

**BOROUGH OF STOCKTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
APPROVED:**

**REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 13, 2021**

The August Meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Stockton was called to order by Mayor Timothy Nemeth at 7:04 pm on August 9, 2021. The meeting was held online using Zoom technology due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mayor Nemeth read the "Sunshine Statement" indicating the meeting was being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Ms. Michele Hovan called the roll. The following members of Council were present: Ms. Rebecca Hendricks, Mr. Aaron Lipsen, Mr. Messina, and Mr. Donald Vandegrift. Mr. Michael Mann was absent. Mr. Adam Juncosa arrived at 7:11 pm. Borough Attorney Michael Butler and Borough Administrator/Clerk Michele Hovan were also present. There were 9 members of the public present.

Mayor Nemeth opened the meeting to the public. Ms. Eileen Foley, 11 Bridge Street, asked about garbage collection, noting there are piles around town since after the storm. Ms. Hovan replied that the Borough has been in contact with the trash contractor, was able to secure dumpsters for the park and for the firehouse, and that the volume is such that it is just taking time to clear it all. She added that the County was also contacted and they may be able to assist, but after Lambertville, due to the devastation there. Mayor Nemeth added that information about the dumpsters has been posted on the website and encouraged all to be patient, if possible. Mr. Jim Gallagher, 58 South Main Street, announced that district is hosting a public information sessions about the school construction referendum, two of which will be at the Stockton firehouse, on September 20th and October 7th. He also encouraged the governing body to pass a resolution of support for the passage of the referendum. Mr. Gallagher also suggested that the Stockton School transfer be completed. Mr. Vandegrift thanked the school district for cleaning up the school playground. Mr. Folz, 5 Bridge Street, asked if the Borough has a preferred tree vendor, to which Ms. Hovan replied no.

Mr. Juncosa arrived at 7:11 pm. There being no questions or comments, the meeting was closed to the public on motion by Mr. Messina, seconded by Mr. Vandegrift and carried.

Update – Impact of Hurricane Ida Remnants

Mayor Nemeth said that the September 1 storm produced 9+ inches of rain in a matter of hours and the rain from Hurricane Ida was something we'd never before experienced. He said that during that night, the first line of defense and rescue was the volunteers from the Stockton Fire Department, and that they displayed true acts of courage and devotion to our community. They risked their lives to help others, over and over again. He said that we all owe them much gratitude and asked all to support them through their fundraisers and in all ways. He also noted that Mr. Lipsen and Mr. Juncosa were out helping others and that the community really did work together. Mayor Nemeth thanked the fire department, and everyone that was able to help. Ms. Hovan also expressed gratitude for everyone that helped, especially the fire department, and also the engineer who was on the ground right after and many times since and that while much progress has been made and the town is again safe, there is much to be done. She then introduced Mr. Pollack, who described the main areas of impact - the Wilson Street area and trash rack, Worman Road, Crestmont, CR523. Mr. Pollack noted that John Sowsian has repaired some of the areas, more will be coordinated with the County. She said that while the Borough will be

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applying for assistance from FEMA and said that individuals should register with FEMA at disasterassistance.gov (information on website). In response to a question raised by Mr. Lipsen, Ms. Hovan said that property owners with damage should register at disasterassistance.gov and also file claims with homeowner's/flood policies. She said that generally speaking, the gap between coverages is what FEMA is likely to fund. Mr. Vandegrift asked about the resilience of the drainage system and increasing the capacity. Mr. Pollack said that the meetings with the County have yet to occur but one was scheduled for the next day. Ms. Hovan offered a brief history; that the system belongs to the Borough, not the County, and that while Ida was an extreme storm, there is a long-standing need to address the volume of water coming down the hill. Discussion followed that there needs to be a way to slow water coming down, perhaps through a retention basin or two farther up the hill or some other measure. Mr. Lipsen thanked Mr. Pollack for his extra efforts.

Ms. Hovan said that all the repairs cost money and that because it is an emergency, we are addressing the needs using the funds available but also require emergency funding steps to continue. She explained that the Borough tonight can pass the resolution for 3% of the operating budget but that is less than \$25k and more is needed, both in sewer and in general capital. She asked for a special meeting next week to introduce an ordinance for additional funds via a bond ordinance, adding that the expectation is that most or all will eventually be reimbursed by FEMA. She said that they are still calculating and estimating repair costs so the numbers are not yet finalized but expects to be more able to estimate in the coming days. She added that she's been in constant contact with bond counsel and also the CFO and that they are together strategizes the best way forward and that more information will be forthcoming.

Resolution No. 2021-50, Emergency Funding Authorization/Response to Flooding from Hurricane Ida, as filed in the Borough Clerk's office and to authorize the expenditure of emergency funding not to exceed 3% was adopted on motion by Mr. Juncosa, seconded by Mr. Lipsen and carried.

Roll Call: Ayes: Hendricks, Juncosa, Lipsen, Messina, Vandegrift
Nays: None
Absent: Mann
Abstain: None

Mayor Nemeth polled the Council and it was decided that Wednesday, September 22, at 6 pm would be the date of the special meeting.

Minutes - Mr. Lipsen requested some edits for the June meeting regarding the park subcommittee and the Mayor's request that they host a public meeting. After additional discussion, including with tabling the August minutes until September 22, the May 24, 2021 minutes were approved on motion by Mr. Juncosa, seconded by Ms. Hendricks and carried.

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Claims for Payment – the claims for payment, as attached, were approved on motion by Mr. Messina, seconded by Mr. Vandegrift and carried unanimously.

Roll Call: Ayes: Hendricks, Juncosa, Lipsen, Messina, Vandegrift
 Nays: None
 Absent: Mann
 Abstain: None

Discussion/Updates: Revaluation Timeline/Grants Committee/Fire Code Violations
Ms. Hovan reported that the revaluation timeline was pushed back due to COVID and that the County extended the deadline accordingly. She said that the Borough would be conducting the town-wide revaluation in 2022 to take effect in the 2023 tax year.

Mr. Vandegrift asked if the Hilltop and Moore was completed. Mr. Lipsen replied that there were supply issues, specifically with the availability of cement that is causing delays.

Mr. Lipsen said that Ms. Hendricks was not at the last meeting when the committee was discussed and that she is interested, as is Mr. Mann and himself. Mr. Lipsen said he is interested in doing what he can to raise funds for the town projects and just needs authorization. Mayor Nemeth asked if there would be issues with recusals if the majority of the grants were for the park. Mr. Lipsen said that the fire department, streets and roads, water supply, other areas in town and the lot of Risler Street could benefit from the grant committee's work. In response to a question raised by Mayor Nemeth, Mr. Butler replied that depending on the grant, there may or may not be a need for someone to be recused. Mr. Butler said that the committee would be gathering information and filling out paperwork but the governing body ultimately is the authority that applies. A brief discussion followed ending with the Mayor appointing Mr. Lipsen, Mr. Mann and Ms. Hendricks to the grants committee.

Ms. Hovan explained that until recently, the State had never, as far as she knew, inspected Borough Hall or other buildings in town and that there is a list of violations required to be addressed. She said that violations were issued without warning and that the Borough has 30 days to abate the issues, some of which are easy, others that are not. She said the Borough likely even needs to retain the services of an architect to design modifications to make the corrections. She added that although there have been conversations about using the school someday for municipal operations, the same type of work would be required there. She said that one consideration in the time ahead might be to abandon the assembly use of the building which would lessen some of the violations. A brief conversation followed regarding remote meetings, executive orders, the Delta variant and the myriad of issues surrounding meetings. Ms. Hovan said that the environment is constantly changing and that all the best planning might be upended by a higher authority. Discussion continued generally regarding the fire violations. Mr. Lipsen and Mayor Nemeth suggested that Council continued to meet via Zoom for the time being. In response to a question raised by Mr. Vandegrift, Mr. Butler explained that there are issues with the title work and that there is no actual acquisition timeline yet. Ms. Hovan explained that considerable planning is required for the school, even if the title work was clean. Discussion

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continued in general terms about the school. Mr. Lipsen suggested that the Borough explore options such as meeting at the firehouse or another location. Mayor Nemeth said that the September meeting could be on Zoom. Ms. Hovan suggested the Mill as a site and Mr. Mann said he would inquire about the firehouse and the Mill. Ms. Hovan suggested to wait, since meeting in-person will require masks at this time.

Mayor Nemeth made the following appointments:

Appointments – Planning Board: Joseph Martino – Class IV, Thomas Hunt – Alternate #1

Mayor Nemeth opened the meeting to the public. There being no comments, the meeting was closed to the public on motion by Mr. Juncosa, seconded by Mr. Vandegrift and carried.

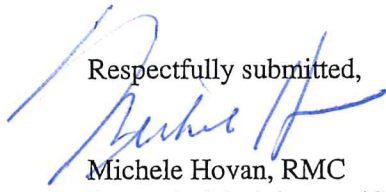
Mayor Nemeth said that he has the new crosswalk signs. Ms. Hovan said that the State has to approve signs on State roads. Mr. Lipsen said there used to be two on Bridge Street. Mayor Nemeth said that he would deliver them during the week and remove the old ones.

Mr. Lipsen said he is meeting with John Sowsian regarding a sinkhole on Glenwood and a drainage issue on Wilson Drive and that those areas will be addressed by the end of the year.

Mayor Nemeth announced that the next meeting would be held on September 13, 2021, via Zoom.

On motion by Mr. Mann, seconded by Mr. Vandegrift and carried, the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Michele Hovan, RMC
Borough Administrator/Clerk