

**AVONDALE BOROUGH
COUNCIL MEETING
NOVEMBER 16, 2021
6:00 P.M.**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Shore, Dave Besselman, Paul Morgan, Dottie Howell
Absent: Bob McCue

GUESTS PRESENT: Mayor Cummings, Sandy Masten, Dennis O'Neill, Kim Venzie, Janet Watts, John Watts, Lt. Jason Ward, Bob Cleveland, Louise Cleveland, Susan Rzucidlo, Steve Allaband, Mike Essmaker, Steve Nuse, Ricky Franks, Nikki Cole, Mike Decker

After the Pledge of Allegiance, the meeting was called to order by President Shore.

RESIDENT AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

SUSAN RZUCIDLO

Ms. Rzucidlo said since the Fire/EMS Tax is on the agenda she has the following comments.

I support the fire company and the EMS division and fully understand the importance of fire and ambulance services for the community. I have received numerous calls, messages, emails from residents of Avondale who opposes the implementation of the tax. The people of Avondale are struggling with everyday necessities and now is not the time to raise people's taxes. I am asking the board not to approve this tax instead let the new elected board look at the books and review how our tax dollars have been spent. I am also asking the board to give the new board an opportunity to research to see if we can provide the needed funds to the fire company without raising the taxes on the people of Avondale because it is the fiscally responsible thing to do.

Dave Besselman said it has been 15 years since there has been a tax increase and over the last 15 years everything has gone up. We have to support the Fire/EMS company who is in desperate need. Dave asked Ms. Rzucidlo how many people have contacted you. Ms. Rzucidlo said 9 different people. President Shore said the Borough received a letter from Amy Krupa stating she is against the tax. Dottie Howell said 10 out of 380 property owners is not very many opposing.

AVONDALE EMS DIVISION OF THE FIRE COMPANY

Steven Nuse, Captain and Manager of the EMS Division gave the following report:

We had 49 calls in October on the Fire side; 4 – Avondale, 1-London Britain, 2-West Marlborough, and 17 Mutual Aid. 448 calls to date. There were 127 Calls on the EMS side. 74-New Garden, 10-Avondale, 5 London Britain, 1-Franklin, 4 West Marlborough, 33 mutual aids. There were 82 transports of the 127. We had 1,211 calls to date which is high since we don't have LGT. We had an open house on October 27th and had around 100 visitors in over 2 hours. We are already planning for 2022. Santa Tours have been posted on the Avondale Fire Company website and Facebook. We will be driving Santa Clause on a fire truck so please follow along to see when he will be in your neighborhood on December 4th and 5th.

Many of you heard that Jennersville Hospital is closing so we are trying to figure out what we are going to do with the increase in transport time. As of November 1st, the ICU is closing so any chest pains, strokes, heart attacks, respiratory will have to be transported to Christiana, Chester County, Lancaster General, Wilmington so transfer times are increasing. Today, we ended up in Oxford for an accident because transfer times are so long and stretched thin there was no ambulance available from Oxford to Longwood. We have gone to each municipality and divided the \$520,000 deficit that we see needed for EMS which is replacing 6–7-year-old ambulance's with over 100,000 miles on them, adding staffing, and adding salary increases for the staff to put us

where the rest of the county is being paid. New Garden Township has really stepped up with a 150% increase for the EMS and 30% increase on fire. We are looking for a lot of help from all municipalities because without the help we are not going to be able to respond much longer. Right now, we are running 10% calls in Avondale Borough and 5% for fire.

Dave Besselman asked Steve to comment about the meeting with all the municipalities with the issues with keeping staff, maintaining help as well as equipment. Steve said Avondale is the lowest wage in Southern Chester County but with the budget we are given we can't pay more so it is hard to keep people. Oxford and West Grove are about \$3.00 more per hour and obviously pulls people away from us. Our full-time employees do not get benefits or retirement; This is all included in the budget we submitted. An ambulance cost around \$250,000-\$275,000. We have 100,000 miles on one and \$80,000 miles on the other ambulance. They are nickel and diming us, we just had a new motor put in one ambulance and now it is leaking oil. Right now, we are pay check to pay check.

Janet Watts said for clarification there are two entities; The fire company and the EMS Division. Steve said the EMS is a Division of the Avondale Fire Company and we have two tax id numbers and two separate budgets. Ms. Watts asked if one is in worse financial than the other EMS vs. fire. Steve said EMS has a larger load because it handles all the career staff. They are just not EMTs, they are also on the fire truck.

Kim Venzie said she understands that every time an ambulance goes out it loses money. Steve said yes, especially Medicare and Medic Aid are a set reimbursement and it is right around \$325-\$350.00. A BLS call can collect the \$350.00. The typical bill starts at \$950.00 and the mileage goes up from there. If it is an ALS call or Medic 94 call, they will take \$125.00 from the \$350.00. Blue Cross and Blue Shield mails the insurance check directly to the patient and it is up them to pay the fire company. Right now, there are at 50% reimbursement. We have invoiced out \$650,000 and have received around \$245,000.

Dave Besselman said the formula for the amount of money the fire company is asking for is based on 1% of the total assessment for each municipality. The tax has to be divided equally; 50% to EMS and 50% to fire. This amount comes out to \$21,000 to each. They asked for over \$37,500 for the EMS Division and a little over \$37,000 fire and we budgeted \$35,000 for each. Steve said the formula for funding is used in Oxford, West Grove, Kennett Commission, and recognized nationwide as a formula for funding. Paul Morgan asked what's the worst-case scenario if EMS goes under. Steve said West Grove is already taxed with covering another township with 12,000 to 15,000 residents; it would have to be picked up by someone else. We discussed merging, regionalization. The most difficult is the distance between fire houses. Hypothetically speaking, if Avondale were to go under, the ambulance would be coming from Longwood, West Grove, and it delays the response which can be life or death. Whether there is a merge or regionalization, that funding still needs to be there to survive.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dave Besselman made a motion to approve the minutes from the Council Meeting on October 19, 2021 and the Work Session on November 9, 2021, 2nd by Paul Morgan, motion carried.

BOROUGH ENGINEER'S REPORT

Dennis O'Neill gave the following report:

WASTEWATER PLANT

The gear parts are due in the first week in December. Eastern Environmental is going to pull the old gear box out and rebuild it. While the gear box is out, the rubber sweeps will be replaced. In the process of scheduling to get the tank drained and cleaned. Preparing the layout for the changeout of the chlorine gas to hypochlorite. We will be submitting the amendment to the Part II permit in the next two weeks to DEP.

W. STATE STREET – CONSTRUCTION RELEASE \$84,795.90

The paving has been completed. Dave Besselman made a motion to approve the construction release in the amount of \$84,795.90 to Smith Paving (\$74,457.00 from Liquid Fuel Account and \$10,338.90 from General Fund), 2nd by Paul Morgan, motion carried. The balance of the work to do is the line striping. The project will come in \$14,000 under budget.

NEW WATER SUPPLY

DEP had a question about what we are going to do with the other two wells. We told DEP that we were going to leave them open so we can monitor the stream and make sure we are not affecting the water table. They are locked and above the flood plain level.

RESERVOIR COVER

The project has been delayed until spring partially due to the contractor's delay (lack of manpower) and partially due to the well not being on line. A grant extension request was sent to DCED.

12 INDIAN RUN ROAD

Waiting on resubmission addressing some stormwater issues.

AVONDALE APARTMENTS

There is grant money available through FEMA Mitigation program. The problem is that the Borough will have to take a substantial step forward to condemn or condemn part of the apartment building and then deal with the housing. We are going to work with the White Clay Association to get a study done and it will let us know if there is something we can do upstream.

BOROUGH SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Kim Venzie gave the following report

BANK FRAUD UPDATE

Kim asked Sandy Masten to give the details leading up to the bank fraud.

Sandy gave the following details of the fraud:

When I came into work on October 18th, Becky was on the phone and she told me that I am on the phone with Bank and we had some fraud on our credit cards again. Becky put her phone on speaker. The bank person said there is also fraud on the checking accounts. Becky told the bank that you will need to talk to Sandy. I took the call and the bank said there has been fraud on your accounts and we need to lock all your accounts for 24 hours. Kim said to mention what showed up on the phone when the call came in. Becky said the Caller ID on the Borough's phone was from BB&T 610-268-3000 and it wasn't unusual that I have received the call because I have received them before when there was fraud on the Borough's credit card in the past.

Sandy continued:

The bank told me that they were going to give a password to lockdown the Borough's accounts for 24 hours. I put the password in and then I guess that is when he got into the accounts. They didn't ask for a user name; just to put in the password. They had all of our cell phone numbers. He said they would send an email when it was okay to get back into the accounts. The next day when I came into work, Becky said someone had called and they called from the banks phone number and said her name was Jessica Stewart. She said was calling to say it was okay to go into our accounts. Becky said you should have an email about the bank accounts. I looked and there was no email. When I spoke with the guy from the bank I asked for his name and phone number. He said his name is Victor Paul and you just call the bank branch and they will transfer you to the fraud department. He even gave me an employee number. I called the bank branch and asked for Victor Paul and they said no one there by that

name. I asked to be transferred to the fraud department. They said no, they couldn't transfer me to the fraud department. I asked to talk to Jose, the bank branch manager, but they said Jose would have to call me back. In the meantime, I called the fraud department and spoke with a lady there and that's when she said that you have been scammed. They immediately locked all the accounts. They made three wires; plus, one wire didn't go through because they made a mistake on an account number. They changed my email address to his so I wouldn't get any notifications. They tried to make two payments of Zell but they didn't go through. What they got was three wires. I called the police to make a police report. I went online and did the FBI reports and called the insurance company. We received a notice from the bank that the funds were not recoverable. The total was about \$29,380.

Dave Besselman said there are two insurance policies that may come into play. The adjuster will be calling this week. Kim Venzie said she sent a letter to the bank because the Borough has never wired funds before so she is wondering why it didn't throw up a red flag. Sandy said we are not even set up for wires. When they gained access to our accounts, they set it up. We do not wire or ach. Kim said in her letter to the bank she asked them to put a permanent stop on any future wire transfers without some type of multifactor authorization process being implemented. Kim said it's pretty standard to have something like this in place as protection. Kim said when there is anything happening with her accounts, they are sending texts notifying. It doesn't seem like the Borough had those in place. Kim's question to the bank is why wasn't that offered, why wasn't it put into place especially since we are a government entity. Not all banks deal with government entities so maybe you should look at a bank that deals with government. Kim said she will keep working on it.

President Shore said it was strange that it happened when the bank was making the transition to their new name Truist. The bank was closed for two days and maybe they left their firewalls down when they were doing that. President Shore said he has BB&T and had some fraudulent stuff on his accounts during the transition.

APPROVAL OF BILLS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Paul Morgan made a motion to approve the bills and financial statements from October, 2nd by Bob McCue, motion carried.

APPROVE TO ADVERTISE 2022 BUDGET

Paul Morgan made a motion to advertise the 2022 Budget, 2nd by Dottie Howell, motion carried.

DONATION TO THE FIRE COMPANY AND EMS DIVISION

Paul Morgan made a motion to add the donation to next months work shop agenda, 2nd by Dave Besselman, motion carried.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Cummings gave the following report:

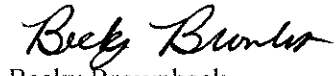
Working on the Christmas Tree Lighting. Some volunteers are helping to decorate this Saturday. We will be having Karen Myers dancers, Presbyterian Choir, we will have a sing a long, background music. Santa Claus will be coming in the fire truck. The tree lighting will take place on December 2nd at 6:30 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Work Session – Tuesday, December 14, 2021 @2:00 p.m.
- Council Meeting – Tuesday, December 21, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m.

Dave Besselman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m., 2nd by Paul Morgan, motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Becky Brownback
Borough Secretary