

**PAXTANG BOROUGH
Workshop Meeting
3423 Derry Street
July 5, 2022**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Vice-President Spackman	Christopher Spackman
Council President Pro-Tempore	Jack Thomas

Thomas Wingert	
Jennifer Britten	
Corbin Bower	
Eric Fillman	Entered at 7:02 p.m.

Mayor	Nathan A. Martin
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COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President	Katheen Bloss
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BOROUGH OFFICIALS

Borough Manager	Keldeen Stambaugh
Borough Solicitor	J. Stephen Feinour

Vice-President Spackman called to order the July 5, 2022, Workshop meeting at 7:00 p.m.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Vice-President Spackman open the floor for members of the audience to share comments

Ms. Rebecca Frankenfield – 114 Kelso Street read a letter from former Fire Chief Todd Zwigart with regard to a communication posted on the Borough website relating to fire services and the decision to have Swatara Township provide fire services for Paxtang Borough. Past plans and discussions were held with thoughts of keeping the Lawnton station and Paxtang station open and then combining as one station on middle ground to support both the township and borough, but discussions phased out. Ms. Frankenfield was concerned that members of the Paxtang Fire Company were not involved in the current plan and stated she was in support of the Harrisburg City contract due to 24/7 coverage, crew availability, and rapid response time.

Matthew Lemmon – 2444 Parkway Boulevard - Harrisburg 17103 voiced the following with regard to fire services: the decision to have Swatara provide fire services for Paxtang rather than Harrisburg City, and maintenance provisions not provided for under the Swatara contract. A plus for Harrisburg was their ability to respond in a rapid fashion and the readiness to have crews available for calls. Was of the opinion that closing the Paxtang station would cause areas of fire suppression capabilities, was dissatisfied that members were not consulted with regard to the appointment of a new Fire Chief, and was disappointed with Council not being deliberate and transparent with the public and personal issues. Mr. Lemmon stated he would be available after the meeting for those wishing to speak with him.

Deborah Harvey – 105 South 47th Street in Lawnton – Swatara Township voiced the following with regard to fire services: added burden placed on the Swatara Fire Department, placing Paxtang residents and Swatara residents at risk due to the need to handle additional calls, a need for volunteers, reason why Swatara, a volunteer company was chosen over Harrisburg City, a paid fire company with 24/7 coverage, and did Harrisburg offer to retain volunteers at the Paxtang station.

Councilwoman Britten said as Chairperson of the Public Relations Committee, information and Borough Minutes are posted on the Borough website, her due diligence was carried out by reading meeting Minutes since her arrival on Council, appreciated the frustration people felt, fire services were publicly discussed over the past 2 years, meeting Agenda is published 24 hours prior to a meeting as is required by law, and the decision for fire services was not made lightly by Council.

Mayor Martin stated Council chose the contract thought best to serve the Borough and that information was available on the Borough website for review.

Ms. Harvey closed by saying Swatara is finding it difficult obtaining volunteers, recruiting, retention, and was very concerned with the choice as made.

Linda Follett – 3625 Brisban Street - voiced the following in regard to fire services: posting of agendas only since required by law in September of 2021, Company not being notified of a presentation for fire services from Swatara Township at a past meeting of Council, Paxtang Fire Company members not being kept apprised of proceedings relating to fire services, and not having information available with regard to cost comparisons for fire services from Swatara Township and Harrisburg City.

Donald Follett – 3625 Brisban Street voiced the following in regard to fire services: reason Council choose Swatara to provide fire services and were “Scratch” accounts or records indicating how many times Swatara was not able to go out for a call, researched.

Gavin Ford – 3731 Rutherford Street – Swatara Township voiced the following in regard to fire services: Harrisburg City could provide 24/7 availability for fire personnel to respond to calls in the Borough while service from Swatara was questionable. While Mr. Ford thanked the Paxtang Lions Club for hosting their recent 5-K Patriot Walk/Run event, he was disappointed that he did not see a Swatara Township police vehicle there during the time he was volunteering. Mr. Ford was of the belief that Paxtang residents would appreciate more visual presentation of Swatara Police in the Borough along with enforcement of the pedestrian crosswalk in front of the Borough building.

Timothy Walde - 651 Lenker Road, Swatara Township voiced the following with regard to fire services: stated Harrisburg City firefighters are also Emergency Medical Technicians and asked Council if they were making Borough residents more safe or less safe with the decision made for fire services.

At this point Vice-President Spackman interrupted discussions being carried out by multiple members of the audience stating if anyone would like to present comments, they were welcome to do so by way of Audience Participation.

Charis Roth 3642 Derry Street – voiced the following with regard to fire services: if Swatara Township were to have a decrease in volunteers and could not provide for adequate fire company, would Paxtang need to search for another contract and be required to pay for 2 service contracts at the same time and go through the entire process again.

Stephen Roth 3642 Derry Street – voiced the following with regard to fire services: concerns with the outsourcing of Police services, Codes Enforcement, trash services, and now possibly fire services. Mr. Roth inquired if the Borough was possibly in financial distress and conceivably entering into receivership. *A statement regarding adequate fire services and a November ballet was inaudible.*

Mayor Martin thanked everyone for attending the meeting, expressed he will reach out to former Fire Chief, Todd Zwigart, with regard to clarification of recently released information on the subject of fire services. The intention of Mayor Martin was to explain to Borough residents that fire service has been a long term topic, stated Paxtang has very dedicated fire fighters like the Zwigart family, Mr. and Mrs. Follett, Mr. Ford, and many people in attendance that have been committed to the fire department. Fire services has been a topic that this Borough Council, former Councils, multiple heads of Public Safety, and multiple heads of Publicity have been working towards for quite some time. The decision was not a lack of ability of the Paxtang Fire Department. Mayor Martin fully supports the decision

of Council as Mayor, a former member of Council, and Borough resident. Due diligence was carried out by Council before this decision was made, was very proud of each member of Council, and of the fire company. Mayor Martin stated the Borough is not in financial distress but has outsourced items as seen best. The reason for this decision was to optimistically hold the line on taxes and be able to provide coverage that Borough residents deserve.

PAXTANG LIONS 5-K WALK/RUN

Mayor Martin thanked the Paxtang Lions Club for hosting this event but was unable to attend due to work obligations.

FRIENDS OF KLINE LIBRARY

Mayor Martin provided the following information from the annual report of the Friends of Kline Library located at 530 South 29th Street in Harrisburg: 14,288.00 active members, top municipalities served were Harrisburg City, Swatara Township, Paxtang Borough, Penbook Borough and Lower Paxton Township. There were 39,950 items checked out of the library, 60,957 annual visits were made, and 13,000 computer sessions were held for a total of 496,872 minutes of computer service for patrons. Information on activities and events at the Friends of Kline Library located at 530 South 29th Street in Harrisburg will be featured in the next edition of the Paxtang Post. Membership to the library is free.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES

Administration – No Report from Vice-President Spackman

Health and Sanitation – No Report from Councilman Thomas

Highway – No Report from Councilman Bower

Property and Recreation – No Report from Councilman Fillman

Public Relations – Councilwoman Britten said the next edition of the Paxtang Post is at the printer and should be ready for mailing shortly.

Public Safety – Councilman Wingert said the decision for fire services was not taken lightly, acquiring volunteers is a national issue, Paxtang has good firefighters and asked members to join with Swatara, and a PA House bill is being considered to lower the age to 17 to join a fire company. Councilman Wingert acknowledged and thanked Chief Zwigart and the fire company for the numerous ways they have lent a hand, assisted, provided service, and held fire prevention/educational programs to Borough residents over the years. Councilman Wingert stated Harrisburg City has a very formidable fire company with an amazing Chief and hoped with the decision as made would ease the volunteer situation.

At this point Vice-President Spackman interrupted discussions being carried out by multiple members of the audience stating if anyone would like to present comments, they were welcome to do so by way of Audience Participation at the end of the meeting.

REPORT OF THE SOLICITOR

No Report from Solicitor Feinour

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Vice-President Spackman reminded those in attendance that the time designated for audience participation was best suited for comments and if anyone had more specific questions, to contact Manager Stambaugh.

Steven Roth 3642 Derry Street - voiced the following with regard to fire services: reason Council chose Swatara, a volunteer company, for fire services, was of the belief that the Paxtang Fire Department could have remained open with assistance from possible (*inaudible*) aid, would like the Borough stay open but believes there is a plan towards having Swatara provide more services for Paxtang.

Matthew Lemmon 2444 Parkway Boulevard, Harrisburg, PA 17103 voiced the following with regard to fire services: inquired if anyone on Council had Emergency Management Coordination experience, or fire department administration experience, was of the opinion that Council made their decision lightly, believed the Public Safety Committee did a disservice to Council by making the recommendation as they did, and stated that Harrisburg City could provide guaranteed service, guaranteed response times, and guaranteed minimum staff levels by paid firefighters. As Captain of the Paxtang Fire Company, Mr. Lemmon stated he has received applications for memberships, believes Council still has an opportunity to revisit services and reconsider their vote as was made to repeal an ordinance that would take the Paxtang Fire Company out of service. In closing Mr. Lemmon offered his contact number to members of Council indicating he would be happy to discuss matters with them.

Donald Follett – 3625 Brisban Street voiced the following in regard to fire services: appreciated the time Council put into this decision but asked if Swatara would be able to provide the most important thing in fire service, that being the ability to provide the best response time to calls.

Linda Follett – 3625 Brisban Street voiced the following in regard to fire services: while the Paxtang Fire Company is not refuting the need to outsource, and agreed with outsourcing, the issue is with whom Council chose. While both entities proposed the same yearly charge for services, why was Swatara, a volunteer fire company, chosen over Harrisburg, a paid fire company. Ms. Follett stated she presented a Right To Know Request but was denied with an extension.

Vice-President Spackman stated for the record that the response provided back to Ms. Follett was not a denial, it was an extension.

Todd Zwigart – 3723 Brisban Street Swatara Township voiced the following in regard to fire services: Mr. Zwigart stated he served as Paxtang Fire Chief for 15 years, as mentioned in his letter read earlier he was attempting to be progressive when Lawnton and Paxtang were considering a merge but the Council, at that time, did not have a desire to move forward. Inquired why Council chose not to have fire services provided by a company that could offer guaranteed coverage and that proposed House Bill would not change anything as one cannot fight a fire until the age of 18. If members of the Paxtang Fire Company were involved in discussions, maybe there would have been a different outcome. Mr. Zwigart stated he gave a lot of time, effort, dedication, and family time and is saddened by with the decision of Council.

Mayor Martin stated the communication on social media was not to imply that Mr. Zwigart endorsed the decision, but to inform residents that this was not something that this present Council just started and decided in a hasty manner, but that discussions go back some time ago. Prior discussions were not as a result of a lack of trying on the part of members of the Paxtang Fire Company, stating Mr. Zwigart worked diligently at possible options, incentives, and ideas. Mayor Martin offered his apology stating he has the utmost respect for Mr. Zwigart and his family.

Mr. Zwigart stated he was not endorsing the decision made by Council.

Mayor Martin said he would be happy to make a correction if that is how Mr. Zwigart felt the message was taken. The intention was to recognize Mr. Zwigart and his family for their dedication to the Paxtang Borough Fire Company.

Mr. Zwigart inquired why Chief Skinner was not kept apprised of communications. Mayor Martin said Chief Skinner was involved throughout the entire process and provided information for Council through the deliberation process. Mr. Zwigart said he was not of the same opinion that of Mayor Martin.

Councilman Wingert stated he spoke with Mr. Zwigart 7 years ago when a plan was mentioned to purchase property on Derry Street and from that time since now, there is still a need for volunteers. Mr. Zwigart stated there was a plan with regard to moving under one roof but Swatara and Paxtang decided not to move forward.

Charis Roth 3642 Derry Street took this opportunity to thank Mayor Martin for personally visiting her family's home after being addressed at a past Council meeting in a manner that Ms. Roth felt was unprofessional. Councilwoman Britten expressed her sincere apology to Ms. Roth noting she will be very mindful going forward.

Gavin Ford – 3731 Rutherford Street – Swatara Township voiced the following with regard to fire services: the person who released the letter on the Borough website in regard to the change in fire service should have signed their name and title and would have liked Town Hall meetings to be held with regard to fire services. Mayor Martin stated the letter referred to was not a letter but a formal communication from municipalial elected officials speaking to Borough residents so a signature was not necessary. Mr. Ford asked Mayor Martin to consider keeping the Paxtang Fire Police as they do a lot for the Borough.

Dave Albright – 3606 Brisban Street voiced the following with regard to fire services: for the same amount of money, why did Council choose Swatara, a volunteer company, to provide services over Harrisburg City, a paid fire company, stating Council has an opportunity to change their decision for fire services.

Rebecca Frankenfield – 114 Kelso Street voiced the following with regard to fire services: is concerned with the choice of fire service chosen by Council, and asked that they consider a change in their decision.

ADJOURMENT

Vice-President Spackman thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the July 5, 2022, Workshop Meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Secretary

