

**CONNELLSVILLE CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**5 PM – DECEMBER 19, 2023**

This meeting of the Connellsville City Council was held this evening at 5:00 PM in City Council Chambers, City Hall.

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING ROLL CALL:**

Attending this meeting was Council members Karpiak, Topper, Keedy and Tiberio and Mayor Lincoln. Also attending was City Clerk Ohler and Solicitor Witt.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Pastor Michael Martin

Mayor Lincoln thanked Pastor Martin and his congregation for the lunches they provide the citizens and all they do for the community.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Police Chief Bill Hammerle informed City Council that Seth Caton would like to give them an update on the server.

Mr. Caton stated the upgrade to the servers is now complete. He noted they were able to reuse the RACK that the old servers were in. He stated a second RACK was put in due to more servers now than before due to Dash and Body Cam setups. He continued that the training could be done by the end of January.

Solicitor Witt stated the City needs to confirm that everyone has had the training on the new equipment and are familiar with the policy itself.

Councilman Topper questioned how long the cameras usually last.

Chief Hammerle stated he does not know the life of them since they have never had them before.

Seth Caton stated it would depend on how much they get beat up. He added the battery will work for an eight-hour shift.

Chief Hammerle informed City Council that if the police were to go into a person's home, they would have to inform them that they are on film.

Mayor Lincoln stated he is happy to have a video of exactly what is happening and have solid proof.

Chief Hammerle added when the police are doing their report and cannot remember what was said, they can play the video tape back and listen again.

Seth Caton explained the police can only watch their own videos. He continued that they cannot delete them, edit them or anything else.

**CITY TREASURER REPORT:** Marilyn Weaver gave her final report as City Treasurer

City Treasurer Weaver wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

**CITY CONTROLLER REPORT:** Bill Addis gave his final report as City Controller

Mayor Lincoln announced that the City is accepting letters from anyone interested in being City Controller. He stated citizens can call the City Clerk to find out the responsibilities of the position.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

**REGULAR AGENDA:**

**Resolution No. 12-1-2023:** "To accept the minutes from the November 21, 2023 City Council Meeting."

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

**Resolution No. 12-2-2023:** "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 Karpiak, Topper, Keedy and Tiberio and Mayor Lincoln. The majority of the votes being affirmative, the resolution was adopted.

**MAYOR LINCOLN:**

Police Department Report by Police Chief Hammerle

Chief Hammerle reminded residents to lock their vehicles. He explained the situation with guy they just caught breaking in to vehicles and noted they not only solved the City break-ins but also other jurisdictions. Chief Hammerle commended his department. He added the residents' cameras help a lot as well.

Mayor Lincoln asked Chief Hammerle to explain the testing for the position of Captain.

Chief Hammerle answered he started out with five guys eligible for the position, but two of the guys chose to stay at their current position. He stated three men went through the interview process with the Civil Service Board and the scores were very close, with Andrew Hominsky scoring the highest. Chief Hammerle added Hominsky would be the man that he would recommend.

Mayor Lincoln questioned how long Hominsky has been with the department.

Chief Hammerle answered 12 or 13 years. He stated the Captain will be his right-hand man, help with Administrative things and is second in command. He explained the job of the Captain.

Chief Hammerle read a letter from Westmoreland County Prison. He noted there are times the K9 Officer is called out to other jurisdictions when they need assistance. He informed council Westmoreland County Prison was having a drug problem and reached out to several K9 units including the city's K9 officer. Chief Hammerle read the letter:

“Corporal Tyler Garlick, K9 Ambrose, and Connellsville City,  
On behalf of Westmoreland County Prison, I would like to thank you for participating in a search at Westmoreland County Prison. The presence alone of these K9 Teams is a true deterrent and is greatly appreciated. The search was excellent and the K9 Teams presented themselves with great knowledge and professionalism. We feel these searches are important and help the inmates and staff. Once again, thank you for participating. We have a large building and without the help of your department, we could have never accomplished this search.”

Mayor Lincoln commended the Chief, K9 and Officer. He then questioned how the evidence room is coming along.

Chief Hammerle stated they are close to completion and just have to get some small things done.

CDBG and CV Programs Report, October 2023

**Resolution No. 12-3-2023:** “To promote Andrew Hominsky to Captain of the Connellsville Police Department effective January 1, 2024; wages are set through the Collective Bargaining Unit of the Police Department.”

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

**Resolution No. 12-4-2023:** “To amend the Agreement between the City of Connellsville and the Connellsville Municipal Authority relating to solid waste collection services within the City of Connellsville for both residential and commercial accounts. Amendment will be Section 4, Compensation, and Ratification and Reaffirmation: In all other respects, the Memorandum is ratified and reaffirmed by the parties hereto, without further addition, change, amendment, or revision, except as modified in the provisions of this First Amendment. This Agreement will commence on January 1, 2024.”

Solicitor Witt explained this is making sure the Administrative Funds comes back to the City.

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

**Resolution No. 12-5-2023:** “To enter into a loan agreement with Mid Penn Bank at a rate of 5.61% for the purchase of a 2023 Dodge Charger Police RWD vehicle for the Connellsville Police Department and permit the Chief of Police and City Clerk to sign off on all necessary paperwork to complete the transaction.”

Chief Hammerle stated they are replacing old car 20 and will pass it to the Code Officer.

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

**Resolution No. 12-6-2023:** “To adopt a REMOTE WORK POLICY for all City of Connellsville full-time, part-time, present, and future employees. Further adding this policy to the Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual; Remote Work Policy will take effect on January 1, 2024.”

Mayor Lincoln questioned if this is a “just in case of an emergency situation? Or is this being our employees are going to work from home as their regular work day?”

City Clerk Ohler stated this will be an emergency basis.

Mayor Lincoln reiterated “So all our employees are going to be working here and not working from home?”

City Clerk Ohler stated yes.

Mayor Lincoln added “If we have a snow day, we can do work from home.”

Councilman Topper added it is a max of 30 days.

Solicitor Witt notified City Council that it requires City approval for the employee to use the work from home option.

Mayor Lincoln questioned if there is a “list of emergencies.”

Solicitor Witt stated he does not know.

City Clerk Ohler stated it must go through him, the head of finance and the Treasurer.

Mayor Lincoln asked again, “What is the list of cause?”

City Clerk Ohler stated they do not have that.

Mayor Lincoln stated they need to be able to respond when someone requests working from home.

Councilman Topper added "We can call them to come back."

Councilman Keedy added if one of them gets sick, they can work from home. He added this gives the City a lot more oversight when someone is working from home, there are certain criteria they have to meet, certain goals and who they have to keep in contact with. Any time something was to happen there is oversight.

City Clerk added "Are you working or are you hanging out at home?"

Councilwoman Tiberio questioned if this should be tabled and to talk about it more. She added she feels this could jeopardize an employee who is already realizing this policy. She noted some of the wording in the policy may jeopardize the situation.

Solicitor Witt added they do not want to discuss it at the table since it is a personnel issue. He added it is up to council to implement it now with the authorization under the policy or wait and they will use the work from home that they are now.

Councilman Karpiak stated when he first read this in an email, I was opposed to it. He continued, "If you are telling me that we have PROOF that we can follow that people are actually working, that there is a time limit." He stated the only gray area he is seeing is "what are the qualifications to work from home and what is the emergency type situations."

Councilman Keedy stated if something were to come up with Shelley, she would have to check with Vernon and the Mayor as the oversight of that department.

City Clerk Ohler stated that is correct.

Councilman Keedy stated Shanea will have to check with Vernon and me and the Treasurer so it is not just one person giving the ok and they are both looking at what that level of type of emergency that is.

Councilman Topper continued that it discusses equipment. He questioned if anyone takes a lap top home.

Councilman Keedy added two of them have lap tops.

Councilman Topper added this this covers the City as far as they taking the stuff home.

Councilwoman Tiberio stated she does not like documents leaving here and having them at home.

Councilman Karpiak stated he is not crazy about the idea either.

Councilman Topper stated they have protections incase they end up back in that situation.

*There is a static sound making it difficult to hear all that is being said.*

Councilwoman Tiberio questioned how they do the oversight.

Could not hear the response.

Councilman Topper questioned if there was a discussion with the employees about this an open discussion? He asked if this was copy and paste from other municipalities?

City Clerk Ohler answered there was a little discussion. He stated the wording is a combination. He continued "Our policies are our policies and we can dictate as management."

Mayor Lincoln stated this is an Emergency Work From Home Policy and they are required to come to work every day unless they request....

Solicitor Witt added this policy can be modified or eliminated in the future. He continued this policy does not change or liberalize any work from home policies but adds accountability that you currently do not have. He added he does not see a problem adopting this policy so there is accountability in place. Mr. Witt stated if the situation warrants modifying or changing it in the future, council can do that. He reminded City Council it is with the oversight of the department heads, at least two with the City Clerk.

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

**Resolution No. 12-7-2023:** "To amend the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of Connellsville and the United Steelworkers of America Local Union 13836-23, the Administrative Union commencing January 1, 2024 and ending December 31, 2024. The amendments will be as follows: Replacing Article XIII, Sections 1 through 5 and Article XV, Section 1."

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

**Resolution No. 12-8-2023:** "To schedule the Reorganization Meeting for January 2, 2024 at 5 PM in City Council Chambers, City Hall, 110 North Arch Street, Connellsville, PA 15425."

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

**Resolution No. 12-9-2023:** “Resolution of the City of Connellsville approving the boundaries of an Enterprise Zone area or areas within City of Connellsville and approving the development of a Regional Enterprise Zone that includes City of Connellsville.”

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

**Resolution No. 12-10-2023:** “To delegate the City Clerk with the signature authority for the City of Connellsville for PennDOT form M-950AA, Application Number 324355.”

City Clerk Ohler stated this is for the Cambell Estates Project.

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

#### **REMINDERS:**

City Hall Offices will be closed at 12 noon on December 22<sup>nd</sup> and closed on Christmas and New Years Day

January 1<sup>st</sup> will be the annual Polar Bear Plunge at Yough River Park. He added the picture will be taken at 10:45 AM and plunge at 11 AM. Mayor Lincoln requested residents bring can goods to support the ministries.

#### **COUNCILMAN KEEDY:**

**Resolution No. 12-11-2023:** “To renew the City’s contract for One-Year with UniFirst for rugs at City Hall as stated in the October 19, 2023 proposal; money to be taken from line item 409.250; contract begins February 23, 2024 and ends February 23, 2025.”

Councilman Keedy thanked Shelley for her assistance on this.

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

**Resolution No. 12-12-2023:** “To appoint Ethan Keedy as City of Connellsville delegate to the Southwest Regional Tax Bureau, Shanea Fuller as alternate and Vernon Ohler as the Secord Alternate Delegate; terms to expire January 2025.”

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

**Resolution No. 12-13-2023:** “To adopt Bill No. 8 of 2023: An ordinance of the City of Connellsville, County of Fayette and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, fixing the salaries payable by the City of Connellsville for the various positions enumerated herein for the fiscal year 2024, and repealing all ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent herewith.”

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

**Resolution No. 12-14-2023:** “To adopt Bill No. 9 of 2023: An ordinance of the City of Connellsville, County of Fayette and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, showing the estimated receipts, expenditures and liabilities of every kind of all the funds for fiscal year 2024 with the balance of unexpended appropriations as the basis for fixing the levy and tax rate for said fiscal year appropriating the various amounts shown as proposed expenditures herein for the expenses of the City for said fiscal year from the revenue available for said fiscal year for the departments, bureaus and specific purposes set forth herein, and the repealing of all ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent herewith.”

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

**Resolution No. 12-15-2023:** “To adopt Bill No. 10 of 2023: An ordinance of the City of Connellsville, County of Fayette and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, fixing the Real Estate Tax Rate and Residence Tax Rate for all City purposes for the fiscal year 2024, and repealing all ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent herewith.”

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

Councilman Keedy stated there is a balanced budget with no tax increase and thanked all the department heads, city clerk and council.

Councilman Keedy thanked the residents, mayor and everyone who helped with the toy drive. He thanked the police department, New Haven Hose and Fayette EMS for showing up.

**COUNCILMAN KARPIAK:**

Health Officer’s Report

New Haven Hose Report by Chief Jeff Layton

Councilman Karpiak thanked New Haven Hose for their diligence and intelligence to see the needs of this town and help.



Chief Layton stated a lot of planning went into opening up a second fire house. He continued you are coordinating your guys and dividing up the equipment. He noted they are trying to be sure they are providing services on both sides of the river.

#### FEMS Report

Councilman Karpiak stated FEMS does a great job and asked residents to subscribe to FEMS and donate if possible.

Mayor Lincoln added that not all insurances cover the ambulance fee and they are not for profit.

Tom Currey, Health/Code/Zoning Officer thanked Councilman Karpiak and Treasurer Weaver for their time in office.

Mayor Lincoln asked how the garbage pickup and billing is going.

Councilman Karpiak replied it is shaping up and working out.

**Resolution No. 12-16-2023:** "To waive \$2,532.00 of the total \$6,032.00 fee of the building permit for the Greater Connellsville Wrestling Club for UCC inspections on the Connellsville Wrestling Room as a charitable project for the benefit of the school district and its students and taxpayers as a local political subdivision operating within the City."

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

Councilman Karpiak stated this is his last meeting and he enjoyed his time on City Council. He continued he worked with a lot of good people and the city is in better shape now than what it was 14 years ago. He added Connellsville is a safe place to live and thanked the Police Chief. He continued that this is a safer place to live because of New Haven Hose. Mr. Karpiak stated this is a better run town because of the girls in the office and Vernon. He stated they made his job easier and I thanked them. He stated he seen people working tirelessly to accomplish the goals. Councilman Karpiak stated he worked with Marilyn Weaver to cut the electric bill in half and succeeded.

Councilman Karpiak thanked the Mayor and stated he is the best Mayor he has ever worked with. He continued that city council is not an honorary position and requires hard work and patience.

Councilman Karpiak stated he was able to see the Recreation Board grow since he has been in office. He noted they once had zero dollars and now has grown.

Councilman Karpiak stated he feels comfortable leaving with the current council in place and comfortable living in this town. He thanked council that has worked with him and wished them well.

**COUNCILMAN TOPPER:**

**Resolution No. 12-17-2023:** “To grant permission to the Diversity and Inclusion Board to use Yough Park on Saturday, August 24, 2024 to host an International Food Truck Festival and Back To School Drive at from 9 AM to 5 PM; further granting items listed on the Utilization Form.”

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

**Resolution No. 12-18-2023:** “To grant permission to the Diversity and Inclusion Board to use Yough Park on Saturday, June 8, 2024 for their Pride Fest 2024 from 9 AM to 5 PM; further granting items listed on the Utilization Form.”

Mayor Lincoln stated this has turned out to be a very nice event. He noted all the county organization go down to the park and it is a safe, fun day with no issues.

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

Councilman Topper stated this is to get a pickleball divider fence to keep the pickleballs from going over into other peoples play. He asked Mr. Frank Jacobyanski if he has anything to add to this resolution.

Mr. Jacobyanski stated this money is coming from the Recreation Board monies and not the city.

**Resolution No. 12-19-2023:** “To award All Around Fence Company, Inc. the contract of installing fencing between the two new Pickleball Courts at Mountz Creek Park, at a cost of \$2,427.00, with money to be taken out of the Recreation line-item REC 453.00K.”

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

Mayor Lincoln stated he is hopeful the community center will allow for a pickleball court on the gym floor.

Frank Jacobyanski stated the Recreation Board is going to try new events in 2024. He added they are getting a lot of new volunteers for the Recreation Board that want to help. Mr. Jacobyanski stated they are going to have more events for kids like they once did and a Silent Film Festival on September 7<sup>th</sup> at the Community Center in conjunction with community ministries. He added the money will be split between the Recreation Board and Community Ministries. He stated more information will come at a later date. He asked if he needs the City Council’s permission.

Mayor Lincoln stated he does not feel they need council's permission.

Mr. Jacobyanski stated it will not just be a movie, but an event.

Councilman Topper stated the parks are still open and you can still utilize the parks. He added the restrooms are closed since they must be winterized.

Councilman Topper wished everyone a Merry Christmas and thanked Councilman Karpiak for his time on City Council.

**COUNCILWOMAN TIBERIO:**

Public Works Report read by Councilwoman Tiberio

Councilwoman Tiberio stated they are still working on traffic patterns when the bridge work begins and would like to make some streets one way to keep traffic flowing.

Mayor Lincoln thanked Councilman Karpiak for his long service to the City of Connellsville. He added that he respects him so much, especially since he retired and came back. Mayor Lincoln stated when he came on council, he knew nothing and it was nice to have someone to follow and learn from. He stated the flood recovery was the greatest thing they did together. He added Mr. Karpiak and Chief Layton took over the ground recovery at Dutch Bottom and never left. Mayor Lincoln added that was the worst and greatest time of the city. He stated he appreciates everything that Tom Karpiak has done for the City.

Mayor Lincoln thanked City Treasurer, Marilyn Weaver, for all she has done for the Treasurer's Office. He added she upgraded a lot of things and made a lot of changes. He stated how much he appreciates her and her willingness to serve the city and thanked her for all she has done for the city.

Mayor Lincoln wished everyone a Merry Christmas and reminded everyone of Yough Park, Polar Bear Plunge at 10:45 AM for the picture and 11 AM the jump.

**Resolution No. 12-20-2023:** "That this meeting of the City Council does hereby adjourn."

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