

# BOROUGH OF SUGARCREEK COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

August 7, 2024

## I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council President James Speth opened the meeting at 7:00 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted there will be no hurtful or harmful speech allowed. Mr. Speth noted the meeting would be recorded by the newspaper reporter in attendance.

## II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (American Flag)

Council President Speth led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## III. MOMENT OF SILENCE

A moment of silence was observed.

## IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Present at the meeting were Council members James Speth, Alan Heller, Bogan Goughler, Larry Baughman, and Mayor Matthew Carlson. Council member Howard Barger was absent. Also present were Maintenance Foreman Doug Freer, Chief Bob Wenner, Attorneys Brian Spaid and Alex Spaid.

## V. DISTRIBUTION OF AGENDA

## VI. COUNCIL CHANGES TO AGENDA

## VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (*limited to 3 minutes each*)

- A. Travis Langworthy, owner Sugarcreek Towing, said he has recently purchased the business and asked what the process is for being put on the towing rotation for Sugarcreek Borough. Chief Wenner said he has discussed this before with him and he needs to submit a request, as he has in the past. Chief said there has been some issues he has discussed with him previously. He also said he is willing to sit down with the Mayor and Mr. Langworthy to discuss those issues. Mayor Carlson said the last time they sat down it was to discuss said issues. And Chief said there continues to be issues and he does not want to discuss in the meeting, but is willing to meet to discuss things further.
- B. Dan Marvin, Reno V.F.D., requested to be placed on the next month's meeting agenda to have a new member sworn in for the Fire Police. Mayor Carlson said he would have applicants go on to the PA State Police website and complete their background check and then submit the background check with the application. Mr. Marvin said the Reno V.F.D. does a background check on the applicants before they are allowed to become members, on every member within the department. The Mayor said to submit the application and the background together and it can be taken care of. Chief said the department can do a cursory due diligence and report that to the Mayor as well, before the next meeting. Mr. Marvin said the department had received the pallet of canned water from Anheuser Busch. He also reported the Car Cruise was more successful than last year's. He thanked the Police Department and the Council for approving the closure of some of the streets in Reno for it. He reported there were over 100 cars and motorcycles. He also informed Council that the department is up to 138 calls for the year, as of the date of the meeting. Mr. Marvin said there are two (2) members who have signed up for the Venango – Crawford Fire School for training.
- C. Chuck Minnick asked if the new police officer that was recently hired is untrained. Chief Wenner said he went to the Police Academy and was certified by the Academy. Mr. Minnick asked if he has been trained. Chief said he is currently in the field being trained. Chief said he has received all his certifications. Mr. Minnick asked if he is working and something happens, there is a liability to the Borough. Chief said the new officer is allowed, by law, to go out in a vehicle by himself. But he holds his officers to a higher standard and has them complete field training. Chief said the new officer is currently riding with senior officers and being supervised and reviewed daily.
- D. Mark Seigworth, Venango County Public Safety Director, said he was asked by Chief to attend to give any updates on the upgrades to the County Radio system. He said the current timeline for the upgrades is 9 – 14 months out. The equipment for the County has been ordered. Mayor Carlson asked if there has been updates on the Reno water. Mr. Seigworth said he is not aware of it since the DEP is heading that issue. Chief said he asked Mr. Seigworth to attend to update Council in case the department is not successful with the grant process and the Council will have to consider it a budgetary issue going into 2025. Mr. Seigworth said he has only heard of

Oil City Fire Department being awarded grant money. He also said there will be consultants at the next C.O.G. meeting to go over grant applications and ideas for municipalities. Mr. Heller asked if other police departments have applied. He said Oil City P.D. purchased their radios and the City of Franklin P.D. is in the process of applying for grants. The Sheriff's Department has applied for a grant and they are waiting for a decision. Mr. Speth asked if he has an estimate of how many grants are getting approved. Mr. Seigworth said he is leaning more towards a 50/50 guess; he said it is very competitive. Mr. Heller asked if the current system will be obsolete and unable to be used by anyone. Mr. Seigworth said the Borough's Maintenance Department currently has their own frequency. And the County will be interested in obtaining the Police Department's frequency for the new system. And once the frequencies are switched to the P – 25 mode, the old radios will become obsolete. Those radios could then be given to the municipal maintenance departments. The County is currently considering an option to have the different maintenance departments be on a talk channel on P – 25, which would allow them to communicate with each other. But that would mean more costs to the municipalities and purchasing more radios.

- E. Terri Lowry said she is confused on the radio upgrades. She asked where is the Council at; has it been approved or discussed and/or tabled. Mr. Speth said it has not been tabled, but the Council and Chief have been discussing and trying to secure grants. Chief said there are currently two (2) grants out for the radios. He also said that is why he asked Deb Sobina to come and speak to Council about other possible grants.
- F. Jake Hellen, Rocky Grove V.F.D., gave their report to Council. He said there were 10 calls the department responded to for the month of July and 156 total year – to – date calls.
- G. Rebecca Smeal said the National Night – Out Event for the first responders was a huge success and a good time. They are looking forward to next year's event. She wanted to thank the Rocky Grove V.F.D. for use of the hall since the weather hampered the original location at the Front Street Playground. As well as Mr. Heller and Mr. Baughman for attending. Mr. Baughman said he attended the Reno V.F.D.'s breakfast they held and it was a very nice event as well.

#### VIII. STAFF REPORTS

##### A. Maintenance Foreman:

- 1. Mr. Freer said the department has been working on repairs from the recent storm damage. They will then begin paving on Seysler Road between Rt. 417 and Cherrytree Road. Mr. Speth said he has received compliments for the work they have been doing, particularly out along Beatty Run Road.

##### B. Police Chief:

- 1. Chief Wenner read a letter from Officer Johnson thanking the Community for holding a National Night Out event.
- 2. Deb Sobina, Oil Region Alliance, was invited by Chief Wenner to give the Council more grant writing options in regards to the radio upgrades. She said the O.R.A. can enter into a MOU with the Borough for each grant that is applied for. But she will be focusing on the Local Share Account Grant through DCED for the Borough to apply for. She said this grant is for machinery and equipment. Each municipality can apply for more than one LSA grant. Ms. Sobina asked Chief if there have been other sources applied for. Chief said there are two (2) other grants the department has applied for, but he did not have the information with him. Mr. Seigworth said the County has applied for a LSA grant. Chief said they missed last year's LSA grant timeframe. Ms. Sobina asked Mr. Seigworth if their application was just for the County or will it extend to the municipalities. Mr. Seigworth said it was for the Sheriff's Department and the County EMA, but there may be an option to pass on whatever is remaining to the municipalities within the County. But the County Commissioners will have the final decision on that. She said the next year's LSA grant will be open from September – November. She also said with the LSA grant, you have to wait to receive the funding before anything can be done or purchased. With the LSA grants, an authorized resolution is required to be submitted with the application. Ms. Sobina said the LSA grant offers 2% of the grant for administrative fees, which the O.R.A. typically keeps if they are the grant writer for it. But she said it can be negotiated that any postage, advertising, etc. fees are paid first and then they get the remaining portion of the fee. Ms. Sobina recommended the Borough looking into other grants since the LSA will most likely take longer than the 9 – 14 months that is estimated. Chief recommended bringing on the O.R.A. to help the Borough with various grants and for all the departments. Ms. Sobina asked if the Borough has applied to the Peters Trust. Mayor Carlson said the Borough has in the

past. Mr. Spaid asked if the grants are matching. Ms. Sobina said the LSA grant is not a matching grant, but the fund amount request has to be a minimum of \$25,000 and goes up to \$1,000,000. Mr. Spaid said the first step for the Borough is to authorize entering into an MOU with the O.R.A. Then at the next meeting, Council would need to approve the resolution to apply for the grant. Mr. Spaid said he just wanted Council to be aware if any grants are matching grants. Ms. Sobina asked if the Borough would be applying for the next LSA grant. Mr. Sporer said the Borough will be applying in the fall. She said she would like to talk to the Borough to make sure there is fluidity between the Borough's grant and the O.R.A. grant. Mr. Spaid recommended having a point person working with the O.R.A. and it should be the Borough Manager. He said the Chief may still get her whatever information she needs, but the Manager has to be kept aware of it as well. Chief said the radios will have to be considered a budget item for 2025. He also said working with the O.R.A. could be beneficial down the road for when the department needs new cruisers or maintenance needs a new vehicle.

2. Motion by Alan Heller, being duly seconded by Larry Baughman to authorize the Borough to enter into a MOU with the Oil Region Alliance, subject to approval by the Borough Manager and the Borough Solicitor. Motion carried unanimously.
3. Chief presented Council with the department's quarterly report. Chief requested to have a motion placed on next month's agenda approving Officer Johnson to attend DRE Re – Certification training. He said Officer Johnson applied for and received a scholarship which would cover the hotel and schooling costs. The Borough would only be responsible for travel and meals. Chief also said the department received preliminary approval for the ballistic vest grant, which covers 50% of the cost of the vests. He said the department spent about 55 hours total in trainings for the month of July. Chief also presented Council with a letter the department received from Community Services in regards to collecting various school supplies for the upcoming school year.
4. Motion by Larry Baughman, being duly seconded by Alan Heller to approve a donation of \$300.00 to the Venango County Coon and Fox Club, for the use of their facility by the Police Department during training. A vote was taken. Mr. Goughler abstained. Motion carried.

C. Administrator/Special Projects:

1. No report.

D. Zoning Officer:

1. No report.

E. Solicitor:

1. No report.

**IX. COUNCIL REPORT**

- A. Alan Heller said he attended the State Fire Commissioner meeting, at Sandycreek Fire Department, on July 30, 2024. He said he received a lot of information for the volunteer fire departments moving forward and he will share that with Council at a later time.

**X. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. Motion by Larry Baughman, being duly seconded by Alan Heller to approve the minutes of the July 3, 2024 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

**XI. FINANCIAL REPORTS**

- A. Motion by Bogan Goughler, being duly seconded by James Speth to approve the payment of bills/issuance of checks as presented by the Treasurer. Motion carried unanimously.

**XII. OLD BUSINESS**

**XIII. NEW BUSINESS**

**XIV. CORRESPONDENCE**

**XV. BOARD OF APPEALS**

**XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Council recessed at 7:55 pm for an executive session to discuss personnel and legal issues which, if conducted in public, would violate a lawful privilege of information or confidentiality protected by the law and any action to follow. The meeting was reconvened at 8:54 pm.

**XVII. NEW BUSINESS CON'T.**

A. Motion by Alan Heller, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to enter into the terms of the Grievance Settlement Agreement between the Borough of Sugarcreek, the Sugarcreek Borough Police Association and Officer Matthew Johnson, dated August 7, 2024. Motion carried unanimously.

**XVIII. ADJOURNMENT**

A. Motion by Larry Baughman, being duly seconded by Bogan Goughler to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Joseph M. Sporer, Borough Manager

James Speth, Council President