

Penndel Borough Council Meeting Minutes

July 1, 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 - absent
Councilman Gary Nickerson - absent
Councilman Bud Murphy
Councilman Bob Winkler
Mayor Tom Sodano

Also present at the meeting

Barbara Kirk, Solicitor, Hill Wallack
Geoff Thompson, Borough Manager
Chief Sean Perry
Marie Serota, Secretary/Treasurer

Presentation by Benjamin Uhler, Land Studies

John Stratz reported that the presentation would not be happening tonight, due to illness.

Council or Borough Announcements

Mayor Sodano said that he has commented about residents seeking information and being frustrated at a lack of contact information and lack of response. In the month of June, between phone calls, texts, and emails, he was contacted twenty-seven times by residents, business owners and property owners and the subjects included zoning, code issues, traffic, parking, speeding, soliciting, power issues and storm debris. These are everyday questions and issues that are over and above the many larger problems and commercial property concerns that are voiced here monthly. These are people who crave a caring ear that will listen. What they do not crave is a cold, our e-mail addresses are on the website response. All the residents and property owners of Penndel deserve their respect and their responses, not just the political partisans who voted for them or donated to their campaigns. They ran for and accepted these positions. They need to show up for meetings and events and give them the respect and representation they deserve.

John Stratz said questions are very important and they strive to answer them. They don't want to give misinformation. They can fill out the form that is in the podium. They will have the correct answer at the next council meeting.

Barbara Heffelfinger reported that since this is Penndel's 125th birthday, on September 6th, they are going to have a presentation and refreshments in this building. They are sending out invitations to the commissioners and representatives. On Saturday the 7th from 12:00 to 5:00, they will have an open house so everyone can look at all the different memorabilia that they have and see what they've done in 125 years and also talk to all the council members who she hopes will be here. It is open to the public and she hopes everyone comes out to support the Heritage Society. They will have freebies and refreshments to give out to commemorate the day.

Consent Items

MOTION BY BUD MURPHY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 17, 2024 WORKSHOP MEETING AND TO PAY THE FOLLOWING BILLS FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 2024:

General Fund	\$33,827.67
Fire Tax Fund	\$ 1,031.97
Refuse Fund	\$ 35.19
Sewer Fund	\$28,193.45
Capital Reserve Fund	\$24,401.50
Sewer Capital Fund	\$ 1,351.50
Liquid Fuel Fund	\$ 997.83
Non-Uniform Fund	\$ 75.00
Police Pension Fund	\$ 75.00
Escrow Fund	\$ 340.00
Payroll Fund	\$ 845.56

Payroll

General Fund	\$32,886.93
Sewer Fund	\$ 3,499.40
Total	\$36,386.33

Escrow Fund Bills

Schoolhouse Court:	
Hill Wallack	\$340.00

SECONDED BY BOB WINKLER. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Mark Moffa abstained).

Reports

President's Report

John Stratz said he has an answer for Tim Weaver's question from last meeting. After Leck's picks up Penndel Borough's recycling, they take them to RMR Recycling in Barrington NJ, and they do get money every year after a grant application is filled out. The amount they get is around \$2,500.00 or so a year. John said he would like to remind everyone, since the 4th of July is this week, that it is illegal to set off fireworks. Many accidents happen this time of year, so please be respectful of your neighbors. Trash will be picked up on Friday this week.

Borough Manager's Report

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

Mayor Sodano asked Geoff if Taddei Woods is considered public recreational space or just open space. Geoff said it is preserved open land. Mayor Sodano said there is an entrance on Holly Ave., which is there to invite people to take part. The reason he asked is since Councilman Dudash is no longer here, they haven't heard anything about trees leaning and people complaining. He asked if there is a program where they keep an eye on those trees because they certainly don't want there to be an issue where something does fall on a neighboring property. On the Washington Ave. side, even though Washington Ave. is not a dedicated street

and they're not responsible technically to pave it, it's deteriorating to the point where the vegetation is encroaching past the edges of the street. If people want to walk in there, there's limited space to park, so they are pretty much blocking someone's driveway. So much vegetation was hanging over the street that he actually was blocking Donna's driveway because he couldn't pull close enough to the woods. He asked if the landscaping company is supposed to be trimming everything. Geoff said Lou was in there trimming. Mayor Sodano said he thinks there should be a regular storm inlet check program. Once these new storm regulations take effect, they're going to have to be very conscious because when it gets onto the storm inlet, it's fine. Once it enters the storm drains and these new regulations are in effect and it enters the storm drain, it is hazardous waste and they actually have to account for everything that they take out of them, even if it's just leaves and branches. Geoff said they had Lou out there before the last storm doing the critical areas, mainly around Bellevue Ave. John said he would go over to Washington Ave. and spray some vinegar to help kill the grass that is encroaching.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Sodano read his report, which is attached.

Police Chief's Report

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

Solicitor's Report

Barbara Kirk said as the mayor mentioned, the Planning Commission meeting originally scheduled for June 27th had to be cancelled due to the agenda for the meeting not being published, as required by the Sunshine Act. Bud said the meeting has been rescheduled to July 11th at 7:30. Barbara said the agenda needs to be posted on the website and available in borough hall at least 24 hours in advance of that meeting.

Unfinished Business

At the 6/3/24 meeting a vote was taken on this motion but there was no motion and second made:

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO AWARD THE NOELAND AVENUE PAVEMENT REPAIR PROJECT TO GORECON INC. IN THE AMOUNT OF \$54,415.00. SECONDED BY JOHN STRATZ.

Barbara Kirk explained that this motion from last meeting was voted on, but they forgot to follow the procedure and get a motion and a second.

Kris Kross, asked how they figured out what to do on Noeland Ave. John explained the engineer inspected it and it needs to be done. It has never been resurfaced and they keep filling the potholes and they keep appearing, so it's time to mill and pave the street. The other side of Lincoln Highway on Noeland is not as bad, so they will just be repairing that side.

Dave Cahill, asked if they are paving from Lincoln Highway straight down to the railroad or if they are turning and paving left and right. John said it will be a straight run and they are just repairing, not repaving.

All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO SEND NOTICES TO PROPERTY OWNERS ON NOELAND AVENUE TO INSTALL OR REPAIR SIDEWALKS. SECONDED BY MARK MOFFA.

Mayor Sodano said the question of curbs and sidewalks was raised in the previous motion and he said that would be addressed in this next motion, but he doesn't see where curbs are addressed. John explained that the engineer had inspected and there is only a small part at the end that conceivably has to have the curb repaired, about one to two feet. Mayor Sodano said there's a lot of people along Bellevue Ave. who would disagree with that last sentence. John said it passes the six-inch mark; therefore, it didn't fail.

Mike Smith, asked what had changed because he had to tear his curbs out and redo them. He could have repaired them because they weren't that bad. John said they had different professionals at that time. Mike said it seems like it's because he didn't contribute to Mark's campaign. John said when Carol comes on the 15th, she'll explain it to him in greater detail. At some point, you have to rely on the professionals that you hire. Mike said he's creating a major problem.

Dave Cahill, said they need to table this vote until Carol is here.

John Kross, asked if there would be a timeline to complete the sidewalks. John Stratz said no, because they have absolutely no bearing on whether the street can get done or not. Curbs are what have the bearing. John Stratz said a date would probably be issued but it wouldn't be within a month.

Kris Kross, asked if they would provide them with the requirements. John said they would because there is a telephone pole, and he will take Carol's recommendations about what to do with that.

Alan Dashoff, asked if they could put the criteria for what is used in the inspection on the website in basic English so that anyone can look at it in case someone wants to do something preemptive.

John Lo Piccolo, said they want to make Penndel walkable. He has to walk in the street there with his kids. Part of the problem is people don't stop at Noeland and Crescent because there's a dumpster in the sightline. Also, people roll through that stop sign because they're avoiding the traffic light. If there's one block that really needs sidewalks, Noeland is it.

John Kross, said on one side of Noeland, there's continuous sidewalks so mandating sidewalks on the other side is only going to facilitate not having to cross the street. Mayor Sodano said that was incorrect. On the old Burger King side, the sidewalk ends at the end of that property. There is no sidewalk from there down to Crescent St.

A roll call vote was taken. John Stratz, yes, Barbara Heffelfinger, no, Mark Moffa, yes, Bob Winkler, no, Bud Murphy, no. Motion failed, 2-3.

New Business

MOTION BY MARK MOFFA TO PAY SEWER SPECIALTY SERVICES CO., INC. \$67,261.40 AS RECOMMENDED BY BOROUGH ENGINEER. SECONDED BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER. All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO RATIFY APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING MID-CYCLE INVOICES:

Comcast invoice dated 5/26/24 in the amount of \$218.51 for internet and voice services at 37 W. Woodland Avenue

Comcast invoice dated 5/26/24 in the amount of \$196.50 for internet and voice services at 300 Bellevue Avenue

Leck Waste Services Invoice #468833 in the amount of \$22,218.00 for June service

Comcast invoice dated 6/2/24 in the amount of \$297.89 for internet at 790 Neshaminy Street

Comcast Invoice #203419167 in the amount of \$380.08 for Business VoiceEdge service

Gettysburg Premium Account invoice dated 5/31/24 in the amount of \$169.59 for dental insurance installment.

State Workers' Insurance Fund dated 5/31/24 in the amount of \$1,951.00 for fire departments' workers' compensation insurance installment.

Ready Refresh Invoice #14E04319382 in the amount of \$173.94 for spring water, cooler rent, delivery, and professional cleaning

Independence Blue Cross Invoice #240607426011 in the amount of \$4,569.94 for medical insurance installment

Philadelphia Insurance Companies Invoice #2006951947 in the amount of \$300.00 for volunteer accident insurance policy.

Verizon Wireless Invoice #9965556966 in the amount of \$25.02 for M2M Account Share 1 GB

Selective Insurance of America invoice dated 6/11/24 in the amount of \$4,874.00 for workers' compensation and commercial package insurance installments.

PECO Invoice dated 6/17/24 in the amount of \$1,421.30 for streetlights' electric.

SECONDED BY MARK MOFFA. All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO AUTHORIZE ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCE #2024-02, AUTHORIZING APPROVAL OF THE COMCAST FRANCHISE AGREEMENT. SECONDED BY MARK MOFFA. All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BUD MURPHY TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING TO SOLICIT PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ORDINANCE #2024-02 FOR AUGUST 5, 2024 AT 7:30 PM. SECONDED BY MARK MOFFA.

Barbara Kirk explained that any time council passes an ordinance, there's a formal public hearing where council takes comments from residents before they render a decision on the ordinance. Technically, it's considered a hearing and they're setting a specific date, so everybody knows when to be here. This is for the motion they just authorized for advertisement of the Comcast franchise agreement extension to be published in the paper, as well as on the website.

All ayes, motion carried.

MOTION BY BARBARA HEFFELFINGER TO AWARD THE 2024-2025 FUEL BIDS FOR #2 HEATING OIL TO COLONIAL OIL INDUSTRIES, INC. AT \$0.4218 OVER MARKET RATE AND OFF-ROAD DIESEL TO RIGGINS, INC. AT \$0.3440 OVER MARKET RATE CONTRACTED THROUGH THE BUCKS COUNTY CONSORTIUM. SECONDED BY MARK MOFFA.

Bud asked where they got the figures from. John explained that they are part of the Bucks County Consortium who does the solicitation for fuel bids for many different boroughs and some townships. Because of the volume that they represent, they get the best price that they can. Barbara Kirk explained with the packet of information was an affidavit of publication because

Northampton Township took the lead through the Bucks County Consortium to get the bids. It advertised what was being looked for as to the amount of gas, diesel fuel, propane, etc. Bids were submitted to the consortium through Northampton Township and were reviewed and opened on June 12th and they compiled a chart showing the most economical bids and the recommendation.

All ayes, motion carried.

John Stratz reported that they were tabling the motion to hire the full-time police until the next meeting.

Public Comment

Neil Berman, asked if the meeting that was supposed to be on the 11th for the Planning Commission wasn't advertised, will the one on the 27th be advertised. Barbara Kirk said it would be advertised.

Mike Smith, asked Mark Moffa if he was out trying to fit in for Joe's replacement.

Dave Cahill, asked Barbara if she believes in the Holocaust that happened on October 7th in Israel. John said this is public comment not public questions. He can fill out a form and submit it. Dave asked Barbara Kirk if their right to know requests is costing a lot of money because her firm has to review all of them before they get answers. Barbara said no.

Council Members to be Heard

Mayor Sodano, said he has frequently commented on their inadequate code enforcement system. He's not faulting the code officer himself. To the contrary, as his reports indicate, he has an enormous workload for what is essentially a half day a week. The other six days a week are a free for all. Much goes on unnoticed and unpermitted when there is no code enforcement available. There are dozens of cars parked long term on auto repair properties. They don't allow sales operations on properties not zoned for that but try to get a good sight line to pull onto Durham Rd. from E. Woodland Ave. They don't allow junk yards but there is long term storage of inoperable vehicles at these businesses. One would think that the same vehicle sitting in place long term, sometimes for years, should be addressed. Large trucks and vehicles with body damage on borough streets should not fall on the residents or the elected officials to feel they have to rat out their neighbors and the residents should not have to endure the unsightliness and inconveniences of these issues in their neighborhood. They can find the money for an electronic sign that more often than not does not have the current information the residents should have, but they can't find the money to provide the services for those residents that they deserve.

Mike Smith, asked if someone can call Middletown about Milnik's place, the old Car Salon. It looks terrible and everyone thinks it's in Penndel. Barbara said she has called numerous times about it. She will call again and let him know what happens.

MOTION BY MARK MOFFA TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:32 P.M. SECONDED BY BUD MURPHY. All ayes, motion carried.

Submitted by: Marie Serota
Marie Serota, Secretary/Treasurer

Mayor's Report - June 2024

Attended all Council Council meetings and work sessions.

Organized and ran Penndel Community Day, Saturday June 8th.

Worked with Chief Perry on finalizing details of preparing to hire a full time officer.

Showed up for the Planning Commission meeting that could not happen.

Remember folks, July 4th is a day for celebrating our Nation's independence. While fireworks are legal in Pennsylvania, they are NOT allowed within 150 feet of an occupied structure. Which would exclude virtually all of Penndel Borough. They are NOT allowed on our recreational field area. Please be safe. Respect your neighbors. Have a happy 4th of July!