride-alongs to Council members in the past. She believes it is an excellent opportunity.

Mr. Stewart also mentioned the conflict of interest forms. In the event of a financial interest by a Council member on a specific topic of discussion, the conflict forms should be used. This form will allow the Council member to abstain from voting on the issue.

The Bellefonte Ordinances were discussed. Messrs. Holderman and Stewart explained that the ordinances have been reviewed over the past few years. The code has been re-codified. Ms. Tosti-Vasey would like to embark on a more intense review of the ordinances in the coming year so that Council members know what our local laws are. Mr. Stewart indicated that this can be done in work sessions. Mr. Holderman interjected that keeping the codes up to date is one of the most important tasks to be undertaken.

NEW BUSINESS:

Consideration of Appointments – Mr. Stewart explained the various positions.

Mr. Brachbill moved to appoint Jeffrey Stover, Esquire as solicitor for the Borough of Bellefonte;

Ms. Hombosky seconded the motion;

Motion carried with one nay (Ms. Brown).

Mr. Johnson moved to appoint Deb Berger as Treasurer for the Borough of Bellefonte;

Ms. Brown seconded the motion;

Motion carried.

Mr. Johnson moved to appoint Gary Hoover as Assistant Treasurer for the Borough of Bellefonte;

Mr. Prendergast seconded the motion;

Motion carried.

Mr. Johnson moved to appoint Stanley Wallace as Sewage Enforcement Officer (SEO) for the Borough of Bellefonte;
Mr. Duffey seconded the motion.

Discussion was held regarding the fee schedule. It was confirmed that he is an independent contractor. Mr. Stewart indicated that he is only used on an as-needed basis. Mr. Brachbill inquired as to why some residents in Bellefonte are not connected to the public sewer. Mr. Stewart explained that there are only a handful of these unconnected properties remaining in the Borough.

Motion carried.

The Library Board was discussed. Mr. Stewart indicated that Ms. Brown was a former Council appointee. Recently, there has been no interest from Council to serve. Mr. Sam McGinley held this seat even though he is not a Borough resident. He is on the HARB Board. He does not wish to renew his appointment to the Library Board. If no one from Council wishes to fill the vacancy, Mr. McGinley has someone in mind. Ms. Hombosky expressed a preliminary interest in this appointment.

Ms. Tosti-Vasey interjected that regarding the ABC appointments; she would like to review the nepotism policy to assure compliance. Mr. Duffey inquired about conditionally approving appointments with the opportunity to rescind if an issue arose after review of the nepotism policy. Ms. Tosti-Vasey indicated that she would prefer to wait to review the policy. It was noted that many of the appointments are reappointments.

Discussion on the nepotism policy was held. Ms. Tosti-Vasey confirmed that the policy pertained to employees as well as committee appointments. There was discussion held on volunteerism being hard enough to come by and then applying nepotism to the committee positions.

In the interest of keeping things moving, and not interrupting any ABC business, Mr. Stewart recommended the conditional appointments. Several ABC's will meet this month. The Authority, HARB, and IDA will meet prior to the next Council meeting. Housing Appeals has an application before them and they may also be meeting this month. Members will be unable to vote at these meetings if they are not reappointed.

Mr. Prendergast moved to conditionally approve the reappointment of the ABC vacancies as follows: HARB, Pat Long (exp. 12-31-2022), Housing Appeals Board, Frank Halderman (exp. 12-31-2022), Barry Spicer (exp. 12-31-2022) and Brian Walker (exp. 12-31-2022), IDA, Greg Wendt, Planning Commission, Nathaniel Day (12-31-2021), Shade Tree Commission, Mike Theuer (exp. 12-31-2020) and Meghan Tooker (12-31-2020), Vacancy Board representative and Stormwater Engineer, Donald Franson, pending review of the Borough nepotism policy;
Mr. Duffey seconded the motion;

Mr. Brachbill expressed his concern over massaging the nepotism policy. Mr. Prendergast suggested re-reviewing the policy. Ms. Hombosky disagreed and indicated that 6-9 months was spent on the policy with Council approval. Mr. Holderman interjected that with the conditional approval there is still an option to remove a candidate if need be. Mr. Stewart indicated that the appointments are done at the first meeting of the year with new Council as recommended by the Borough Association. Mr. Brachbill suggested that the information relative to the ABC appointments and reappointments should have been sent out earlier; i.e., December, November and compared with the policy to assure that there were no conflicts. It was also mentioned that the new members have never seen the nepotism policy and do not know its contents. A policy handbook will be distributed to the new Council members. Earlier action on confirming a volunteer's desire to remain on a board was discussed as more practical. All ABC volunteers will be given a nepotism form and will be kept on file.

Additional ABC's include Council Member to serve on the Centre Area Cable Consortium. This group oversees franchise agreements with Comcast and use of the municipal rights-of-way. The Vacancy Board also has a vacancy. A Bellefonte resident should be appointed to this position. It is very unlikely that this member would be utilized but still needs to be appointed.

The Fire Protection Task Force was discussed in brief. Mr. Brachbill is Chair of the task force as he is a member of the safety committee.

Mr. Stewart also mentioned that Council recommended at their previous meeting to recommend appointment of Mr. Johnson on the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization. Marion, Walker, and Benner Townships are also involved in this decision. Marion and Walker are both in agreement with the appointment of Mr. Johnson. Currently Benner has a representative serving on the CCMPO, but he has not heard anything from them. The first meeting is late February.

Per Ms. Tosti-Vasey, vacancies are to be advertised on the website as follows: Vacancy on HARB, Vacancy on Housing Appeals Board, Nittany Valley Joint Planning Commission, and an alternate and regular position on the Zoning Hearing Board.

Motion carried.

Centre County Library Board and the Centre Area Cable Consortium (CACC), requiring Council appointment were discussed. Ms. Hombosky preferred to hold off her appointment to the Library Board until the next meeting.

Ms. Tosti-Vasey indicated her willingness to serve on CACC. Mr. Stewart briefly described the negotiation process relative to this organization.

The Spring Creek Watershed Commission alternate was discussed briefly. Mr. Eaton expressed interest in this position.

Mr. Johnson moved to appoint Mr. Eaton as alternate to the Spring Creek Watershed Commission;
Mr. Brachbill seconded the motion;
Motion carried.

Mr. Brachbill offered that he has been on the Nittany Valley Joint Planning Committee for four years. He was appointed as Council representative. He is willing to continue serving if Council so desires. He is also Safety Committee Chair.

Ms. Brown moved to approve the reappointment of Mr. Brachbill to the Nittany Valley Joint Planning Committee.

Mr. _____ seconded the motion;

Motion carried.

Memo – Consideration of Modification to Council Committees

Mr. Stewart explained the process of the appointment of committee members by Council President. Ms. Hombosky offered that she served on two committees that took up a lot of time. Mr. Brachbill spoke against the committees, as some take up more time than others. He explained that Council members are often contacted in their capacity as committee members instead of residents calling the Borough office directly to report an issue or concern. He went on to explain that the number of committees exhausts a lot of Messrs. Stewart and Holderman's personal time. He believed that work sessions can be held in lieu of committees. Mr. Prendergast interjected that if the committees are dissolved then they can always be reinstated in the future. Mr. Wilson stated that eliminating the committees may aid in getting other members of Council involved in issues and perhaps giving it a 6-month probationary period. It would free up staff time and make the process of doing business more efficient and more informative to the group as a whole as opposed to individual committee members. Ad Hoc committees were also mentioned as an alternative to a set committee. Another benefit to eliminating the committees would be to get all Council members on the same page the first time so that when a vote is needed, all are properly informed and educated on the issue and can be passed more efficiently.

Ms. Tosti-Vasey believed that a Human Resources Committee and Finance Committee would still be needed. Ms. Hombosky was willing to try the new proposed group committee as well, but stated that she did not think it would be an efficient use of time. She was concerned that the lack of committees would cause Council members to spend more time at meetings when discussions go off topic. She understood the concept of better understanding the other "committees" and the work that they do.

Mr. Holderman offered that the committee elimination was not a proposal due to time spent on meetings by himself or Mr. Stewart. This suggestion was more about communication. Both Mr. Holderman and Mr. Stewart felt that this would be a better way to enhance communication with the full Council. This is due to feedback that they receive about not having knowledge of a topic. Staff wishes to provide Council with all the information they can so that Council can make the very best decisions. Mr. Stewart indicated that when the memo was written, at the time, two Council members were lost. They expressed frustration with the amount of time it took at two meetings a month. Two good volunteers were lost to time constraints. Mr. Stewart considered alternatives to the current system.

Ms. Hombosky would like to see the work sessions productive and focused and perhaps broken into segments.

Mr. Brachbill moved to propose having work sessions in-lieu of individual committees running 6-7:30 p.m. based on information that needs to be

discussed. This would be on a trial basis for a 6-month period through June 30, 2018. Exceptions: Parks and Rec, Fire Executive Committee, Safety Committee, and Human Resources.

Mr. Prendergast seconded the motion;

Appointments of Council members to head up prior committee tasks were discussed. These individuals would oversee notifying Council members of upcoming events or issues and keeping everyone on board.

Regarding the Human Resources committee, it was suggested that the Borough Manager should handle the hiring process. Mr. Holderman suggested HR operating as an Ad Hoc committee. Mr. Johnson stated that the HR committee should be a policy-driven committee and not oversee hiring and firing of personnel. Mr. Prendergast agreed.

It was confirmed by Ms. Tosti-Vasey that individuals would be appointed to chair the committees. For the work sessions, topics would be discussed as would be listed on the work session agenda. Mr. Johnson stressed that topics would need to be prioritized.

Mr. Brachbill amended his motion as follows:

Mr. Brachbill (as spoken by Ms. Tosti-Vasey) moved to create a six-month committee as a whole with one person appointed as a point person from the old committees who will inform Messrs. Stewart and Holderman by Wednesday prior to the Council meeting as to what agenda items would come from their particular point of focus;

Mr. Prendergast seconded the motion;

Motion carried with one nay (Ms. Hombosky).

Council members will relay their committee preferences (first and second choice) to Ms. Tosti-Vasey.

Select Date/Time for Council Orientation –

Mr. Stewart suggested Saturday, January 13, 2018 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. This would include a drive-by familiarization of facilities. Perhaps in spring and summer tours can be accommodated.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Brachbill mentioned that he would like to generate some tourism through the armory property. He realizes that it is not ADA accessible, but it would be interesting to people. Mr. Stewart stated that there are issues such as accessibility, lack of restrooms, and liability issues to consider.

A Borough/County joint town hall meeting was discussed briefly. Mr. Stewart also discussed a possible joint Planning Commission/Council meeting early in the year to discuss the Centre Crest property.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business coming before Council,

**Mr. Brachbill moved to adjourn the January 2, 2018 Council meeting;
Mr. Prendergast seconded the motion;
Motion carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.