



CARNEGIE BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING

Special Meeting: Future of Carnegie Volunteer Fire Dept.

**Notice of Public Meeting
Wednesday, November 9, 2011
7:00 pm**

**Borough Council Chambers
Call Meeting to Order**

Roll Call of Council

Councilperson Catena, Councilperson Covi, Councilperson Demko (phone)
Councilperson D'Loss (absent), Mayor Kobistek, Councilperson Sarsfield
Councilperson Veres

Opening Remarks

Council President Catena

Good Evening:

On behalf of Carnegie Borough Council and Mayor Kobistek, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the members of the Carnegie Volunteer Fire Department and the public to this very important meeting.

The purpose of this meeting is not to discuss any financial or other issues that may have resulted in past strained relations between the Carnegie Volunteer Fire Department and Borough Council. The fact is that the present Council has been working diligently with the Carnegie Volunteer Fire Department for the past 2 years to ensure the long-term viability of the Fire Department.

During the past year, we have however, become aware of certain inadequacies in the structure and oversight of the Carnegie Volunteer Fire Department that we believe will hamper the continued progress that we have made. Shortly, I will ask our Solicitor to briefly outline these inadequacies and explain what needs to be done to correct them. Make no mistake that we believe that we have an excellent Fire Department and deeply appreciate the sacrifices that each of you make. By working together, I am certain that we can continue the progress that we have made to ensure that the Carnegie Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Bureau's able to protect our community for years to come. Now, I will ask Solicitor Joe Lucas to briefly outline what needs to be done.

Solicitor Joe Lucas

Why are we here? That is the big question. I believe everyone knows a couple weeks ago, I sent Mr. Kandracs a letter, pretty detailed letter, outlining the problems that council has found and what are the remedies to these problems. Let me outline why council has concerns. To go back to 2008 – at that time, then President Koller wanted there to be an audit. The audit was completed and recommendations were made but never seemed to be implemented. In 2009 there was a foreclosure on the fire department building; this was taken care of at a later date. Earlier this month creditor's called the Carnegie Borough Administration building requesting the repossession of the ambulance. This past week, the phone service was disconnected at the fire department. Today, we received a letter from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of Comptroller Operations, stating the fire department has missed a payment on a loan. Looking at Council's perspective, the borough gives the fire department \$37,000 each quarter and Council has a fiduciary obligation to the tax payers. Council respects and appreciates the job that the fire department performs and the first obligation is to make sure the fire department can continue to operate and secondly council has responsibility to the tax payers to show where monies are allocated and applied. Earlier this summer, a Right to Know request was sent to Chief Kandracs requesting documents pertaining to the operations of the fire department. Chief Kandracs provided the By-Laws and the Articles of Incorporation. Chief Kandracs stated that he was still looking for the other documents and some of the requested documents were destroyed in the 2004 flood. There is a borough ordinance that requires the fire department to provide a list of the fire department members and officers. As of today, this list hasn't been given to the borough. So that, brings me to where we are right now. Chief Kandracs has stated that there are officer positions that need to be filled. So in light of the fact that the borough is giving money each year; the borough has formulated a position that it wants the fire department to operate administratively like a business. Carnegie Borough Council is requesting the following: Submit names of all members and Officers, elect officers, have meetings. Council is requesting a consultant review the fire departments processes and procedures and make recommendations for improving the administrative operations for the fire department. The goal of council is to make the fire department the best it can be both administratively and operationally.

President Catena:

Any comments from the fire department. Is there a spokesperson?

Chief John Kandracs:

I spoke with the solicitor on the telephone several times regarding the letter. The Fire Department had a meeting last Wednesday and reviewed each line item in the letter. I do agree that we haven't had monthly meetings or minutes – our officer's who were appointed have walked away from their position due to the conflicts with council. In your letter you have stated a few things that you received phone calls on. My problem as the Chief is to say to you that I have had numerous meetings with different public safety people from here- I've been involved in consolidation meetings, and council meetings. The problem, that the plan that you would want us to follow – we haven't had anything for a background since 2008. In 2008, we had received a plan from Mr. Kollar that you want us to follow. This plan has changed seven times – as far as a consultant, there were four council people at the consolidation meetings. At those meetings work

was done by the DCED. Those reports state what the responsibilities of the borough and the fire department – at the last meeting consolidation meeting it was stated that the borough needs to support the fire department. We started to do what was recommended by the consolidation report – the borough provided the funds (\$22k) for the inspection and repair of some of the equipment. Then, somewhere along the line, we stopped. I believe that all of us should set a standard to operate by and that standard should apply to the borough and the fire department.

President Catena:

Chief Kandracs does your membership know your financials with how much money you have, how many expenses are incurred yearly? Do they know how much money the borough gives the fire department? Do they know the borough paid for the repairs on some of the equipment? We need to work together to make this work. You need to do better and we also need to do better. We need to work together to make the fire department the best it can be.

Chief John Kandracs:

Let me asked this – what plan do we go by?

Solicitor Joe Lucas

The first step is to follow your by-laws and articles of incorporations. Conduct meetings and take minutes and share your financials. As I explained, this is for your protection John because there is money that needs to be accounted for.

Chief John Kandracs

I guess we are considered like the Library – you give us a check. Do you have anything on record that would show what we need to do to get a check from you? Do they have to provide all of this paperwork?

Councilperson Sarsfield

The Library releases a Public Budget each year.

Chief John Kandracs

Can you show that to us so we have something to go by? What do you guys require and why aren't we on the budget?

President Catena:

If you brought us something. For example the repairs to the trucks – did we refuse to give you money?

Chief John Kandracs

No.

Chief Kandracs – Solicitor Lucas – President Catena

Discussed what the Borough can do for the Fire Department and what is the Fire Departments obligation back to the Borough.

Solicitor Lucas

My recommendation is to put a contract in place and put the agreement in writing.

President Catena

Any public comment – any other comment.

Mayor Kobistek:

I just want to let everyone know that the fire department does more than fight fires and they are the right hand people of the community. This community would struggle to survive without an internal fire department. I am in agreement that we all need to work

together. We need a clear and concise plan to follow and stop sending mixed messages within the organizations. We need to work together to support the needs of the community.

Councilperson Sarsfield

Council wants to partner with the fire department and it is my belief that we are further ahead today than several years ago.

Councilperson Covi

Shared two poems speaking of the dedication of fire fighters.

Councilperson Veres

Expressed his concerns on how the fire department is running the administrative side of their operation. He stated that the borough should handle the administration side for the fire department. Councilperson Veres also commented on his frustration with how things were handled in the past.

President Catena

This isn't about the past this is about the future and I look forward to moving forward.

Thank you for coming out tonight. I need a motion to Adjourn.

MOTIONED by Councilperson Covi. Second by Council person Sarsfield.