

MINUTES
NORTH CATASAUQUA BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
October 3, 2022

PEOPLE PRESENT

CALL TO ORDER – 7pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENT: President Peter Paone. Councilpersons: Mark Gioielli, Michele Hazzard, Mike Macsisak, Dan Snyder, Jessica Cope. Mayor Wm. Molchany. Solicitor Steven Goudsouzian, Treasurer Annette Englert, Secretary Tasha Jandrisovits, Jr. Councilperson Kaitlyn Lawton.

Also present were Police Chief Christopher Wolfer and Fire Chief Roger Scheirer

ABSENT: John Yanek

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: By Michele Hazzard to approve the minutes from 9/19/2022. 2nd by Mike Macsisak. Jessica will abstain from voting as she did not have enough time review. No further discussion. Approved.

Pete acknowledged the people present, and said since we were aware we were going to have a large crowd this evening we are going to do things slightly differently. Chief Wolfer would like to address the people present, and then Solicitor Goudsouzian and Councilperson Jessica Cope have statements.

STATEMENT BY CHIEF WOLFER

I wanted to make a statement to help outline where we are today. I did not write anything down, as I wanted to speak to you from the heart. On September 9th, Friday at 5:30pm I received a call at home from my Detective. He informed me a woman had been seriously attacked by two dogs. The process is my guys will always notify me if there is a major incident. I pulled up my portable radio and listened to the calls. The 2nd call was that a cat was attacked and killed. There was then a report that the dogs were headed toward the North Catty Park. My heart sank, I have a 4-year-old daughter and 2 dogs. It made me sick, I called my detective and told him that I didn't want him to have to make a hard decision, that he had my authority if the dogs were attacking someone to do what he had to do, to dispatch the dogs. The safety of kids, the community, pets were the #1 priority. Contact was then made with the owners, who they took along in police cars, dogs were found and put into custody in our kennel for the weekend. The plan was to figure out what to do on Monday.

Monday 9/12, I called the PA Dog Warden, assuming I would be told when to euthanize the dogs. I was told to return the dogs to the owners. I was speechless. I was under the full assumption that when a dog severely attacked someone they would be gone. This is not the

case, but the dog warden is in charge of dog law in PA, I am the Chief of Police, I can't break the law. All of us took this so personally, the officers, everyone in the office.

Fast forward to Saturday 9/24 – another call that the dogs got out. Went after people and pets, luckily this time no one was injured. To say I was upset is an understatement. Again, my choice was to break the law or return the dogs. At that point, I got on the call with anyone I could think of, agencies, called any and every one, looking to get a new answer, it wasn't there. I then called the DA and was told the dogs are innocent until proven guilty, they get their day in court as well, laws pertain to dogs too. At that point, I had two options, to stay quiet and let time takes its course until the hearing and deal with it, but that's not my style, when I took over as Police Chief, I promised this community to be transparent. So, I made the press release, knowing it would get attention. In a few minutes after posting, it was shared by Lehigh Valley Live and then shortly after I got a call from WFMZ for an interview and I agreed. I wanted to bring light to an issue that needs it. I can see the upset and anger in your faces, keep this energy, make calls, send emails, sign petitions, get on the phone with the lawmakers that can make changes to these laws. Keep this energy and use it, be loud, I have your back. At the end of the day, we have done everything we can, but the law is not on our side. I cannot break the law, I can't have my officers break the law, I want to apologize to all of you, it's a hard feeling when you have to do something you don't agree with but it's the law.

STATEMENT BY SOLICITOR GOUDSOUZIAN –

Steve stated he would like to address procedure. Those that have not been here before, during people present, you will get a chance to say what you would like, and you are welcome to do so, we want to hear from you. It is your opportunity to tell us what you would like, however, it is not a question-and-answer session, there will not be conversation with council. Telling so that you do not get frustrated if you ask a question and do not get an answer. You have all heard Chief Wolfer, hopefully this provides you more information that what you came in with before today. There are a lot of you hear, as you listen, if you decide what you are going to say is just repeating what others have said, you are welcome to or you can choose not to speak.

STATEMENT BY JESSICA COPE –

Jessica stated she did write her statement down, as this is something near and dear to her heart.

*Note – Jessica read the majority of the statement below during the meeting and provided a copy to the secretary for publication in the minutes. Below is a copy of the statement.

As for all of the individuals that are going through this, I sympathize with you. This statement is not about what happened, but more about how an official statement was presented and the wording that was used. I wish I had more information surrounding all of the details of these events, other than what I saw on a Facebook post.

I'm a life-long dog owner and over the past decade, I've rescued mix-breed dogs. I am also an advocate for these dogs. Historically, "pit bulls" have been given a bad reputation, even though any dog can have aggression in them. It could be fear motivated, food motivated, or it could even be a strong prey drive.

These dogs have been described only as pit bulls. According to AKC/UKC standards, pit bull is a classification of a breed such as sporting breed, herding breed, etc. Pit bulls come in all shapes and sizes. For example, an American Staffordshire terrier averages 40-60 pounds in weight. What most people think of as a pit bull, is actually a mix of breeds. I think a better description could have included size, height, & coloring of the dogs. By only describing the dogs as pit bulls, all you did was perpetuate fear mongering and set back pit bull advocacy, by years. There are dogs in my immediate neighborhood, which also seem to be aggressive, of which are not bully breeds. My personal experience has been several encounters with these non-bully breed dogs in my neighborhood. During one of these encounters, I have a video from a camera outside my front door, when these dogs charged at my house towards my child, husband, and my dogs. In this video you can hear my husband screaming "Someone Help! Someone Help!" and you can see one of the dogs charging the house. I called the police on this day, which is not the first time I've called the police about my neighbor's dogs. An officer did come out. I did speak to the officer briefly to which I've been told, in the past, that officers know this gentleman and his father personally and so all they do is call his dad when he doesn't respond. I also know, it's going to take more than 2 calls to the police department for anything to be done about the specific dogs in my neighborhood. But, there was no Facebook post stating these dangerous dogs should be taken off the street.

As a result of these incidents, I have brought up to Council, a need for an animal control officer. What I've been told, and it is documented in past council minutes, is that the Borough had an animal control officer in the past. This individual claims to have sent an invoice, to which the Borough did not receive and was never paid. Therefore the Borough no longer has an animal control officer. From my past experiences and hearing from our police, this is needed so they can do their jobs to the fullest. It's apparent that the Borough is critically in need of an animal control officer.

Now to what my issue really is, it's with the statement itself and how it was released. Immediately after seeing a Facebook post as the official press release, I spoke to the mayor and asked why it was released. I was told because there are rumors that the police are not doing their job with this situation and so they wanted to address those rumors. The way the statement was written, it buried the fact that legal proceedings have started to have a court hearing, to have these dogs deemed as dangerous. Using words like "stay vigilant" and "shelter in place", has seemed to cause hysteria within our community and invited hateful and down right disturbing posts about carrying guns and shooting dogs, carrying baseball bats and hitting dogs and/or poisoning meat and tossing it over their fence. Let alone a former council member putting the exact address of where these dogs live. When I questioned this ex-council member through a private text exchange, they said "I have had to keep my mouth shut for 12 years while on council about numerous topics. I no longer answer to anyone but the Man upstairs." This is extremely problematic, that a past council member didn't feel they were allowed to speak up. Well I for one am not afraid to speak my mind and not always be on a united front if I don't feel the same about an issue. This is a proud responsibility as an elected official and one that I will continue.

I lost my beloved Patti Cakes a little over a year ago. She was a mixed breed dog and most likely an American bulldog and boxer mixed with an American staffordshire terrier. Near the end of her life, she had a brain tumor and she escaped from a section of our fence. You would've

never thought by looking at her size that she could've gotten through the very small opening. We now know it was due to her brain tumor and trying to leave to die. What scares me is that if she was alive right now, by just releasing a statement that only described the dogs as pit bulls, she could be targeted. How do we continue to make our residents, who own these types of breeds, feel comfortable and not worry if their dog is next because of the way it looks?

I spoke with friends I know who live in the vicinity of Willow Drive. One told me they had heard the rumors about these dogs but wasn't fearful until the police released this statement and now they're terrified to go out of her home.

I cannot talk about the temperament of these dogs because I've never met them. Unfortunately, at this time, I do not know more of the details that caused this press release. I think it was reckless to release a statement of this nature and create the hysteria and fear mongering that has since resulted.

Myself and my family, would try to contain any dog we see that is running loose. I'm now terrified that residents and nonresidents are encouraging one another to carry guns and shoot dogs that go running up to anyone.

We need to do better!

It's critical to make sure our outreach to our residents and the public at large are level minded and facts are stated without using wording that would create fear and discriminate against a breed and not focus on the individual dog. We cannot state words like "stay vigilant" and "shelter in place" unless our residents are in imminent danger.

I have always and will continue to support our police, fire and all emergency services. They are essential to keeping our Borough safe. NCPD officers even recently helped return my 10-year old black lab and 1 1/2-year old mix. I'm thankful that they had the understanding and proper attitude to help them, as my puppy has anxiety and is fearful to strangers, something that I've had him in training for since we rescued him.

As a Borough, we need to figure out the animal control officer issue. In today's society, we need to communicate better through more concise statements and be transparent. I know we can do this!

PEOPLE PRESENT

Sandi Eckhart – Stated she has an issue with the dog next door to her. The owner doesn't use a leash, the dog messes in her yard. Dog runs over, they get scared, they know to call and let the borough know when this happens, the problem is the owner.

Tina Petko – stated her dog was almost attacked, if she was not able to get him into her garage and close the door he would have been attacked. Her rights are being taken away, what happens if something happens to her, these two dogs need to be take out of the neighborhood.

Eileen Lapsansky– stated she was there when the dogs got loose. She has a little dog, she is a dog lover, been around dogs her whole life. She just feels nervous, and said this was prior to

statement from the Chief even coming out, she now has to look around, her dog is only 20 lbs., she is petrified. She knows, she worked at shelter in NYC, how to defend herself, now she has to worry each day, scared to death. She thinks this is horrific.

Richard Kleppinger – stated to the Chief it was a nice speech you gave. He said while you may have had to return the dogs, the property should have been inspected prior to their return by the patrolman to see how they got out in the first place. How do they prevent them from getting out again. Stated if he would see a dog attacking a little girl, he will step in and do what is necessary to stop them. He was a cop not a politician. You have a right to protect yourself.

Jane Schubert – thanked everyone for being there and the borough for providing the forum for them to speak. The dogs ran through her yard, they ran up to her circling the dog, they were talking to the dogs at first, the one went away but the other one's hair stood up and he charged her husband. He picked up the dog and threw him inside the bed of the pickup truck. They then ran off towards the playground. Its beautiful out, all those kids at soccer practice, and trick or treat coming up. She noted the mayor online and noted seeing his cat walk across the screen, she stated she was glad his cat is safe as Mrs. Drummer's cat is dead. The only good to come of this is it has brought the community together.

Susan Hirner – stated she lives on Palamino Drive. She said the reason people were asking on Facebook is so they knew what kind of dog do they need to run from. There are two bus stops, bunch of little kids on their street. The other day the bus came early, and she was the only adult there at the time, how was she going to defend 10 kids. These dogs are running all over the place, they need to be contained. She thoughts there was a 3-bite law and she also wants to know when the hearing is – how long to they must they wait for that? Prominent older member of the community - Alex Daku – walks that street daily, walks with umbrella. He would not even see them coming at him.

Cathy Spieth– lives on Willow Drive –across the street, stated about the press release, this community was already on edge, these dogs have gotten out over and over again. The last time, neighbor had a fenced in yard, so they took their dog and threw him over the fence. They distracted the dogs so she was protected, they then ran after a little boy, ran after him, a neighbor ran after him and he kicked dog to protect them from attacking him. She has been riled up for a few years, terrified for a few years. She noted she did not receive a 911 reverse call. The only way she knew was because they all blew each other's phones. No one she spoke to received the call, so beyond the dogs, that information would be helpful as well. Two number she wants to share - 22 and 15. 22 children, 15 are 5 and younger. 3 school stops. Police presence is needed to protect the children, trick or treat coming up – the fear of parents allowing children out in the neighborhood. Halloween parade too, the dogs have made it to the North Catty playground.

Cindy Drummer – regarding the 9/9 attack on cat. Ambulance at her neighbor's house, neighbor came out to go to the hospital, she was attacked by two pit bulls. She could not find her cat and eventually saw Simon on the ground, he was mauled by these two. Having an autopsy done. He was attacked and killed. Listen to recording. On 9/24 – she was sitting on back deck steps, the dogs came charging across at her, she fell on her hands and knees, they started to circle and sniff her and the owner showed up looking for them. That is when she

learned the dogs were returned to her after the first time. The dogs should have been confined and isolated for a minimum of 10 days. There should be penalties by the courts on the owners an expense of others reimbursed. Apparently, you have to file a claim within 10 days, she did not know that, is there any way that can be rectified. She wants this resolved quickly so people can feel safe and secure in their neighborhood again. She appreciates the time, energy and effort the police are putting into this.

Joe Weber – stated we are placing the blame at the wrong place. It is not the dog's fault. It is the owner's fault. Numerous incidents, going back a year and a half ago. One time, the dogs got out of garage, they were unleashed and ran towards his wife and daughter and two little dogs, when his wife went to protect them and fell down. The owner came out of garage, her told her to get control of your dogs. She called them and got them back in time. Dogs are like kids, owner needs to be held responsible, fined or arrested, there are leash laws, shots are not up to date, his wife had to go through rabies shots. It's gone too far; this has been going on for quite some time. Owners need to be held responsible.

Nancy Nonnemacher – lives on the border of North Catty and Northampton. Everyone brings up the animal, all blame on the dog, the owner is 95% responsible for everything. Walks all over constantly.

Amber Shrey – moved here 23 years, people are my family. Grown up with Cindy, with all the neighborhood cats, dogs and kids. They had a pit bill, he stayed in the fence. Cats stay in their yards; she has never seen a dog get out or not be on a leash. Even one of the cats is walked on a leash. Why, if the fence is the problem, is the fence not fixed. If the leash is the problem, fix the leash. Why are people not getting apologies. This hurts her family, the neighborhood. 23 years. She doesn't want to lose someone, or see another one get attacked. One of her neighbors is expecting a grandchild. She doesn't see why there is no consequence or they are not fixing.

Tanya Pridgeon – stated there are no words to describe how bad she feels about what happened. She said there are a lot of feelings here tonight. When someone says something because that's how they feel, doesn't make it credible. It's based on opinion. As far as rabies shots, she immediately left work after she heard what happened and came home and got certificate and it is valid for 3 years. She wanted to get it to the person, she knows the person bitten by the dog has to get shots and they are horrific, so she brought it to the police to avoid that person having to go through that. What does surprise her is that a month and a half ago there was a story on 69 news about a grey pit bull and two German shepherds running loose and there was no town meeting then.

At this point, other residents in the crowd corrected her by stating that was in Whitehall Township, not North Catty.

Tanya continued that 69 news showed her house and car, so now she is receiving death threats, people stating about shooting dogs, what happens if they are aiming at a dog and hit a child. Loose cannons and vigilantes, might shoot a neighbor or a child, before you throw poison meat over the fence, come shoot the dogs, appreciate they think twice before they come out. Peace officers are supposed to keep the peace not insight anger.

Deidra Garcia – stated she is in fear that while she is out and trying to solve this issue, she is afraid she will come back to her house on fire and her mother inside. She stated she is afraid family is going to die while she is out trying to fix situation.

Tanya Pridgeon - stated she never brought it up before but she will now, her shed is sinking in her yard, the neighbor covered drain and causes water to back up in her yard. She had covid money reserved to pay bills, but the dogs are now kept in house, and when out on a metal leash to walk around the yard.

Pete confirmed there was no one else who wanted to speak on this matter, including those attending virtually. Solicitor Goudsouzian told the people present they were free to stay for the rest of the meeting or they could exit at this time, it was their decision. He also announced we would be taking a 5- or 10-minute recess as people exited. Meeting resumed at 8pm.

Mark Hillenbrand – Autumnfest, discussed cars, vendors, horseback riding, craft tents, pumpkin decorating, ventriloquist, bounce house and obstacle course, inflatables for kids. Noted he did call Miller blood bank need to reserve them approximately 7 weeks ahead of time.

TREASURER REPORT – Annette Englert

TREASURER’S REPORT
OCTOBER 2022 #1

1. Received our PA State Aid check for the pension funds in the amount of \$84,255.00. I must deposit \$51,375.00 to the Police Pension Fund per our MMO Report and deposit the difference of \$32,880.00 in the Non-Uniformed Employee Pension Fund. This leaves a difference of \$1,367.78 which will have to be paid thru the General & Sewer Funds.
2. Received our payment from Penn Vest for the Main Street Sewer Project so we were able to make the final payment of \$216,326.10 to Barasso Excavation, Inc.
3. I would like a decision from council as to whether they want to extend the quarterly garbage option to our residents for 2023. This year we had property owners take advantage of this service.
4. The Finance Committee needs to meet to review all budget worksheets that have been turned in. Please let me know your availability.

OFFICE REPORT – Tasha Jandrisovits

- Approval of Storm Water Management Ordinance #437

MOTION: By Mike Macsisak to approve ordinance #437 Storm Water Management.
2nd by Jessica Cope. No further discussion. All in favor.

PUBLIC WORKS SUPERVISOR REPORT – Travis Brett - no report

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT – Chief Wolfer



**North Catasauqua Borough Police Department
October 2022 1st Monthly report**

October Dispatched calls-

2022 Total for September: 246

2021 September total- 218

% Change year over year- +12.8 %

- Traffic stops- 36
- Domestic violence- 14
- Armed person- 1
- Burglary- 2
- Shooting/Stabbing -
- animal complaints- 10
- Suspicious activity- 3
- EMS- 15
- Fire calls- 7
- MVA's- 3
- follow up investigations- 47
- citizen assists- 24
- 911 hang-up's- 5
- Burglar alarm- 1
- Welfare check- 6
- Assist other PD- 11
- Theft- 2
- Vandalism-
- Assault- 1
- Fight in progress-
- Harassment-
- Fraud-
- Wanted persons- 1
- Warrants served- 3
- Psych emergencies-

- Indecent sexual assault- 1
- Threats- 1
- Fireworks-
- Emergency PFA's-
- Trespassing- 1
- Public drunks-
- Pursuit-
- Use of force- 2
- Report of shots fired- 2
- Recovered stolen vehicle-
- Bomb squad call out-
- Parking tickets- 5
- Traffic citations- 9
- Traffic written warnings- 1
- Summary arrests-
 - 1- Operating vehicle with fraudulent inspection
 - 4- Operating vehicle with expired inspection
 - 3- Operating vehicle with expired registration
 - 1- Operating vehicle without insurance
 - 2- Failure to stop at properly posted stop sign
 - 2- Possession of dog without proper license
 - 6- Harboring of a dangerous dog
 - 8- Borough ordinance, dog at large
 - 1- Parking in a no parking zone
 - 1- Animal cruelty
 - 2- failure to use turn signal
 - 3- Vehicle inspection code violation
- Misdemeanor arrests-
 - 3- Possession of a schedule 1 controlled substance
 - 5- Possession of a small amount of Marijuana
 - 6- Possession of drug paraphernalia
 - 4- DUI Schedule 1 controlled substance
 - 5- DUI general impairment unsafe driving
 - 1- DUI highest rate of alcohol
 - 1- Corruption of minors
 - 1- Endangering the welfare of a child
- Felony Arrests-

Moving Forward

- New SOP finalized and put into full effect for project Lifesaver on 8/12/22
- Tramonte and I participated in a County DUI checkpoint on Schoenersville road 8/13/22 and 248 on 8/19/22
- 1ST Neighborhood watch meeting was held 9/26/2022 @ 1800 hours. Minimal participation. Discussed it was an open session and they had pamphlets for those that

attended, they discussed mail fishing, trends in the community and other items. Chief Wolfer stated he started this at the request of the community and hopes that more people attend the next meeting.

TRAINING COMPLETED

- Sgt. Tramonte completed training in SFST's & drugs advanced recognition through the National Association of Prosecutors
- Ofc. Santiago completed CPR & 1st aid instructor training through the NYC department of health
- I completed training in Interview and Interrogation law through the Blue2Gold academy
- Sergeant Tramonte, Ofc. Santiago, and I completed enforcement of the vehicle inspection regulations training through the Institute for Law Enforcement Education
- Sergeant Tramonte, Ofc. Santiago, Ofc. Hazim, and I completed vehicle search and seizure training through the Institute for Law Enforcement Education
- Ofc. Douglas and I completed Crisis Intervention Training through Northampton County Crisis
- Ofc. Pursell and I completed red dot pistol instructor training through VIGR training LLC. We are now both red dot optic instructors.
- Sgt. Tramonte completed annual IACP impaired driving and traffic safety conference through the International Chiefs association

CIVIL SERVICE – Roger Scheirer

Interview will be held 10/12 – will bring list to 10/17 council meeting to approve.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT REPORT – Roger Scheirer

Thanked rec committee for their \$1k donation towards the fire investigation equipment and vehicle.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT – Roger Scheirer

Roger provided training reports for his department to council for review. 26 fire calls for the month of September. They will attend fire prevention on 10/7, Autumnfest on 10/9 and Halloween on 10/19. All trucks will remain in service during. On Fridays and Saturdays in October they will be on call for Whitehall while they do their Haunted Woods.

OFFICE INSURANCE & PERSONNEL REPORT - Mark Gioielli – no report

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT - John Yanek – no report

RECREATION COMMITTEE REPORT – Michele Hazzard

Rec meeting on 10/24 at 7pm here in community room, discuss tree lighting which is scheduled for Sunday 11/27 with a rain date, Monday 11/28.

LAW COMMITTEE REPORT - Michele Hazzard- no report

PUBLIC PROPERTY & PARKS REPORT - Jessica Cope – no report

PUBLIC SAFETY-POLICE – Michael Macsisak – no report

PUBLIC SAFETY-FIRE REPORT – Daniel Snyder - no report

MAYOR REPORT – William J. Molchany, Jr. – no report

SOLICITOR REPORT – Atty. Steven Goudsouzian

COUNCIL PRESIDENT REPORT - Peter Paone

- Main Street Greenway estimate – agreed to give estimate to fill in hill and other items, will discuss with council in at the next meeting
- Discussion with DL – guard lock, wall like structure by bridge into Hokey. Report done by Hunter Research, 5 different proposals. Pete discussed with the DL their preferred options. Updated estimate of ones preferred by county and DL, will share with council once received.
- Letter to the County being drafted for Sherry Acevedo to attempt recovery of grant funds for storm sewer project.
- DL Ribbon Cutting – was held last Monday, good event with a lot of representation.
- Pete spoke to a rep with Mako’s office to elevate the complaints regarding the dogs and they will get back to Pete next week.
- Regarding the crossing guard, Pete spoke to Jason Bashaw and was told they are looking to implement bussing for 5th and 6th grade students starting in November, as long as they can hire school bus drivers. Jason stated it was premature to hire a crossing guard when this was happening. Jess asked if the bus driver positions were advertised yet and Pete said he assumed so, since they want to start in November. Mayor confirmed that Officer Santiago watched the bus stop at Grove Street for a week and there were only 3-4 kids to pass by daily.

NEW BUSINESS

Dan – asked about the animal control ordinance. Issues on his side of town with other things. Pete stated we can always review, this would fall under the law committee, at any time those ordinances can be reviewed. Pete suggested Dan discuss within the committee, but noted the State law will always supersede and preclude our local ordinance.

APPROVAL OF BILLS

MOTION: By Mike Macsisak to approve payment of all invoices. 2nd by Dan Snyder.
No further discussion. All in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: By Dan Snyder to adjourn the meeting at 8:25pm. 2nd by Michele Hazzard. No further discussion. All in favor.

ATTEST:



Tasha Jandrisovits