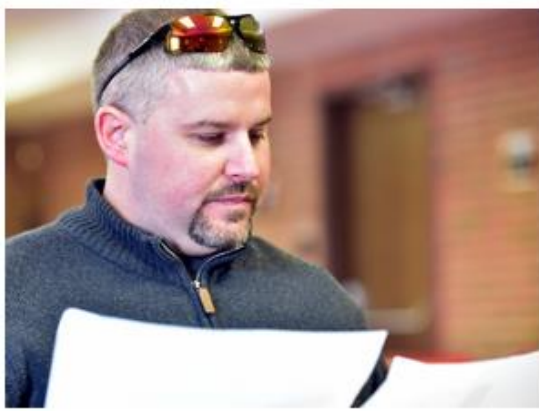


Plymouth council hopes to make 'Old Shawnee' shine again

LOCAL, WEST SIDE



By **Bill O'Boyle** - *Click for more information on Bill boboyle@timesleader.com - @TLBillOBoyle - 570-991-6118*
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Councilman Gary Kochinski reads from a list of savings the council has achieved and planned savings in the future during a meeting with other council members and a reporter at the Plymouth Borough Building on Friday.

Sean McKeag | Times Leader



Plymouth Councilmen, from left, Clyde Peters, John Thomas and Bill Dixon listen to Council President Gary Kochinski read off budget numbers for 2017.

Sean McKeag | Times Leader

THE COUNCIL

The following individuals comprise the Plymouth Borough Council, along with their tenure.

Gary Kochinski, president, four years

Bill Dixon, five years

John Thomas, three years

Frank Coughlin, 20-plus years

Mark Kytort, two years

Clyde Peters, one year

Earl Cunningham, nine months

PLYMOUTH — It's been a struggle, but members of the borough council say the future looks bright for "Old Shawnee."

Following years of political in-fighting, the current seven members of Plymouth Borough Council are, besides all Democrats, on the same page when it comes to conducting borough business.

"The in-fighting is over," council President Gary Kochinski said. "We can now concentrate on working together to improve our town."

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One of the ways to make that goal reachable, Kochinski said, is to generate revenue without raising taxes. He said the first place they looked was in the insurances paid for by the borough, and then at utilities.

According to Kochinski, the borough will realize more than \$100,000 in savings in several areas: health insurance, general liability insurance, workers insurance, cell phones, electric bills and gas bills.

And to help out, all seven council members — Kochinski, Bill Dixon, John Thomas, Clyde Peters, Earl Cunningham, Frank Coughlin and Mark Kytort — will not take their salaries. Neither will Mayor Dorothy Petrosky. The total annual savings will be about \$9,000.

"None of us are in this for \$75 per month," Kochinski said.

Kochinski, Dixon, Thomas and Peters sat down to discuss the borough and its current situation. They offered several cost-savings moves that collectively will help keep taxes down and they offered a plan for the future.

- The council eliminated borough-issued cell phones for the police department. They said each officer uses their personal cell phones. The move saved about \$700.
- Council members want to partner with the state to save on energy costs. They hope to save \$5,000 to \$7,000 per year.
- The borough converted the heating system in the borough garage from oil to gas, resulting in a \$5,900 savings per year.
- The council is considering a switch in the borough's police pension plan provider.

The council estimated approximately \$112,696 in savings for 2017.

Several projects are on the councilmen's to-do list. They want to make significant improvements to John "Snoggy" Mergo Community Park; several streets will be paved; Barnes Street Park will be re-surfaced and new rims and nets will be placed on the basketball courts; and the runoff problem affecting Beverly Drive will be resolved through a joint project with Plymouth Township.

Council members said they doesn't intend to stop with those projects. The borough has applied for a \$714,000 gaming grant to do a Main Street Redevelopment Project. Kochinski said four properties would be purchased, including the town's former liquor store site, to make another lane access to the borough's parking lot, which will also be realigned.

The popular Kielbasa Festival, organized by Plymouth Alive, will plan another festival — a one-day event featuring food on a stick. Peters said the event is planned for May.

The Mergo Park project will include tree clearing, grading the parking area and applying stone, re-doing the infield surface, purchasing a new backstop, installing a water line extension, and constructing two dugouts. Total estimated cost is \$96,960, with \$21,960 coming from the borough's general fund.

In 2017, several streets will be paved: Salzburg, Nesbitt, Wall, Gardner, Third, River and Temperance Hill at a total cost of \$272,566, with \$31,215 coming from the general fund.

In 2016, council members noted, several streets were paved: Gould, Eno, Center, Carolina, Willow and Rowe Lane.

The council has also applied for grants for each of the borough's three volunteer fire companies.

Kochinski, Dixon, Thomas and Peters agreed the council meetings are productive. They said there are still complaints and concerns aired at the meetings, but they said all are treated professionally and they are resolved quickly and efficiently.

Dixon said each council member has been assigned responsibilities, and reports are given at meetings.

"Everybody works well together," Kochinski said.

"We work as a team," Thomas added.

Peters said he's only been on council for one year, but he is glad he decided to apply for the vacant seat created when James Mahon resigned.

"Our council has adapted to what we need to do for this town," Peters said. "Our goal is to make Plymouth better than ever."

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