

**Borough of Munhall  
Regular Council Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, June 16, 2021 - 7:00 P.M.**

**I. Call to Order – President Inglis**

**II. Pledge of Allegiance – Councilman Falce**

Fire Chief Ed Pletsch requested a moment of silence for James Kincaid who served for 48 years with the Munhall Volunteer Fire Stations 3 and 4.

**III. Roll Call: Councilman Falce; Councilman Fallon; Councilman Ondo; Councilman Petruzzi; Councilman Stein; Vice President Votedian; President Inglis – All present except Councilman Ondo.**

**IV. Speaker(s)**

Maureen Fry – 124 West Virginia Ave – Several Items – Mrs. Fry asked Dave Cannon about the proposed property for Rallys. She then asked Bob Bicsey about a garbage truck item and how many garbage trucks would need this item. Mr. Bicsey advised one. Manager Varhola explained what the item is and feels it can prevent future workers compensation claims. Vice President Votedian explained how the item works. Mrs. Fry asked Colin Lampark if the cost of motion#3 was included the original cost of the building. She also asked about motion#5 and Chief Campbell advised it just time to update their computers, add a couple and doesn't have anything to do with the new building. It is just time. She then asked about the cost differences between what was advised the costs for #3 and #5 would be and the motions today. Manager Varhola explained. Mrs. Fry then asked Councilman Stein how many accounts the Borough holds at Brentwood bank. Councilman Stein asked Manager Varhola to confirm, and Mr. Varhola advised 13. She then asked Councilman Stein what the balance of the General Fund was, and he advised \$1,917,559.00 and asked if it includes the loan for the 1860 West property and Councilman Stein advised no. Mrs. Fry then asked about motion 7 and asked how much was paid the previous year. Manager Varhola advise \$6500.00. Councilman Falce advised this is

reasonable. Manager Varhola said he can't say enough good things about him. There was a discussion about Turnley's process. Mrs. Fry asked about motion 12 and what the MMO is. Solicitor Evashavik explained.

## **VI. Reports**

**Mayor** – Mayor Brennan asked for an explanation for motion 6. Manager Varhola explained. He then asked about motion 2 and if there is a cost estimate for Hatch to work on the project. Manager Varhola advised he spoke with Mr. Lampark, and he said it should be less than \$1000.00. Mr. Lampark advised they had spoken and there is a possibility of Hatch donating some time to the project. Mayor Brennan then wished everyone a Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July. He advised he is being asked about fireworks and he isn't a proponent of them. Mayor Brennan asked about the utilities at 1860 West Street. Colin Lampark explained the separation of the utilities. Manager Varhola talked about options for payment of the utilities by the Borough and anyone who may move into the unfinished area.

**Solicitor** – Solicitor Evashavik touched on motion 8 and advised if Council would approve the motion, it would be a zoning change and the current exclusion that exists in the current ordinance. If the motion is passed, he will have to write an amendment to the existing ordinance, clear that change through the County and have a public hearing. He then discussed his recent work on real estate tax assessment filings and advised they are having allot of success with this. Mayor Brennan questioned Motion 8 and asked if this change would apply to all general service areas and not just this specific location. Solicitor Evashavik advised he is correct. Dave Cannon advised there are only 3 general service areas in Munhall and that includes Whitaker Way and Forrest Avenue.

**Manager** – Manager Varhola discussed payments that will be made soon. He then explained who Snyder Brothers are and that they would be replacing UGI as our supplier of gas and electric. Mr. Varhola discussed salt for the upcoming season. He also asked about the police gym equipment that will be going by the wayside. There was a

discussion about donating it to the Fire Department, auctioning them or possibly putting it on Municibid. A resident suggested a Chinese auction or raffle and give the equipment away. Mr. Varhola advised there was an evaluation of the sewer system, and it does have a value and that the value is in the same ballpark as Brentwood, and they received 19.5 million. He explained why the value was entertained and unless someone comes up with an idea of how the old pipes can save the Borough money or bring money to the Borough, they are a liability. Mr. Varhola explained selling the old pipes off can be a windfall of possibly 15 million for the Borough. He explained how the money can be used towards the Borough infrastructure, including roads. He suggested another option would be to take 2 million of the money received for the sale and put it in to an account that can be used for unexpected projects. He explained if the sewer pipes are sold and the DEP or Alcosan requires money to be spent on them, the responsibility will fall on the new owner and not Munhall Borough. Mr. Varhola then talked about the possibility of taking 10 million and giving it back to the taxpayers by being able to put that 10 million away and taking money from that account each year, in the amount of up to 2 mils or \$750,000.00, and using that for infrastructure, instead of raising taxes. He advised the Borough can not continue to work without a tax increase. Expenses such as wages go up year over year, but the revenue stays the same. This can't continue. He explained the Borough has lost 5 employees due to attrition and they haven't been replaced to save money. Or taxes can be raised 2 mils, which will be approximately \$250.00 on a home with a value of \$100,000.00. He said he doesn't have a preference either way but advised some decisions must be made about how the Borough will make ends meet or make things work. He said Council can look further into the possible sale of the sewer pipes or raise taxes. President Inglis advised he would like to discuss it further in an executive session. Vice President Votedian advised he would like to see a public meeting as it will affect taxpayers in the future. Councilman Falce said he would like to see a meeting between Council, the Sewer Authority, and the public. Manager Varhola Council to decide if they want to entertain the idea right now or should he contact PA American Water to advise Council would like it taken off the table. Mayor Brennan said he thinks it

should be investigated but not until next year. Mr. Varhola asked if the Mayor is saying that he is not interested. Mayor Brennan advised not at this moment and that he agreed with Councilman Falce and feels Council should meet with the Sewer Authority and look at the general numbers, including debit, they might have. He suggested we tell them we are not objecting to it, but we need further discussions including the next Council coming in. President Inglis asked if he would like to come in with 10 million in the account. Mrs. Fry would like to hear what the people in the neighborhood would say but President Inglis reminder her there are sewer projects coming up and that the sewer rates will have to go up to fund those projects. Mrs. Fry said those things can be talked about in future discussions. Manager Varhola explained the current process with PA American Water and Aqua America. He said that approximately 12 municipalities are talking with PA American and approximately 6 with Aqua America. He advised that each municipality is put in a "queue" for discussions. He stated Munhall can be at the beginning of the "queue" a year from now or they can be thirty sixth in line depending on the decision made now. He said PA American staked claim on Brentwood and now Munhall is up for discussion and that either PA American or Aqua American may overpay to claim Munhall. Councilman Stein asked at what point does it become binding or costing the Borough money. Manager Varhola advised it is not costing money. Councilman Stein reiterated that if we stop the process now, the Borough will go back to square one. And that the Borough is at least 12-18 months away from any potential realization of a deal. He advised if we put this off, it is lost time. He said if they continue the pursuit at this time, and keep the discovery going, there will be a time where they ask for a commitment, from the Borough, and we can decide not to pursue at that time if need be. Manager Varhola explained that neither company are giving us an exact figure because they don't want us to take that figure to the competitor and ask for more from them. He said that once we commit to proceed, either PA American or Aqua America will call in a PUC approved company to come in and evaluate. This cost is about \$20,000.00 that the Borough would pay for the evaluation, but the money will be reimbursed by whichever company gets the purchase. He explained the reason the Borough would pay

the cost up front is that it can say it is interested and not be. He said they can look at it as a subsidized tax increase or are they happy with the way things currently are and raise taxes on the other end. He stated Munhall rates are 18<sup>th</sup> highest out of 87 communities. Councilman Stein asked how long the proposal has been floating around and have the exploratory conversations been happening. Manager Varhola said December of 2019 and then the pandemic came along. Councilman Stein clarified either they pay the \$20,000.00 now and keep the proposal open or they don't, and everything goes back to square one. Manager Varhola said the most important thing is not to lead these companies to believe we are interested, and we are not. Vice President Votedian asked exactly how long the Borough must commit. Mayor Brennan said it is only his opinion, but he feels they will still be interested next year. Mr. Varhola stated it doesn't affect him if his taxes are raised but if the taxes are raised and the sewage bills get higher and higher, we may want to ask what we are getting for our money. He said paying \$350 additional dollars in taxes doesn't affect him one way or another, but he is not sure everyone will feel that way. President Inglis asked Mayor Brennan to confirm he would rather wait until 2022 and Mayor Brennan said he would but that was only his opinions. Councilman Fallon said he felt there needs to be discussions with the Sewer Authority before decisions are made. A resident spoke and said she felt they need to have a public meeting before the new year so that people are informed. She asked if we could tell them that we are very interested but not able to commit right now. Manager Varhola said this would put the Borough back at the beginning of the line. Police Chief Campbell advised he was on the Sewer Authority board for 6 years and he feels that Jackie and the engineer are the experts and not the board. He said they usually proceed by the information the professionals give them. He also advised the Borough doesn't want to be the "last one at the table" either. Vice President Votedian asked Council to think about the seniors in the community that are on a fixed income. He feels they will not be happy if their taxes are raised. Councilman Fallon said they wouldn't be happy with a 40% increase on their sewage bill which is what happened in McKeesport. Manager Varhola advised they received an approval from the PUC to increase that high because of

how much had to be put into the system right away. He advised it will be the responsibility of each individual Councilman to find out information to make an informed decision. He advised he spoke to the PMA Board member, CEO of Erie Waterworks, the engineers for Clairton and West Mifflin as well as both of their executive directors. He went on to say he spoke to Mayor Cherepko of McKeesport and Brentwood Boroughs Mayor who is willing to speak to Council about the process they went through. He said the President of the Mayors Association, Jim Nowak asked him why the Borough wouldn't want to treat the sewage like every other utility it has. Mr. Varhola said that any amount of money that must be paid into the Sewer Authority will have to be done so by the residents/taxpayers. Vice President Votedian asked if the PUC regulated rates and Mr. Varhola advised yes. Solicitor Evashavik advised the PUC regulates private companies and can not regulate Alcosan or the Munhall Sanitary Sewer Municipal Authority. He advised there are no limits on what a governmental authority can raise their rates. He explained if there is a 20-million-dollar cost to fix a sewer system, the Authority will have to raise the rates to cover the cost of the project. Vice President Votedian asked if the current sewer system needs allot of work. Engineer Lampark explained when Chief Campbell was on the authority board, they took out to Penn Vest loans in the amount of approximately 13 million dollars. He explained the Sewer Authority was formed in 2007 in reaction to a consent order regarding the deficiency of the system (systems everywhere). Councilman Falce said it was a federal mandate. Mr. Lampark advise Alcosan will be spending 2 billion dollars over the next 15 years and the residents will pay that amount. Manager Varhola gave an example of the possible separation of the sanitation and storm water in the lower end of Munhall. He said some people say that will never happen and he has learned it is indeed a possibility from 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue down and that cost will have to be absorbed by 4000 rate payors. Councilman Stein confirmed he is hearing that there needs to be a meeting between Council, the residents, and the Sewer Authority soon. Manager Varhola said he can bring in the representatives from both PA American and Aqua America as well. The resident who spoke said she is also hearing that each Councilman will need to do his homework to make an informed,

intelligent decision. Manager Varhola agreed 100%. The resident said if you are a current Councilman or a soon to be Councilman, you need to do your work to participate in an intelligent conversation or make an intelligent decision. Manager Varhola mentioned an article that was written "Why you do not want to privatize..." and he contacted the writer who said that the article was written for reasons why you wouldn't want to, but he also asked what the Sewer Authority is bringing to the Borough. Manager Varhola advised nothing, and the gentleman said, "then the article doesn't include your borough." He advised if the Borough could sell it and get something that would benefit the taxpayers, why wouldn't it want to sell? The resident said she feels that Mr. Varhola has done his homework. President Inglis asked if it would be possible for everyone to meet in July. Possibly the 14<sup>th</sup> as there will not be a workshop meeting. He checked with everyone on their availability and confirmed the time of 6:30 pm with Secretary Becki Wirth who will advertise. The location will be decided. There were discussions on who will be in attendance, including Council, the residents, the Sewer Authority, and possible speakers.

**Engineer** – Colin Lampark advised of a block grant the Borough has received and this year they are using the money to pay Creative Enterprises who won the bid through the COG. They will be working on 14 catch basins. He advised the money will be paid to the contractor by the COG and therefore the Borough will not have to write a check. He advised the contractor asked for partial payment and Council will have to recommend the COG issue the partial payment. Solicitor Evashavik agreed with the process in which the grant was given and that the COG holds the funds. He said the contractor completed part of the work and therefore are entitled to the partial payment. The added motion is as follows:

**Added:** Motion to approve the COG to release the progress payment, in the amount of \$31,950.00, for project contract CD-46.7.6.

**Motion: Councilman Fallon; Second: Councilman Falce; Vote: Unanimous**

**Mr. Lampark then advised he needed an additional motion added regarding the annual paving contract. He explained the paving coverage and that the contractor has submitted the final change order and he now has the invoice.**

**Added:** Motion to approve contract 2021-02 the 2021 annual paving contract, payment to A. Liberoni, in the amount of \$158,662.71.

**Motion: Councilman Petruzzi, Second: Councilman Stein; Vote: Unanimous**

Councilman Falce said he received a thank you note from a resident for the work completed on Pansy Way. Engineer Lampark thanked the contractor. President Inglis asked who will be paving Ravine Street and the Engineer advised the water company. Colin advised there is a change order on the contract for the catch basins, but he did not have it ready to submit to Council as he is waiting on approval by the County. He advised the inlet to the catch basins were broken in about 4 or 5 different locations where waterline replacements were done in the past. He said it is obvious the water company broke them and did a half job to repair them. He advised it is important that these things are found because future sink holes could cost the Borough thousands of dollars. He is asking there to be a better inspection upon completion of these jobs to catch the issues. He said he just wants to bring this to our attention. There was a discussion about the current process and the delay with paving after the water company projects are completed. Solicitor Evashavik advised we cannot stop them from working. Even after we have paved, they can come in and tear it up to complete their own project.

#### **Public Works Supervisor – Report submitted**

**Police Chief – Report submitted.** Chief Campbell talked about resident complaints on Munn Street because of a new club. He advised they have posted the area and tagged vehicles, but the residents are asking for permit parking. He advised the LCB, and County Homicide are working with Munhall PD on the recent issues with the club. Solicitor Evashavik advised he will check but thinks the Borough already has an



ordinance allowing resident parking. There were discussions about recent issues with parking. Vice President Votedian asked how the Police would know the difference between the residents and others. Chief Campbell explained the residents, and guest, would have passes hanging in their cars. There were discussions about Valet parking. Councilman Falce asked what the capacity is in the club and Dave Cannon said 140 on the first floor. Mayor Brennan advised the Police Department now has body cameras and they are working well and are very clear. Chief Campbell said they are working with the Chief Harley from Pitcarin who has the same equipment and will be advising how to share information with the DA's office.

**Fire Chief – Report Submitted.** Chief Pletsch discussed his report and discussed the recent fatal fire. He is asking Council to have a conversation authorizing him to board up properties as needed. He wants to enter into an agreement with whomever the Borough chooses, that he can contact in the middle of the night, if need be, to board up a home. He mentioned Extreme Restoration having been the company he contacted for the recent fire, but he will allow that to be decided by Council.

**Code Enforcement – Report Submitted.** Mr. Cannon also mentioned 631 E 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and said he checked about possible grant money for demolition. He said the COG was already looking for demolition grants for Homestead, West Homestead and Munhall and there is no grant money available at this time. Engineer Lampark agreed it is bad. Dave said he tried to locate the owner and can not locate him. He said there are two neighbors who would be interested in it. Solicitor Evashavik advised them to go through the county and Dave advised they are not directly next door but a few doors away. Dave then mentioned a call he had from a resident at the Co-op. He commended the fire department on their response time and their professionalism.

Vice President Votedian asked Mr. Cannon if there was an update on 620 13<sup>th</sup> Ave. Manager Varhola stated that Dave will take them to the magistrate and then finds out there are no police reports. Joe advised the residents in the area call the police so that there are reports.

Resident Emma Carter advised she and other neighbors have indeed contacted the police. She said there is a problem with the ordinance. She advised it needs to read so many contacts in a week. She spoke about another home in the alley and advised both landlords need to go. Chief Campbell explained what should be filled out when warnings are given and once there are so many of those, they are sited. There were discussions about things that are going on besides noise. Vice President Votedian asked what the ordinance reads, and Chief Campbell said three calls within a period. Dave Cannon said he will send a letter to the landlord if there are three calls within a 6-month period advising them of the problem and that if the problem continues, they, as the landlord, will lose their ability to rent. Chief Campbell advised the magistrate's offices are backed up approximately 7 months.

Vice President Votedian asked about another property asked about the process for acquiring property next door. Manager Varhola advised he already sent that person the paperwork for the Vacant Property Recovery Program.

Dave Cannon advised the row house on 2007 West Street sold for \$150,000.00.

**Finance Chair** – Councilman Stein advised he is going to work on having more finance meetings. He advised for the month of May there were 1.178 million in expenses and 2.177 million in deposits and doing the math there is almost 1 million to the plus. He is not surprised as it is the second month into tax revenue. He advised Brentwood Bank changed their accounting system in the middle of the month, so he does not have the last two weeks of May numbers. He did say that as of the second week of May there was \$140,000 to the plus year over year.

## **V. Public Comments on Items for Consideration**

No Comments

**VII. Items for consideration:**

1. Motion to approve donation of \$2500.00 to the Main Street Business Association for the Halloween parade.  
**Motion: Vice President Votedian; Second: Councilman Petruzzi; Vote: Unanimous**
  
2. Motion to authorize Hatch Engineering to start the plans for park projects.  
**Motion: Councilman Falce; Second: Councilman Fallon; Vote: Unanimous**
  
3. Motion to award new office furniture and window coverings to Easley & Rivers, not to exceed \$150,000.00 which is COSTAR pricing.  
**Motion: Councilman Stein; Second: Vice President Votedian; Vote: Unanimous**
  
4. Motion to approve Resolution 2021-5 for the acquisition and subsequent disposition of vacant property 132-P-027, 3541 Forest Ave, through Allegheny County Vacant Property Recovery Program.  
**Motion: Councilman Falce**  
**Question on motion:** Councilman Stein asked where it is located. Councilman Fallon explained.  
**Second: Councilman Fallon; Vote: Unanimous**
  
5. Motion to approve Munhall Police to purchase new computer equipment from Integra One through COSTAR pricing, not to exceed \$50,000.00.  
**Motion: Vice President Votedian; Second: Councilman Petruzzi; Vote: Unanimous**
  
6. Motion to sponsor Carnegie Library of Homestead for Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Grant to be submitted through Commonwealth Consulting Partners. Munhall and Carnegie Library of Homestead are both clients of Commonwealth Consulting Partners.  
**Motion: Councilman Stein; Second: Councilman Falce; Vote: Unanimous**

7. Motion to approve letter of engagement with Mark C. Turnley, C.P.A. for 2020-year end audit in the amount of \$6500.00.

**Motion: Councilman Petruzzi; Second: Councilman Fallon; Vote: Unanimous**

8. Motion to amend Ordinance 1381, article 6, section 2, part B (permitted uses) changing the verbiage in general service area to include food and drink establishments and direct the Solicitor to prepare the ordinance amendment.

**Motion: Councilman Stein; Second: Councilman Petruzzi; Vote: Unanimous**

9. Motion to approve a handicapped sign at 822 E 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue as approved by Sergeant Williams and Chief Campbell.

**Motion: Vice President Votedian; Second: Councilman Fallon; Vote: Unanimous**

10. Motion to deny a handicapped sign at 308 W Miller Avenue as denied by Sergeant Williams and Chief Campbell.

**Motion: Councilman Petruzzi;**

**Question on motion:** Councilman Stein asked about the denial and was advised the resident didn't have a handicapped placard.

**Second: Councilman Falce; Vote: Unanimous**

11. Motion to approve the May 19, 2021, meeting minutes.

**Motion: Vice President Votedian; Second: Councilman Fallon; Vote: Unanimous**

12. Motion to pay bills for the period May 19, 2021, through June 11, 2021, summarized as follows:

Administration	\$	43,869.33
Police:	\$	24,879.77
Fire:	\$	16,676.12
Health & Sanitation:	\$	31,068.31
Public Works:	\$	38,743.81
Recreation:	\$	3,314.89

Debit Services:	\$	1,642.42
Miscellaneous:	\$	<u>523,190.19**</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>683,384.84</b>

\*\*Includes \$517,004.69 for MMO

**Motion: Councilman Stein; Second: Vice President Votedian; Vote: Unanimous**

13. Motion to approve Payroll for the period of May 27<sup>th</sup> and June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

2021: May 27 <sup>th</sup>	\$	155,594.98
2021: Jun 10 <sup>th</sup>	\$	<u>163,652.74</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>319,247.72</b>

**Motion: Councilman Stein; Second: Councilman Falce; Vote: Unanimous**

**VIII. Additional Items:**

Councilman Falce advised everyone of the upcoming Community Yard Sale on July 27<sup>th</sup>. He advised there will be a list of addresses and a map. He discussed with Secretary Becki Wirth the process of notifying the Borough of addresses. He also said Community Day will take place this year and may be late September or early October. He will have the date soon.

A resident asked about the park projects and the move in date for the 1860 West Street. She asked about the furniture and the Council Table that was in the current building. Manager Varhola advised it is already moved to the new building.

Manager Varhola asked Mayor Brennan if he intends to hold the Halloween Parade and Mayor Brennan advised he did indeed.

**IX. Adjournment:**

**Motion: Councilman Petruzzi; Second: Councilman Stein; Vote: Unanimous**

  
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 President of Council