

**NEW BERLIN BOROUGH COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING**

A regular meeting of the New Berlin Borough Council was held on February 9, 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; Officer Faulkner, Police Patrolman, and Mayor Scott Benfer were also present. Geralee Zeigler and Aaron Crawford from Seda-COG were present to discuss the American Rescue Fund allocation. Visitors present were residents David Farmer, John Showers, Mary Palermo, Sarah Delp, Ray Sassaman, Brad Benfer, Ed Pilko, Sherri Benjo, and Sharnel Pilko.

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

APPROVAL OF REORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES – January 3, 2022 – January 3, 2022, minutes were approved.

January 12, 2021, Minutes – Councilwoman Stamm had an issue with the word “terminate” in the motion regarding Officer Bremigen. Councilwoman Stamm stated the word “terminate” was not used in the motion. The January 12, 2021, minutes were not approved until the recording from the meeting can be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting.

VISITOR BUSINESS – Geralee Zeigler and Aaron Crawford – Seda-COG – Geralee Zeigler and Aaron Crawford from Seda-COG were present to talk about the American Rescue Funds that the Borough received. Ms. Zeigler explained that she and Teri Provost met with Rebecca Witmer at the Borough Office for a kickoff meeting regarding the administration of the funds and utilization of the funds. Seda-COG understands that the Borough would likely utilize the funds for a project. However, Seda-COG felt it a disservice if they did not present council with an explanation of the option for premium pay for its employees. Before explaining the premium pay to council, Seda-COG explained details regarding the origination of the funds, permitted utilization of the funds,

guidelines regarding the funds, reporting to the US Treasury, and how other municipalities are utilizing the funds.

Aaron Crawford explained that several qualifications that are used to determine whether an essential worker is eligible for premium pay. He also explained the qualifications that define an essential worker and restrictions as to the amount of premium pay that can be allotted per worker.

President Shambach asked the finance committee to meet before the next meeting to determine the financial allocation of the American Rescue Funds. The committee is to consider and make a recommendation as to how much of the standard allowance should be allocated to government services and how much, if any, to premium pay. A recommendation is to be made at the next meeting of council.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – Fire Company Liaison – FEMA Grant – Councilman David Wertz stated the Fire Company FEMA grant allocation was received and the air packs should arrive by the end of March.

Fireman’s Carnival – The Fire Company is planning the carnival for July 13th through July 16th. The parade will be held on July 14th. A list of other events were requested for insurance purposes. The only events decided upon by the fire company so far this year is the carnival, the parade, a drive-thru dinner on February 19th, and another drive-thru dinner on April 9th.

Feral Cat Committee – The feral cat committee met and went over the assigned objectives. Members of the committee have also made phone calls and did some research regarding the objectives.

Personnel Committee – The personnel committee recommends creating an assistant supervisor position for the street department. The personnel committee will create a job description for the position to be considered for approval at the next council meeting. Paperwork regarding reporting criteria will also be distributed. The finance committee will consider what impact the personnel committee’s proposed pay rate for the position will have on the current budget.

Brad Bilger – Street Department Employee – It was reported that Brad Bilger, Street Department Employee is no longer interested in working for the street department due to the low pay rate. Additional laborers will be sought to help with street department duties.

POLICE REPORT – January 2022 Police Report – The January 2022 Police Report was reviewed.

STREET SUPERVISORS REPORT – No report was given.

MAYOR’S REPORT – Mayor Benfer stated that one of the things he has desired the most from the time he started campaigning is that the community come together and put differences aside. He really wants people to look at New Berlin and think it’s a nice community in which to live and raise their family. The Mayor stated that he was recently sent a screenshot of something that was posted online which accused our police officers of smoking on duty while sitting in the car and then throwing cigarette butts out on the street. So, basically there was a bunch of hearsay surrounding the issue and none of those things said in the post were true. If they were, it would be addressed but none of our Borough Police Officers smoke. The Mayor suggested that if people see a police officer doing something they think is wrong or questionable, instead of placing it on social media to cause division, the proper steps should be taken. The complainant should contact the Borough Office and speak with Rebecca who will guide them through the proper process to make a formal complaint. The officers are expected to behave in such a way that brings pride to the town. If someone has an issue with any of them, put it in the proper place rather than on social media where everyone in the entire Country can look down on our town. Not everyone in the community will agree all of the time, but can’t we try to get along.

SOLICITORS REPORT – No Solicitor’s report was given.

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

Waterline Break – Several weeks ago there was a waterline break on Market Street. The liaison reported that there were actually four breaks on that line in the same spot over a period of a few

days. The water/sewer infrastructure is so bad that it would be nice to earmark a portion of the American Rescue Funds towards replacing and repairing the water/sewer infrastructure. It was mentioned that there are a lot of grant opportunities available for water/sewer infrastructure.

Water Meters – For the past few years the New Berlin Municipal Authority has been trying to replace the water meters in homes. Due to COVID, the efforts needed to be placed on hold. The NBMA talked at their last meeting about making efforts to replace the meters sometime in the near future.

NBMA Board Appointment – There is still a vacancy on the NBMA Board.

Grant Opportunity – There is a lot of grant money available to the New Berlin Municipal Authority for upgrading and updating some of the infrastructure. They are looking into the grant and hope to come up with some projects for which to apply.

Communication System – The NBMA discussed upgrading its system that controls communication with the well. The current system has such a delayed response, that if the well has an issue, it does not put out communication regarding the issue until a day later.

SECRETARY/TREASURER REPORT - Balance – General Fund – The Secretary/Treasurer reported the balance in the general fund as \$84,638.75. That balance still includes 50% of the American Rescue Plan Funds.

PLGIT Report - The Secretary/Treasurer presented the updated and final PLGIT Report showing balances at the end of 2021.

Budget vs Actual Report for 2021 – The Secretary/Treasurer presented the Budget vs Actual Report for 2021 showing what actual revenues and expenses were for the 2021 budget year and showed them in comparison to what was budgeted for the 2021 year.

DCNR Feasibility Study Update – There was a kickoff phone conference held with the borough office and the consultant. The consultant requested documentation on the former New Berlin Elementary School Building and property. The consultant was provided that information. A project kickoff meeting will be held with the DCNR Study Committee on March 7th.

DCED Keystone Communities Grant – The Chief and the Secretary/Treasurer applied for the DCED Keystone Communities Grant as approved at the last council meeting. The grant will be used to upgrade the police department’s radio communication systems. When Central Susquehanna Regional 911, the emergency dispatch center for Union and Snyder Counties, upgrades from analog to digital frequencies as planned, New Berlin Police Department radios will then be compatible with CSR’s new digital frequency system. If the grant funds are awarded, personnel would like to be able to sign the contract to get the process moving.

Motion – DCED Grant Contract – Councilwoman Julianne Finkbinder made a motion to sign the grant contract. Councilman Michael Palermo made a 2nd to the motion. Vote was taken with all in favor and none opposed. Motion carried.

Permit Application to Close State Roads – The Secretary/Treasurer will be submitting applications to PennDOT to close the state roads for the Fireman’s Parade and New Berlin Day. To facilitate that, the Borough Council needs to understand that they are taking on the liability for those road closures during the event. There is a section of the application that pertains to that and needs to be verified. The Borough has insurance that would cover any instances stemming from the road closure. There were no objections regarding the Borough taking on the liability or closing the roads for the events.

READING AND SIGNING OF BILLS/PAYROLL – Councilwoman Julianne Finkbinder made a motion to pay the bills with any additions. Councilman David Wertz made a 2nd to the motion. The Secretary/Treasurer stated there would be a lot of additions due to the meeting being earlier in the month. 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
Wex, Inc.	555.85
Curt Keister	335.92
George Geise	525.90
Jason Engleman	224.88
Joshua Dreisbach	1,213.37
Martez Faulkner	301.95
Michael Mattocks	636.88
Rebecca Witmer	2,696.13
Rex Solomon	407.18
Rodney Styers	30.39
Cardmember Service	94.13
Kim Barton	177.50
PA State Association of Boroughs	40.00
Postmaster	214.00
PP&L	32.24
Seda-COG	110.00
Union County Treasurer	12.00
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue	217.88
US Treasury	1,695.70
A-1 Lock & Key	4.15
AMTRUST	2,722.00
Buffalo Valley Sportsmen’s Association	115.00
CH Waltz Sons, Inc.	607.48
Coles Hardware	31.32
DE LANGE Landen Financial	79.57
Gessner Excavating	125.00
Hometown Disposal	77.90
Hoover Tractor	287.61
Cole & Varano	562.50
Phoenix Distributors	1,600.00
PIRMA	19,108.00
PP&L	1,720.78
Windstream Buffalo Valley, Inc.	422.20
AT&T Mobility	116.40
B.S.&B. Repair	535.74
New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co. Inc.	446.72
Stauffer Brothers Fence	1,713.60
TOTAL	39,822.87

OLD BUSINESS – Community Center Fence – The community center fence is scheduled to be installed next week.

Borough Auditor – Betty Kratzer agreed to help be a Borough Auditor. A letter of interest will be submitted to the Borough.

Motion – Betty Kratzer – Borough Auditor Appointment Resolution 2022-5 – Councilwoman Barbara Stamm made a motion that we do whatever we have to do and say whatever we have to say to appoint Betty Kratzer as auditor. Councilwoman Julianne Finkbiner made a 2nd to the motion. Vote was taken with all in favor, and none opposed. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT – Motion – Councilwoman Julianne Finkbiner made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilwoman Lynda Frederick 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