

**Borough of Ben Avon**  
**7101 Church Avenue, Ben Avon, Pennsylvania 15202**  
**Special Meeting of Council – February 4, 2014**  
**Minutes**

**Call to Order**

Council President Earl Bohn called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Council Members Present**

Julian Wynnyckyj, Michael Wrbas, Richard White, Earl Bohn, Philip Brind'Amour, Michael Bett

**Council Members Absent**

None

**Others Present**

Bob Jones, Mayor

Anne Sweeney, Solicitor

Dale Regrut, Public Works Foreman

Carmella Hallstein, Secretary

Mr. Bohn stated that this was a special purpose meeting advertised to address the revisions to the 2014 budget and any other business that may come before council. He stated that Mr. White discovered a deficit in the 2014 budget of about \$37,000.00. Mr. Bohn stated that council discussed some adjustments at the January council meeting that would reconcile revenue with anticipated expenses. Mr. White stated that he discovered that the budget double counted the liquid fuels revenue that the borough receives from the State each year, which produced a deficit of \$36, 757.00. He stated that, as the borough is required by State law to maintain a balanced budget, he adjusted expenses to compensate for the lower revenue. See Exhibit A.

**Public Participation**

Len Barcoucky of 7028 Flaccus Road addressed council about funding for the bookmobile. Mr. Barcoucky read a prepared statement. See Exhibit B.

Jennifer Bett of 221 Ridge Avenue stated that when the Friends of the Ben Avon Bookmobile made their presentation to council their objective was to raise awareness and help to offset some of the costs on a year-to-year basis. She stated that the group raised almost half of the funds needed for 2014. Mrs. Bett stated that she thinks government is supposed to help to promote the quality of life in their neighborhood. She stated that residents do not all use police or fire services at the same time, all the time or ever, but the service is here and the bookmobile is here. Mrs. Bett stated that people who do not use the bookmobile now may have used it in the past or may want it here for their neighbors or their children. She stated that the bookmobile is a great asset, adding that this is why people come here to live in this neighborhood. Mrs. Bett stated that she thought it would be a terrible loss to Ben Avon if this asset went away.

Maureen Sweeney of 106 Irwin Avenue stated that she found out about the special meeting at the last minute. She stated that she was wondering why, in this age of advanced communications,

that the special meeting was not posted on the borough's website so that other parents could be here to speak their mind and give their opinion. Ms. Sweeney stated that she thought it was outrageous that the meeting was being held at 8 a.m. when the parents of small children who patronize the bookmobile could not be here to voice their opinion and their expectations of their elected municipal officials. She stated that it was important to have the availability of the bookmobile for kids to walk to enjoy the aspects of our tree-lined streets and the things that make Ben Avon valuable. Mr. Bohn stated that the meeting was advertised in The Citizen, which is and has been for many years, the official newspaper for legal advertisements for the borough.

Mr. Bett stated that he was concerned about breaking the contract with the Allegheny County Library Association. Ms. Sweeney stated that she contacted the Library Association to let them know about the borough's situation. Ms. Sweeney stated that she informed the Library Association about the money that was raised by the Friends of the Ben Avon Bookmobile and asked what could be done with the amount that was raised in an effort to keep the bookmobile. Ms. Sweeney stated that the Library Association offered a proposal for bi-weekly service. She stated that taking into account the weeks that the Library Association had already provided service this year, their proposal is to provide service on February 8 and then every other Saturday through December 13, 2014 for a cost of \$6,056.40. Mrs. Sweeney stated that under this agreement the borough would be modifying not breaking the contract.

#### **2014 Budget**

Mr. Bohn stated that based on Ms. Sweeny's conversation with the Library Association, the borough has a proposal to take bi-weekly service for \$6,056.40. He stated that the Friends of the Ben Avon Bookmobile had raised \$4,021.00 so the borough would need to provide \$2,035.40. Mr. Bohn suggested reducing the amount budgeted for other administration expenses to cover this expense. Mr. White stated that the amended budget would deduct \$4,758.60 from the bookmobile line item and that the remaining budget for 2014 would be \$6,056.40, the amount that the Library Association has proposed to provide service every other week through December 13, 2014. Mr. White stated that to offset that change \$2,035.00 would be deducted from other administration expenses; account code 401470 and that the remaining budget for 2014 would be \$1,215.00.

Motion: Mr. White; Second: Mr. Wrbas; Motion carried by voice vote to approve the 2014 budget as amended at this meeting. Mr. Bett opposed the motion.

#### **Council Vacancy**

Mr. White stated that council received a letter from Ken Opipery, Jr. regarding the council seat vacated by Sue Weiss. He stated that Mr. Opipery has expressed his interest to fill the vacancy.

Motion: Mr. White; Second: Mr. Brind'Amour; Motion carried by unanimous voice vote to appoint Kenneth L. Opipery, Jr. to the open seat on council.

#### **Adjournment**

Motion: Mr. White; Second: Mr. Wrbas; Motion carried by unanimous voice vote to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Carmella Hallstein*  
Borough Secretary

## Memorandum

To: Council Members, Mayor Jones, Tax Collector, Solicitor

From: R.J. White

Re: 2014 Operating Budget

As I have indicated previously, the 2014 budget—as approved by Council—contains a significant error. The Liquid Fuels Money the Borough receives each year from the Commonwealth (\$36,757 in 2014) was counted twice under revenue.

Thus, the 2014 operating budget produces a deficit of \$36,757. We are required by state law to maintain a balanced budget. To seal this gap, we have two options: raise taxes or lower expenses. None of us want to raise taxes. Therefore, we are left with the difficult task of choosing where to cut.

I have asked for input from you all, and I'm grateful for your suggestions. I have tried to limit the effects of the cuts as much as possible, to spread them out over as many line-items as possible.

I request that Council amend our 2014 Operating Budget in the following ways:

**Revenue: (Current Revenue Forecast: \$1,096,103.00)**

Account Code	Account Title	2014 Budget Amt	Reduce By	Budget Remain (2014 Amended Budget)
355020	Liquid Fuels Allocation	\$36,757.00	-\$36,757.00	0
Total All Reductions:	-	-	-\$36,757.00	-
<u>Total All Revenue</u>	-	-	\$1,059,346.00	-

**Expense: (Current Expense Forecast: \$1,096,103.00)**

Account Code	Account Title	2014 Budget Amount	Reduce By	Budget Remain (2014 Amended Budget)
404309	Solicitor	\$29,476.00	-\$10,000.00	\$19,476.00
436040	Street Repair	\$156,527.00	-\$13,463.00	\$143,064.00
436092	Avon Park Improvement	\$5,000.00	-\$4,000.00	\$1,000.00
456000	Bookmobile	\$10,815.00	-\$6,794.00	\$4,021.00
491020	Real Estate Tax Refund	\$7,500.00	-\$2,500.00	\$5,000.00
Total All Reductions:	-	-	-\$36,757.00	-
<u>Total All Expense:</u>	-	-	\$1,059,346.00	-
<u>Revenue Less Expense:</u>	-	-	<u>\$0.00</u>	-

Len Barcousky, 7038 Flaccus Road.

My fellow members of the Friends of the Ben Avon Bookmobile and I are distressed to hear that Borough Council plans to eliminate local funding for the bookmobile for 2014. This comes as bitter news to the more than 300 of us who donated last year or signed petitions in support of continuing bookmobile service.

The proposed action also appears to be contrary to the understanding reached between council and residents. We were asked to raise awareness of and money for the bookmobile service. We succeeded at both, raising circulation, patronage and cash. That arrangement was based on the idea that borough council would do its part to support bookmobile service for 2014. Individuals and organizations, including the Avon Club, donated to the effort in the belief that council would provide support this year. Our all-volunteer campaign was predicated on the idea that bookmobile service was a partnership between government and citizens. Donors and volunteers did not expect they would be expected to bear all the costs of providing the service.

It was that sort of partnership that was established when council voted in October to provide \$6,000 for the bookmobile to be added to the almost \$4,000 we Friends raised. That is not an unsubstantial amount and suggests the broad support the bookmobile has, even among people who currently do not use it.

That arrangement now appears at risk. We Friends question the wisdom of that change. It suggests bad faith on the part of council to break a contract arrived at only a few months ago. It risks bad feeling between council and residents who have given of their time and money to support the bookmobile. It threatens embarrassment for the borough as officials have to explain each week between now and May, when service would end, why they are not living up to last year's agreement.

Council members, many of whom I know as individuals, have been uniformly respectful. I am grateful for the kindness with which I have been treated here. When I last appeared before you in October, I looked forward to coming to see you again in April with a report on fund-raising for 2015. That effort, which has so far raised about \$1,000, has understandably been put on hold.

On behalf of the Friends of the Ben Avon and the residents who donated and signed out petitions, I urge you to reconsider your plan to rebalance the budget by eliminating a popular and long-standing service.