

## Borough Council Meeting Minutes

November 21, 2023

Meeting called to order by Vice President Morales at 7:00 PM.

**Attendance:** Vice President Morales, Mr. Robol, Mrs. Meckley, Ms. Fawess, Mrs. Mabus, Mr. Derr, Mr. J Pfeil, Mayor Aber, Mr. D Pfeil, Mr. Swartz, (President Walker was absent). Also present: Jess Novinger, Brittnee Vann, Amy Day, Sam Shaffer, Doug Diehl, Chief Zettlemyer, and Atty Wiley

*Motion* to approve the meeting minutes from Nov. 8, 2023:

**1<sup>st</sup> Derr / 2<sup>nd</sup> D Pfeil / Carried**

### Borough Manager's Report

- Mrs. Novinger asked for Council's consideration to allow her to complete the Green Light Go pre-scoping paperwork. It is required prior to being invited to submit a full application to PennDOT, and this would be more improvements towards traffic signals at the intersection of Broadway St (SR 254) and Turbot Ave. The grant, if awarded, has a 20% match (approx. \$100,000.00)
  - *Motion* to allow the completion of the pre-scoping paperwork for the Green Light Go grant **1<sup>st</sup> D Pfeil / 2<sup>nd</sup> Swartz / Carried**
- Completed and submitted the annual 904 Recycling Performance grant. The Borough saw a significant increase in commercial tonnage reported for 2022
- Reminder the Recycling Center will be closed Thursday, 11/23 and Monday, 11/27

### Mayor's Report

- Mayor Aber reminded everyone of the Winterfest activities starting with the Tree Lighting on December 1st in downtown Milton, where the Fire Department will be collecting new unwrapped toys for the tots
- Mayor Aber asked that all parking meters in the Borough be bagged from 12/1 to 12/31 for the holiday season
- The Mayor wished everyone a nice Thanksgiving and if he doesn't see you a very Merry Christmas!

### President's Report

- President Walker was absent. Vice President Morales reported that President Walker is enjoying his vacation and wished everyone a "Happy and Safe Thanksgiving"

### Chief of Police's Report

- Last week Clearview was installing the security cameras – take a look around Council Chambers, the lobby, and outside. Clearview will continue installing exterior cameras across the street after the DPW crew is done with the bucket truck because Christmas decorations and holiday lights needed to be put up downtown. We will get with Clearview to set a date to complete the project once the truck becomes available

- Dan Zettelmoeyer passed his 107 FAA test for drone flight, and we are waiting for the insurance company clearance to make sure it will be in service – within a week or two the rest of the Officers are scheduled to take this test
- A meeting is scheduled with the Winterfest Committee for final planning, Scott, hopefully we can get with you – I know there were a few things last year that were a little unsafe at times, and we want to make sure that doesn't happen this year. The committee received PennDOT permits for road closures this year. I feel it will be a great event, looking forward to it

### **Public Works Director's Report**

- The crew has been out installing the Christmas lights, getting ready for the holiday season. All of the new lights they (WinterFest) wanted are finished. There are some outlets on the light poles that need to be replaced which the crew will be working on tomorrow. The rest of the ornaments will go up tomorrow.
- The Christmas tree for the tree lighting on December 1<sup>st</sup> will be arriving on the 30<sup>th</sup>
- The crew is still working on leaf pick-up. We are working our way through the wards as fast as possible. There have been some complaints about the guys not getting off the truck during leaf pick-up. The new leaf machine runs on hydraulics which requires the crew to stand on the back of the truck, using a joystick. There is no physical way to move that arm off the truck. That's why they are not getting off the truck. So, if Council receives any further complaints, you can inform the residents that this is how the new truck operates. D. Pfeil confirmed that the DPW crew was still getting the job done. Mrs. Meckley commented that she feels this machine does better than ever.
- Leaf pick-up will continue until the first plowable snow, then we convert all the trucks over for winter maintenance. We do have three trucks, right now that are ready to go for winter maintenance; two currently set up to pick-up leaves, however due to vacations/holiday decorating only one truck is picking up leaves.
- The truck that was ordered from New Holland Auto Group back in February is at the upfitter and estimated to be finished at the end of the year

### **Fire Chief's Report**

- Vice President Morales read the Fire Chief's Report as: 24 Calls for Service, 12 Volunteer EMS Calls, and 132 MICU calls (Seth Heddings was absent)

### **Public Comments**

Kris LaVanish (521 Center St)—Ms. LaVanish appeared on behalf of the Milton Public Library with a visual aid. When we discussed the Library budget and the allocation from the Borough to the Library and when that was cut in 2021, we essentially discussed “work harder,” and I believe the library has done it.

In 2022 we brought in 210% of what we brought in the previous year. This past year is the first year we have not drawn on the endowment in any kind of way. We have had an incredible year—an incredible two years. So what's important on this page (referring to visual aid) is that we have saved the community almost \$600,000. So just by using the library, that's almost \$600,000 that the total service area of the library saved. That works out to be East/West Chillisquaque, Turbot Township, and Milton. It's just about

\$48 per person, so the more people use the library, the more money people would save, and I think it's really important to note that.

What we received from the Borough is the same amount of money we received in 2014. Everything that I do costs more money from 2014, and I know that it's a tough job to run the Borough, and I know it's a lot of volunteer time on your guys' part to be here and to help out and oversee everything. And I know that coming up with the budget and raising taxes, that's hard to do. But my point is that we were asked to work harder and I think we did just that. We started a fundraising campaign in May, so in about six months, we brought in almost \$80,000 from the community. Overwhelmingly, the community seems to value the library and what we do, so what I'm asking is that sense of value be reciprocated with the Borough Council.

Each year I try and come and talk about what the library does, and the one thing the library does that I believe is important is our hotspots that we lend out. Right now, there's ten people waiting for hotspots at the library. The program was started with federal funding because of Covid. It's something we started for free and that money has run out. The school no longer provides hotspots for children, but the library does, and we committed to keep doing that because the program is not only an important utilization, but also an essential service that some people don't have access to.

In a year when things were the hardest and our funding decreased and we worked harder, we committed over \$11,000 to throw in extra just so we could provide more support to the community. I can't think of many other services that don't tax. We survive just based on the goodness of everybody and for the goodness of everybody.

What I'm asking for before it's time to propose the budget is maybe the Council could reconsider the allocations provided to the library. We spend a lot of time and effort just to be there for the community, so we're asking that the Borough be there for us as well.

Ms. LaVanish explained how she came up with her figures regarding the amount of money the library helps people save. The \$45,000 allocation that Milton Borough gives to the library based on the municipality of approximately 12,000 residents comes out to about \$4 per person. Even if 20% saved of each person was added into what we get, it would be roughly \$67,000. So another \$17,000 or so.

Then, Ms. LaVanish explained how she contributes to the library's upkeep and what she does. I shovel, mow the grass, spread salt, which is a lot of physical labor. I spend six to seven days at the library. I say this not because I'm special but because the library is special. We all do things, so I'm asking for consideration. I've offered to help grant write, to participate down here at the Borough to do extra. Please use us as a resource. This is a relationship, so please look to us as a resource as well.

Mr. Robol asked some questions regarding how she came to the conclusion of \$48 per person. Ms. LaVanish explained how the money that the library saved the community of a service area of about 12,000 people in East Chillisquaque, West Chillisquaque, Turbot Township, and Milton. Every time an individual does not have to buy a book, that is money saved. Overall, it's the average of what a person would save within the community the library services.

Mr. Robol followed up with a question about what the other communities or municipalities donate to the library. Ms. LaVanish stated that she just met with Turbot Township last week and gave the same spiel. They haven't contributed to the library in the past two years. West Chillisquaque doubled what their contribution was. They committed to \$10,000 for 2024. East Chillisquaque contributed another

\$1,000, so they're at \$4,000 this next year. Mr. Robol said that the Milton Library received \$45,000 (from the Borough) to which Ms. LaVanish confirmed the amount allocated.

Mr. Robol brought up concerns stated on Milton Rants and Raves about the increase in taxes and notes how the Borough could cut the \$45,000 and reduce that, wherein, perhaps Zettlemyer could lose an Officer coming up and they wouldn't have to fill that position if the Council listened to every comment on Rants and Raves. They state we're going to be taxing at a 10% increase.

A debate ensued regarding the raised taxes and the \$45,000 allocated to the library. Ms. LaVanish made the point that she doesn't have healthcare, she does spend 60 to 70 hours at the library. Mr. Robol noted that she is management, so someone in management would typically spend that kind of time on their job. I spent 38 years at Chef Boyardee, 60/70 hours. No more. No less. Ms. LaVanish said, but if that salary is cut for a service that people use, that only saves them money, yet Mr. Robol didn't feel as though that service was saving him money. If someone does not utilize the library, then it won't save them money. However, Ms. LaVanish said, there are people in the community who are on a fixed budget and commented how perhaps Mr. Robol should use the library. Mr. Robol noted that if they were to allocate another \$15,000 to the library, then that would only increase taxes. It's a system of checks and balances, so there's only so much money they can allocate. Should the Council cut Sam Shaffer's staff in half? For that to not happen, the Borough has to raise taxes. It does not make the library any less important.

Vice President Morales diffused the conversation by expressing how the Borough is attempting to improve on actions made in the past. If we potentially raised taxes more substantially, we would have more money in the reserve account that we don't have. This committee has taken upon itself to re-steer the boat and take charge and put money back towards the reserve account because we did pull from the reserves for years. I mean, some years \$300,000. We set a budget for it, we said we budgeted for it. We did not budget for it. It wasn't potentially the right thing to do, but I think this committee has done a good job in taking back the budget. The argument can be made that the pool is not being funded anymore, which was an average \$55,000 a year for the past ten years. Again, that wasn't budgeted. That was cut from the reserves, which was not necessarily the most responsible move. Hopefully, in the near future we can fix that and get Milton on the proper financial track. Again, I appreciate you sharing that information.

Mrs. Meckley asked what percentage of the 12,000 potential users of the library actually use the library? Ms. LaVanish noted that 70% of Milton residents have active library cards. By and large, the largest part of our service area is from Milton Borough.

D. Pfeil asked is she keeps track of yearly, unique usage—the number of people who come in and actually check out books. He has an active library card and he might have used it once six years ago. How many visitors does the library receive in a year? Ms. LaVanish reports on that information yearly, but last year she had about 12,000. D. Pfeil explained how tallying up the entirety of the area that is serviced by the library and then just dividing that does not give an actual number to what is saved across the community. To get back into the numbers and elaborate on what Mr. Morales was saying, the Borough set a firm number for the library that we think will help sustain you until we can actually revisit it after we get through other issues which have to be corrected. Unfortunately, raising taxes for other services is something we need to do until we get a better handle on whether its depreciation scales, et cetera. We're not telling you no indefinitely, but right now we've given you the best we can with our current

situation. Other conversations will still be had, but I just wanted to explain where we're coming from and what the Council deals with.

Lynn Yocum (*314 High St*)—Mr. Yocum spoke on behalf of the library as a board member. He stated that in the past, the library has shown resiliency to bring in the funds they need to provide funds for the community. So the conversation was a handshake, you show us you can do it and we'll be there for you. So we did our part and we're being told we're not a priority over the other things. Yes, we have many priorities. We have many things we have to make sure that we have a safe, happy, healthy community, but the library is a key function in this community. Social workers and the people who need these services the most. It's easy to say that you don't use it, but the library is so much more for a community than the books that sit on the shelves. It's a hub for many families, it's a connection to the internet in a way to have things that they cannot afford, to get homework done, to be a family. We have stepped up to make sure that the library would continue to be a core in this community, and we're just asking that it be taken into just a little more respect by this Borough.

Mr. Yocum replied that he made a post letting people know the information in the newspaper. He claimed he never bashed the Council. Mr. D. Pfeil continued to say that Council is raising taxes. Milton Borough does not own the library. This is a donation that the Borough gives every year to the library because we do not own it. It is not our responsibility to provide budget items to a private entity. I'm talking about the \$45,000 for the library. I'm talking about the budget for why we had to raise taxes to cover expenses. \$45,000 is one of those expenses. We are not responsible for that facility, but we are making a yearly donation to it. As we are able to donate more, we will revisit it. You're talking to us like it's our responsibility to raise the funding for that facility and that's an unfair stance. Mr. Yocum asked the Council to see the value in the library and its services, but at the moment, their hands were tied.

Chad Gonzales (*1310 Grange Hall Road*)—Mr. Gonzalez began by apologizing that he's not a public speaker. He read a statement about the \$150 fee for inspection of rental properties. He asked if anyone on the Council owned rental properties. If you do or you don't, you know the expenses associated with rental properties. Me and my guys have remodeled six of my properties. We're remodeling our seventh as we speak. The cost of sewer, taxes, and now water have gone up; therefore, it's getting harder to get good tenants since the rent prices are starting to reflect these charges. We now have the Borough making us pay \$150 per property for inspections. I have to bring up that one of the Borough's biggest landlords for Northumberland County was the Towers, and I'm not sure whether it's owned by the County or not, but either way, my understanding is they're exempt from this fee. I want you to understand I am not opposed to the inspections. I am for them since people should have a safe and sanitary place to live, but I am opposed to the fee. Doug has been doing Code Enforcement for 20 years and has been doing a fine job. In that time, there has never been a fee because it was about making the Borough safe and sanitary. These are the same houses with the same footprint. I could see if there were added expenses or more houses being taxed, but it's not. In my opinion, this is being done to add more money to the general fund. The reason I'm here tonight is to ask the Borough to look at this fee in a different perspective. I bought a property in this Borough. I own a bar, the only hotel left in this town, and several rental properties. For those of you who know me, you know how hard I work and continue to work. I had a goal to retire at age 50, which brings me to this. You say it's only \$150 per rental, but when you own 26 rental properties, that's \$3900.00 every three years, which equates to \$100 per month. I decided to invest in my hometown that I do a lot for. I have been paying taxes on all my rentals since I owned them, which is a chunk of change. Because I chose to invest in my community and your Borough, I feel that you as the Council, are about to start stealing from me and other rental owners

doing the same thing I'm doing, which is supplying Miltonians with a place to live. If you choose not to revisit this, I'll have no choice but not to buy any more properties within the Borough because I'd be afraid that the whip of a pen from this Council could cost me more money that I've gotten.

Vice President Morales mentioned that Mr. Gonzalez already spoke to Mrs. Novinger about such concerns and that the Borough is going to be considering improvements for this process for instances like hotel owners.

Mr. D. Pfeil said that this decision was not intended to negatively impact local owners. And just hearing how many properties you have, it does bring up some ideas I would like to revisit, and possibly changing that, whether it be a sliding scale of possibly the first \$150 and then it drops from there. If you have any ideas, please talk to me. We have quite a few properties that are in a state of disrepair or vacant and should probably be condemned. We have those fees because then we have some recourse afterwards. I do hear you and I would like to come up with a better solution for this, so thank you for speaking before us today.

Mike Sampsell (*28 Spottswood Drive*)—Mr. Sampsell also commented on rental registration and the inspection process and costs. He didn't quite understand why every three years he has to get his properties inspected. There are problems in Milton and there have been problems in the town. He expanded on an example of sidewalks in Milton. He was confused why some of the problems are not being addressed. The people who live in Milton are the people who pay the taxes, but the point is the rest of the people who are not doing what they're supposed to do and those issues are not being addressed currently and similar issues haven't been addressed for 30 years. He said how the Council are taxing rental property owners, and this money is coming from their pockets, when in reality, the problems in Milton still are not being addressed, despite the raise in taxes, and this inspection cost shouldn't be a consequence for the landlords who do take care of their properties.

Vice President Morales addressed Mr. Sampsell's concerns. You're right. We do want to make Milton better, and we working in the right direction to do that. This is just part of it. It's for the safety and health of the citizens of the town and the properties as well. Mr. Gonzalez spoke up and said how if Milton has property owners that can't afford to fix their places, then the \$150 fee isn't going to help. That's more money that they won't have to be able to fix their property. Vice President Morales said that it is a change, and it doesn't feel fair because it affects those with more properties. But again, we don't take issues like this lightly.

### **Public Works and Cemeteries**

- Nothing to report

### **Public Safety**

- Nothing to report

### **General Government and Finance**

Vice President Morales read the agenda item regarding the reappointment of Mr. Chuck Beck to the Milton Regional Sewer Authority (MRSA) and noted that Mr. Beck had been a member of MRSA for quite some time. He then noted that he personally felt that it was time for new representation, "new blood" and that Ms. Cindy Fawess is the proper person to do that. He asked that Council, prior to voting, consider voting "No" so that Ms. Fawess could be the new MRSA representative. Vice President Morales

called for a roll-call vote clarifying that a vote “Yes” was to reappoint Mr. Beck to MRSA for a 5-year term and a vote “No” was to NOT reappoint Mr. Beck to MRSA.

- *Motion* to reappoint Mr. Chuck Beck to the Milton Regional Sewer Authority Board for a five-year term  
**1<sup>st</sup> Meckley / 2<sup>nd</sup> Swartz / MOTION NOT CARRIED**  
**ROLL CALL VOTE : Yes to reappoint Mr. Beck: 2 Meckley; Swartz / No to reappoint Mr. Beck: 6 Robol; Fawess; Mabus; Derr; Moralez; D Pfeil / 1 J Pfeil Abstained**
- *Motion* to amend the agenda to include: Consideration to appoint Ms. Cindy Fawess to the Milton Regional Sewer Authority Board for a five-year term  
**1<sup>st</sup> D Pfeil / 2<sup>nd</sup> J Pfeil / Carried**  
(Fawess abstained)
- *Motion* to appoint Ms. Cindy Fawess to the Milton Regional Sewer Authority Board for a five-year term  
**1<sup>st</sup> J Pfeil / 2<sup>nd</sup> Derr / Carried**  
(Fawess abstained, Swartz opposed)
- *Motion* to adopt Resolution #22-07 approving a Statewide Local Share Assessment grant application submission to be used for the purchase of DPW Equipment  
**1<sup>st</sup> Fawess / 2<sup>nd</sup> J Pfeil / Carried**
- *Motion* to authorize Attorney Wiley to prepare and advertise the Flat Rate Occupational Tax Ordinance #1251  
**1<sup>st</sup> Fawess / 2<sup>nd</sup> Meckley / Carried**
- *Motion* to approve and advertise the Council Meeting dates for 2024, as well as the Reorganizational Meeting date  
**1<sup>st</sup> Fawess / 2<sup>nd</sup> Meckley / Carried**
- *Motion* to accept the Letter of Resignation from Brittnee Vann as Secretary/Treasurer  
**1<sup>st</sup> Fawess / 2<sup>nd</sup> Meckley / Carried**
- *Motion* to readvertise for the Secretary/Treasurer position  
**1<sup>st</sup> Fawess / 2<sup>nd</sup> J Pfeil / Carried**
- *Motion* to pay the bills from General Fund, Reserve, Payroll, and Cemetery accounts in the amount of \$213,235.67:  
**1<sup>st</sup> Fawess / 2<sup>nd</sup> Derr / Carried**

### **Final Comments**

- None

*Motion* to adjourn at **7:55 PM**

**1st J Pfeil / 2<sup>nd</sup> D Pfeil / Carried**

Submitted By:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Brittnee Vann', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

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**Brittnee Vann**  
Secretary / Treasurer