

Finance Committee proves to be sore subject among council members

By CAITLIN DAVIS

HOPEWELL - At the city council meeting on Feb. 14, a difficult subject among council members was revisited. As reported in the Jan. 12 edition of the Hopewell News, Mayor Christina Luman-Bailey, Ward 1, brought up dissolving the 2011 Finance Committee during the first meeting of the year on Jan. 6. This action upset Jackie Shornak, Councilor, Ward 7. The topic proved to be no different at the February meeting.

Towards the end of the meeting, Bailey brought up dissolving the 2011 Finance Committee. Shornak was upset by this and immediately turned to City Attorney Thomas Lacheney for his advice and counsel on the matter. She was concerned because the committee was still under assignment.

At the first meeting of the year Richard Newman, Commonwealth Attorney, asked for a \$30,000 supplement for his employees' salaries. This request was given to the committee to review and to determine if it was feasible.

Lacheney told council they had to amend the agenda to dissolve the committee. Brenda Pelham, Councilor Ward 6, made the motion and Michael Bujakowski, Councilor Ward 3, seconded the motion. The agenda was amended and passed with a 4-to-2 vote, with Shornak and Vice-Mayor Wayne Walton, Ward 5, voting "no."

Lacheney also said the committee can be dissolved along with the current assignment. The motion was made to dissolve the committee. This passed with a 4-to-2 vote, with Shornak and Walton again voting "no."

"Here, again, I am blindsided," Shornak said.

Pelham responded to Shornak's remark and said this matter was the Mayor's prerogative. Shornak continued to voice her objection as the voting continued. "We are making things based on personal wants," Shornak said.

Once the agenda was amended, and the 2011 Finance Committee was dissolved, the council began to discuss the 2012 Finance Committee. Bailey chose to appoint Gerald Stokes, Councilor Ward 4, to the

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to be a conflict for some council members.

"I do not understand...we eliminate the committee and turn around and appoint one person?" Shornak said.

Shornak continued to voice her opposition to the decision during the meeting. "It is just bizarre to me what is going on here," Shornak said.

Lacheney confirmed that at least one another person had to be appointed to form an official committee. The motion was made to have a staff member appointed to the new Finance Committee. This was passed by a 4-to-2 vote, with Shornak and Walton voting "no."

"I wasn't kept in the loop about what hap-

pened tonight," Shornak said.

Bailey did not agree with Shornak on this matter. "We tried to discuss it at the last meeting," Bailey said.

After the meeting, Shornak explained her distain for the way events transpired at the meeting. "It was not on the agenda. I didn't know anything...I wasn't told anything," Shornak said.

She added that she was not respected as a council member and was left in the dark. "The lack of communication is just evident," Shornak said.

Shornak was also added her surprise in regards to just one person being voted onto the new Finance Commit-

tee. "One person does not make a committee," she said.

Another reason Shornak provided on why she was upset about the committee being dissolved is because it had not finished with the task the committee was given in regards to Newman's request. "We had not even finished our task... I do not even feel like our job is done," Shornak said.

Shornak said she hopes that the city council will work on their communication issues and focus on what is best for the residents of Hopewell.

"I feel passionate about finances in the city of Hopewell," Shornak said.

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