

**BOROUGH OF WEST EASTON
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

May 22, 2023

APPROVED

The regular monthly meeting of the Council of the Borough of West Easton, Northampton County, Pennsylvania, was called to order at 6:30pm by Council President Paul James, in Council Chambers of the West Easton Municipal Building, 237 Seventh Street, West Easton, Pennsylvania.

Roll was taken; Council President Paul James noted there was a quorum. Council members – Janie Jones Brown, Matthew Dees, Pete Mammana, David Bolash, Kenny Decker, Jr., and Robert Adams were present. Mayor Daniel DePaul, Solicitor Steven Goudsouzian, Borough Manager Joan Heebner, Public Works Supervisor Dane Thatcher and Police Chief Robert Mahady were present. Members of the public in attendance: Michael Curcio, Clay Brown, Carl Pierson, Megan Dietz, Deborah Dietz, Trude Hargraves, Shawn Sefcik, Deborah James, Jim Jankowich, and Leon Stull.

Mr. James requested a moment of silence to remember former Mayor Gerald W. Gross and all he had done for the Borough of West Easton.

-Upon motion by Mr. Dees, seconded by Ms. Jones Brown; Council approved expenditures as presented. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

-Upon motion by Mr. Mammana, seconded by Ms. Jones Brown; Council approved the Deposits and Receipts from April 2023. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

-Upon motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Mr. Mammana; Council approved the minutes from the April 10, 2023, Council Meeting. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

-Upon motion by Mr. Dees, seconded by Ms. Jones Brown; Council approved the Treasurer's Report for April 2023. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

President's Report – Mr. James mentioned that last week was National Police Week. He wanted to not only recognize our police officers, but also all other police officers for the good job they do. He asked for Council's approval to attend the PSAB Conference in Hershey. He had won a door prize at the previous conference which covered the cost of the upcoming conference. Ms. Jones Brown made the motion, seconded by Mr. Mammana, for Paul James to attend the PSAB Conference, in June, in Hershey at a total cost of \$627.54 to cover hotel and travel costs. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

Police Chief's Report – Chief Mahady shared what information he had about the April 4, 2023, fire at 1550 Lehigh Drive. There were eight different businesses that had damage and losses due to the fire. Several Fire Marshals from all over the country met last Tuesday and Wednesday, and as much as everyone wants to be able to determine the cause of the fire, they agreed that there is no way to know what the original cause is. He reminded the public to not listen to rumors in a situation like this, that he's heard many different rumors and theories, none of which turned out to be true.

Public Comment (Agenda Items) -

-Leon Stull - Saw on the news that Palmer Township had lost a hose because of what was in the fire. It was later mentioned that the hose was ruined due to someone running it over with a vehicle.

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-Carl Pierson – Worked there 47 years and said there was never a sprinkler system installed there. He stated it was all open in the building and feels the fire just drafted itself.

-Paul James – Stated he met with Chaim Greenbaum, owner of 1550 Lehigh Drive, and that Mr. Greenbaum explained to him that he did have insurance inspections, and that all of the properties had the required fire extinguishers, including both portable extinguishers and larger ones that rolled on carts. Mr. James said that he learned that for metal to twist and/or distort during a fire, the temperature has to be greater than 2200 degrees.

-Trude Hargraves – Asked who owned the property and if this was going to affect the taxes they paid in the future. Solicitor Goudsouzian explained that the tax rate would stay the same until the owner went to the County and asked for a reduction.

-Megan Dietz – Asked about any reports from environmental scientists. She was told as of now we have nothing formal from anyone. She said she would like to gather information on the fire. Chief Mahady said that Fire Chief Bogari, Jr. might have some information.

-Leon Stull – Stated that residents need a CO to sell their property, did the 1550 Lehigh Drive property need it. Mr. James replied that we had met with our Code Inspector, and based on our ordinances we were okay with what we did; that is something that Council will look into updating.

-Chief Mahady - Mentioned that he and the Mayor escorted former Mayor Gross to his final resting place. He reminded everyone that school is almost out, to be diligent in locking their car doors and not leaving valuables in plain sight.

Engineer's Report – Ms. Heebner referred to a proposal put together by Barry Isett & Associates on combining the CDBG grants from the past couple of years into one large project. Ms. Jones Brown made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mammana, to approve the cost of the project, the Borough's match being estimated at \$45,175.74 and for Barry Isett & Associates to start the bidding process. Discussion was had: Mr. Dees asked about the sidewalks being listed as 4" stone and 4" concrete; he thought we required 5" of concrete. Leon Stull stated it was changed to 4" years ago. Ms. Heebner will check with BIA to be sure. Motion passed 7-0.

Office Report – Ms. Heebner shared that she and Mr. James met with Joseph Hoffman, our former BIA code inspector. He said that based on our current ordinances, we had done what was required, referencing the 1550 Lehigh Drive fire. He suggested the Borough look into a fire inspection ordinance for all commercial businesses; that would give the Borough the best protection in this area. Mr. Hoffman brought along a copy of Hellertown's Fire Safety ordinance as a suggestion to what the Borough could work toward.

Sewer Report – Mr. James reported that Forks Township has a new sewer representative. He shared that the sewer plant has improved its efficiencies from 80% to 99.6%.

Ordinances and Resolutions – None

Solicitor's Report – Executive session

Mayor's Report – Mayor DePaul stated that he and Police Chief Mahady represented the Borough at former Mayor Gross's funeral today. He said that one of the workers ran over the Palmer Township fire hoses; that is what ruined it, referencing a question asked earlier in the meeting. He said the Borough has received a donation of an all-in-one bathroom for the Pole Barn Building for the future, at no cost to the Borough. He mentioned the need to get after residents that need to repair their sidewalks.

Round Table – Directly from Ms. Jones Brown: *Mary Meuser Library is offering its Summer Reading Program for children. They will also be doing Summer Reading Baskets for all ages. You can enter the basket raffle by visiting Mary Meuser Library and checking out books. Patrons of all ages can win baskets, like Ice Cream Sundae Kits, Painting Kits, Various Art Kits, Summer Game baskets, and many other fun baskets for the entire family. Please stop by Mary Meuser Library and tell them Janie sent you.*

Committee Reports

Business and Finance Committee – None

Property and Roads Committee – Mr. Adams shared that he's noticed the power companies repairing lines

Public Safety and Personnel Committee – None

Legal and Technology Committee – None

Utilities and Fire Committee – The Committee has finished up their town hall meetings. They hope to formulate a proposal. A meeting is scheduled for May 31st, 6pm, at Borough Hall.

Parks and Recreation Committee – Directly from Ms. Jones Brown:

Earth Day was the best yet!! Thank you to the many, many people that turned out to participate in Earth Day. In addition to picking up trash, many trees were planted. Thank you to our amazing volunteers: Robin, Sharon, William, Morgan, Dan, Matt, Pete, Bonnie, Mason, Kenny, Jenna, Shelby, Kristen, Gabriella, Ellianna, Mila, Ella, Jenna, Jeffrey, Lisa, Luke, Levi, Dane and Jesse.

Spending the day at our annual clean-up event and planting trees from our TreePennsylvania grant made my heart happy. Thank you to all our amazing volunteers, Parks & Rec Committee, Council, Mayor, Borough Manager, Jessica-Program Director TreePennsylvania, Julianne Schieffer-Arborist, and Public Works Supervisor Dane Thatcher, for all the hard work. It was a fantastic day working together. Special thank you to Jesse for digging the holes to make planting trees possible. We ended up planting an adorable tree that Pete Mammana's grandson Mason donated. It was just magical.

Special thanks to Rachel Hogan Carr, the director of the Nurture Nature Center Resilient Community Project that I participated in, for introducing me to Rob Christopher Forester for the city of Easton, who told me about this grant.

I am excited to share that our Tree PA Grant trees look amazing at our main park. Thank you to Dane and Brandon for filling the gator bags and maintaining these beautiful trees.

Playground Grant Process Update: *Our Playground meeting on May 16th was successful. A great group showed up to discuss and share ideas on updating and improving our park for all residents. Mayor Dan DePaul, Pete Mammana, Paul James, Deborah James, Robin Strawn, Sharon Niko, Jeffrey Miggins, Kenny Decker Jr., myself, and families using the park that night were asked questions, and other residents reached out to supply suggestions as well.*

**We are looking into ways to create an accessible park for ALL residents and visitors by making it handicap accessible.*

Other ideas or wishes were:

-to add another toddler swing to the existing swing and then add another frame to add larger swings and particular swings for children needing more support,

- add and install a soccer net for all ages

-repave the basketball court and reline for an updated look.

-Questions on if we should update the t-ball field

-Suggestions on adding a walking path around the park

-We are dreaming of a zipline that is definitely on the wish list.

-We would like the engineer to assess the large structure that has been there for over twenty years. It looks good, and children still love it. We want to know how long until we need to replace it; our engineer will help determine that.

I am working on setting up a meeting with the Superintendent of Parks & Recreation and Northampton County, to help provide suggestions.

Recently we were made aware of a possible grant that we could use to update our park. Council was provided with the quote from Burke. This would be used as a wish list, and we are trying to see what we can get for our borough park. That is why I would like to make a motion tonight. Ms. Jones Brown made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mammana, for the Borough of West Easton to apply to the 2023 DCED CDBG for various improvements to the Gerald W. Gross Park, including but not necessarily limited to: two toddler swings, two bays with two swings each, a soccer net, musical board that would be accessible to everyone, and to black top and line our basketball court. Discussion was had. Motion passed 7-0.

Also, a big thank you to Councilman Decker for trimming a hedge at the park. Your dedication and help is greatly appreciated. He is also organizing a new sign for our rock garden.

Back by popular demand “Chalk the Walks and Rock Painting” art event is on [May 25th](#), 6-7:30. (Rain Date will be in June if needed.) Special thank you to Robin for collecting and cleaning rocks for the event. We will be painting, chalking, walking around the park, having snacks and prizes, and enjoying time together at Gerald W. Gross Park. This is an event for all ages; please spread the word. We hope to see everyone come out to join in the fun. Remember it is this Thursday from 6-7:30, and you can come for 10 minutes or the entire time.

We look forward to seeing everyone at our May community event.

Grants and Public Relations Committee – None

Unfinished Business – None

New Business - Mr. Dees made a motion, seconded by Ms. Jones Brown, to approve Mr. James to be West Easton Borough’s voting delegate at the PSAB Conference in June.

Mr. James confirmed that there will be a Memorial Day service at 9am on Monday, May 29th.

Public Comment (Open) – Jim Jankowich asked if there were any updates on the Federal litigation. Carl Pierson, as treasurer, suggested that Council look into paying Borough employees every other week rather than every week, and to look into direct deposit of the employee paychecks. He said he has sent zoning suggestions to Council and is available if anyone wants to discuss them.

Break from 7:43pm – 7:46.

Executive Session – 7:46pm – 8:19pm. Council discussed potential litigation, and personnel issues.

Ms. Jones Brown made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dees, to accept David Gehman's resignation as of May 19th, and to accept his help on an as needed basis. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Mammana made a motion, seconded by Mr. Adams, to authorize the accountant/auditor to review our accounts and to make future recommendations. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Jones Brown made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mammana to advertise for part-time help for general office help at \$14.50 an hour. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Jones Brown made a motion, seconded by Mr. Adams, to hire a borough resident on a temporary, emergency basis. No discussion. Motion passed 7-0.

Upon motion by Mr. Dees, seconded by Ms. Jones Brown, no discussion, Council voted to adjourn the meeting by a vote of 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:24pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Joan Heebner, Secretary/Manager
