

**WINDBER BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES: JANUARY 12, 2010
SPECIAL MEETING: RECREATION BUDGET
6:00 PM.**

The special meeting was advertised in the Tribune-Democrat on January 6, 2010.

The special meeting was called to order by Council President Anthony Turcato at 6:00 PM. and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Attendance

The following council members were in attendance: James Furmanchik (arrived at 6:03 PM), George Ledney, Barry Jerley (arrived at 6:47 PM.), Sonya Pekala, James Spinos, Anthony Turcato, and Michael Winas. Also in attendance was Borough Manager Casey Durdines.

Public Comment on the Agenda

There wasn't any public comment on the agenda for the special meeting

Turcato proceeded to turn the meeting over to the Finance committee for input regarding the 2010 Recreation Budget. Spinos asked to comment before discussing the budget.

Spinos Remarks

- The Borough should consider working with East Hills Recreation and the other municipalities in the area to develop a joint recreation program.
- A second option would be to lease the swimming pool to East Hills Recreation since they are considering building a pool of their own. This would provide the Borough a guaranteed income and at the same time if we could lease part of the Community Building to them also, part of the basketball league could be returned to the Borough.
- The downtown business community is upset at the loss of income due to the moving of the basketball leagues.
- Richland Township residents pay the highest membership fees and many of them use the Borough Pool. If the Township would build its own pool, it would doom the Borough pool. We need funds to make repairs to the pool and if we lease the pool to Richland, those repairs can be made.
- He attended a town hall meeting with Representative Frank Burns where it was noted that the more that municipalities join together and share services, the better chance you have to receive more money in grants. The larger the group, the better chance you have.
- The East Hills Director indicated that he would keep an open mind and was willing.
- Things are changing and if the Borough doesn't act we are going to be left in the dark.

- With a joint venture with East Hills it would open the avenue for improvements to the park and the pool.

Discussion

Turcato commented that he is not opposed to this suggestion of a joint venture. This has been tried in the past and nothing came of it. The issue was with the money and their contribution.

Furmanchik remarked that we owe it to the people of the community to provide a viable recreation program.

Turcato also stated that a lot of our tax dollars go into the recreation program and in reality the bulk of the people who use it are from outside the Borough. You can't tax the residents of the local municipality to provide recreation for people from outside the municipality. The Borough has done this for the longest time and everyone is in agreement that the practice should come to an end.

Furmanchik remarked that the pool is a crown jewel for this area and we should consolidate services with other local municipalities to maintain this jewel.

Ledney stated that we can't continue to do what we have been doing financially. He offered up some numbers to substantiate his point.

Ledney remarks

- In 2009, the Recreation program lost \$38,314.12.
- From 2004 to the present time we lost \$280,179.00. This equates basically to 6 mils of tax that we lost.
- In developing the budget we beat our heads against the wall trying to come up with money for recreation. We took money from the General Fund for recreation that could have been used for paving and public improvements.
- Transfers were being made from the General Fund into Recreation without anyone's knowledge.
- Looking at the budget before us, there is projected a \$9,000.00 loss in Recreation.
- From 2004-2008 the Community Building made a profit of \$3,665 which works out to \$733.00 per year.
- In that same time period the park & pool combined lost \$47,712.00 per year on average.
- For basketball in 2009 we had a profit of \$46,336.85 not including utilities.

Discussion

Pekala stated that basketball made a profit of \$2,612.00 not counting utilities. Ledney added that the money made in the Community Building stays there and the rent is not enough to cover expenses. Turcato indicated that the rents we are charging are ridiculously low. He spoke to Mr. Mattis twice asking him to sit down with council in an effort to maintain the basketball league here, but it never happened. Turcato stated that

for every dollar spent at the Community building we made six cents and we can't operate like that.

Furmanchik indicated that he was concerned about the effect that the loss revenue was having on the business community who are taxpayers. If they are forced to close, it would increase the tax burden on all the remaining taxpayers.

Turcato stated that the pool would open this year. Manager Durdines responded by indicating that he was not going to open the pool because there are too many maintenance issues that need addressed and we are not making any money up there.

Spinosa praised the volunteer efforts of the Municipal Authority but is concerned that if they fail, the burden would shift back to the taxpayers. He wanted to know where we are coming up with the money for the needed repairs.

Manager Remarks

Durdines added that from the first five minutes he worked here he realized that the Recreation program was a losing venture. All of the money we have lost from 2004 is from the General Fund. There were other issues that could have been addressed with that money. Council needs to make a decision. He agrees with Spinosa that something has to be done and he is willing to accompany him to any meetings with East Hills Recreation. At the present we need to focus on your central services. This building is falling down; there are maintenance problems with vehicles, maintenance problems with everything and you throwing all of the money into what? People want the roads plowed; they want to see a police car drive past more than they want to go swimming in his opinion. In good years there wasn't very much money being generated by Recreation. The condition of the Community Building isn't much better than this building.

Durdines also stated that even if there was agreement on a joint venture with other municipalities, we are going to have to throw money into the mix and these are going to be tax dollars. If we wouldn't have lost this money in the past five years we could have replaced the roof and windows on this building.

Doors in Ballroom

Furmanchik indicated that Bill Bahorik who has been very generous in the past to this Borough would like to install a set of doors off of the stage area at the rear of the ballroom at the park. Mr. Bahorik would pay for everything. This would provide for uninterrupted operation when bands are setting up and moving equipment. Furmanchik made a motion authorizing the installation of the doors. Motion was seconded by Ledney. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Discussion & Remarks

Pekala reviewed several line items on the Recreation Budget and revised figures to reflect the loss of the basketball league. She also commented on reviewing the garbage collection for the Borough garbage. We are losing the recycling bins at the Community building. She would like to solicit bids for collecting the Borough's garbage

that would also include recycling. Our trash collection fees are excessive. It may result in some savings. Waste Management is our current hauler.

Turcato stated that there are four trash haulers that are registered to pick up in the Borough. They are Sulosky, Waste Management, Galucci and Bergmeier. Pekala asked that those four haulers be contacted for bids for the collection of our trash and recyclables. She also felt that the heating costs were high for the Community Building. That should be cut, because there won't be as much to heat.

Durdines stated that the programmable thermostat in the Community Building should probably be moved to a more suitable location to better serve the building, but there isn't any money to have it done. He added that council talks about things that should be addressed but doesn't say where the money is to come from to do it.

Ledney and Pekala continued to address line items in the Recreation that were changed.

Spinosa remarked that the fees for rentals at the park were too low. He also would like to see a clean up fee deposit added to the price. If you don't clean up, we keep the clean up fee. There is an increase in price for everything that we do.

Pekala said that we are in competition with SS. Peter & Paul for pavilion rentals and we don't want to overprice ourselves for the rentals. They offer similar amenities but don't have a pool. With a pavilion rental here in the Borough we give a dollar off of the pool admission.

Discussion continued among council members about whether the Borough is required to provide recreation in light of the fact that the majority of people using the facilities are not from the Borough. Furmanchik stated that many of the Borough residents who use the pool are walk up admissions. Turcato would like to see that tracked in the future to ascertain what percentage of the various groups are using the facility, possibly by using the zip code.

Ledney pointed out several items from the Recreation Budget Revenue page that need eliminated or changed.

Pekala said that we are collecting per person fees for walk ups desiring to use the basketball courts in the Community Building.

No one seems to know what the Special Activities line item was for on the Revenue page.

Turcato indicated that a ballpark figure for repairs to the pool would be under \$10,000 possibly fewer than eight. Repairs are needed to the liners and some plumbing repairs. A new winter cover is approximately \$20,000. The current cover is twenty year old. There are also some cosmetic repairs needed to the Ballroom.

Durdines felt that Council is feeling that we would like to do this the right way or don't do it at all.

Ledney indicated that our option if we decided to make these repairs is to use the mil of tax approximately \$45,000 that was set aside to be used for the building. Durdines said that if you do that, then what about the building?

Spinosa said this brings us back to his second option to lease the building.

Concerns were voiced as to whether the Municipal Authority would be successful running recreation and if they weren't it would fall back to the Borough. Turcato stated that a one time the Community Building was run by an Authority and it could not make it. It subsequently fell back to the Borough.

Furmanchik would like to see the Park marketed better to attract more people. He added that what happened happened. Now we have to move on. Let's see where the meeting with East Hills takes us.

Turcato adjourned the special meeting at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Fred Oliveros
Borough Secretary