

Borough of Coraopolis
Allegheny County, Pennsylvania
Regular Council Meeting via teleconference
June 12, 2024
6:30 PM

The Regular Meeting of the Borough of Coraopolis was called to order by Council President, Robb Cardimen.

Fire Chief Spencer led the gathering in the Pledge to the Flag.

A Roll Call of Members was then taken.

Present

Robb Cardimen
Rudy Bolea Via Teleconference
George Mihalyi
Gary Flasco
Kim Haskins
Mike Harris
Joe Szabat
Michael Dixon, Mayor

Absent

Allison Marine

Mr. Cardimen said are there any questions from Borough Council on the Agenda? Mr. Cardimen said are there any visitor requests or comments regarding these Agenda items? Being none, the meeting continued.

Ms. Haskins made a motion to approve the Minutes of the May 8, 2024 Regular Council Meeting. Mr. Harris seconded the motion.

Motion passed by Unanimous Voice Vote.

Mr. Mihalyi made a motion to approve the Minutes of the June 5, 2024 Council Workshop Meeting. Mr. Szabat seconded the motion.

Motion passed by Unanimous Voice Vote.

Ms. Haskins made a motion to approve the Invoices for June 2024 in the amount of \$205,893.18. Mr. Szabat seconded the motion.

Upon Roll Call Vote

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Robb Cardimen | Yes |
| Rudy Bolea | Yes |
| George Mihalyi | Yes |
| Gary Flasco | Yes |
| Kim Haskins | Yes |
| Mike Harris | Yes |
| Joe Szabat | Yes |

Motion carried.

Ms. Haskins made a motion to approve the Payroll for the month of May 2024 in the amount of \$218,024.31. Mr. Mihalyi seconded the motion.
Mr. McCutcheon said that is for a three-pay month.

Upon Roll Call Vote

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Robb Cardimen | Yes |
| Rudy Bolea | Yes |
| George Mihalyi | Yes |
| Gary Flasco | Yes |
| Kim Haskins | Yes |
| Mike Harris | Yes |
| Joe Szabat | Yes |

Motion carried.

Ms. Haskins made a motion to hire Christopher Good, Jr. as a Full Time Police Officer. Mr. Mihalyi seconded the motion.

Upon Roll Call Vote

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Robb Cardimen | Yes |
| Rudy Bolea | Yes |
| George Mihalyi | Yes |
| Gary Flasco | Yes |
| Kim Haskins | Yes |
| Mike Harris | Yes |
| Joe Szabat | Yes |

Motion carried.

Mr. Mihalyi made a motion to approve the contract with Independent Enterprises, Inc. in the amount of \$756,925.00 for the Neely Heights Avenue Roadway and Utility Improvements. Mr. Szabat seconded the motion.

Mr. Cardimen said this is a large amount and will not all be paid out of the Borough coffers. We will be reimbursed by Columbia Gas for some of this as well as the Coraopolis Water and Sewer Authority.

Upon Roll Call Vote

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Robb Cardimen | Yes |
| Rudy Bolea | Yes |
| George Mihalyi | Yes |
| Gary Flasco | Yes |
| Kim Haskins | Yes |
| Mike Harris | Yes |
| Joe Szabat | Yes |

Motion carried.

Mr. Mihalyi made a motion to advertise the Montour Street Roadway Improvements Project between 4th and 5th Avenues. Mr. Szabat seconded the motion.

Motion passed by Unanimous Voice Vote.

Mr. Harris made a motion to approve Pay Request No. 8 for Riverfront Park Improvements project in the amount of \$45,765.04 to CH&D Contractors. Ms. Haskins seconded the motion.

Upon Roll Call Vote

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Robb Cardimen | Yes |
| Rudy Bolea | Yes |
| George Mihalyi | Yes |
| Gary Flasco | Yes |
| Kim Haskins | Yes |
| Mike Harris | Yes |
| Joe Szabat | Yes |

Motion carried.

Ms. Haskins made a motion to approve the use of the Riverfront Park on July 20, 2024, from 1 pm to 9 pm for Tiffany Young for a picnic. Mr. Harris seconded the motion.

Motion passed by Unanimous Voice Vote.

Solicitor's Report

Mr. Richard Start said I have nothing this evening.

Police Chief's Report

Mr. McCutcheon gave the Police Department Report for the month of May 2024.

Fire Chief's Report

Chief Spencer said in May 2024 the Coraopolis Volunteer Fire Department answered 18 calls; 9 were mutual aid calls, 1 elevator entrapment, 6 false alarms, 1 carbon monoxide alarms, which turned out to be a bad water tank, and 1 stove fire for a total of 230.96 volunteer hours.

Engineer's Report

Mr. Drew Null said Riverfront Park; there are some punch list items outstanding and with the pay request that you approved this evening you are still holding retainage. We will get those addressed with the Contractor within the month. Phase III applications were filed in May. That is through the Greenways Trail and is a resubmission from the previous year.

Mr. Drew Null said the Ridge Avenue Tot Lot; the Contractor notified the Borough they would be out in the next week to get started.

Mr. Drew Null said Neely Heights Roadway and Waterline and Sewer Improvements; the bids were open and you awarded a contractor this evening. We will notify the Contractor and get contracts back for signature.

Mr. Drew Null said Montour Street Road Improvements; surveys are completed and design is pretty far along, so we will advertise and looking at that to be for consideration at the August Meeting.

Mr. Drew Null said Grant Applications; the Flood Mitigation Program grant application was filed last month. This is the plan associated with the levee project.

Mr. Cardimen said after it rained, there were some low laying spots in the walkways of Riverfront Park, were they ever addressed?

Mr. Null said they were approached and there are two spots that they milled, but one of them appears it is still holding. We will get a field meeting set up and have them look at it.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Dixon said Second Saturday was a resounding success this weekend. It was very well attended and we had some beautiful weather, so thank you to all of those who came out to celebrate with us.

Mayor Dixon said we participated in a ribbon cutting at Queen Beans. Such a successful thing that she has going over there, so happy to celebrate with her.

Mayor Dixon said I received two emails this week from Mrs. Spencer and Mrs. Angelo asking the Borough, if they can investigate "No Turn on Red" signs coming off of the Neville Island Bridge and he continued to explain and a discussion pursued.

Mayor Dixon read a Proclamation for June and the LGBTQIA Community.

Committee Reports/Comments from Council

Mr. Flasco said I have a report from the Personnel Committee. We met with the Police Officers two weeks ago on their contract and we have another scheduled meeting on June 25th.

Mr. Flasco said we are having our first meeting with Local 1058 next Tuesday for their contract.

Mr. Mihalyi said I have nothing this evening.

Ms. Haskins said I have been speaking with a few neighbors in the Second Ward and there's a concern about the safety of the children, seniors and others due to the cars speeding up and down 1st and 2nd Avenues. I am asking for more speed signs and maybe one or two more "Children at Play" signs and she continue to explain.

Mr. Cardimen said I spoke with Mr. Tollis and he is going to take an inventory of the signs that we have and then meet with you so you can show him where the signs will be most effective in that area.

Mr. Szabat said Mr. Flasco and I met with a resident earlier in the month who wishes to remain anonymous. They had some property maintenance issues with several properties. Mr. Flasco and I toured the properties and filed them on

behalf of the resident. Within a week the property in the 900 block of State Avenue was being taken care of, so I would like to thank code enforcement person for acting quickly as well as the citizen who cleaned up there.

Mr. Szabat said the library is still soliciting bids to replace ceiling tiles and paint the ceiling. Mr. Szabat said there is no July Meeting for the Library Board.

Mr. Harris said I just want to read a little statement that I prepared for comment; I thought about last weeks vote for Police Chief over and over and I asked myself would I be having the same reaction if my candidate had won. Although I am greatly disappointed in my fellow members of Council for the outcome of the vote, this was the process. It is the process that I would like to address. The process used in selecting our new Police Chief didn't involve a committee such as the Personnel Committee that would interview qualified candidates and make a recommendation. This case there was no committee recommendation or interviews conducted for either candidate. In my opinion, there was no serious discussion or debate, instead the selection process for our new chief involves allegations of influential calls to different Council Members. I was naive to believe that as a Council Member, I would have the opportunity to question each candidate and form an informed opinion. It would have been a tough decision, but at least it would have been an informed one. As far as I'm concerned, the lack of transparency has again muddied the waters of our Borough. In conclusion I can only say that if any of our constituents are as disappointed as I am, please allow it to reflect in next November's vote at the polls.

Mr. Cardimen said I have nothing this evening other than I, too, share in Mr. Harris's disappointment. There are a lot of firsts for me here in this Borough and this is the first time I have made this statement; I truly am disappointed in my cohorts in this Council. The five of them. I am truly disappointed in the process as well as Mr. Harris is and that is all I'm going to say on the matter. Just so the people out there in the audience know, I share in Mr. Harris's feelings.

Mr. Bolea has nothing this evening.

Borough Manager's Report

Mr. McCutcheon said I want to thank Ms. Marine, members of her family and several volunteers for planting flowers throughout town, they look very nice.

Mr. McCutcheon said now that we've put the furniture in at the park and town square, I see quite a bit of usage going on. I spoke with Waste Management about getting a couple of canisters at the Riverfront Park that we will be able to put out for the regular pick up. I also spoke with Mr. John about getting a porta john at the Riverfront Park for access during the week when there are no events.

Mr. McCutcheon said I want to thank Public Works, they went out of their way to build the furniture etc. They put the planters together for Town Square, so those should be out within the next two weeks.

Mr. Cardimen said I think the flower pots through town look tremendous, but I would like to see us look for alternative planters for the front of this building and he continued to explain.

Comments from the Public

Mr. Cardimen said before opening the meeting to public comments I would like to make the following observations and direct that they may be part of the public record. It is the public's right to comment at public meetings and is limited to residents of the Borough or persons who pay taxes to the Borough and that is why we ask each person who desires to comment to give your name and address of the residence of property that you own in the Borough. Each person who seeks to comment is limited to three minutes and comments are limited to matters that are or may be before the Borough. Council Members are not required to answer any questions posed by the members of the public or engage in any dialog with the comments of the public. Council Members shall not comment on matters of personnel, discipline, or any legal matter.

Ms. Lori Lucier of 818 Thorn Street I want to find out what the Council has found out about the flooding on 4th Avenue. The last time I was up on any Council I was told the names to call, I never got any names. When I went to the water, they said there were going to go to the Board Meeting in Moon. Nobody showed up, but we did and got a lot of information from Moon Township on phone numbers, who owns what and they don't understand why this can't be dredged and why you have to have the DEA and all of this stuff, they are confused about that, but they did send out letters to, I'm assuming maybe you guys too, I did tell them to try to put Mr. Harris on it. They were going to cc Valerie Gaydos. They said there is some kind of program that she has for instances like this. I took all of the information that I could get that night and am passing it down to you guys. I shouldn't have to be doing that because it's not my job, but I'm glad to help. I am just here to help save these people. She continued to explain and a discussion pursued.

Mr. Cardimen said make sure you give your contact information to Mr. McCutcheon. We are going to use whatever resources that we can to get this problem solved.

Paulette Stephens from 1413 5th Avenue said I have an invitation for the Borough Council; I will be celebrating at Shelley Jones Park on July 6th and ask for you to bring your families and she continued to explain.

Ms. Stephens said does anyone know anything about VanBalen Cleaners? Is there someone I can get in touch with?

Mr. Cardimen said we had it scheduled for demolition four years ago and the individual who owns the property turned himself in to Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas and said that property may be contaminated with old chemicals from that plant and it stopped the demo process. He continued to explain and a discussion pursued.

Ms. Darlene Youngworth of 851 5th Avenue said I am curious as to why 824 5th Avenue has gone as long as it has with no one from the Borough approaching them about the property and how it looks. Grass is knee length and they have over 100 bags of garbage behind their house open, there are rats running around. Neighbors have called the Board of Health and they said they can't believe Coraopolis has let it go like that. I want to know, being in the first Ward and all you Council people drive by it every day, why did it take for me to come down here to file a complaint and call the Board of Health? And the garbage is still sitting there.

Mr. McCutcheon said six citations have been sent to the owner, but I believe she is deceased. We've called the Health Department and are doing everything that we are legally allowed to do and a discussion pursued.

Ms. Youngworth said I am very disappointed in all of you to not hire Officer Litterini as the next chief, and I hope that every day the each of you go and look in the mirror. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. For what that man has done for this town and for the people in this town. He's talking about showing love and respect. That's really showing him love for what he has done for these people. I hope you all regret the decisions that you made by offering that other man the job.

Mr. Harris said I would like to comment on that property on 5th Avenue. I also made a complaint and met with our Zoning Ordinance Officer, so we are going to try with Council and him to do what we can do. Right now, it's private property, so we're not allowed to really do anything on it and a discussion pursued.

Ms. Kristin Blackstone of 702 Main Street said my original intent was to speak here tonight about the hundreds of positive and ethical things that Officer Litterini has done for this community. Then I realized each of you already know this. I'm not sure why this decision was made, I chose to raise my children here because this is a safe community. I am also sure that you are aware about what Officer Litterini did for the children of Coraopolis and how he protected and influenced all of these kids. He's also a role model for some of these kids that don't have a positive influence at home, you all know it. I am not going to stand here and put someone in the uncomfortable position of giving an untruthful answer as to why you made this decision. We all know that Officer Litterini has more than earned his position as the chief. I have no bad feelings about Officer Stewart, he took an oath. My entire family is filled with law enforcement and I respect anyone that takes that oath, especially today. I have nothing to say, I'm sure he's great at his job and I have nothing negative to say about him, but I want you to know that most of the community does not agree with your decision. For what it's worth, I hope you had this community at heart with the decision you made. I also look up to this Board and Ray with the utmost respect and hope in all of your hearts that you made an educated and intelligent decision based upon the betterment of this community and she continued to explain.

Ms. Tracey Baker Serba from 1818 Devonshire Road said I have been here before talking about the blighted property at 1816 Devonshire Road. I filled out all of the forms, talked to you in person, I have rats, racoons, opossums. This is the 14th year I have filed this complaint. I read there is an ordinance stating that the property owners can be fined \$25.00 per day and she continued to explain.

Mr. George Carr of 103 Chestnut Street said I want to speak on what Ms. Haskins had to say. When I mentioned the garbage cans, people thought that was a joke, as to putting garbage cans out for people to use. They are more likely to put garbage in cans if they are there. You can put 500 signs along 1st Avenue and it won't make a difference if no one is patrolling on a regular basis. People are blowing those stop signs off of Broadway and 1st Avenue. It doesn't matter how many signs we have up we still need enforcement and he continued to explain.

Ms. Morgan Amber of 914 1/2 Fleming Street said I am also here to talk about the Chief of Police. I have known Jason for over 20 years. He has worked for the Coraopolis Police Department for almost 24 years and I can say for the first time in my life I am ashamed of the people in this community. They are slandering him all over facebook. They do not know him and they know nothing about him. I don't know who these people are, but they are now harassing his ex-wife and his 17-year-old daughter over this whole thing. It is not our decision as a community to make that decision, that is a Borough decision. People of the community who have gone out of their way to make this gentleman not feel welcomed in his position should feel ashamed.

Mr. Trevor Reed of 1441 Ridge Avenue said I'm not going to go over and repeat everything that has already been said. I think everyone on Council knows how ashamed we are of the decision you made. I know both Jason and Rob personally and both of them are great guys. Like Mr. Cardimen said, I don't have a problem with the decision, I have a problem with the way the decision was made. This is the second time this year that this exact conversation has been had in this Borough Chambers about decisions being made in secret, without public input, without interviewing the candidates for that position. The same thing happened when Mr. Kraynyk resigned from Council. The same conversation was had then, that both candidates that expressed interest were not interviewed and the same thing is happening now with the Chief of Police. Something has got to change. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. That's where we're at right now.

Mr. Brian Diggins of 1012 5th Avenue said I agree with all of the comments made by the public up here so I'm not going to rehash those. I want to talk about Rudy specifically. I've been trying to meet with you for six months, I've got the text messages and you say you want to meet with me so on and so forth. I want to discuss some blight in the areas that your Councilman for and I have properties for. It doesn't seem like you actually want to get together and discuss that or work on a solution. If anyone else would like to entertain a conversation about business blight and maybe what we can do about it, I would love to have that conversation and be part of the solution. I'd love to try to bring more businesses to town, it is difficult to do with some of the conditions that exist in the area's that we are trying to bring businesses to town. Most of you know that a street lamp fell over on Mill Street nine months to a year ago. There is still an orange cone that sits on top of that. You move the orange cone and the bolts that hold the street light are still sticking up out of the sidewalk and so are the wires that operated that light. That's how it was taken care of. So, when everyone is talking about blight of neighbor's houses and grass and so on and so forth, their example is this Borough Council and the way they take care of their stuff. You guys got rid of the heads of the parking meters and now we have what? A thousand sticks of metal trash sticking out of our sidewalks. Are you guys going to do anything about it? Like how do you attract businesses down here and have your streets look like that? Back to the street lamps, there are three other street lamps about to fall down that you guys haven't secured, you haven't done anything to. If another person leans on them, they are going to fall over also. I mean, get your act together. And to the residents here, the way we solve this is we get rid of these people. Like there are elections. We get rid of these people. I've tried, I've campaigned for it. We've had some success and they're doing a wonderful job. We need to get rid of the rest of the people.

Mr. Mihalyi made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Haskins seconded the motion.
Motion approved by Unanimous Voice Vote.

MEETING ADJOURNED