

The March 8, 2005 Regular Meeting of the Newtown Village Council was called to order at 7:30 PM by Mayor John Hammon, who led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Present: Tracy Hueber Ken Pulskamp Doug Evans
Fiscal Officer Keri Everett Solicitor Doug Miller Debbie McCarthy
Greg Thomas Police Chief Daryl Zornes
Police Lt. Tom Synan Street Commissioner Charlie Siegel

Ms. Hueber made a motion, seconded by Mrs. McCarthy to hire part-time Police Officers Lateccia Schuler, Robert Huber, Richard Kaiser and Jared Fox. All aye. Motion carried.

Mayor Hammon swore in the new police officers.

Citizen Input

Mrs. Pauline Murrie, Main Street Cafe: Hi, I'm Pauline Murrie and I've been a business owner here in town for eleven years. First of all, I want to thank the Police Officers of Newtown because they have really protected us and everybody feels very safe and secure. They do an outstanding job. The reason I'm here is I'm a little bit concerned about the property next to us again and it's getting worse. I think the Village is growing and it's a really good thing and I think unless we come up with some plan of attack to keep the Village clean and to improve upon it, we're not going to grow and we're not going to be where we want the Village to be. I think it's something we need to address somehow and come up with a solution.

Mayor Hammon: First off, we adopted a property maintenance code eighteen months ago. We hired a property maintenance inspector, unfortunately he's resigned his position just as we were getting him up to speed. We are in the process of hiring another one.

Mrs. Murrie: What are the qualifications?

Mayor Hammon: We basically want someone with some kind of familiarity with property maintenance codes. We have a code that we have to abide by and he goes out and enforces it. The big delay is hiring an individual.

Mrs. Murrie: Is this for keeping properties clean?

Mayor Hammon: It is pretty encumberancing in the ordinances that we have.

Mrs. Murrie: So what do we do? How do we solve this problem?

Mayor Hammon: We've got to get someone hired.

Mrs. Murrie: No, I understand that. But what about after you get somebody hired? The mess grows and grows. What can be done to stop it? How do you stop it?

Mayor Hammon: Lt. Synan is really one of the authors that went through the ordinance and procedures we developed.

Mrs. Murrie: It's a law and it needs to be enforced. The customers that come through Newtown, it's embarrassing when these people come to Main Street Café and they talk about how great Newtown is and talk about it's got this and it's got this, but what about that God awful mess next to you? It's embarrassing! What am I supposed to say?

Mayor Hammon: Well, let Tom tell you about the procedures and see if that answers your questions about what we can do.

Lt. Synan: A lot of these properties have been this way for thirty years and a lot of people think we can just step in with a broom and clean it all up within a matter of days. That's not the process. We initiated a seven step process. The process has begun but what we did is take the most serious offenders, where literally the house is falling down, and . . .

Mrs. Murrie: Tom, when I have to call a pest control company to treat the perimeter of my property I have a problem.

Lt. Synan: Trust me, that is nothing compared to these properties. It's a matter of getting the court process started and getting someone hired. The process has started, it's just people have to be a little bit more patient and understand it's going to take a little bit to get there. But, we have started and that property will be taken care of along with a bunch of others. It's not easy and it's not going to be done overnight.

Mrs. Murrie: I understand that.

Lt. Synan: We're working on it. These three houses we had to start in with, people were living in there and literally the back of the house was falling down. You talk about bugs? One of these houses had huge rats. These are all issues we are dealing with but it's going to take a little while. I can tell you this, that it is a priority of this Council to get this Village cleaned up.

Mrs. Murrie: Well, as I said, I am super-happy about 99.9% of what goes on in this Village. But, that dirt and that garbage and that debris that is next door . . .

Lt. Synan: Well, trust me, we know it effects your property value and that is one reason why we did it.

Mrs. Murrie: I'm not even concerned about my property value. I'm concerned about the overall value of the Village. The village needs more business and more growth and without solving that problem people are hesitant to do this.

Lt. Synan: Right, and we're working on it but it's going to take time.

Mrs. Murrie: When you say "time" how long are you talking?

Lt. Synan: I don't have an exact amount of time but we are working on it.

Mrs. Murrie: Is there anything I can do?

Lt. Synan: Do you know somebody that can do property maintenance, talk to the Mayor.

Mrs. Murrie: What are the qualifications? Maybe I'll do it.

Mr. Evans: Pauline, we are aware of it. We all went together and rode around the Village. We know there's problems. Sometimes our hands are tied more than we would like them to be.

Mrs. McCarthy: Have you talked to the people, Pauline?

Mrs. Murrie: They won't talk to me.

Mrs. McCarthy: They won't talk to you?

Mrs. Murrie: They had agreed when they tore the house down that they would sell me the lot. We were ready to go to closing and he called and said he wouldn't sell it to me. My point is that it just needs to be worked on.

Lt. Synan: The problem is that everyone has been overwhelmed with it because it is a lot of work.

Mrs. Murrie: Well, that one is in the middle of town and it is so visible.

Lt. Synan: Well, we can't pick on people and be selective.

Mayor Hammon: We have a process where you can sit down and file a complaint. Now, if you file a complaint and it is a false complaint you can be cited. We did that because we don't want neighbors picking on neighbors.

Lt. Synan: Well, the beginning of the process is we go talk to them. Then they get a letter and start the process.

Mrs. Murrie: Is it possible for someone to go talk to them now?

Lt. Synan: Yeah, I can take care of that.

Mayor Hammon: Now that we have an ordinance in place we can do that. If they say no, they have a right to go through the process and it can take six months.

Mrs. Murrie: I understand that. The only reason I'm bringing it up now is because if I wait six months it's just going to be six months more garbage and it's going to be even harder.

Lt. Synan: Right now I'm training seven new officers, I'm working on five cases, plus my daily projects, so I'll try to get into it as much as I can until we get somebody hired.

Mrs. Murrie: I understand and I don't want to seem like I'm bitching but the only way for growth is through improvement.

Lt. Synan: The thing with growth is we have to keep up with it.

Mrs. Murrie: I'm just asking what we can do to try to take care of it. I also wanted to comment about how clean the streets are kept. The guys really do a great job and it's better than anywhere else. They really are kept clean.

Mrs. Joan Waits, Monongahela: This is what I've been saying for months. Where are the citizens? She thinks it's bad next to her and now Tom's saying the first thing is to go talk to the people? What about the slum lords? I've been at this for 1 ½ years. I am the point now, because a business person comes down here, she's going to get priority? Where's the fairness here? Somebody has to give me an answer now.

Lt. Synan: I think you misunderstood me. The Mayor and I are going out next week to look at properties.

Mrs. Waits: I know where she's coming from. People come to me about the house next door to the caterer up there. People come to me and scream at me to clean up my property. I sold that property 18 years ago. That house is falling down, it's a disaster. This is a main street. This is what people see.

Mayor Hammon: We gave a list of priorities to Greg. That died when Greg left. Things we need to address is Main Street and Church Street. We need to look at the heart of the town. It's really kind of ceased right now.

Mrs. Waits: We have to think about property values.

Ms. Hueber: I think you took it wrong that it wasn't about property value. It's definitely a property value and we understand that.

Mayor Hammon: Anyone else want to address Council? All right, while we're talking about it, one of the things we need to do is to appoint two more people to the informal board. If anyone knows of anybody that would like to participate, tell them to come forward and contact either myself or Tom so we can get this board moving. We will not be able to push very far without the members on this board.

Ms. Hueber: Okay, now we're talking the informal board for the maintenance?

Mayor Hammon: Right.

Mrs. Murrie: And you have to be a citizen of the Village?

Mayor Hammon: Right, on that board. So, that is an issue that we need to address. The gentleman we interviewed the last time we interviewed for a property maintenance inspector is interested in the job. I'm going to sit down with him on Thursday afternoon and give him a copy of the contract and talk to him about some of the issues.

Mr. Evans: What is his name, John?

Mayor Hammon: Robert McAdams.

Mr. Evans: And what is his pay?

Mayor Hammon: There's a bracket. It's roughly \$25/hour. He does sit on the Union Township Board of Zoning Appeals so he is very familiar with it. If we hire him by contract, he does have to get Worker's Comp insurance so it will take a while to get that. That's also going to delay the process.

Police Chief Daryl Zornes

No report.

Street Superintendent Charlie Siegel

No report.

Fiscal Officer Keri Everett

A lengthy discussion was held to review the appropriations ordinance for 2005. A new system for calculating wages and raises was introduced to Council and pros and cons of the system were discussed. A Council Work Session was scheduled for March 21, 2005 at 7:00 PM to discuss the salary ordinance and Village goals.

Mrs. McCarthy left the meeting early due to illness.


Mr. Evans: With my name on this checklist, I have to abstain from the vote, right?

Ms. Hueber: Yeah, you can make the motion but you have to abstain from the vote.

Mr. Thomas: Ken's name is on it too.


Mr. Pulskamp: I was going to make that statement, just for a matter of public record. My company I am employed by is on the checklist. I am an employee only. I am not a stockholder or a shareholder, not a board member. I am salary only. I do not receive commission or bonuses based on any sales whatsoever. The state auditor has a record as well.

Ms. Hueber made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thomas, to accept the checklist dated March 8, 2005. On roll call: Ms. Hueber – aye, Mr. Pulskamp – aye, Mr. Evans – abstain, Mr. Thomas – aye. Motion carried.

 Mr. Evans suggested contracting with David Krigs to help with a lot of the salary discussions coming up. He felt it would be good to have him as a consultant on a part-time basis. In prior discussions with Mr. Krigs, he suggested the rate of \$50/hour.

Mr. Miller: What do you want to use him for?

Mr. Evans: For instance, this thing with the Police Department. This thing with getting some grant money. The Village is growing but we're not getting any more tax dollars.



There has to be somewhere along the line where we're missing the boat on something. His experience could help us on things.

Ms. Hueber: He's not looking for a position here except to help us out.

Mr. Miller: He might know where to find money and to help you with your budget.

Mr. Evans: He's only two minutes away.

Mr. Miller: You can use him as little or as much as you want to. I would clearly define what you want him to do.

Ms. Hueber: Do we need to draw up a contract for him?

Mayor Hammon: You need a contract and you need to decide what you want.

Mr. Miller: Decide exactly what you want him to do.

Mr. Evans: The first thing is to sit in here with us next Monday night.

Ms. Hueber: He would be able to give us information on the levels and hiring the secretary.

Mayor Hammon: He could come in and help us get some things in place like an evaluation system.

Mr. Miller: Why don't you let me put something together in a contract, and it's going to be a pretty generic contract, and it would be something to work on.

Mr. Thomas made a motion, seconded by Mr. Pulskamp to contract with David Krigs, as an independent contractor at the rate of \$50 per hour with the contract to be prepared by Solicitor Miller. Motion carried.

Councilmember Tracy Hueber

Ms. Hueber: Hydrant? What's your follow-up on that?

Mr. Miller: It is an administrative decision on the Village as to how they want to spend their funds. Therefore, you have immunity if there is a problem.

You're basing your decision on what the experts said, that you don't need this. If they said you did need this, you would have a problem. With the Fire Chief's decision you fall under the immunity clause.

Ms. Hueber will check with the Fire District to see if the hydrant should be permanently capped or left alone.

Ms. Hueber met with Print Management on Monday and went over the information for the newsletter. She contacted Addressed for Success and they will be extracting the addresses for delivery and the release date for the newsletter is targeted for April 1, 2005. They have put enough information together for a four-page newsletter.

Councilmember Pulskamp

Mr. Pulskamp made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hueber to have a second reading of the appropriations for 2005.

Mr. Pulskamp: I want everybody to think about, Keri gave me a list of the Council committees, how they're listed right now, I actually have four committees, Debra only has two committees. I am chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Development, I would like to also be the councilperson on Planning Commission with that committee.

It's always been that way. I would like to be the liaison between Council and Planning if that's the committee I'm going to be serving on.

Mayor Hammon: Alright, . . .

Mr. Pulskamp: I know John said he didn't want to switch people . . .

Mayor Hammon: We talked about it and we talked about it actually before you came on, Ken. Tracy and I talked about it one day, and you know, I don't know, it's just like if she left Public Safety, do we take her off the Fire Board in the middle of the year or something like that? I feel if you start off the year, you gotta stay there.

Ms. Hueber: You know what, John? She changed that on her own and chose to go to Parks.

Mayor Hammon: I know.

Ms. Hueber: I don't think that it would be fair for me to move over, you know what I mean?

Mr. Pulskamp: There's just things that, you know, when you guys had your Planning Session, John, and you did the ordinances and things that needed to be updated, I need to be working closely with Mike and with Planning Commission on these things.

Mayor Hammon: I hear you Ken, and you know, it's okay with me if you want to do it. It's just very difficult.

Mr. Pulskamp: I would like whoever to talk to Debra and see if she has a problem with that or . . .

Ms. Hueber: Or she should take . . .

Mayor Hammon: I'm the one who stood up and said I think once we started the first of the year we should stay.

Mr. Pulskamp: Or does she want to take Planning and Zoning Development back and I'll take her Parks.

Ms. Hueber: Or should we just trade it right now?

Mr. Pulskamp: Yeah, she took Gary's Parks from him and gave up Planning and Zoning.

Ms. Hueber: Yet she wanted to keep Planning, yeah, you really can't do. . .

Mayor Hammon: She didn't want to keep Planning, as I told her, Tracy, I would like her to stay there for the continuity of it. I don't think we want to change that. When it came up I thought it was the right idea, but, if everybody doesn't like it and wants to get off of it. . .

Ms. Hueber: Right, if they're going to start changing the zoning things he has to sit in there. If it were me, I'd want to take part in the whole process, don't you agree?

Mayor Hammon: Oh, I . . .

Ms. Hueber: So, can we do it now and just say that so that . . . Then you'll have the right amount of committees then? You'll have three and Debra will have three?

Mr. Pulskamp: No, I'll still have four committees at that point.

Ms. Hueber: Okay, then let's. . .

Mayor Hammon: Let me go back to the records and I'll talk to her about it. Ken, if you want to take (indecipherable) and I'll talk to her about Planning.

Mr. Pulskamp: And just let me know.

Mayor Hammon: If you want to come down to the interviews tomorrow night, you're welcome to do that. I gave her a copy of the resumes.

Mr. Pulskamp: I'm going to trust you on this one, John.

Mayor Hammon: Oh, you're not going to come?

Mr. Pulskamp: No, I've got a meeting.

Ms. Hueber: But you can talk to Debra on that.

Mayor Hammon: Like I said, she's never expressed an interest to stay there, I just suggested it for the continuity. As far as the committees, I'll have to go back and look to see what it was before you came on.

Ms. Hueber: Maybe, there's a typo.

Mayor Hammon: No, I don't think so.

Ms. Hueber: Oh, okay.

Mayor Hammon: My guess is it's not because I told . . . I think she was on Parks anyway, wasn't she?

Ms. Hueber: Oh, that's right, Debbie was already on Parks.

Mr. Pulskamp: She was already on Parks.

Mayor Hammon: So, I don't know, I'll have to call her.

Councilmember Greg Thomas

A Public Service Committee meeting was scheduled for Friday, March 11, 2005 at 9:00 AM.

Ms. Hueber made a motion, seconded by Mr. Pulskamp to adjourn the meeting.