

**December 27, 2022**

**LEWISTOWN MUNICIPAL BUILDING COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**The Council meeting opened at 5:30 PM with Borough Council President Larry Searer presiding. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.**

Roll call Larry Searer (President), Nelson Rieffannacht, Robert Hammond, William Wilson was present. Aaron Wilson phoned in. Venus Shade and James Steele were absent.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**The following are routine, procedural, and informational non-controversial items and do not appear to require discussion or explanation prior to the Council's action. These items will be acted upon by one motion unless any member of Council desires to move an item to the Regular Agenda for further discussion.**

**A. Approval of Minutes: Council Meeting of December 14 , 2022**

**B. Approval of Treasurer's Report: NA**

**C. Approval of Schedule of Bills: NA**

**D. Facility Use Request: NA**

**E. Acknowledge receipt of Fame Meeting Minutes : NA**

**F. Acknowledge receipt of Tax Collector's Report: NA**

**G. Acknowledge receipt of Codes Enforcement Report : NA**

**On a motion by Mr. A. Wilson and seconded by Mr. Rieffannacht, Council votes unanimously 5-0 to approve the Consent Agenda.**

**Hearing of Persons Present:**

**Brandon Basom**, President of United Fire and Rescue thanked council for the vote from the previous meeting to support the fire department with an increase in the Fire Tax Ordinance by 1 mill. Per Mr. Basom, 1-mil would put the cost at \$3.33 per household and would give the fire department approximately \$100,000 in additional funding for fire equipment, gear, and building repairs. Mr. Basom stated that the equipment that is going out of date is a safety issue. Mr. Basom stated it is state law to have municipalities supply fire protection, not the county. Mr. Basom stated the funds would be kept in the Specialty Tax Fund and Borough Council would have final approval to allocate those funds. Borough Council would manage those funds. **Ryan Barlett** spoke and mentioned that if the Borough of Lewistown had to fund a paid fire service it would cost 19-mil. If the borough went with a neighboring community fire department to service the Borough it would cost approximately half of that (9.5-mil). **Mr. Rieffannacht** asked what financial savings are expected after the consolidation of United and Brooklyn Fire departments. **Abbey Espigh** responded that actually the

consolidation provides better service for the community. It does not save all that much financially. **Chief Barlett** stated the needs mentioned are true. Equipment needs replaced. Chief Barlett praised the work and professionalism of the fire department. Chief Barlett asked that council vote for the tax increase to help the fire department. **Mr. A. Wilson** stated we need to do something to help the fire department now. **Mr. Zimmerman** read an email from **Mr. Jim Zubler**, who could not attend. The statement touched on the burden of the tax increase which he feels would be shared by residential and commercial property owners. Mr. Zubler stated that all property owners benefit from the favorable insurance rates supported by a fire service that meets all insurance requirements. Mr. Zubler stated if the fire service did not receive adequate support, it could affect morale and lead to a negative impact on volunteerism. Mr. Zubler stated that if volunteers were to withdraw altogether, the cost of a fully staffed paid fire department would impact all tax payers astronomically.

**Borough Manager-NA**

**Fire Chief- NA**

**Mayor-NA**

**Police Chief-NA**

**Recreation Board no meeting-NA**

**Borough Solicitor**

**Borough Solicitor Mark Remy** stated the Omnibus Ordinance will affect several different ordinances. It will fix minimum and maximum fines, change the mechanical device law to raise the fee for a game that has the potential to payout. It will also update Borough codes to allow the codes department to work with the right codes and have those codes updated correctly. This ordinance has been properly advertised.

**On a motion by Mr. Hammond and seconded by Mr. A. Wilson, Council votes 4-1, with Mr. Rieffannacht voting against, to approve the Omnibus Ordinance.**

The next item for Mr. Remy was the Vacant Property Ordinance. This ordinance will create a vacant property registry. For a property to be listed it needs to be vacant for 6 months or more. This ordinance is designed to help fight blight in the borough. It is also designed to help make sure properties that are on the registry are properly inspected before they are rented again. To ensure that these properties are up to code. **Mr. Rieffannacht** asked what the benefit to this registry for the borough would be. **Katelyn Rauch** stated that the registry would allow buildings to be inspected to make sure they are properly maintained to avoid further damage to the property or to cause damage to neighboring properties via frozen pipes. This ordinance is to prevent properties from becoming so deteriorated that there is no coming back. This is to increase property values.

A roll call vote was taken on a motion by Mr. A. Wilson, seconded by Mr. Hammond, Council voted 3-2 to approve the Vacant Property Ordinance. Mr. Rieffannacht and Mr. B. Wilson voted against.

Bobby Hammond	Yes
Nelson Rieffannacht	No
Larry Searer	Yes
Venus Shade	Absent
Jim Steele	Absent
Aaron Wilson	Yes
Bill Wilson	No

#### **UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS**

1. Approve the Salary and Compensation Resolution 2023

Mr. Zimmerman stated the raise for salaried employees is listed at 5%. Mr. Searer recommended a \$2,200 raise for salaried employees.

A roll call vote was taken on a motion by Mr. Rieffannacht, seconded by Mr. B. Wilson, Council voted 3-2 to approve the Salary and Compensation Resolution for 2023 with the only change being \$2,200.00 raises for all salaried employees. Mr. Hammond and Mr. A. Wilson voted against the resolution.

Bobby Hammond	No
Nelson Rieffannacht	Yes
Larry Searer	Yes
Venus Shade	Absent
Jim Steele	Absent
Aaron Wilson	No
Bill Wilson	Yes

2. Approve the CY 2023 Budget

A roll call vote was taken on a motion by Mr. Rieffannacht, seconded by Mr. B. Wilson, Council voted 3-2 to approve the CY 2023 Budget with the amended raises for salaried employees of \$2,200.00. Mr. Hammond and Mr. A. Wilson voted against the resolution.

Bobby Hammond	No
Nelson Rieffannacht	Yes
Larry Searer	Yes
Venus Shade	Absent
Jim Steele	Absent
Aaron Wilson	No
Bill Wilson	Yes

3. Fire Tax Increase Ordinance

A roll call vote was taken on a motion by Mr. A. Wilson, seconded by Mr. Hammond, Council voted 3-2 against raising the Fire Tax by 1 mil. Mr. Rieffannacht, Mr. Searer, and Mr. B Wilson voted against.

Bobby Hammond	Yes
Nelson Rieffannacht	No
Larry Searer	No
Venus Shade	Absent
Jim Steele	Absent
Aaron Wilson	Yes
Bill Wilson	No

A roll call vote was taken on a motion by Mr. Rieffannacht, seconded by Mr. B. Wilson, Council voted 3-2 to approve the Tax Resolution with the same taxes as 2022. Mr. Hammond and Mr. A. Wilson voted against.

Bobby Hammond	No
Nelson Rieffannacht	Yes
Larry Searer	Yes
Venus Shade	Absent
Jim Steele	Absent
Aaron Wilson	No
Bill Wilson	Yes

Mr. Basom spoke briefly about the fire department's frustration in regard to the failed fire tax increase.

4. Approve 2023 Meeting Schedule

On a motion by Mr. A. Wilson and seconded by Mr. Rieffannacht, Council votes unanimously 5-0 to approve and advertise the 2023 Meeting Schedule.

5. Publish Delinquent Tax List Quarterly

On a motion by Mr. Hammond and seconded by Mr. Rieffannacht, Council votes unanimously 5-0 to approve posting the delinquent tax report quarterly on the Borough's website.

Council ended at 6:49 PM

  
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(Vice) President, Lewistown Borough Council

(Seal)

ATTEST:

  
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(Asst.) Borough Secretary