

Penndel Borough Council Meeting Minutes

December 2, 2024

Council President John Stratz called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present at the Meeting

Council President John Stratz
Council Vice President Barbara Heffelfinger
Councilman Mark Moffa
Councilwoman Robin Valentis – via phone
Councilman Gary Nickerson
Councilman Bud Murphy
Councilman Bob Winkler
Mayor Tom Sodano

Also present at the meeting

Barbara Kirk, Hill Wallack
Chief Sean Perry
Geoff Thompson, Borough Manager
Carol Schuehler, Value Engineering
Marie Serota, Secretary/Treasurer

Moldamatic – Recognition for their generous donation

Mayor Sodano read his proclamation to Tim Bollard and Geraldine Sauers from Moldamatic, LLC for their generous donation to the police department. Chief Perry explained that the Penndel Borough Police Department was the second department in Bucks County to have body cameras. Officer conduct complaints went from a few a year that were unsubstantiated to almost zero. People will complain that they got a ticket, but they won't complain about the conduct of the officer, which they're very proud of. Their cameras are reaching their life expectancy. He emailed Mr. Bollard and requested some assistance in making this project happen. He was looking for maybe a small amount to offset the cost for the borough and within an hour, he got full approval that they were going to fund the whole project in excess of \$15,000.00, which was extremely generous of them. He and the officers are very excited about it, and they can't thank them enough. It means a lot to them, especially with a small borough police department with a very limited budget.

Council or Borough Announcements

John Stratz reminded everyone to come to the microphone to speak. He asked that they refrain from calling out from their seat. All comments about motions must pertain to the motion they are working on and nothing else. Public comment is at the end, where they can comment on any topic. He asked the audience to not engage council members from their seat and for council members to not engage the citizens while they are trying to vote. This Saturday at 6:30, they are hosting the annual tree lighting with a Christmas choir of young citizens.

Consent Items

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 18, 2024 WORKSHOP MEETING AND TO PAY THE FOLLOWING BILLS FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, 2024:

General Fund	\$17,771.24
Fire Tax Fund	\$ 8.00
Refuse Fund	\$ 47.63
Sewer Fund	\$27,262.43
Debt Service Fund	\$ 6.66
Capital Reserve Fund	\$ 3,271.50
Liquid Fuel Fund	\$ 94.89
Escrow Fund	\$ 1,500.00
Payroll Fund	\$ 1,637.56

Payroll

General Fund	\$46,785.80
Sewer Fund	\$ 4,406.28
Total	\$51,192.08

Escrow Fund Bills

126 Holly Avenue:

Escrow Release	\$1,500.00
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SECONDED BY ROBIN VALENTIS. All ayes, motion carried.

Reports:

President's Report

John Stratz highlighted some of the things council has done this past year. They have done much with little money coming directly from the taxpayers. With the COVID money from the government, they did much needed sewer repairs and fortuitously, a sinkhole arose while the crew was working on that project and they gave a quick estimate, and it was repaired. The RDA provided them with a new public works truck and a new police cruiser, both much needed additions to their vehicles. A CDBG grant provided them with a brand-new basketball court, which he has already received many compliments and thanks. They paved Noeland Ave. and that was just a startup of their streets program for next year. Most importantly, council is providing another decrease in taxes by one mill. Other communities in this county are raising taxes or staying the same. John said a big thank you goes to their engineer Carol Schuehler with Value Engineering.

Borough Manager's Report

Geoff Thompson read his report which is on file in the secretary's office.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Sodano read his report which is attached.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Sean Perry read his report which is on file in the secretary's office.

Solicitor's Report

Barbara Kirk reported that the property at 51 Centre St. has been up for sale since June of this past year. She understands there were bids that are to be submitted for acquisition of the

property and those bids are supposed to be opened this week on December 4th. So, hopefully, there will be a new owner shortly.

Engineer's Report

Carol Schuehler read her report which is attached.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO APPROVE ESTIMATE #156 FROM COSTARS CONTRACTOR DANE & SON CONSTRUCTION, INC. FOR \$15,600.00 TO REPAIR CONCRETE CEILINGS AT PUMP STATIONS 1 & 2. SECONDED BY MARK MOFFA. All eyes, motion carried.

New Business

MOTION BY MARK MOFFA TO RATIFY APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING MID-CYCLE INVOICES:

Comcast invoice dated 10/26/24 in the amount of \$219.05 for internet and voice services at 37 W. Woodland Avenue.

GBA Premium Account invoice dated 10/31/24 in the amount of \$171.38 for dental insurance premium installment.

Office of Labor & Industry invoice dated 11/1/24 in the amount of \$1,953.00 for fire department workers' compensation premium installment.

Comcast invoice dated 11/2/24 in the amount of \$297.89 for internet at 790 Neshaminy Street.

PA UC Fund invoice dated 11/4/24 in the amount of \$1,077.77 for 2025 solvency fee.

Comcast Invoice #221930874 dated 11/1/24 in the amount of \$393.30 for business voice edge service.

Keystone Health Plan East Invoice #241107260895 dated 11/7/24 in the amount of \$3,166.96 for medical insurance premium installment.

Verizon Wireless Invoice #9977677798 dated 11/1/24 in the amount of \$25.02 for M2M Account Share 1GB.

PECO Payment Processing invoice dated 11/13/24 in the amount of \$1,435.31 for streetlights' electric.

Keystone Sports Construction Invoice #001 dated 11/15/24 in the amount of \$18,861.66 for backstop and fence installation deposit.

SECONDED BY ROBIN VALENTIS. All eyes, motion carried.

MOTION BY MARK MOFFA TO APPROVE THE FINAL 2025 BUDGET. SECONDED BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER.

Mark thanked Geoff and Marie for their work on the budget. The Finance Committee gathered and spent some hours going over it and making some tweaks. There's a new revenue source in the budget this year that came out of discussions that he was having with Geoff regarding how the borough handles its cash that is held on account. It came to his attention what some other municipalities, including the county government, are doing with some investment sweeps where the money earns interest. They weren't doing that. They had about \$2,000,000.00 sitting in the bank earning zero interest, so he shared with Geoff and Marie what he learned. They met with First National Bank of Newtown, and they were able to implement this program for them. So, now this year, they're earning 4 point something and next year it'll be 3 point something the way rates are going, but that's another \$70,000.00 - \$80,000.00 in revenue for the borough. It's a great new source of revenue. So, with that they were able to offset, the budget increases largely

from salaries and benefits and the new police officer and then also return some to the taxpayers. That's how they're able to afford the property tax cut because they're giving some money back to the people out of that. They do have a refuse rate increase that they're passing along that they have to because of the contract. The property tax cut helps to offset the increase. It doesn't offset all of it but the increase on the trash side is unavoidable.

Dave Cahill, said they have a five-year contract with the trash company. He asked why it was going up. Mark explained that it has an increase built into the contract every year.

Tim Weaver, asked about earning \$80,000.00 in interest and \$2,000,000.00 in the bank and having outstanding debt. He asked if the interest was going to be applied to that debt and if any of that was going to be applied to the outstanding debt to pay the debt down. John said they are earning 4 1/2% as opposed to what they owe at 1%, so they are making 3 1/2%. Tim asked if they factored in inflation, higher rates, and everything else. It's never good for a borough to be in debt and accumulating money. That money should be going back to the residents of this town instead of them stocking it up and making interest on that money. He asked if they have 2 million in the bank, are they over taxing the residents. They can whack out the extra expense for the trash contract for the people so they could save a few bucks. The property tax cut would be about \$27.00 per homeowner on average. He asked how much the trash is going up. Mark said around \$15.00 a quarter.

All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO ADOPT RESOLUTION #2024-21 FIXING AND RETAINING CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY TAXES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 IN THE AMOUNTS OF 18.3 MILLS FOR GENERAL BOROUGH PURPOSES, 3.0 MILLS FOR FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES, AND 2.5 MILLS FOR DEBT SERVICE, AS PROVIDED UNDER THE PA BOROUGH CODE. SECONDED BY MARK MOFFA. All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO ADOPT RESOLUTION #2024-20 ESTABLISHING A FEE FOR COLLECTION OF ASHES, GARBAGE, RUBBISH AND REFUSE PURSUANT TO SECTION CHAPTER 340- "SOLID WASTE;" REPEALING PRIOR INCONSISTANT RESOLUTIONS AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE. SECONDED BY GARY NICKERSON. All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO AUTHORIZE ADVERTISEMENT OF THE 2025 MEETING SCHEDULE. SECONDED BY GARY NICKERSON.

Mark said in the past, when he was on council, they shifted the November meetings, because of Election Day, to the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month because a lot of them on the dais also volunteer 12-15 hours the next day.

MOTION BY MARK MOFFA TO AMEND THE SCHEDULE OF THE NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING. SECONDED BY ROBIN VALENTIS. All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY MARK MOFFA TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED LEGAL ADVERTISEMENT OF THE 2025 MEETING SCHEDULE AS AMENDED BY COUNCIL. SECONDED BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER

Tim Weaver, said they'll have back-to-back meetings week after week for the first meeting in December, unless that meeting's not needed. Mark said they can always cancel the November 24th meeting, if not needed.

Barbara Kirk said she would recommend leaving the advertisement as the schedule because this way it's published for everyone to know when the meetings are generally scheduled and if for some reason, there is not enough for an agenda, they can cancel the meeting beforehand. It's harder to advertise a meeting than it is to cancel it.

All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO REAPPOINTMENT FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS: ZONING HEARING BOARD (3-YEAR TERM), CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (6-YEAR TERM), AND TWO SEATS ON THE PLANNING COMMISSION (4-YEAR TERMS). SECONDED BY ROBIN VALENTIS.

John said the applicants who are staying are: for the Zoning Hearing Board three-year term is Elizabeth Suarez, for the Civil Service Commission six-year term is Guy Serota and for the two four-year terms for the Planning Commission are Barbara Sodano and Leo Campbell.

All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO SELL THE 2012 FORD F5550 DUMP TRUCK. SECONDED BY MARK MOFFA.

John said the last time he was in it, the dump truck was working nicely. Geoff said it is in great shape, they just don't utilize it anymore. It has value now, so they should sell it before it wears out. Bob asked what they were going to do with the saltbox and plow. Barbara asked Geoff if he got it appraised. John asked if they had to go through Costars. Geoff said they can put it on Municibid. People bid on it, and they can put a reserve on the vehicle, so they get a minimum amount. Barbara said they can take the best bid. She was making sure there were no regulations. Geoff said they just have to follow the borough code where it has to be bid on. Mayor Sodano said he was perusing the municipal bids over the course of the past year, with similar vehicles, but with a lot more miles and not garage kept. So, they're talking vehicles with a lot of abuse and the rust going in the plus \$20,000.00 range with a plow and a salt box. So, they can assume that their vehicle, garage kept under 10,000 miles, in outstanding shape, will probably draw a premium price on there. It will never be worth more, so now really is the time to move that truck since it really serves no current purpose for them. John asked if the new pickup truck could be jury rigged to accept that salt box. Geoff said he doubts it.

Kris Kross, asked why they don't get it appraised and then maybe go to a dealer that they deal with and see what they'll offer for it before they just put it on a bid auction and figure out what you're going to get for it.

Tim Weaver, suggested they keep the truck since it is in good condition and the cost is minimal to the borough, in case they need it in an emergency. With the price of trucks going up, it would be good to keep it.

Barbara asked if they needed to do this right now. Someone said if they want to sell a snow truck, they should sell it now. Geoff said they have a brand-new truck. The other truck has

been sitting there for twenty plus years and basically deteriorated. He didn't want that to happen with this vehicle. It seems like it is still in good shape, and they don't use it.

All ayes, motion carried.

Public Comment

Dave Cahill, asked what was going on at the old Burger King property and the old carpet mill. Mayor Sodano explained both property owners came in for the required permits. Dave asked what their plans are. Mayor Sodano said they don't need to go in and take care of the property. Dave said they painted the lines in the parking lot. Mayor Sodano said they don't need a permit for that. Dave asked if there is a reason they have prisoners going to the bathroom in the trash cans at the police station. He understands the cleaning lady no longer cleans over there because she didn't want to clean that up. Dave asked if Hillary is still working the same shift as the chief. Mayor Sodano said her shift varies. Dave said he finds it odd that all of a sudden, they have money to work two full-time officers on the same shift. Mayor Sodano said he wouldn't comment because that's a personnel issue.

Tim Weaver, said he thinks they made a mistake getting rid of the Ford F-550 but that's just his opinion. Getting back to the irregularities of election day, there was a lady walking out of here filming on a laptop. She went out the door and across Woodland Ave. She was paying a cab driver to allegedly bring people to this polling station. He wants this on the audio minutes, so when he has to go back and get these, they will be retrieved. She switched out the laptop that she had and the bag she had and retrieved another laptop and another bag and brought it back into this building. At that point, he did not have his watcher's certificate to figure out what was going on inside this building. As soon as he got it, and came in the front door, that woman ran out the back door. The Board of Elections won't return his phone calls and it's starting to make him a little suspicious of everything that he's seeing.

Joe Fitch, asked if there was somebody to follow up with if the truck was getting sold or not. John said to call the borough hall for the borough manager. Joe said in regard to the insurance, if they have vehicles sitting that they're not using, they can suspend the insurance coverage on that vehicle. The vehicle will be covered with comprehensive coverage, so if the building that it's in burns down or somebody steals it, they're covered. If somebody were to take the truck out and drive it and smash it up, they would not be covered. They can talk to their agent.

Jeff Jones, asked about the letters that were sent out to rental properties and how they knew how many rental properties are in the borough. John said it's a voluntary notification by the rental owners. Jeff said half the people out there could be renting and they didn't get letters. John said if they are willing to tell them that they're renting, they get a letter. If they're unwilling, there's nothing they can really do about it. Jeff said they should be able to find out who's renting properties. He knows of one house that is split and two people are renting it. Barbara said they will be doing a newsletter and can put it in there. Mayor Sodano said they need to increase the budget for code enforcement. They are booked by the time they get here with inspections, things to do and sometimes, even court. They need them to be here more to go around the borough to see what is going on. Sometimes, people may do something that can create unsafe situations for their neighbors if they do things without permits and don't do it correctly. They should not expect residents to rat each other out. When somebody files a complaint, the name of the person is not released. Jeff said he complained about someone doing an addition on the house. He came to this borough every other week to make sure that it was being followed. It was, until he stopped. Now that piece of paper got shoved in a bottom drawer. Barbara Kirk said there is no mechanism in place that will allow a code enforcement officer to go into a house

and determine if it's an owner or a renter. They don't have to answer the door. Jeff asked why they are hiring an inspector. Barbara Kirk said the fire marshal has a pretty good feel of what goes on in this borough and that's why he asked to have the Residential Rental Ordinance passed. Jeff asked if he is allowed to know which houses are rental properties in the borough. Barbara Kirk said she did not know off the top of her head.

Tim Weaver, said the law isn't balanced equally. The way this borough has been operating, he's going to start hiding everything he's doing too because everybody else gets away with everything. He can bring up a hundred things and rat out his neighbors, but he's not going to. He's just going to start doing what they do.

Pat Donahue, said at the last meeting, he talked to Robin about using wood on the curbs and sidewalks and asked what she found out. The borough wouldn't let his contractor use wood. Carol asked what property he was talking about. Pat said the new house on Holly Ave. Carol said she did not inspect that. Pat said he got charged double because they couldn't use wood.

Council Members to be Heard

Barbara Heffelfinger wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. She said they are trying their best to make this a better place.

John Stratz said there were a few snide comments tonight about the new microphone. He put a sign up there saying please speak on the side because it is a studio microphone, and it does not pick up from the top. It is an excellent microphone, and he donated it to the borough.

MOTION BY MARK MOFFA TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:43 P.M. SECONDED BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER. All ayes, motion carried.

Submitted by: Marie Serota
Marie Serota, Secretary/Treasurer

Mayor's Report, November 2024

In November I attended the Borough Council meeting and Council Work Session as well as Zoning Hearing Board reorganization meeting.

I assisted in decorating the Borough Holiday Tree.

Thanks to all the residents who kept their vehicles off the Borough streets for street cleaning.

Reminder; The Borough Holiday Tree Lighting will be this Saturday, December 7th, at 7pm. The OLG singers will be entertaining with Holiday Carols starting at 6:30pm.

And lastly, as we move into the winter weather season, in the event of a snow emergency declaration, parking is prohibited on designated emergency routes until they are cleared.

For all snow events, whether a declared emergency or not, please do not park in the streets until they are cleared. Snow will be cleared from the even numbered side of the streets first. If you lack off street parking, please park on the odd numbered side until the even side of your street is cleared, then move your vehicle to the opposite side of the street.



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December 2, 2024 Engineers Report

Penndel Borough, Bucks County

Memorial Park Ball Court Restoration funded by a CDBG grant

Project work is substantially complete. We anticipate the contractor will submit a final invoice and related paperwork during the month of December.

Noeland Avenue Sidewalks

Design work is underway.

Pump Station Roofs

As requested, I reviewed the proposal from Dane & Sons for repairing the spalling concrete on the pump station ceilings and also asked if they could reduce the cost. The Dane & Son proposal for roof repair was accepted at the last meeting, and it is preferable to have one contractor responsible for all the repair work.

The proposal includes power washing and cleaning the areas of spalling concrete. I confirmed by email the need to protect all electronic equipment and wire brush areas that cannot be power washed.

Next, Sika Armatec will be applied. This product includes a corrosion inhibitor. It protects the reinforcing bars from corrosion and acts as a bonding primer for concrete repair.

Repairs will be completed with SikaQuick VOH, a fast setting, fiber reinforced, and polymer modified repair mortar for repairs on overhead and vertical concrete.

The revised proposal reduced the cost from \$17,550 to \$15,600, and the vendor is a Costars contractor.

I recommend accepting the revised proposal from Dane & Son Construction to complete the repair work for \$15,600.

