

Meeting Minutes of the Borough of Middletown

July 21, 2016

The July 21, 2016 special meeting of the Middletown Borough Council held in the MCSO building was called to order at 6 p.m. by Council President Kapenstein.

After the Pledge of Allegiance the following council members answered to roll call; Ben Kapenstein, President; Dam Suglia, Vice President; Dawn Knull; Ian Reddinger; Diana McGlone; Robert Reid; Anne Einhorn. Also present were Ken Klinepeter, Borough Manager; Mayor Jim Curry; Lori Smith, clerk.

Councilor Kapenstein made an opening statement that he would like to keep the Elks Theater open but does not know if this is something that the taxpayers should be fiscally responsible for. Councilor Suglia agreed with Ben but also stated that the Borough should not be the landlord of the business. There should be an investor that would run it. We should spend the money to refurbish the building to keep it going but it needs to be run under a private entity.

Council recessed the meeting at 6:05 pm for a tour of the Elks building and the meeting was back in session at 6:20pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gordon Einhorn- representing the Friends of the Elks Stated the building is 105 years old and should be eligible for a Historical Landmark Restoration grant. He stated that there is a petition out asking if people are in favor of keeping the Elks Theater open, and it has well over 1000 signatures at this time, with over half of them being Middletown residents. He stated that the theater is the 2nd oldest continuously running theater in the country and that it is an asset to the community. He feels the Borough should own the building and it should be run by a 501c3, the same as the Middletown Public Library and the Main Street Gym are. At this time the only proposal the Borough had received is the one from the Friends of the Elks. He would also like to see the theater as multifunctional. Tattered Flag has contacted the group and would like to partner with them. He feels that since the ICDA went forth with phase one of the project that the Borough should go forward with phase two and complete the project. He stated that grant money should be available, both Federal and State and he would also like to see the leftover money from the community development funds to go to the Elks Theater. If their group would take over the theater again, the profits would continue to go back into the building.

Ed Carpenter- Lower Swatara Township his father was the manager of the Elks and the Majestic theaters and is offering his knowledge if anyone needs it.

Jonathan Crist- former manager of the theater from 1986-2005 currently owns 2 other theaters. He feels the building is in need of major structural repairs and needs to be stabilized immediately. He provided a demonstration with a picture of the outside of the building. He went into detail about the amount of work that should be done to maintain the building and has stated that he feels that it has not been done. He presented council with a proposal and gave a breakdown in it of what he feels the cost to save the building would be. He estimated \$1.2-\$1.3 million. He also stated that since the building has been closed for over a year that they would need to meet the new codes. He is very interested in taking the building over again and maintaining it through his retirement.

Mayor Curry asked how much he made a year while he previously ran the theater. Mr. Crist answered \$25-30 grand a year but that is by not being open during the week.

Phil Bennett- 121 Ann St – He Feels that the job to restore the Elks should be at a cost of about \$850,000. He is willing to be the project manager to get the job done. He stated that he knows a lot of union workers that may be willing to maybe donate their time to help with this. He also thinks that financial help can come from celebrities and possibly TV networks.

Mark Knudsen, 220 N Union St. - he is a former Penn State student who enjoyed the movies here at an affordable price. He really feels that being one of the oldest theaters around can draw in people from all over.

Rebecca Wealand, Lower Swatara Township _ She stated she used to live here and is asking council to please reconsider opening the theater. It is our heritage.

Kay Wealand, 131 Keystone Ave -She quoted Councilor Reddinger on what he stated previously about the Elks Theater and wanted to express that the theater is history and we should preserve it. It will bring in economic development to the town. She also praised an article written in the Press and Journal by Andres Garcia III. She stated that however they can keep the theater open, it should be done.

Sue Kelly- 291 Selma Ave - She moved here 2 years ago and is shocked to see how many businesses have left in that short period of time. She is a comedian and knows many others in the business that she can ask to come into the town to perform. She feels that we should come together to raise the money for the theater without having to use any tax money.

Mike Dalton- 237 N Pine St - He has always wanted to make the theater multifunctional. He has been approached by Tattered Flag. A radio station is willing to bring in entertainment but it would need to include alcohol. He would like to ask AP Williams to come over to the Elks to give an estimate to do the work. He stated the Friends of the Elks are a nonprofit group; Tattered Flag is looking into ways to get grants; the Historical Society is also looking for grants and he has an offering for a grant writer. He said it is very sad to see the condition of the Elks at this time because when they closed down last year it was a fully functioning theater.

Dave Graybill, Londonderry Township - He wants to see this go forward. There was a similar situation in Oregon with a theater and a brewery.

Ed Carpenter, Lower Swatara Township Wants everyone to throw out ideas.

Chris Davis, 14 N Union St - She loves the architecture in this town and that the brewery is going in and is hoping the theater will be open so people can either go before or after. She wants to see the community and the Borough come together to work on this.

Augie Spadone, 657 Hoffer St - It is possible to restore an old theater. He brought up that Johnstown was flooded and they were going to tear down their theater but decided to save it and now it is thriving. He made a suggestion to have people purchase plaques to put their names on the back of the theater seats. Do fundraising.

Mike Dalton responded to his comment about the chairs, saying they are the most expensive part of the renovation.

Laura Souders, 118 Spruce St - The theater was one of the reasons they bought the house they did and renovated it. She feels the Tattered Flag and the theater will bring in business to the town.

Fred Heagy, 269 E Water St - He would like to see the Borough budget the same for the theater that they do for the library. He feels a commercial entity should take over it. He asked what kind of funding & grants have already been given to the Elks? What did they get and what was the money used for?

Agnes Matincheck-Fuoti, Humelstown - Stated she grew up in town here and feels her heart belongs to Middletown; wants the Borough to continue for the young and also for those who have passed away.

Jenny Miller, Trustee, Historical Society

Robin Pelligrini, Trustee, Historical Society

Leslie Givler, Trustee, Historical Society

They did a poll of their members, sent out 151 ballots; at this time 61 said to save the Elks; 4 said no; 1 abstained. The rest are not counted or in at this time.

Jenny said she has got a lot of calls at this time to save the Elks. Robin stated that she just wants to save the theater.

Bob Hauser, 37 Brown St - He volunteers with the Historical Society and also with Veterans Organization. He wants to be sure it stays a theater. His suggestions are to just ask for donations, corporate sponsorships. Get the businesses to help.

Cathy Winter, 154 W Water St - The theater is also a reason why she decided to purchase her home here in town. She has always had a love for theaters and it is a beloved piece of history & will bring us into the future. The opportunity to partner with Tattered Flag is a unique situation. She is 100% in favor of the theater being a nonprofit. She is willing to write grants for the theater.

John Milkovich, former Middletown teacher and resident of Middletown - he used to help at the theater and would like to town to "bring back the spirit again".

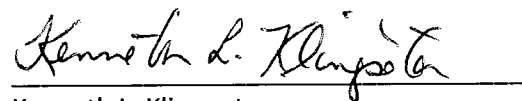
Phil Bennett - Stated he wants to hold a free concert here in town. He will contact Tattered Flag and the Event Place and hold 2- 45 minute shows. He then sang the song "Misty".

Janet Kirchner, 132 Spruce St - Stated she moved back here after being away because of the small town charm; she would hate to see the theater be closed; recommends going to other single screen, old theaters and see what we could have and recommended the Strand in York specifically for the silent movies. She is currently making a movie called Meltdown about TMI. She would love to be able to show it in the Elks.

Councilor Kapenstein thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Councilor Suglia stated that the people have opened his eyes. He came here 16 years ago with his job but stayed because of the small town. He stated he does want to see the theater survive and has changed his mind due to what he has heard tonight. He thanked everyone for coming.

Adjournment – Motion by Dawn Knull, second by Damon Suglia to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kenneth L. Klinepeter", is written above a horizontal line.

Kenneth L. Klinepeter
Borough Secretary