

**NEW BERLIN BOROUGH COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING**

A regular meeting of the New Berlin Borough Council was held on January 12, 2022, at 7:00 pm at the New Berlin Borough Community Center located at 318 Vine Street, New Berlin, PA. Those in attendance were President Meghan Shambach, Councilwoman Barbara Stamm, Vice-President Barry Kuhns, Councilwoman Julianne Finkbiner, Councilman Michael Palermo, Councilwoman Lynda Frederick, and Councilman David Wertz. Rebecca Witmer, Secretary/Treasurer; Solicitor Wendy Cole; Joshua Dreisbach, Chief of Police, and Mayor Scott Benfer were also present. Visitors present were residents Christine Benfer, Sally Farmer, David Farmer, Nancy Showers, Mary Palermo, Ed Pilko, David Benjo, John Showers, Sherri Benjo, David Finkbiner, and Sharnel Pilko.

The meeting was brought to order by President Meghan Shambach with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – December 12, 2021 – The December 12, 2021 minutes were approved.

VISITOR BUSINESS – David Benjo – Feral Cats – David Benjo stated people should think about whether they want to be a community that comes together rather than a divisive community. Further, rather than looking at the problems, the focus should be on finding solutions. The feral cat issue that has been discussed is really not an issue because people have been taking care of it and rehoming cats.

Mr. Benjo referenced a study sent out by a council member on feeding feral cats. Mr. Benjo stated that the study was not based on facts but rather a hypothesis which is defined as a proposed assumption.

Nancy Showers – Burn Barrels and Feral Cats - Mrs. Showers stated that for everything there is a season and every season is a season to correct what is wrong and reclaim our quaint and irresistible community. Mrs. Showers wanted to dispel the thought that the feral cat issue has taken the place of the burn barrel issue. It's the winter season and people aren't outside to smell

the burn barrels nor are they outside to hear the noise from burning rubber and roaring and revving of passing vehicles. Those issues are still there and will be addressed but not by her tonight. This meeting is to spotlight the citizens maintaining feline colonies which are now under control.

Mrs. Showers stated that on January 29th there will be a meet and greet with furry friends event at the town bookstore where some furry friends will be available for adoption on Saturday. Various organizations have donated gift certificates to be given away at the event.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – – Fire Company Liaison – FEMA Grants – Councilman David Wertz stated the Fire Company grants were approved but, other than that, there is nothing else to report.

Feral Cat Committee – President Meghan Shambach formed a feral cat committee consisting of Michael Palermo, Julianne Finkbiner, and Barry Kuhns. President Shambach stated that, by no means, is this committee to explore a change in the current animal ordinance but, rather, they are to report to council the research they found. The focus of the committee research is as follows:

- Researching official TNR programs
- Researching similar government bodies ordinances and programs
- Interview local rescues that act as a recognized TNR organizations (sponsor)
- Reviewing citizen complaints
- Reviewing information submitted by local community program
- Research how New Berlin colony can be maintained with public health and safety in mind
- Interviewing community members, scholars and conservation groups
- Safe feeding techniques without being negligent

Sharnel Pilko stated she passed out a packet to everyone and there was a letter in that packet that addresses all of those issues. President Shambach stated that she was only present via telephone last meeting and did not receive the packet. Mrs. Pilko stated that maybe someone can share the letter with her. President Shambach stated the committee will do research and will likely look at those as a part of their research. Further, there are several surrounding municipalities that work with Cherished Cats.

Discussed was that there are not members of the community on the committee but that does not exclude council from speaking with them as part of their research. Also discussed was that the committee will bring unbiased information to council but is not charged with making a decision on an ordinance.

Mrs. Pilko next asked if she could assume that there will some type of funding coming from the Borough for feral cats. President Shambach stated that she has no idea so she will not say one way or another about that.

POLICE REPORT – December 2021 Police Report – The December 2021 Police Report was reviewed.

2018 Ford Explorer – The 2018 Ford Explorer has been outfitted with New Berlin graphics. It will be scheduled for an equipment install as soon as everything comes in and Keystone Communications has availability in their schedule to do so.

STREET SUPERVISORS REPORT – There was no report given in the Street Department Supervisor’s absence.

MAYOR’S REPORT – Mayor Benfer stated that there was need for a police committee this month and it proved beneficial.

Mayor Benfer also stated that he agrees with what Mr. Benjo said during the visitor comment period about working together as a community. When roughly 1,000 people are in a community, not everyone will agree but there is a need to put differences aside and come together.

SOLICITORS REPORT – The solicitor had nothing to report.

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY REPORT – Minutes – There were no questions regarding the minutes.

SECRETARY/TREASURER REPORT - Balance – General Fund – The Secretary/Treasurer reported the balance in the general fund as \$62,635.94. That balance still includes 50% of the American Rescue Plan Funds.

End of 2021 General PLGIT Balance – The end of the year General PLGIT balance was reported as \$60,908.42.

Estimated January 2022 General Fund PLGIT REPORT – A PLGIT Report showing January 2022 General Fund showed an estimated January 2022 balance of \$93,658.42 was given to council. The balance is estimated depending on the January 2022 interest generated in the account. The bank statement has not yet been received so the interest is estimated. The report also showed several end of the year transfers into the account totaling \$32,750.00 and a transfer out of the account totaling \$16,948.46. Transfers were made according to the budgeted savings and planned expenditures.

Liquid Fuels PLGIT Balance – The Secretary/Treasurer reported the Liquid Fuels PLGIT fund balance as \$142,995.79.

Auditor - An additional auditor is still needed to audit the 2021 Borough finances. If an auditor is not appointed, a CPA will need to be hired via approval of council. That process could take some time and the audit is due to DCED by April 15th.

READING AND SIGNING OF BILLS/PAYROLL – Councilwoman Julianne Finkbiner made a motion to pay the bills with any additions. Vice-President Barry Kuhns made a 2nd to the motion. Vote was taken with all in favor, and none opposed. Motion carried.

BILLS TO BE PAID – GENERAL FUND

M&T Bank – Service Charge	25.00
Curt Keister	218.74

George Geise	322.12
Jason Engleman	50.49
Joshua Dreisbach	519.27
Martez Faulkner	167.33
Michael Mattocks	315.08
Rebecca Witmer	2,747.53
Rex Solomon	142.00
Riley Bremigen	104.80
Rodney Styers	32.09
William Stamm	104.94
B.S.& B. Repair	90.16
Cardmember Service	626.70
Coles Hardware	84.54
H.A. Thomson Company	350.00
Hometown Disposal, lp	77.90
Kim Barton	110.00
NAPA Auto Parts	6.99
PP&L	956.06
S.J. Eaton Plumbing & Heating	177.91
Atlantic Tactical	421.27
The Daily Item	70.95
Windstream	410.14
PA UC	18.11
DE LANGE Landen Financial	79.57
H.A. Thomson Company	324.00
Phil Miller's Electric	100.00
Martin's Small Engine Repair	72.60
PP&L	511.40
AT&T Mobility	2,795.97
Hoover Tractor	277.11
TOTAL	12,310.66

OLD BUSINESS – Hobbins Lumber – The lumber company will be timbering trees on the mountain and will stage their equipment at the mountain brush site. The equipment will be out of the way so residents can continue to use the brush area. The street department was notified about the equipment being staged there.

NEW BUSINESS – Communications Upgrade Grant – Resolution - New Berlin was encouraged to apply for a grant to upgrade police radios. Central Susquehanna Regional 911 has plans to change from analog to digital frequencies in the next few years. The current radios will not work on digital

frequencies. The grant is for \$25,000 which will not cover the entire cost but more grant funds can be sought at a later time for the remaining cost of the equipment upgrade. The grant requires the borough council pass a Resolution authorizing the application for the grant and a letter of commitment if council so desires to apply. There may be some matching funds needed but the match should not be much compared to the grant award.

Motion – DCED Keystone Communities Grant – Councilwoman Julianne Finkbiner made a motion to pass a resolution to apply for the DCED Grant and do a letter of commitment for the same. Councilman David Wertz made a 2nd to the motion. Vote was taken with all in favor and none opposed. Motion carried.

Grant for Body Cameras – The federal grant funds for the police department was not awarded.

Executive Session – Police Department Personnel - An executive session was held at 7:43pm with All of council, the solicitor, Chief of Police Joshua Dreisbach, and Rebecca Witmer, Secretary/Treasurer were in attendance. The executive session ended at 8:07pm and the regular session resumed.

Motion – Officer Bremigen Employment - Councilman Michael Palermo made a motion to no longer retain Officer Bremigen’s Probationary Status Probationary Police Officer Bremigen [*sic*] from employment with the New Berlin Police Department due to him not being a good fit for New Berlin. Councilman David Wertz made a 2nd to the motion. Vote was taken with all in favor and none opposed. Motion carried.

Street Department Employment – Whether or not the Borough should seek additional hires for the street department was discussed. Also discussed was who is designated to call personnel out when it is time to plow. The personnel committee will meet with the Street Department Supervisor before the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT – Motion – Vice-President Barry Kuhns made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilwoman Julianne Finkbiner made a 2nd to the motion. Vote was taken with all in favor, and none opposed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca A. Witmer,
Secretary/Treasurer

MAYOR