

# BOROUGH OF AMBRIDGE

## MINUTES

Council Meeting: June 9, 2020  
Virtual Setting on Zoom.us



- The June 9, 2020 meeting of Ambridge Borough Council was called to order at 6:30PM, remotely and virtually on the website [www.Zoom.us](http://www.Zoom.us) and via conference call.

- **Roll Call:**

Present: Mr. Cafarelli  
Mr. Dunn  
Mr. Flannery  
Mr. Gill  
Mrs. Miller  
Mr. Mikulich  
Mrs. Tessaro  
Mayor Drewnowski

Also Present: Borough Manager Kauer, Chief Gottschalk, Chief DeLuca and Solicitor Start

Absent: Engineer Suehr

- **Invocation** – the invocation was conducted by Mrs. Barbara Costa, Trinity School for Ministry.

- **Pledge of Allegiance**

- **Presentations -**

Mr. Mikulich called for a motion to adopt a Proclamation.

Mr. Gill made a motion to table the motion regarding the Proclamation until Council can get together and talk more about it, motion seconded by Mr. Cafarelli; a roll call vote was taken:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	

Motion carried.

- **Citizen's Participation On/Off Agenda Items (3 minutes per speaker)**

Mayor Drewnowski questioned the time limit for public comment, he stated that is used to be five minutes. Mr. Mikulich stated that it was reduced to three minutes for the virtual setting but will return to five once we return back to Council Chambers.

- 1) **Mr. David Ninehouser, 1116 Duss Avenue**, stated that he attended the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting and then there was no talk about the upcoming COVID-19 pandemic, he was there to express concerns about the proposed Beemac Trucking Development. He stated that he was troubled that there was no conversation then about COVID-19. He then explained that on May 31<sup>st</sup> there were peaceful protests in Aliquippa regarding racial inequities and police brutality and it was then reported that the protests would move to Ambridge that day. Mr. Ninehouser expressed concerns and frustrations with a militia group that open carried rifles, dressed in tactical gear, and fortified a business on 10<sup>th</sup> Street here in Ambridge. He questioned this militia groups legitimacy and background. He stated there needs to be an apology to the community regarding this group.

Mr. Mikulich stated that Borough Council had nothing to do with this group, it was not authorized by Borough Council; this was actions by a private business. He stated that the Borough has nothing to do with a private militia group and he had no idea they were coming to town.

Mayor Drewnowski stated that he understands the citizen's frustration, and added that he, the Police Department, nor the Chamber of Commerce called this militia group to come to town and that he was appalled by it.

**Mrs. Erin Ninehouser, 1116 Duss Avenue**, stated that she was appalled by the militia group in town on May 31<sup>st</sup> at Muscle's Gym. She called for a public apology to the African Americans of our community that the actions of this militia group do not represent our community. Mr. Mikulich stated that the Borough is not responsible for this militia group or business's actions; he stated he is appalled as her. He added that Ambridge Council will never hire a militia group. She again called for a written apology.

- **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes  
May 14, 2020**

Mr. Flannery made the motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Mr. Dunn; Mr. Gill questioned Council to see if he and Mrs. Tessaro need their own lawyer to represent them as the statement from Solicitor Start at the May meeting only represented five members of Council and not them. Mr. Gill stated that not everything in Solicitor Start's statement is correct, and that half of Mr. Gill's statement is not entirely in the meeting minutes. He added that not all of Council agreed to hire an Interim Chief of Police from outside of the Department.

Mr. Mikulich stated that all members of Council did have the opportunity to talk to Chief DeLuca before the May Council Meeting and that we couldn't all meet with him in person at the same time due to the pandemic. Mr. Mikulich stated that Mr. Gill had the opportunity to meet the Chief in the Public Safety Committee meeting before hand.

Mr. Gill stated that the process that we hired the Interim Chief of Police was not right.

Mr. Mikulich stated that a process that we have used in the past was followed.

Mrs. Tessaro questioned if she needs her own lawyer, echoing the statements of Mr. Gill. She stated that she was never advised to call Chief DeLuca before the May Meeting. Mr. Mikulich stated that he personally called Mrs. Tessaro before the May meeting and that she did not object to the matter. He stated that he advised her that if she wants to meet Chief DeLuca, he will arrange a meeting for both her and Mrs. Miller to meet with him and she did not have a problem with that.

Mrs. Miller stated that she had a good opportunity to talk to Chief DeLuca before the May meeting, had no objection to the process and stated it was the same process used to hire Chief Romutis.

Mr. Mikulich commented that Mr. Gill and Mrs. Tessaro do not need their own lawyer, and that he is not going to put up with their criticism if they don't understand how something works.

Mrs. Tessaro stated she was never told that Council was going to hire Chief DeLuca, and that she had no issue with meeting and greeting him.

Mayor Drewnowski stated that his full comments were not recorded in the May minutes.

Manager Kauer stated that he is not a stenographer, minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting and that if you want your prepared statements in the meeting minutes, they need to be provided to him after the meeting. Mr. Gill thanked Mr. Kauer for explaining this.

Solicitor Start responded to these comments and stated that he will not stand for these untruthful allegations and that his May statement reflects the facts and if Council wants a new lawyer, they should fire him.

Mrs. Tessaro questioned is it facts or the comments of four people who attend the Public Safety Committee Meeting, is that a rumor? She said the Solicitor never called her. Solicitor Start stated that he chose not to call her.

A roll call vote was taken, those voting yes were with the requested changes added to the minutes:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	
Motion carried.			

- Borough Bills and Expenses**

Motion to pay the bills was made by Mrs. Miller, seconded by Mr. Flannery; a roll call vote was taken:

1.	General Fund	Unpaid: \$167,187.81	Paid: \$16,016.84
2.	Grants / Special Project Fund	Unpaid: \$0.00	
3.	Recreation Fund	Unpaid: \$0.00	Paid: \$0.00
4.	Escrow Fund	Unpaid: \$0.00	
5.	Police Pension Fund	Unpaid: \$0.00	
6.	Service Employees Pension Fund	Unpaid: \$0.00	
7.	Firemen's Pension Fund	Unpaid: \$0.00	
8.	Drug Investigation Fund	Unpaid: \$0.00	
9.	Fire Apparatus Replacement Fund	Unpaid: \$0.00	

Questions on the bills:

Mrs. Tessaro questioned why zeros are next to all funds numbered two through nine. Manager Kauer explained that there were no bills for those funds to pay.

Mr. Gill questioned items on the Solicitor's invoice and wanted to know who was involved with conversations regarding the Police Department. Solicitor Start answered the Manager, President and Councilmen Dunn and Flannery. The Solicitor informed Mr. Gill that if you ever have any questions, please feel free to call his office.

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	

Motion carried.

- Consent Agenda:**

*Those matters included under the consent agenda are self-explanatory and are not expected to require further review or discussion. Items will be enacted by one motion. If discussion is desired by any member of Council, that item must be removed from the consent agenda and considered separately.*

**Motion to accept item 1 and 2 listed on the Consent Agenda; all were in favor.**

1. Borough Financial Report - acknowledge receipt of the Borough Treasurer's Report.

## Treasurer's Report (June 9, 2020)

Marilyn Sheleheda - Treasurer

<b>General Fund Analysis</b>
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\$1,054,710.37	General Fund Bank Account Balance as of:	-(June 9, 2020) -3:00 pm
\$234,783.55	All (including today's checks) Outstanding Checks as of:	-(June 9, 2020) -3:00 pm
<b>\$819,926.82</b>	<b>Available Balance as of:</b>	<b>-(June 9, 2020) -3:00 pm</b>

<b>General Fund Bank Summary:</b>	<i>Totals that cleared the bank are as follows:</i>	
	<i>Deposits:</i>	<b>\$257,979.69</b>
	<i>Debits:</i>	<b>\$547,862.82</b>
	<i>-which include the following:</i>	
	<i>83 Checks &amp; Transfers</i>	<i>\$403,432.36</i>
	<i>2 Payroll (s)</i>	<i>\$144,430.46</i>

<b>Other Fund Balances as of (June 9, 2020) 3:00 pm</b>	
230.00	Ambridge Bicentennial 2024 Fund.
\$1,218.48	Ambridge Borough Drug Investigation Fund
\$25,908.39	Ambridge Fire Apparatus Replacement Fund
\$12,227.49	Escrow Disbursement Account
\$95,352.27	Grants/Special Funds
\$219,579.45	Liquid Fuels Fund
\$35,842.13	Recreation Fund
\$327,266.45	Sinking Fund
<b>\$717,624.66</b>	<b>Total Other Funds Balances (Restricted Use)</b>

2. Authorize the Ambridge Crime Watch to use PJ Caul Park on Thursday evenings starting June 25 through August 21, 2020 for their summer movies in the park program.

**New Business - Items for Discussion:**

- A. Motion to authorize the advertisement and release for public bid of the 2021 Municipal Solid Waste and Recycling Collection Contract. Motion was made by Mr. Gill, seconded by Mrs. Miller; a roll call vote was taken:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	

Motion carried.

- B. Motion to accept the lowest responsible bid received from Independent Enterprises in the amount of \$51,113.75 for the 2020 Road Program. (Bid Opening of June 4, 2020, project includes paving of DPW Yard (90% grant funded) and 10th Street between the busway and Glenwood Avenue.) Motion was made by Mrs. Miller, seconded by Mr. Cafarelli; a roll call vote was taken:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	

Motion carried.

- C. Motion to authorize the execution of an Agreement with the Beaver County Housing Authority for the biannual inspection and registration of all of their units within the Borough as part of the Borough's Rental Registration Program. Motion was made by Mr. Gill, seconded by Mr. Cafarelli; a roll call vote was taken:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	

Motion carried.

- D. Motion to accept the resignation of Borough Manager Joseph Kauer effective July 24, 2020. Motion was made by Mrs. Miller, seconded by Mr. Flannery; Mr. Gill questioned what if we don't accept, will he stay? Mr. Mikulich replied that he wishes. A roll call vote was taken:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	No	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	

Motion carried.

- E. Motion to appoint Dennis Lopic to the Planning Commission with a term that would expire December 31, 2024. Motion was made by Mrs. Miller, seconded by Mr. Cafarelli; Mrs. Tessaro questioned if this was advertised and when was his application received? Mr. Mikulich stated that yes it was advertised. Manager Kauer stated that it was received last month around the time of the Council Meeting; a roll call vote was taken:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	

Motion carried.

- F. Motion to authorize the purchase of a tailgate salt spreader for Public Works Truck No. 3 from US Municipal Co. in the amount of \$3,615 to be paid for from the Special Project Fund per the adopted 2020 Budget. Motion was made by Mr. Cafarelli, seconded by Mr. Flannery; a roll call vote was taken:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	

Motion carried.

## Committee Reports

### 1. Public Safety Committee:

Mr. Flannery stated that Chief DeLuca recently completed an evaluation of the Police Department and that the Committee will be meeting soon to discuss this along with recent insurance claims involving one of the fire engines and police cruisers.

Mayor Drewnowski questioned if the evaluation will be on the Committee Meeting Agenda to discuss all points of it. Mr. Flannery said yes, along with moving forward with body cameras for the police officers.

Mr. Mikulich stated that the damage to the fire engine is estimated at \$31,000 and questioned the Manager if this is in the budget. The Manager said no and that he is in the process of appealing this insurance claim denial and asked for some time to see what can be accomplished.

### 2. Mayor's Report

Mayor Drewnowski thanked and welcomed Chief DeLuca. He stated that the two are working well together and that he again welcomes him to Ambridge and the Department. The Mayor read a prepared statement regarding the militia group in town on May 31, 2020:

"This is a statement from the Mayor:

On May 30, 2020 at 7:14 pm I was notified by Ambridge Police that they received a call from an outside law enforcement agency notifying us that a protest was going to start in Aliquippa at 10:00 am on Sunday, then proceed to Ambridge at noon, and then on to Beaver Falls.

At 7:15 pm I called Chief Deluca to inform him, he stated that he would call the Ambridge Police Officer who notified me.

At 7:50 pm I called the Council President, Mike Mikulich. There was no answer, so I left a message asking him to call me.

At 7:53 pm I called Joe Kauer who said he would send an email to all of Council with the information.

At 8:00 pm Mike Mikulich called me back and I informed him of the information we received about a protest coming to Ambridge and that Chief Deluca was notified. I informed him that Ambridge Police Department would NOT stop or intervene with the protest as long as it remained peaceful.

At 8:23 pm Joe Kauer sent an email to all of Council and myself stating the information that was received and the police department plans that were being put into place. Quote from Joe in the email "simply letting the folks be unless something alarming happens (end quote)."

At 8:37 pm I called some of the merchants that I had phone numbers for. One of them suggested that I call Kim Villella.

At 9:34 pm I spoke to Kim Villella, president of the Ambridge Chamber, informing her of the possible protest on Sunday. There is a lot of family owned businesses in Ambridge. She stated that the Chamber would send an email to the business owners that are members.

I knew that if it was a local community protest, there would be no violence. After seeing what was supposed to be a peaceful protest in Pittsburgh turn violent, I felt it was my duty to ensure safeguards were put in place to protect life and property in Ambridge.

A post was created on Ambridge Connection's community bulletin board social media page and people started blaming Council, the Mayor, and the Chamber for bringing a group wearing Camo and guns into town. That is completely untrue, and I was shocked to find out that they were in town.

Council President Mike Mikulich reacted to the comments by posting on social media "It was the Mayor who put out the message to just his friends that a mob was coming which never happened. Blame the Mayor (end quote)."

I did not put out information to just my friends and I NEVER used the word "Mob."  
Mike Mikulich was fully aware of what was put into place through the email he received and my conversation directly with him.

Attacking the Mayor on social media with lies is unacceptable behavior from a Council President.

A council president should unite all elected officials as one for the best interest of Ambridge. I know he will disagree with me, but his actions and words prove differently. Mike, bring us together as a whole, not divide us." (END OF PREPARED STATEMENT)

Mrs. Miller questioned the Mayor asking so you were not aware this militia group was coming to Ambridge before they came? Mayor Drewnowski stated that Mrs. Tessaro called him the night before the proposed protest and informed him that this militia group called her and asked her if they were needed in town. She then called me to ask what I thought, he said that was a decision for the Public Safety Committee and then said no to them. Mrs. Miller said then both you and Mrs. Tessaro knew well in advance that they were coming to town. She said shame on both of you for not going to that business and letting this happen. She is embarrassed that both the Mayor and Mrs. Tessaro knew in advance and did not stop it.

Mayor stated that he did not know that they were coming.

Mrs. Miller read Mrs. Tessaro's recent Facebook post regarding this incident, highlighting that she was called Sunday morning by Iron City CRU and asked her if we needed their assistance. She said that she was in no position to give the go ahead so she called the Mayor and they said it would be up for the Public Safety Committee to decide, but later said no. She then reported that Mrs. Tessaro called Matt back. Mrs. Miller affirmed that Mrs. Tessaro knew they were coming and asked her why didn't you go to that business owner and tell them not to come.

Mrs. Tessaro stated that when she called the Iron City CRU team back, she did not ask what business they were going to go to. Mrs. Miller stated that it is your business to ask what business they planned on going to.

Mrs. Tessaro commented that it is completely legal to open carry a gun and that it is not up to her to go to a group or business to police this. She stated that if she knew the extent that this group was going to take here in Ambridge that day, she would have said no. She added that we can not legally say to this group that they can't come to Ambridge; people can walk up and down Merchant Street open carrying a gun if they want.

Mrs. Miller told Mrs. Tessaro that you knew what they were doing and coming, and she knows the constitution. She added that Mrs. Tessaro could have stopped this by going to the business owner.

Mayor Drewnowski stated that he agrees with Mrs. Miller and that he was not aware this group was coming in camo fatigues and brandishing guns. He stated that he was questioned if this group is needed to help in Ambridge and that both him and Mrs. Tessaro told them no.

Mrs. Tessaro stated that she did not think it was necessary to have this group in town and told them no thank you, but a business did request them, and they told her that the Iron City CRU group was going to stay inside the business. Mrs. Miller stated shame on you for not asking what business the group was going to in Ambridge.

Mrs. Tessaro stated that the Mayor did not cause hysteria by notifying people of the planned protests, it was precautionary. Mrs. Miller stated that if you wanted to be precautionary, you should have told the militia group not to come.

Mr. Mikulich stated that all of Ambridge Council was attacked on Facebook regarding this militia group in town on May 31<sup>st</sup>. He is not going to stand for it and take the blame. He stated the Mayor made the calls to the Chamber which concerned this business. He added that the Mayor got everyone alarmed, not Council. Mr. Mikulich stated that he is not going to have this arguing in meetings in the future, this will not bring about any progress.

Mayor Drewnowski stated that he never said a “mob” was coming to town, the President said that. He stated the President of Council represents all of us and the town and that he should not make comments against the Mayor, we need to work together. Mr. Mikulich stated that he was really upset that people were blaming Council for this issue and that he defended Council. He stated that we are all on Council to make the Borough better and that we don't need to agree on everything but said we need to stop bashing one and another, this isn't how we conduct business. He added that we do not need extra solicitors, that is a ridiculous statement. He stated that the Solicitor's May statement was for five members of Council as the five members were being condemned.

3. Code Committee

Mrs. Tessaro reported that commercial fire and home sale inspections have resumed. She stated that the March Electronic and Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event that was to be held at the Borough Building has been rescheduled for Saturday, August 8, 2020. Mrs. Tessaro also reported that high grass has been a recent issue in town, 148 letters were sent out this past month.

4. Public Works Committee

Mr. Cafarelli reported the following:

- Street sweeping is ongoing every other week. Parking enforcement is scheduled to begin the week of June 15<sup>th</sup>. The Police Department will be giving out warning notices in advance. News of the enforcement has been posted on the Borough website, Facebook page, WMBA Radio, Beaver County Times and a text message will be sent out the Friday before.
- Cleaned catch basins and swales throughout town on rainy days. Crew also emptied and logged collected debris in the catch basin nets in the French Point watershed area.
- Yard waste collections have been busy with citizens cleaning up their yards.
- Grass cutting of parks, borough properties, right of ways and abandoned properties is now underway for the season.
- All playground equipment has been mulched for the year.
- Crew planted new street trees on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, replaced a dead one on 4<sup>th</sup> Street and added two new shade trees to PJ Caul Park.
- Troop banners have been hung for the year throughout town and the Borough Office is still accepting applications for new banners.
- Electrician is currently working on retrofitting the streetlights on Church Street to LED. He also made repairs to the streetlights on Merchant Street in the Historic District.
- Equipment Maintenance:
  - Truck 1– inspected, it needed rear brakes.
- Sign maintenance is on-going, replacing missing signs and repairing damaged locations.
- Ongoing maintenance has been dedicated to filling potholes and repairs to multiple alleys.
- Foreman responded, marked and reported multiple PA-One Call requests.

5. Parks and Recreation Committee

Mrs. Miller reported that all playground were recently mulched by DPW, potholes in the access road at Walter Panek Park fixed and that the road crew will be addressing concerns with the dog park fence.

She also reported that the annual Fall Festival of Churches that is co-sponsored with the Chamber of Commerce will more than likely be cancelled this year due to COVID-19. She said there are restrictions on how many people can be at a gathering and that donations will be hard to secure this year with economic impacts facing our business community.

Mr. Cafarelli and Mr. Mikulich thanked Mrs. Miller and her family for their work with the festival each year that makes it a success.

6. Engineer's Report – no report.

**Official Reports**

**Motion to accept the Official Reports;** was made by Mrs. Miller, seconded by Mr. Flannery; a roll call vote was taken:

Council	VOTE	Council	Vote
Mr. Cafarelli	Yes	Mrs. Miller	Yes
Mr. Dunn	Yes	Mrs. Tessaro	Yes
Mr. Flannery	Yes	Mr. Mikulich	Yes
Mr. Gill	Yes	Mayor Drewnowski	
Motion carried.			

• **Other Unfinished Business:**

Mr. Mikulich welcomed Chief DeLuca to Ambridge and thanked him for stepping into the role before his first day addressing issues that weekend.

Mayor Drewnowski questioned if the July meeting will be virtual on Zoom; Mr. Mikulich said no, it is planned to be back in person in Council Chambers.

Mayor Drewnowski stated that at the end of next month's council meeting on July 14<sup>th</sup>, the Ambridge Grocery Store Committee will hold a drawing for (4) \$25.00 gift certificates for those that returned their grocery committee surveys. He asked if that would be ok, after the meeting; there was no objection.

They Mayor stated that the committee hopes the results of the survey will help Ambridge get a grocery store. He stated that when he ran for Mayor, he never said he promised a grocery store for the town, he said he'll work hard to get a store.

Mrs. Miller stated to the Mayor that Council invites the Mayor to all of their committee meetings, why aren't they invited to the Grocery Store Committee meetings. She said she knew nothing of this committee other than a mention in the Manager's report. The Mayor stated all are welcome to attend his meetings and encouraged Council to attend. He will let everyone know of the next meeting.

Mrs. Tessaro stated at the May meeting the Administration and Finance Committee was discussed, and she reported that the last mention of this Committee was in the January 2016 meeting minutes and it states all of Council are responsible for this committee. Mr. Mikulich stated that the Administration and Finance Committee never stopped existing and that every month the bill list section of the meeting is the finance report for the month. He added that the President of Council sets all committees and narrowed down the membership.

Mrs. Miller stated that it is the role of Council President to set committees at his discretion; membership doesn't pick their committee assignments; they are appointed by the President. Mr. Mikulich stated that Mrs. Tessaro is referencing actions from 2016, it is now 2020, he sets committees at his discretion.

Mrs. Tessaro stated that in the newsletter she had an article about the new Pet Finder program and asked the public to submit their pet's information to the Borough Office if you want to be included.

• **Adjournment –**

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Flannery, seconded by Mr. Dunn; motion carried unanimously – meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

**DRAFT**  
Joseph Kauer  
Borough Manager / Secretary