

BELLEFONTE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Regular Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

July 15, 2024 - 7:30 p.m.

236 West Lamb Street, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania 16823

www.bellefonte.net

I. CALL TO ORDER (Council President Kent Bernier)

The July 15, 2024 meeting of the Bellefonte Borough Council was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Kent Bernier, *President*
Mr. Randall Brachbill
Ms. Deborah Cleeton
Ms. Barbara Dann, *Vice President*
Mr. Douglas Johnson, *Pro Tempore*
Ms. Shawna McKean
Ms. Rita Purnell
Ms. Johanna Sedgwick
Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey
Mr. Christian Larson, *Jr. Council Member*
Mayor Buddy Johnson

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Ralph Stewart, Borough Manager
Mr. Don Holderman, Assistant Borough Manager
Mr. Bill Witmer, Police Chief
Mr. Robert Holt, Police Officer
Ms. Julie Brooks, Borough staff member

IV. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

- Tosti-Vasey requested that information be made available to the public regarding the memo on the Solar Co-Op. The Co-Op is still open through July 26, 2024.
- The Spring Creek Watershed Association will hold its meeting on Wednesday, July 17th, from 7-8:30 pm at the Ferguson Township Building.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT - Agenda and Non-Agenda/General Items and Comments

Sajay Samuel, a representative from Penn State, spoke on behalf of the group “Justice in Palestine”. He encouraged the Bellefonte Borough to join the movement to pass a resolution to call for, among other things, a cease fire. This resolution was presented to Council.

Stacy Hall, a Bellefonte resident, spoke regarding their group, Centre County Cranes for Peace, which makes paper origami cranes to show support for Palestine and Gaza. She also encouraged Borough Council to join the movement to pass the resolution.

Reem Abdou, a member of the political action group “Students for Justice in Palestine”, also encouraged Borough Council to join the movement to pass the resolution.

John Holst, a borough resident, spoke about the situation in Palestine and Gaza and encouraged Borough Council to join the movement and adopt the resolution. He noted that US tax dollars are being spent to fund Israel’s military. He stated that over \$100,000 of Bellefonte’s tax dollars are being used to fund the effort annually.

Tamir Sorek, a representative from the PSU group “Academics for Peace”, also spoke regarding the situation in Palestine. He also encouraged council to join the movement and adopt the resolution.

Matt ?, a representative from the PSU group “Student Committee for Defense and Solidarity”, also encouraged the Bellefonte Borough to join the movement to pass a resolution to call for a cease-fire to stop genocide. He noted that while smaller municipalities like the Bellefonte Borough cannot necessarily stop the US government from shipping weapons overseas, what the Borough and other local governments can do is help to apply pressure to the US government by passing decisive Cease Fire Resolutions. He noted that Palestinians have basic human rights, and it is everyone’s responsibility to help Palestinians fight for those basic rights.

Yusuf Shabana, a representative from the “Islamic Society of Central Pennsylvania”, also encouraged the Bellefonte Borough to join the movement to pass the resolution. He encouraged council to take a stance against the conflict of loss in this situation.

Julia Kasdorf, a borough resident, spoke to also encourage the Bellefonte Borough to join the movement to pass the resolution to call for a cease-fire. She noted that State College Borough has joined the movement to call for a cease-fire.

Oliver ?, a borough resident, spoke to also encourage the Bellefonte Borough to join the movement to pass the resolution. He also noted that US taxpayer dollars are being used to fund the genocide in Palestine and Gaza.

Dan Letwin, a resident from State College, spoke to also encourage the Bellefonte Borough to join the movement to pass the resolution.

Maria Vetter, a borough resident, also spoke to encourage the Bellefonte Borough to join the movement to pass the resolution that will condemn the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip, and demand a full and permanent cease-fire in Palestine.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS (Written)

Memo from Bellefonte Authority pertaining to the Big Spring Cover – possible wellhead locations in Talleyrand Park. No council action is requested.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA (will be acted upon by a single motion unless otherwise noted)

Dann motioned and Johnson seconded to approve the Consent Agenda, items - minus the July 1 Council Minutes. Motion to approve Consent Agenda items as noted above carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	yes
Mr. Randy Brachbill	yes	Ms. Rita Purnell	yes
Ms. Deb Cleeton	yes	Ms. Johanna Sedgwick	yes
Ms. Barbara Dann	yes	Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey	yes
Mr. Doug Johnson	yes		

Discussion regarding changes to minutes. It was suggested that one person on council be appointed to review any suggested changes to minutes. Ralph Stewart volunteered, as Council secretary, to review suggested changes for approval.

Roll call vote to approve Consent Agenda Item 3, Council Meeting Minutes July 1, 2024. Motion to approve the minutes carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	yes
Mr. Randy Brachbill	yes	Ms. Rita Purnell	yes
Ms. Deb Cleeton	yes	Ms. Johanna Sedgwick	yes
Ms. Barbara Dann	yes	Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey	yes
Mr. Doug Johnson	yes		

VIII. REPORTS

Mayor Johnson

NONE

Police

- June 2024 Report
- Chief Witmer and Officer Holt Verbal Report
 - Chief Witmer noted that the Bellefonte Borough Police Department has been active in the past month with public relations activities.
 - The department had a table at the Bellefonte Children’s Fair
 - Pizza Mia held “Pizza with Police” and Chief Witmer thanked John Jennings, owner of Pizza Mia for his generosity in donating food for this event.
 - The department also attended and assisted with the 35th annual Bellefonte Cruise. Chief Witmer thanked the surrounding communities for their assistance with the event. There were 23 officers assisting from Spring Township, PSU and State College and Patton Township police departments. Their assistance was greatly appreciated.
 - The department was also able to complete some required trainings.

- Officer Holt (23 years of service with the department) noted that morale has improved with the administration changes. He noted that the new officers are doing well in their positions.
- Staffing: the department is in the process of hiring more officers. They have had 6 applicants for open positions. Out of the 6, 4 are under consideration.
- Chief Witmer and Officer Holt came up with goals for the department and they are working on meeting those goals. They are working to establish good relationships and communications with Borough staff and the community. Chief Witmer is thankful for all the support from the Borough.
- Mayor Johnson publicly thanked the department for their service.

Office of Community Affairs (OCA)/Historical and Architectural Review Board (HARB)

1. Recommended for approval:

177 E. Linn Street (Tooker) – Replacement of existing deck in rear of house.

Tosti-Vasey motioned and Brachbill seconded to approve the above listed project. No discussion. Roll call vote. Motion to approve the project carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	yes
Mr. Randy Brachbill	yes	Ms. Rita Purnell	yes
Ms. Deb Cleeton	yes	Ms. Johanna Sedgwick	yes
Ms. Barbara Dann	yes	Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey	yes
Mr. Doug Johnson	yes		

IX. CURRENT and OLD BUSINESS

Memo from Finance Director answering questions asked at the July 1, 2024 Council Meeting. Response was read aloud to Council.

- Tosti-Vasey clarified that she would like to see Council create a Reserve Fund Report. She agreed to send an email regarding this to Council.

X. NEW BUSINESS

8th Annual Dylan Crunick Memorial Charity Baseball Tournament request for fee waiver.

Johnson motioned and Cleeton seconded to approve the requested fee waiver for the 8th Annual Dylan Crunick Memorial Charity Baseball Tournament held on August 10th & 11th at the Governor’s Park Baseball field. Discussion included Tosti-Vasey questioning waiving the fee as the Charity is not Bellefonte-based. It was clarified that the Charity is based in Bellefonte and as such the fee waiver is warranted. Roll call vote. Motion to approve carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	yes
Mr. Randy Brachbill	yes	Ms. Rita Purnell	yes
Ms. Deb Cleeton	yes	Ms. Johanna Sedgwick	yes
Ms. Barbara Dann	yes	Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey	no

Mr. Doug Johnson	yes	
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Vacancy Announcement: There is a vacancy on the Bellefonte Borough Authority with a term ending December 31st, 2028. It was recommended that Council have a recommendation available for an appointee before the August Council meeting. It was requested to move the application deadline earlier and hold a special meeting to review applicants to reduce the application/appointment time.

CATA Non-participating Municipality Service Agreement.

Cleeton motioned and Brachbill seconded to approve CATA Non-participating Municipality Service Agreement. No discussion. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	yes
Mr. Randy Brachbill	yes	Ms. Rita Purnell	yes
Ms. Deb Cleeton	yes	Ms. Johanna Sedgwick	yes
Ms. Barbara Dann	yes	Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey	yes
Mr. Doug Johnson	yes		

CATA Local Match for State Operating Financial Assistance Resolution No. 07152024-01.

Cleeton motioned and Dann seconded to approve Resolution No. 07152024-01. Discussion included Tosti-Vasey questioning the funding. She noted that the amount exceeds the \$30,000 allotted for CATA. It was clarified that funding for CATA has 2 parts, an operating (\$30,000) and a capital (\$4,000) part. Council will adjust the budget accordingly. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	yes
Mr. Randy Brachbill	yes	Ms. Rita Purnell	yes
Ms. Deb Cleeton	yes	Ms. Johanna Sedgwick	yes
Ms. Barbara Dann	yes	Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey	yes
Mr. Doug Johnson	yes		

Civil Service Commission Amended Rules and Regulations

Brachbill motioned and Dann seconded to approve Amended Rules and Regulations effective July 11, 2024. Tosti-Vasey questioned what changes have been made. The changes are listed in the memo and Chief Witmer stated that the changes were in regard to Act 120 schooling requirements. This did not allow for out of state applicants. The wording was changed to state "an Act 120 school or an out of state equivalent". It was noted there could be further changes in the future. No further discussion. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	yes
Mr. Randy Brachbill	yes	Ms. Rita Purnell	yes
Ms. Deb Cleeton	yes	Ms. Johanna Sedgwick	yes
Ms. Barbara Dann	yes	Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey	yes
Mr. Doug Johnson	yes		

Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association requests to use the Spring Creek waterfront walkway for a community art exhibit.

Dann motioned and Cleeton seconded to approve BHCA request to use the Spring Creek waterfront walkway, in front of the stone wall, for a community art exhibit. Discussion included Tosti-Vasey suggesting that this request go to the Solicitor for review. A concern was also raised regarding the plan for the safety and protection of the artwork during the month-long display. The event organizer clarified that weather damage should not be an issue for the artwork as it is acrylic paint which would withstand weather damage. She further clarified that vandalism also isn't a concern because Bellefonte is a safe community. The theme would be "Our Town – Life on Spring Creek". She gave a list of suggestions for the theme. It was also clarified that the artwork would be secured via a cord with no damage to the wall. The Borough will assume no liability for any damage to any artwork displayed. It was suggested that any participants sign a waiver clearing the Borough of any liability. It was discussed that the display would be during the month of September.

Tosti-Vasey motioned to send this request to the Borough Solicitor for review. Johnson seconded. Discussion included a suggestion that if the display is not approved for the public waterfront walkway, the organizer could approach downtown businesses to see if they would be willing to display the artwork on their properties. No further discussion. Roll call vote. Motion to send this request to the Solicitor carried. Council will review and get back to the organizer by the next meeting scheduled on August 5th, 2024.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	yes
Mr. Randy Brachbill	yes	Ms. Rita Purnell	yes
Ms. Deb Cleeton	yes	Ms. Johanna Sedgwick	yes
Ms. Barbara Dann	yes	Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey	yes
Mr. Doug Johnson	yes		

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.