

President Abby Wertz called the May 5, 2014 meeting to order at 7:30 PM with the pledge to the flag. Council Members present were Harvey Marshall, Ron Becker, Jr., Bob Pierce, Rod Soliday and Mike Kocher. Bill Langjahr was absent. Also attending the meeting were Solicitor Jason Ulrich, Police Chief Bill Schlichter, Mayor Randall Gartner and Manager Lisa Heilman. Citizens and visitors attending the meeting were David Randler, David Bright, Lori Brown, Tom Kellenberger, Tony Wirebach, David Rohrbach, Frank Schnee, James Swartz, Garry Degler, Solicitor John Muir, Anthony & Denise Curtis, Matt Planer, Steve Tribioli, Doug Brown (Bern Township PD), Ronald Mohl (FOP Representative), Jim Dotzenroth, Benjamin Shaner (Mohnton PD), Charlia Koch, Perry Lloyd and Matt Nijori of the Reading Eagle. On a motion by Mr. Becker seconded by Mr. Pierce and unanimously carried, the meeting minutes of the April 7, 2014 Council meeting were approved as presented.

Mayor Randy Gartner asked to read the following statement prior to the citizen/visitor comment section of the meeting:

"Before we start tonight, I want to take some time to address some lies that have been circulating about Robesonia Borough Council and the Western Berks Police. This online source has reported that if Robesonia withdraws from the Western Berks Regional Force we will form a joint force with Heidelberg Township and Bernville. This has never ever been discussed....period. It's a blatant lie. Second, it was reported that Robesonia Council was upset over the salary increases our police received. Not true....it was never brought up. There were many other things in the article that just weren't true. But how would the author know that when she never contacted me, the Council President, Vice President, or, the best of my knowledge, any other council member. Robesonia does have concerns which will be addressed and presented to Wernersville. These concerns include future cost trajectory of the department, changes to the charter agreement and more transparency. We are hopeful these discussions will lead to the department staying together. And we believe some of the things we are proposing will benefit Wernersville, too. I believe I speak for the whole council when I say that, for the most part, our police have been doing a good job. We had a good rapport with the former Chief, Scott Wagner, and I personally supported the current Chief, Bill Schlichter, to become our new Chief. I believe Bill and I are on the same page when it comes to the type of police force we both want to see serving our communities. There are no personality conflicts. Our concerns, as I have stated, are about controlling future costs and making sure our council stays fully informed about decisions made by the police commission. Last month's motion to dissolve the joint force was made because of language in the charter agreement stating that a year's notice be given if one of the communities involved is leaving the joint force. That will be a last resort. We have time to work this out and promise our residents we will keep them fully informed during the process."

VISITORS & CITIZENS – Matt Planer asked to defer his comments till later in the meeting.

Frank Schnee asked the status of the recycling numbers and grant money obtained from the recycling. He suggested the Borough put the information in the newsletter to keep the residents posted on the results of their recycling efforts.

David Bright, on behalf of the POSofA, reminded everyone of the upcoming Remembrance Ceremony scheduled at the Henry P Robeson Park and hoped everyone could make it. Jim Dotzenroth, on behalf of Trinity Lutheran Church, advised Council that the church has submitted the paperwork to PennDOT for a permit to close Penn Avenue for the Halloween Parade (Jack Frost Frolic). He advised Council that a car raffle would be held this year to raise money for the parade. Also, the Walker Bros. circus will be held this year on September 8th (also as a fundraiser). He advised Council that \$2,000 in scholarships will be given at the Jack Frost Frolic from the money raised. Doug Brown, a Bern Township police officer, Richard Mohl, a FOP representative and Benjamin Shaner, an officer from Mohnton were there to support the Western Berks Regional Police Department. Tom Kellenberger, Lori Brown, Charlia Koch, Tony Wirebach, Dave Rohrbach, Perry Lloyd, Jim Schwartz, John Muir, Garry Degler, Dave Randler and Matt Nijori (of the Reading Eagle) were observing.

MAYOR – Mayor Gartner asked the Borough Solicitor to look into if anything could be done to help Bennie Freeman on Freeman Street with the stormwater run-off issue from his neighbor's property. Also, the Mayor suggested the Borough needs to follow up on curbing along Penn Avenue. Many of the curbs are in disrepair and PennDOT is planning to do a major improvement on Route 422 in either 2015 or 2016. The Mayor has suggested it would be a good time to get the property owners to repair the curbs in conjunction with the betterment project.

SOLICITOR – No business.

ENGINEER – The Engineer’s report was included in the agenda packet. It included attendance at the MS4 Steering Committee meeting and

PLANNING COMMISSION – Next meeting, scheduled for May 21st, if needed.

MANAGER – Ms. Heilman presented request from Heidelberg Township to send representative for COG meeting to determine the best use of leftover funds. Meeting is scheduled for June 16th at 7PM at Heidelberg Township meeting. Mayor Gartner will attend as the Borough’s representative.

POLICE CHIEF: Chief Schlichter advised Council that the WBRPD will be running Buckle Up details in May. He also advised Council that the fingerprinting of children during the Wernersville Fair was very successful with a total of 105 children being fingerprinted. They will perform the same service for the Robesonia Street Fair. He will not be available for the dunk tank. Chief Schlichter reminded Council of the bike rally being held at the CW Middle School on June 14th for children ages 8 to 12.

PAYMENT OF INVOICES- On a motion by Mr. Pierce, second by Mr. Soliday and unanimously carried, the bills were ordered paid as presented, including those paid prior to the meeting to avoid penalties.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

Finance/Administration – No report.

Fire Protection/Safety – Next meeting May 6th. Secretary will send invoice for fire radios for payment along with Mr. Soliday.

Streets/Highways/Sewer – Meeting minutes from May meeting were included in the agenda packet.

Parks & Recreation –Mr. Becker advised Council that a meeting would be held with Angela Miller (playground leader) prior to the start of the playground program.

Personnel: No report.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Marshall – No report.

Langjahr – Absent

Becker- Mr. Becker thanked Sgt. Planer for his professionalism during his response to a recent call.

Pierce- Mr. Pierce asked about the accuracy of a rumor he heard regarding conversation during the Heidelberg Township supervisors meeting. It was reported that one of the supervisors made the remark that Robesonia was hiring two new officers and could then merge with Heidelberg Township to form a joint department. Mr. Randler (a Heidelberg Township supervisor) stated that it was discussed that if Robesonia got out of the regional department with Wernersville and formed their own department a cross coverage agreement would be sought. Mr. Pierce notified Council that the next Western Berks Regional Police Commission meeting would be held at 7PM at Wernersville on May 6th.

Soliday – No report.

Kocher- No report.

Wertz - No report

Mayor Gartner: No report.

NEW BUSINESS – At this time, Sergeant Matt Planer of the Western Berks Regional Police Department read the following statement:

Mayor Gartner/Council: Thank you for the opportunity to allow me to speak.

There has been an ongoing pattern of nitpicking about the police department. There have been numerous attempts to manipulate and misinform the council into finding a reason to dissolve this department since the inception. The reasons have been, including but not limited to the following: Coverage issues, visibility of police on certain streets, funding for Berks County Emergency Response Team or SWAT (which was voted down by council in the past to provide services to your borough residents in a crisis). There have been blamed contractual issues, scheduling issues, and cited lack of transparency of the department-which is completely contrary to the truth. There have been attempts teamed up with outside entities to bully members of council and the police commission board, preventing functions of this department, creating distractions to officers in the process and interfering with contract negotiations. These tactics are getting old. The officers and Chief don’t deserve this, the council and police commission don’t deserve this and the voting taxpaying residents certainly don’t deserve this. This latest tactic of trying to attack the 2014 police budget is just another attempt at pushing a personal

agenda. Every police department in the county is experiencing the costs of providing their own computer server and upgrade their radio system. There is no way around these added costs. The addition of a police car was long overdue from a denial in the 2013 budget and absorbed into this year's budget, adding costs of assets. These were all items of one time purchase, put off until Chief Schlichter was hired. These expenses were known back in 2012. Prior to Chief Schlichter's start, I was badgered and misled on issues and personalities of people around me. I am ashamed for being childishly and immaturely lured into that position, just as others have been. Chief Schlichter has been at the helm since September 2013 and has done a phenomenal job of building this department with mortar and stone from what it was. He has used the resources within HIS compliment of officers to expand the now respected ability of the department to include a Criminal Investigator, Field Training Officer program, an Aggressive Drug Enforcement officer, Truck Inspection officer, Traffic Enforcement certifications, and in house Training Officers at NO ADDED EXPENSE from prior years. Sick time use has diminished. Overtime is at the absolute minimum and morale is as high as can possibly be, contrary to the way it was before he became chief. As president of the officer's association, the 2014-2016 contract we have been eager to sign, had been negotiated to its exhaustion. The fortunate part for Robesonia, is that once the contract goes into effect the operating costs will be reduced based on what we have previously agreed. We have been waiting for an agreed copy to sign, and for some reason is being held up since the beginning of this year. There is also a concern of arbitrarily fielding questions from outside agencies that have issues of their own, and do not need to be dragged into our exceptional functioning department. Some of the things we work hard to provide, are: to protect and preserve life(first and foremost), fully investigate all calls, provide aggressive patrols, round the clock coverage, handle ordinance violations, handle snow emergencies, crime prevention, specialized services to the public, and assist EMS and fire calls (often being first on the scene). All of this, while being the lowest paid 24/7 full time department in the county, and lowest paid regional department in the state. Our officers have over 175 combined years of experience and knowledge to share within. All of your effort is nothing more than a power struggle that WILL result in elimination of exceptional services to Robesonia residents, who deserve the best service available. I (WE) urge you AND council, to reverse your decision to withdrawal from WBRPD, and to benefit the residents you are supposed to serve. It's all about them, not about you! Thank you."

Mayor Gartner offered a rebuttal, stating that he and the Council do serve the best interests of their constituents, many accepting no money for doing the job. Most Council members serve on several committees or donate valuable time to their community. He stated the Council does want to meet with Wernersville and work out the problems in order to keep the police department intact. A workshop meeting will be held in two weeks to continue discussions to make this work. Mayor Gartner offered to meet with any resident interested in sitting down with him to discuss our concerns about potential expenses coming down the road and our residents' ability to pay for them.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Mr. Pierce asked the status of the no parking signs in front of the Wells Fargo bank. He was told the signs were erected on Thursday, May 1st and are being enforced.

COMMUNICATIONS-

- WRJA Meeting Minutes and Treasurer's Report
- Monthly police report.
- Code enforcement report.

On a motion by Mr. Pierce, seconded by Mr. Kocher and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Lisa Heilman
Manager
Borough of Robesonia