

BOROUGH OF EDGEWOOD
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**BOROUGH OF EDGEWOOD
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD
MONDAY, MAY 21, 2007**

President Patricia Schaefer called the Meeting of the Council of the Borough of Edgewood to order on Monday, May 21, 2007 at 7:35 PM in the Municipal Building.

Borough Manager Kurt Ferguson called the roll and the following responded: Ms. McDonald, Mr. Cook, Ms. Nogrady (arrived 7:50 PM), Mr. Szefi, Mr. McNally, Mr. Hellett, Ms. Schaefer.

Mayor Jean O. Davin, Borough Solicitor representative Shon Worner and Junior Councilperson Bush were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. Weiss of 860 E. Hutchinson Avenue, an Edgewood resident for seven years, spoke to the increasing anxiety experienced in his neighborhood due to a recent shooting in a proximal Wilkinsburg residence.

Mr. Weiss wanted to register several concerns with Council, the first issue being the problems that exist within a three to four block area and which cause a disproportionate amount of police involvement. He stated that the situation is becoming increasingly uncomfortable, but that residents are committed to remaining in the neighborhood.

Mr. Weiss also informed Council that their neighborhood will be having a block club meeting, which will cross borough lines with Wilkinsburg, on June 4, 2007 at his house. He asked for help and for information from Council concerning Crime Watch and neighborhood patrols. It was Mr. Weiss' opinion that the two neighborhoods, Edgewood and Wilkinsburg, should cooperate with one another. He asked what sort of cooperation has taken place in the past.

In closing, Mr. Weiss encouraged Council to actively pursue this problem, assuring them that the neighbors would be doing the same from a grass roots level.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Schaefer stated that Mr. Weiss' visit to Council is timely as there are emails currently circulating on this very issue. She offered that Borough Manager Ferguson has already begun working with the Borough Code Enforcement official with regard to property maintenance and absentee landlords in the Borough. The landlords will be contacted and brought before the magistrate and the Health Department will be contacted, if necessary, according to Ms. Schaefer.

Further discussion ensued with Ms. Schaefer stating that the Borough Public Safety Committee and Police Department work cooperatively with Wilkinsburg. Police Chief Wood has a past history with the Wilkinsburg Department, having been their Chief at one time. Also, Mayor Davin has worked with the previous and the current Wilkinsburg Mayors.

Ms. Schaefer said that the Borough will do everything within its power to help find a solution to the problem, beginning with more frequent patrols in the area. She stated that the Mayor had mentioned working with Wilkinsburg on timed patrols. Also, Ms. Schaefer mentioned that the Borough belongs to the Council of Governments and the issue of safety might be discussed at one of their meetings.

As Chair of Public Safety, Ms. McDonald mentioned that one resource is the Edgewood Crime Alert, which has significant events of the Borough updated to it frequently. She went on to give several ways to help the police, one way being to make anonymous calls. Another solution would be to keep a log of vehicles and activities which are seen in the area, using accurate and detailed descriptions.

Mr. Ferguson explained the purpose of the Crime Watch Hotline to Mr. Mihalcin, an engineer from 804 Walnut Street, at his request. Mr. Mihalcin explained that for residents of his street, it would help if there were documentation of milestones made for this situation, showing that something is being done by Council.

Mr. Mihalcin expressed his opinion that these issues exist because of the condition of the unoccupied houses in Wilkinsburg. He said he brainstorms ways to address the problems and that Mr. Weiss has long-term solutions, but that Walnut Street residents are looking for short-term solutions. Mr. Mihalcin indicated that the police are coming to calls more frequently in his neighborhood and a better short-term fix is needed as the situation is considered desperate.

Mr. McNally commended both Mr. Weiss and Mr. Mihalcin for the intelligent, appropriate and constructive manner in which they approached this problem. Mr. McNally stated that those things are what make a community strong and, far from being apologetic, he indicated that the gentlemen should be proud of what they have done and he encouraged them to continue.

Mr. McNally said that as a member of the Public Safety Committee and Chair of the General Government Committee, he thought it was paramount to deliver as completely as possible on the issue of public safety. He assured the visitors that the elected officials understand the sense of urgency and stated that bullets do not observe boundaries, but that governments and officials must.

According to Mr. McNally, both Mr. Weiss and Mr. Mihalcin are asking the right questions and Mr. McNally let them know that their presence is appreciated by Council. He acknowledged that their courage to deal with the problems at hand is commendable and further stated that Council will try to enlist as much support as possible. Mr. McNally said residents should insist that elected representatives do what they are required to do to keep things safe.

Mayor Davin had questions regarding the June 4, 2007 block watch meeting. She said that she and Chief Wood had discussed this previously with Mr. Busch and Ms. Stewart and that she and the Chief would be happy to help organize this meeting. The Mayor stated that trying to establish this meeting dates back several years. She said that the Police Department has devoted a lot of time to that area of the Borough and the problem is that this is Wilkinsburg's jurisdiction. Mayor Davin told the audience that she met with the former Mayor of Wilkinsburg regarding this

situation and got cooperation from the building inspector and the police, but that a significant turnover of employees has occurred and everything is back at square one.

According to Mayor Davin, she talked with Chief Wood about doing staggered patrols and meeting with officials from Wilkinsburg to try to alleviate problems there. How quickly this might be done was an issue the Mayor contemplated, stating that funding is an issue also.

Mr. Weiss stated that the grass roots group wants to correct the problems incrementally and measurably and they will count on people from Wilkinsburg to put pressure on their people. He stated that the immediacy of the problem is that residents worry whether the sounds heard are cars backfiring or gunshots.

The Borough Manager asked that both Mr. Weiss and Mr. Mihalcin call his office and he will give a more detailed description of what was being done regarding building inspection.

COMMITTEE ACTION

M-1 Mr. McNally moved to approve the minutes of April 16, 2007. Second by Mr. Cook.

DISCUSSION: None.

Upon roll call vote, the following was recorded: Mr. Cook, Ms. Nogrady, Mr. Szefi, Mr. Hellett, Mr. McNally, Ms. Schaefer voted yes. Ms. McDonald abstained. Motion carried.

M-2 Mr. McNally moved to approve the minutes of May 7, 2007. Second by Mr. Cook.

DISCUSSION: None.

Upon roll call vote, the following was recorded: Mr. Cook, Mr. Hellett, Mr. McNally, Ms. Schaefer voted yes. Ms. McDonald, Ms. Nogrady, Mr. Szefi abstained. Motion carried.

M-3 Mr. McNally moved to authorize the payment of bills, for goods and services received by the Borough, having been reviewed and approved by the General Government Committee in the amount of \$62,286.09. Second by Mr. Hellett.

DISCUSSION: None.

Upon roll call vote, the following was recorded: Ms. McDonald, Mr. Cook, Ms. Nogrady, Mr. Szefi, Mr. Hellett, Mr. McNally, Ms. Schaefer voted yes. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

GENERAL GOVERNMENT REPORT

Mr. McNally stated that the Committee met to approve bills and consider an issue related to a Council position.

DISCUSSION: None.

POLICE REPORT

Mayor Davin indicated that the statistics appear to be in line and that activity for calls was increased even from last year. The revenue was increased and totals were up for year-to-date figures.

DISCUSSION: None.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. McDonald stated that the Committee met earlier this evening and that the matter was not mature for public discussion at this point. She then read the highlights of this report.

April has been the lowest month for fire calls, according to Ms. McDonald, and she read the nature of each of the calls.

DISCUSSION: None.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Nogrady stated that the Committee did not meet.

DISCUSSION: None.

PUBLIC WORKS

Ms. McDonald said that the Committee did not meet and she then read the April report.

DISCUSSION: None.

COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORT

The Committee did not meet, according to Mr. Hellett, but it will meet next week. He reported that the Recreation scoreboard was installed. He informed Council that the Committee will be discussing Mr. Ferguson's efforts to restructure Recreation.

DISCUSSION: None.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mr. Hellett said that the Committee did not meet.

DISCUSSION: None.

PENSION COMMITTEE

Ms. Nogrady said the Committee met May 14, 2007 with Mr. Dalessandro and Mr. Hugo and talked about the performance of the plan and what they might be able to do for the Borough.

DISCUSSION: To Mr. Hellett's question on the Borough's performance, Mr. Ferguson said that the plan managers talked about freeing up money at a quicker rate and he indicated that he will be putting a report together for Council.

AD HOC

PORT AUTHORITY

Mr. McNally said that the Committee has met and said that the Port Authority personnel with the longest exposure to the Cooperation Agreement will be retiring in June. Mr. Feder will have a successor and Mr. Nutbrown will continue to be involved, but with significant diminution in his role.

The State Historic Preservation Office has signed off on the \$50,000, according to Mr. McNally. The Train Station will now be readied for Public Works to pick up with the painting, grass seeding and the start date remains mid-July.

Mr. McNally reviewed the issues surrounding the \$65,000, which Port Authority considered to be \$42,000, and Port Authority's desire for the Borough to compromise on this issue. Mr. McNally went into detail on the items discussed in the meeting. He also talked about the handoff of the Train Station and the need for a lease document memorializing the deal, which Ms. Bredel said she would get their in-house counsel to prepare.

According to Mr. McNally, there was also a discussion of the RFP that is currently out to seek a consultant for the Edgewood Avenue Revitalization Project.

DISCUSSION: After a discussion of the matching engineering cost of \$230,000 generated by Mr. McNally, Mr. Szefi had questions. Further details will be gathered in this regard.

Ms. Schaefer stated that she had an opportunity to speak with Senator Costa at the Mayors' Dinner and he introduced her to personnel from the Port Authority. The Senator wants to meet with Mr. Szefi, Mr. McNally and Mr. Ferguson to go over the Agreement and Ms. Schaefer stated that she was encouraged by this.

Mayor Davin asked Mr. McNally what type of construction has been done on the Train Station, stating they have done the outside, including the platform, roofing, sewer and water. She asked if interior work has been done, including electrical and plumbing and Mr. McNally stated that Mr. Grubb has been involved and is overseeing this.

More conversation ensued regarding the \$65,000 for the Edgewood Avenue Revitalization Project and Port Authority's efforts to get the Borough to make a compromise on this. Mr. McNally thought that Port Authority might think the Borough is rebuffing their offer.

Ms. Schaefer felt, after talking with Senator Costa, that she is not sure the Borough has to make a decision quickly.

Regarding the charrettes, Mayor Davin asked if they had any benefit to the RFP and, if they are of no benefit, the Borough should not have to pay for them.

Mr. Hellett stated that this is not the problem Port Authority is having with the budget, but Mayor Davin indicated that Port Authority made it very clear that the operating income is where they are hurting; the capital income is fine.

Mr. Szefi stated that all that can legally be done is to meet with Senator Costa.

Mayor Davin also requested that the Solicitor send a letter to the Port Authority requesting the lease agreement for the Train Station.

EDGEWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Ms. McDonald said that the Committee did not meet. She said that Mr. Ferguson did meet with some residents and brought them up to speed, but indicated that there is no official plan on the table.

Ms. McDonald referred to a confusing May 9, 2007 article which appeared in the paper and to which she wrote a response that appeared in the May 16, 2007 edition of the paper. She stated there has been no movement regarding the governor's drive as far as the Borough of Edgewood is concerned.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Schaefer stated that Ms. McDonald's letter indicated that the sole focus has always been, and continues to be, public safety and that teachers' parking has never been the issue.

Ms. McDonald stated that she will continue to be proactive and is happy to explain the facts as she knows them.

It was Ms. Schaefer's opinion that the letter which Ms. McDonald compiled for the newspaper will be useful.

Mayor Davin said it was her understanding that another meeting of the residents will be taking place and Ms. McDonald stated she will be attending as a resident.

PARCEL D COMMITTEE

Mr. McNally indicated that the Committee did not meet.

DISCUSSION: None.

3 RIVERS WET WEATHER DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Ms. Schaefer informed Council that the Board of this group has reassembled for meetings and stated that the group is one of the sponsors for the Local Government Academy.

DISCUSSION: Mayor Davin offered Ms. Schaefer an invitation she had received to the Port of Pittsburgh Commission and US Army Corps of Engineers program on Wednesday, May 23, 2007.

COMPREHENSIVE INTERMUNICIPAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Mr. Szefi said that the Steering Committee met Thursday, hosting about 70 people. He said that the input was good and the next meeting of the group will be July 5, 2007.

Ms. Schaefer indicated that website questionnaires will also be done and three items from the three municipalities will be reviewed to see where they interconnect. These areas might encompass South Braddock paving, restaurants and Edgewood Avenue business district development.

A resident told Ms. Schaefer that the taxes were reasonable and there was responsible government in Edgewood which focused on things that needed to be taken care of. A cross section of people was also represented at this meeting, according to Ms. Schaefer and all expressed fresh ideas.

Observations were made by Mr. McNally, one being a fairly young professional who talked about what a great asset the busway is, making the community attractive to people who use it. The second observation was a negative one, that being a recurrent theme concerning code enforcement. Mr. McNally stated that this should not be ignored.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Mr. Worner had no separate report, but stated that he would have comments in Executive Session.

DISCUSSION: None.

BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Ferguson stated that he has had the Code Enforcement official busy focusing his attention on several properties on Center Avenue and Walnut Street in Edgewood Borough. According to Mr. Ferguson, he has also sent the Code Enforcement officer to Greendale and East Swissvale Avenues to deal with property maintenance issues.

For yard and grass issues, Mr. Ferguson indicated that there is no ability for the Borough to lien properties and asked Mr. Worner if he knew of anything in the Borough Code that might refer to this situation.

DISCUSSION: Ms. McDonald expressed concern that she did not want the Borough to be viewed as a landscaping service and Mr. Ferguson indicated that he felt that the problem properties are those that are for sale.

Mr. Hellett had questions regarding regulations for grass height and the procedure to purchase a bucket truck for the Public Works Department.

With regard to the bucket truck, Mr. Ferguson spoke about a \$5,000 grant. He also talked about a monthly auction held by the utility companies and asked how to give Mr. Guerriero of the Public Works Department the authority to make a bid of up to \$5,000.

Mayor Davin said that she had mentioned this situation to Mr. Barry and he was to check this through the Borough Code.

Mr. Ferguson talked about how delinquent taxes and sheriff's sales are dealt with and spoke about specific properties and circumstances surrounding them. He also spoke about Act 78 and insurance settlements and the fact that the Borough receives a portion of the settlement to hold until a property is torn down.

Ms. Schaefer talked about poorly kept residences which neighbors called the real estate agents about and, following a call from Mr. Ferguson, the neighbors saw resolution to the problem.

To protect the Borough, Mayor Davin suggested that a motion or resolution be passed that should Public Works have to go out and mow the grass at a property, the property owner should be charged \$100. The Mayor stated also that both Oakmont and the City of Pittsburgh were contemplating nuisance ordinances for residences to which there are a number of police, fire and/or building inspection calls.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Hellett set a Community Service meeting for Tuesday, May 29, 2007 at 7:30 PM.

Ms. Schaefer talked about the 10th anniversary for the Parkway planting, with a luncheon following the planting at the home of Greer and Gary Mulholland. Ms. Schaefer asked that the Mulholland's be acknowledged for their efforts and asked the Mayor to handle this.

According to Ms. Schaefer, tonight is the last official meeting for Junior Councilperson Bush. Ms. Schaefer stated that it has been truly energizing to have Ms. Bush sit on Council in this capacity. Ms. Schaefer also thanked Ms. McDonald for her efforts in getting the program started and also thanked General Government for their input and guidance.

COMMITTEE ACTION

M-4 Mr. Hellett moved to hire Shane Mysels as a seasonal part-time employee in the Recreation Department effective immediately at a pay rate of \$6.25 an hour. Second by Mr. Cook.

DISCUSSION: None.

Upon roll call vote, the following was recorded: Ms. McDonald, Mr. Cook, Ms. Nogrady, Mr. Szefi, Mr. Hellett, Mr. McNally, Ms. Schaefer voted yes. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

M-5 Following an Executive Session to consider a contractual and personnel matter, which lasted from 9:25 PM until 10:00 PM, it was moved by Mr. Szefi and seconded by Mr. Cook to adjourn this meeting at 10:01 PM.

Kurt M. Ferguson
Borough Manager