

Connellsville City Council
MINUTES
February 16, 2021

This meeting of the Connellsville City Council was held this evening at 6:00 PM. Attending this meeting was Mayor Lincoln, Council members Keedy, Karpiak, Tzan and Topper. Also attending was City Clerk Ohler and Solicitor Witt.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE:

REMARKS FROM VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

CITY TREASURER'S REPORT:

Mayor Lincoln stated the Administrative Secretary will put the Tax Office reminders on the City and Tax Office Facebook Pages and the City website.

CITY CONTROLLER'S REPORT: Absent

CORRESPONDENCE:

Connellsville Area Garden Club, Geranium Festival request, May 29, 2021 beginning 9 AM until 3 PM

Resolution No. 2-1-2021: "To close Crawford Avenue between Arch Streets and Pittsburgh Streets beginning 7 AM until 5 PM on May 29, 2021 for the Geranium Festival; pending review and approval of PennDOT, Police Chief and Fire Chief."

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

Greater Connellsville Chamber of Commerce, Savor the Avenue 2021 request, August 5, 2021 from 10 AM until 11:30 PM

Resolution No. 2-2-2021: "To close West Crawford Avenue from Pittsburgh Streets to Arch Streets beginning 10 AM until 11:30 PM on August 5, 2021 for Savor the Avenue 2021; pending review and approval of PennDOT, Police Chief and Fire Chief."

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

New Haven Hose, Neon Nights 5K Race, May 8, 2021

Resolution No. 2-3-2021: "To close the following streets beginning 8:30 PM on May 8, 2021 for the New Haven Hose Neon Nights 5K: South 7th Street to West Crawford Avenue, right onto South Arch Street then left onto West Green Street and straight onto East Green Street, right onto Sycamore Street then right onto Davidson Avenue, right onto Race Street then left onto East Green Street, straight onto West

Green Street, right onto South Arch Street then left onto West Crawford Ave and left onto South 7th Street; pending review and approval of the Police Chief and Fire Chief and PennDOT.”

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

REGULAR AGENDA:

Resolution No. 2-4-2021: “To approve the minutes from the January 19, 2021 City Council Meeting.”

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

Resolution No. 2-5-2021: “To waive the Four-Day Resolution Rule to allow for items submitted after the Four-Day Rule to be read at the meeting tonight, such Resolutions will be marked with an asterisk.”

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

MAYOR LINCOLN:

Police Department Report for January 2021 by Police Chief Hammerle

Resolution No. 2-6-2021: “To appoint Robert Lubic to the Connellsville Redevelopment Authority; term to expire the first Monday in January 2022.”

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

Resolution No. 2-7-2021: “To approve A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF CONNELLSVILLE CREATING AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF CONNELLSVILLE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION BOARD.”

Mayor Lincoln stated the board will consist of seven persons including the Mayor or the Mayor’s designee, City Council and a member of the Connellsville Police Department. He explained the terms and information about the board which is being put together. Mayor Lincoln stated this is an educational advisory board.

Councilman Karpiak added he would like one item guaranteed which is the power of the board.

Mayor Lincoln answered this board would have no enforcement power and cannot pass a law. He clarified City Council would have the power and this board would have to take issues to City Council. He further added this board would be positive and ensure everyone is included and no one singled out.

Councilman Karpiak stated he is comfortable with the present City Council but holds concern for future administrations. He stated he wants this written up so it cannot change – even one word – then he is for it. He stated if it is not written up that way then he considers it a gray area that he is hesitant to go down. Councilman Karpiak stated he welcomes similarities noting everyone is human, part of this town and part of this country. He then asked the City Solicitor if he can guarantee that this board will never change.

Solicitor Witt stated there is no way to guarantee that in this resolution. He added this and future councils will always be able to modify this board by passing new resolutions and ordinances.

Mayor Lincoln stated this is clearly an advisory board and he sees nothing but positive in this board.

Councilman Karpiak stated he is in favor of that, word from word. He noted he is not in favor of is the volatility in the future.

Councilman Topper stated he feels this board would give a voice to those who feel they do not have a voice.

Mayor Lincoln requested and encouraged Councilman Karpiak to come to the first meeting and discuss setting up the by-laws. He further added he wants total input and all of City Council involved.

Councilwoman Tzan added she feels that this is an opportunity for people who feel they are diverse to realize they are similar.

Mayor Lincoln stated we are asking people to send in a letter of interest by email or in the mail for City Council to review. He noted they will need to put effort into this because this is important.

Councilwoman Tzan questioned if board members will have to be City residents.

Solicitor Witt stated the resolution can be amended to require members to be City residents.

Councilwoman Tzan stated she would rather members be from the City.

Solicitor Witt suggested language be appointees must be from the City.

Mayor Lincoln stated that once the board gets going, people will see its role in the City.

Councilman Karpiak stated he knows what the first board was and that is why he is cautious on this one.

Solicitor Witt stated that future council can pass an ordinance giving this board power or authority.

Mayor Lincoln stated we can “put this out there” and appoint members at the March meeting.

Councilman Karpiak asked if this resolution could be tabled for further information to be obtained.

Mayor Lincoln answered he would like to read the resolution this evening so letters of interest can begin coming in.

Mayor Lincoln read the resolution again with an amendment.

Resolution No. 2-7-2021: “To approve A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF CONNELLSVILLE CREATING AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF CONNELLSVILLE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION BOARD. All citizens must be from the City of Connellsville.”

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. Voting nay was Councilman Karpiak. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

REMINDERS:

March is “Art Month” with a Flag Contest sponsored by Downtown Connellsville. For information visit their Facebook Page or email: DowntownConnellsville@zoominternet.net . City Council will judge entries at the March 16, 2021 City Council Meeting

Downtown Connellsville is challenging businesses to create an employee Karaoke video. Email questions to downtownconnellsville@zoominternet.net

March 13th, Heart to Hope Telethon, 1 PM until 9 PM, Community Ministries with a Polar Plunge kicking it off.

Mayor Lincoln stated it will broadcast from the Connellsville Community Center so everyone can come up and see the music and Porter Theatre. He noted it will be in the new gym the refurbished. He further added there will be a lot going on that day. Mayor Lincoln stated there will be a Polar Plunge at Yough Park to kick off the event. He asked Solicitor Witt if Council needs to approve a plunge by resolution.

Solicitor Witt answered yes, they need to vote by resolution.

Mayor Lincoln stated he hopes those who plunge for New Years will come to Yough Park on March 13th between 11 AM and 12 Noon for this event. He added bring \$5 or more and put it in the heart bowl that will be on site and it will all be donated to the Heart to Hope Telethon. He asked City Council to support this resolution.

Resolution No. 2-12-2021: “To approve permission for the “Plunge for Hope” event at Yough Park on March 13, 2021 at 11 AM until 12 noon. Event will kick off the Heart to Hope Telethon.”

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

Councilwoman Tzan asked for clarification that there is no canned collection, only cash and there will not be a warming tent.

Mayor Lincoln answered there will not be a warming tent. He also stated the Fire Chief will make the decision as to the condition of the river and weather and if it will happen that day. He also stated to

visit connmin.org for information on cardboard cutouts of yourself or loved ones to be placed in the background the day of the event. Mayor Lincoln stated they are \$100.

March 13th, Soup Walk, 11 AM until 2 PM, Tickets \$10 at Connellsville Canteen, Appalachian Creativity Center, and many other businesses or on-line; www.downtownconnellsville.org/events

Connellsville Little League Registration for the Spring 2021 Season is now open. Registration will be done through their website: <https://tshq.bluesombrero.com/cville/> and will close February 28th at 11:59 PM.

Christian Church, 212 S. Pittsburgh Street, Free Community Lunch every Monday beginning 11:30 AM until 1 PM 724-628-3802

KEEDY:

Resolution No. 2-8-2021: “To abate and exonerate the City Treasurer from collecting 2021 Real Estate Taxes on a property owned by Fayette County Cultural Trust, which shall be exempt from 2021 City Real Estate Taxes, known and located as follows: 400 West Crawford Avenue, Parcel ID: 05-07-0076, \$549.05.”

Mayor Lincoln stated the Cultural Trust is purchasing the Independent Italian Club on the west side. He added it needs a lot of work on the inside and they are replacing the roof, heating and air.

Councilman Karpiak questioned why they are being exonerated with taxes.

Mayor Lincoln stated they are looking to turn this into an Art Incubator.

Councilman Karpiak stated he is trying to figure out why they should be tax exempt when it is a building in Connellsville and will be used for profit.

Mayor Lincoln stated he is not sure how it works, and they ran into issues with the Senior Center. He added they would have to get the County and School District to be exempt as well.

Solicitor Witt stated, “They would also be in the process of filling for an exemption from the Tax Assessment Board, which wouldn’t completely exempt them from all of the taxes, this is just a request in the interim because those hearings don’t occur until later in the year and the City taxes come out in the spring.”

Mayor Lincoln stated he feels with the building in horrible condition, they put a lot of money into the murals on the building and they are going to put a lot of money in to repairing the building so in the long run if the building switches hands, it would be taxable again.

Solicitor Witt noted until it was sold to another nonprofit or the Tax Assessment Board exempts them.

Mayor Lincoln clarified that if the Assessment Board says they are exempt, then Council’s decision does not matter.

Solicitor Witt answered yes.

Mayor Lincoln read part of the Fayette County Cultural Trust's letter to Council:

"The Trust purchased the building at the end of 2020 and intends to utilize the building for educational purposes and to fulfill our mission of improving the area's quality of life by promoting the cultural, artistic, heritage and natural Assets."

Mayor Lincoln questioned what the reason is for Council to read this resolution if this is up to the county and if Council should table it.

Solicitor Witt stated this will put it in place and it is only for the spring taxes for this current year. He added they could table the resolution until March since it is still the discount period if they want to investigate it more.

Councilman Keedy questioned if the City could exonerate until they hear from the county and then charge the taxes if the county says no.

Solicitor Witt answered no it cannot be turned around.

Mayor Lincoln stated he is ok with exonerating this year and then next year address it again.

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

Resolution No. 2-9-2021: "To enter into a five-year lease agreement with Ford Business Machines at \$500 per month for copiers in the Administration Office, Police Station and the Tax Office. Payments will come from the following line items: 402.374 \$200.00 per month Administration Office; 403.374 \$100.00 per month Tax Office and 410.330 \$200.00 per month Police Station."

Councilman Keedy stated this will give a color copier to the Police Station and new equipment in the Administrative Office and the Tax Office. He added it is \$28 cheaper than what the City is being charged now.

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

KARPIAK:

Public Works Report

Councilman Karpiak thanked Mark from Public Works for all he did during the last snow fall along with Vernon and the men filling in for the Public Works men. He also thanked the public for their patience and understanding. He further added he hopes things will go better now that the weather is in a cycle of rain, snow and ice.

Councilman Karpiak announced it is crucial that the Public Works trucks can get through both sides of the street. He reminded residents to park on the odd side of the road on odd days and the even side of the road on even days. He added the hospital and schools must come first.

TZAN:

Resolution No. 2-10-2021: "To advertise for sealed bids for the re-roofing of the Connellsville Public Works Garage on the arched main structure and receive bids for the two end towers that shall receive acrylic coatings with an alternate bid for trussed metal roofing. Bids will be opened at the March 16, 2021 meeting. Money to be taken from the Capital Improvement Account."

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

Mayor Lincoln and City Council discussed again what all needs done to the building and how old it is.

TOPPER:

Health/Code Officer Report

Resolution No. 2-11-2021: "To appoint Gwen McPoyle to the Board of Health; term to expire the first Monday in January 2026."

Mayor Lincoln stated the board now has two doctors and a nurse on the board now.

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

New Haven Hose Report given by Fire Chief Jeff Layton.

Mayor Lincoln asked residents to please support New Haven Hose because fundraising is the only way they have finances. He noted they incur debts just as everyone else. He added they do more than put out fires, for example they opened the fire hall to be used as a place to get vaccines.

Chief Layton stated hoagie sales will begin the first of March which will be from Vonas.

Councilman Topper stated there is a comprehensive plan and the City tries to revisit the zoning end of it along with a few other things they want to work on. He added they are working on some minor changes.

Councilman Topper thanked Tom, Vernon and Solicitor Witt and everyone involved, noting there are a lot of details that go into this, noting that every word of it matters. He added he hopes that over the next couple of months it will go before the Planning Commission and then City Council. He further noted it will then go out to the residents it will affect.

Mayor Lincoln thanked everyone working on this, noting it needs updated.

Mayor Lincoln stated there was a vaccination clinic at the Connellsville High School and over 1,100 vaccines were administered. He thanked the County's Task Force, Highlands Hospital and all the nurses and people who volunteered their time. He added he heard all positives on how organized it was. Mayor Lincoln reminded everyone if they get a phone call from Rep. Warner, Rep. Dowling or Senator Stephano's Office, most likely if you have signed up to get the vaccine, they are calling you to schedule your appointment because they are volunteering to help with this process. He noted not to call their offices. He also stated they will back at the high school this Saturday giving the vaccine and the next six weeks. Mayor Lincoln announced if anyone wants to be a part of this, go onto the Fayette County's Task Force page and fill out a form.

Resolution No. 2-13-2021: "That this meeting of City Council does hereby adjourn."

A vote upon the adoption of the resolution resulted as follows: Affirmative were Councilmembers Topper, Tzan, Karpiak and Keedy and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.