

BELLEFONTE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
MEETING MINUTES
December 2, 2024 - 7:30 p.m.
301 N. Spring Street, Suite 200, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania 16823
www.bellefonte.net

I. CALL TO ORDER (Council President Kent Bernier)

The December 2, 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- EXCUSED
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. Bill Witmer, Police Chief
Ms. Julie Brooks, Borough staff member

IV. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

- NONE

V. PUBLIC COMMENT - Agenda and Non-Agenda/General Items and Comments (*Oral*)

- NONE

VI. COMMUNICATIONS (Written)

Memo. DCED Survey on Land Use & Growth Management. No council action is requested.

Letter response to CBD 1st floor residential presentation. No council action is requested.

Ribbon Cutting for the Terrapin Bellefonte Store located at 205 Park Place will be held on Thursday, December 19th at 11:00 AM. Date and time are tentative. Finalized details will be available later. No council action is requested.

Spring Creek Water Resources Monitoring Project Request for \$2859 for 2025. Council Action requested to include this amount in the tentative budget for 2025.

Motioned and seconded to include \$2859 in the Tentative Budget for 2025 for the purpose stated. Roll call vote. Motion to approve carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	EXCUSED
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		

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

Consent Agenda includes the following items:

1. Finance	Budget V. Actual October 2024
2. Finance	Budget V. Actual Summary October 2024
3. General	DRAFT Council Meeting Minutes November 18, 2024
4. Finance	Treasurers Report October 2024
5. Finance	Voucher Summary October 2024

Tosti-Vasey motioned and Dann seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. Roll call vote. Motion to approve the Consent Agenda items listed above carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	EXCUSED
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

Junior Council Member Report (November 2024 Report)

- The High School hosted a Coffee Themed Book Tasting event in the Library.
- The Student Council held a Volleyball Tournament and raised over \$1000 for Mini-Thon
- On Veterans Day, the school brought in Veterans to speak to the students
- Fall break was held and there are 3 weeks until winter break.
- The class of 2025 held a blood drive last month
- Spanish Honor’s Society held their induction ceremony.
- NHS held a blanket, coat and hat drive
- Environmental questions and answers are included in the submitted report.

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

The Bellefonte Planning Commission will meet on Monday, December 9 at 5:00 p.m. in the Large Meeting Room/Council Chambers.

HARB will meet on Tuesday, December 10 at 8:30 a.m. in the Large Meeting Room/Council Chambers.

Comments/Additions:

NONE

IX. CURRENT and OLD BUSINESS

Formal Approval of William Witmer as Chief of Police. Council action requested.

Tosti-Vasey motioned and Dann seconded to formally appoint the current Acting Chief of Police, Mr. William Witmer, to the position of Chief of Police of the Bellefonte Borough Police Department. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	EXCUSED
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		

Swearing-in of Police Chief William Witmer by Mayor Johnson

- Chief Witmer made comments regarding his new appointment/position. Congratulations Chief Witmer!

Chief of Police Employment Terms. Council action is requested.

Dann motioned and Cleeton seconded to formally approve the terms and conditions of employment for the Chief of Police position for the period of December 2nd, 2024 through December 31st, 2025, as outlined in the November 18th, 2024 offer letter and the related Memorandum of Understanding between the Borough, Mr. Witmer, and the Bellefonte Borough Police Association, executed November 20th, 2024. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	EXCUSED
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		

Spring Creek Watershed Commission Annual Dues. Council action is requested.

Tosti-Vasey motioned and Cleeton seconded to approve the payment of \$915.75 as part of the 2025 budget. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	EXCUSED
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		

The Draft Budget was presented to council with staff-recommended increases in the Streetlighting Fund and the Fire Department Fund. The increases below were suggested during the budget work sessions. Staff recommends council action to include each in the Tentative and Final Budget.

Parks Funding for 2025. At a council work session where the Parks Fund was reviewed, a request was made to provide winter maintenance to the Waterfront walkway. Adding the winter season maintenance to the Parks Fund will increase the real estate tax by .20 Mills. Council Action Requested.

Dann motioned and Cleeton seconded to approve listing the .20 increase in the Tentative Budget. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	EXCUSED
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		

Public Transit (formally CATA) Funding for 2025. At a council work session where the General Fund was reviewed, a request was made to increase line item 447.000 (formally CATA Expense) Public Transit Funding by \$35,000 for 2025 and to state this in the tentative budget. This increase may result in an increase in the real estate tax of approximately .35 mills. Council Action is requested.

Tosti-Vasey motioned and Cleeton seconded to approve an additional \$35,000 of borough funds to be added to line item 447.000 of the General Fund for the Tentative Budget. Tosti-Vasey moved that the funds be covered by the Reserve Funds rather than through a tax increase. There was extensive discussion regarding the funding for this line item. Roll call vote. Motion carried with 5 yes votes and 3 no votes.

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

Bellefonte EMS Request for funding of 1/2 Mill. Bellefonte EMS is currently funded by Bellefonte Borough at .30 Mills. Council action requested. Council may consider increasing EMS funding by increasing the millage rate.

Cleeton motioned and Tosti-Vasey seconded to increase the EMS Real Estate millage rate to .35 mills.

Dann motioned to amend this motion to .40 mills. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	EXCUSED
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		

Consider approval of the tentative 2025 Budget and to make the tentative budget available for public inspection on or before December 6th, 2024. Council action is required.

Cleeton motioned and Tosti-Vasey seconded to approve the tentative 2025 Budget with or without modifications. Roll call vote. Motion carried.

Mr. Kent Bernier	yes	Ms. Shawna McKean	EXCUSED
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		

Budget Process. The Tentative Budget will be made available in the borough office during business hours and posted on the borough website no later than Friday, December 6th. A public hearing on the Tentative Budget will be held during the December 16th, 2024 Council Meeting. A Tax Ordinance adoption and the 2025 Budget approval will be considered at the same meeting on December 16th, 2024. No council action is requested.

Courtesy Parking. At the Bellefonte Borough Council meeting held on January 16, 2024, Council approved courtesy parking for the 2024 Holiday Season. The first time the parking enforcement officer observes your car with no time on the meter, he will give you a complimentary pass of two hours. On his second pass-through on that same day, with no time on the meter and two hours having passed, a ticket will be issued. Courtesy parking began on November 29, 2024 (Thanksgiving Day) through January 1, 2025 (New Year’s Day). We encourage you to use this opportunity to do some holiday shopping in beautiful downtown Bellefonte. No council action is requested.

Bellefonte Borough Open House. An Open House for 301 North Spring Street is being planned for Thursday, December 5th, from 6 to 8 pm. This is an open invitation to the community to come out and tour the building, and meet borough elected officials and staff. Food donations for the event will be pursued. No council action is requested.

Items for Sale. Large wooden Cherry Desks that have not sold have been re-listed on Municibid (Municibid.com) to be sold. There is no reserve. If the desks do not sell, efforts will be made to donate them to surrounding municipalities. Online bidding will end on December 16th. No council action is requested.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2025 Council Meeting Schedule – proposed. The council will review and make recommendations for changes to the proposed meeting schedule. Council action will be scheduled for the December 16th meeting. No council action is requested.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING ISSUES NOT ON THE AGENDA

Mayor Johnson requested that a future report be submitted/presented regarding the B-Line and transportation to Weis Markets and the new Geisinger building. He would like to see this area added to the available routes.

- It was reported that Giant in Benner Township has 145 employees, and they have lost 14 of their employees – 10% of their workforce, due to transportation issues.

Mrs. Dann commented about the walking trail on Airport Road by the new Elementary Project site. They have reopened some sections of the path, but the path will continue to have disruptions as the construction process continues.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned a 8:25pm.