

Penndel Borough Council Workshop Minutes

July 15, 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 - absent
Councilman Bud Murphy
Councilwoman Robin Valentis
Councilman Gary Nickerson - absent
Councilman Bob Winkler
Mayor Tom Sodano

Also present at the meeting

Barbara Kirk, Solicitor, Hill Wallack
Carol Schuehler, Value Engineering
Marie Serota, Secretary/Treasurer

Council or Borough Announcements

John Stratz reported that the borough is hosting a home repair workshop, presented by Habitat for Humanity, on Thursday July 25th at borough hall where you can learn about programs that can help with roof repairs, heater repairs and more.

Mayor Sodano reported that summertime is prime time for door to door soliciting. Everyone should ask for credentials and a Penndel Borough permit. They exist to help ensure that people walking in the neighborhood aren't casing properties or looking for children to exploit. Also, please note that it's almost election time and per PA law, legitimate political and religious groups are exempt from needing permits, but they still should have credentials.

Bob Winkler said that he understands that Governor Shapiro ordered all American flags on all government buildings to be at half-staff due to the shooting and loss of the volunteer fireman. He asked why they're not following the governor's request. Bob said he used to get the notifications when he was mayor, from either the flag company or from the state. Somebody needs to look into that. Mayor Sodano said he has not received any communication from the governor's office since he's been elected. It was his understanding that the borough manager handles that.

Presentation

Benjamin Uhler, Land Studies made a presentation regarding stream stabilization with the PA DEP and provided council with the necessary information to decide if they want to explore it further. A copy of the Feasibility Study dated June 11, 2024 is on file in the secretary's office.

Consent Item

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 1, 2024 COUNCIL MEETING. SECONDED BY BUD MURPHY. All ayes, motion carried.

Reports:

President's Report

John Stratz thanked Carol and Ben for an excellent presentation and for making council have a lot to think about.

Solicitor's Report

Barbara Kirk reported that the Pennel Borough Planning Commission met on July 11th and reviewed the amendment to the zoning code, concerning the fences. The Planning Commission made specific recommendations to the last revision that had been prepared back in June, which included comments from the borough engineer, zoning officer as well as the Ordinance Committee. With these recommendations by the Planning Commission, if council so chooses, they can prepare the final version to be submitted to council for consideration of advertisement at its next meeting and they can do it in such a way, so it's redlined, so they can see the things that are changed and then give them the clean copy as well.

Engineer's Report

Carol Schuehler read her report which is attached.

Unfinished Business

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO REQUIRE RESIDENTS ON NOELAND AVENUE TO INSTALL OR REPLACE SIDEWALKS IF NECESSARY, USING BOROUGH ENGINEER'S SPECIFICATIONS. SECONDED BY BUD MURPHY.

Mike Smith, said if they require them to put in sidewalks, which means the dumpster that sits on the corner is going to have to be moved around the back because there is no curb cut. Carol said if they were to put in a new curb depression and a driveway apron specifically for a dumpster, that would be a whole new driveway permit and there's no driveway permit in place for that right now. If he's talking about where the dumpster goes, that's a zoning question. It shouldn't be out there in the right of way. Barbara Kirk said if they want to maintain that dumpster, they will have to get either zoning relief for the location of the dumpster or do the work to have it installed. If the borough decides to approve the repair or installation of sidewalks, notices will go out to all the property owners.

The owner of that property where the dumpster is located, would then have to come up with a plan on where to relocate it or have a curb cut put in in order to do it or go to the Zoning Hearing Board to get relief. Mayor Sodano said that after the road is paved, if it's determined that dumpster is going to be somewhere else which it has to be, the owner of the property if he chooses to keep a dumpster, is going to have to destroy some portion of the brand new street in order to add a curb cut and put in an apron. He can't do it by cutting the curb because that curb is not deep enough to support the truck weight. If they cut that curb down to the street level, it will crack. Bud asked if they could delay the paving of the street. Barbara Kirk said they can't because approval was granted by council at the last meeting and the contractor has been told to proceed. They have the signed documents. There is no basis, under the terms of the contract, to delay the paving without the borough facing a lawsuit and potential additional liability. Mayor Sodano asked if the owner doesn't get whatever zoning relief he needs to move the dumpster, can the borough compel him to switch to our trash pickup and pay a refuse fee for every unit in there, as opposed to having a dumpster. That's the only way he's going to get trash picked up if he doesn't get dumpster zoning relief. Barbara Kirk said if he doesn't get approval for the curb cut from the borough, which he has to get a permit for, and he doesn't get zoning relief for the

location of the dumpster, then there's no other alternative except for the easiest solution, which is to sign up for trash pickup by the borough's collector.

John Lo Piccolo, said they shouldn't get all upset and worried about this. There were a lot of streets done and then unfortunately, Bucks County Water and Sewer cut an area. They did six streets in the borough and next thing you know; it's disheartening to see them torn up. Carol goes around and makes sure that they're done right. John Stratz said the ADA ramps had the street cut and they were done very professionally. Bob said maybe they will put the dumpster in front of the garage doors or maybe down closer to the steps going up to the second floor over the garage or they can put trash cans out there for each tenant.

Dave Cahill, said he looked at the two areas that are being paved and it looks like the restaurant district has the same markings with spray paint lines on certain sections of the road like they're going to do on the automotive district side. John said they are milling and paving the restaurant district and those markings are where it is the worst. Carol said on the block between Lincoln Highway and Crescent St., the pavement will be milled, proof rolled and where necessary, base repairs will be done.

Terry McIntyre, asked if the ones that have their driveway come right out into the street will be required to put sidewalks across the front. Carol said she believes the code requires the borough engineer to set the locations and elevations of the sidewalk, so they would actually need to do a survey in a simplistic design so that that could be undertaken. The way she reads the code, it should have a concrete apron.

All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BOB WINKLER TO AUTHORIZE BOROUGH ENGINEER TO PREPARE SPECIFICATIONS FOR SIDEWALKS ON NOELAND AVENUE. SECONDED BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER. All ayes, motion carried.

New Business

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO HIRE HILLARY KLOIBER TO FILL THE FULL-TIME POLICE OFFICER POSITION AS RECOMMENDED BY MAYOR SODANO, CHIEF PERRY AS WELL AS SEVERAL OTHER CHIEFS AND COMMAND STAFF THAT ASSISTED IN THE HIRING PROCESS. SECONDED BY BUD MURPHY.

Mayor Sodano read two letters from himself and one from Chief Perry which are attached.

Dave Cahill, asked how many years she has been working as an officer and if she has worked anywhere else. Mayor Sodano said she has worked approximately six months in Yardley, and she has not worked anywhere else. She also has nine years in the medical field and then made a career transition, which required going to the police academy and becoming Act 120 certified. Dave asked what shifts she would be working. Mayor Sodano answered that it has not yet been established. Dave asked if any of the part-time officers applied for the position. Mayor Sodano said that no one that's currently employed here applied during open application. Dave said at the last meeting, they were supposed to make a motion to hire another officer. Mayor Sodano said it fell through because he was poached approximately an hour before the meeting by another department. Dave said that's because Penndel is underpaying. Mayor Sodano said they actually pay higher per hour than what he understands he took. Penndel's part-time police officers are among the highest paid per hour of part-time officers currently in this area and the full-time officer is fully in alignment with other boroughs.

Motion carried 4 yes, 1 abstention (Bob Winkler).

Public Comment

John Lo Piccolo, asked if they could have a moment of silence for Cory Comperatore, the firefighter who lost his life this past weekend. John said he can come over and lower the flag. Mayor Sodano asked John to show him how to do it, since he's never done it before. John said the new mailbox outside is a little tight. He tried to put his bill in. The old one was much easier.

Terry McIntyre, said he has noticed, over the last few months, a lot of these electric bikes running around, some in the street and some on the sidewalks, a golf cart or two and maybe one of those mule things or whatever. He doesn't really have a problem and he's not complaining, but it's just food for thought. He had a close call taking his trash out because somebody zoomed behind him on one of those electric bikes. He asked if there are any regulations. It's a motorized vehicle on the street and it has to be registered. The person driving should be licensed and have insurance if they run into a parked car or hit a pedestrian.

Council Members to be Heard

Mayor Sodano said he feels that they should have "No Soliciting Without a Permit" signage at the seven major roadways of egress into the borough. They had it at one time, but it is no longer there. It is seriously getting out of hand. This past week, he received three phone calls about it and the week before last, he personally escorted two people out of town and he'll continue to do so because if they don't have credentials, he doesn't want them knocking on people's doors. They should also get a few more of the truck, no parking signs, since we have trucks in town to let them know they're not allowed to be parking all over the place.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:20 P.M.
SECONDED BY ROBIN VALENTIS. All ayes, motion carried.

Submitted by: Marie Serota
Marie Serota, Secretary/Treasurer