

Langhorne Borough Council Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2022

A Meeting of the Langhorne Borough Council was held Wednesday, April 13, 2022, in person with Zoom attendees. President Murdock called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and invited those in attendance to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Present: President Paul Murdock, Vice-President Rich Mason, Councilpersons Nancy Culleton, Kristen Farry, Scott Haldeman, Kathleen Horwatt, and Anthony Marfia; Mayor Joseph Taylor; and Solicitor Catherine Anne Porter (via Zoom). Absent: Police Chief John Godzieba, Treasurer Ellyn Schoen.

Announcements and Presentations:

President Murdock distributed \$800 checks from the Borough's ARPA relief funds to representatives of the following non-profit organizations that suffered losses during the pandemic:

- American Legion
- American Legion Auxiliary
- Boy Scout Troop 19 (no representative present)
- Four Lanes End Garden Club
- Historic Langhorne Association
- Langhorne Borough Business Association
- Langhorne Community Memorial Association
- Langhorne Council for the Arts
- Langhorne-Middletown EMS
- Langhorne-Middletown Fire Company
- Langhorne United Methodist Church
- Rotary Club
- St James Episcopal Church

Councilwoman Horwatt advised the organizations to use the money in the best way they see fit. Grant recipients and Councilmembers reconvened outside for photographs.

Don Minnick, on behalf of the American Legion Jesse Soby Post, invited Councilmembers and the public to the Memorial Day parade and discussed the condition of the parade route. Councilwoman Horwatt suggested contacting PECO to discuss the lines drawn in the intersection of Hill and West Richardson.

Mayor's Report: Mayor Taylor discussed difficulties enforcing parking violations on Bellevue Avenue and suggested reviewing the ordinances and posting proper signage. He reported on PennDOT repairs on Richardson Avenue, the four-hour traffic gridlock due to a raised dump truck bed punching a hole in the Pine Street overpass, and a tractor trailer blocking the intersection and pedestrian crossing at Maple and Pine which created difficulties for children and others trying to cross.

Police Chief's Report: None.

Manager's report: None.

Planning Commission: Chair Brian Smiley (via Zoom) reviewed three points from their report: \

1: In its March meeting, the Commission approved the recommendation that Borough Council send the RC3, 413 Interchange Alternative 4 sketch to PennDOT and request a face-to-face meeting to discuss it. Alternative 4 was also sent to Joe Fiocco of SAFE Engineering.

2. The Commission drew up a timeline of events relating to the RC3 project, which President Murdock will email to Council members.

3. President Murdock had asked the Commission to identify new projects, but given the evolving nature of the PennDOT issue, the Commission determined that, as volunteers, they did not have the time or resources to take on new projects. Further, reviewing suggestions set forth in the Borough's 2014 Comprehensive Plan, such as a Traditional Commercial Neighborhood Zone along 413/Pine Street and walkability and pedestrian safety, may be counterproductive until the impact of RC3 is determined.

President Murdock and Brian Smiley discussed SAFE Engineer Joe Fiocco's opinion on the viability of the Commission's Alternative 4 plan and the impact due to taking traffic from 413 and putting it on surface streets.

Councilman Haldeman did not see the need for the roundabouts at Gillam/Bellevue and the entrance to Woods Services but could support keeping two roundabouts (at the cloverleaf site and at the blinking light at South Bellevue). Brian advised that the extra roundabouts were helpful to slow traffic to the optimal 25 mph or less and discussed the negative impact caused by 45-mph traffic.

The SEPTA engineers JMT and SAFE Engineering have discussed the idea of the roundabout at 413 and Gillam and JMT has permission from PennDOT to study this idea. Councilwoman Horwatt stated that PennDOT was listening and that a person from SEPTA was helpful and had joined the conversation with the Commission.

Councilwoman Farry wanted to hear directly from Mr. Fiocco. Councilman Haldeman suggested tabling the discussion pending a report from SAFE Engineering.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt, seconded by Councilman Mason, Council voted 4-3 to send the Borough Planning Commission's Alternative 4 plan to Representative Farry to forward to JMT/PennDOT. Voting in favor were Councilmembers Horwatt, Mason, Marfia and Culleton. Opposed were Councilmembers Murdock, Farry, and Haldeman.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt, seconded by Councilman Mason, Council discussed sending a letter drafted by Councilman Mason to Representative Farry in response to Representative Farry's recent letter to Council. After discussion, the motion was tabled.

A work session was proposed to address the wording of the letter with the understanding that once the wording was agreed upon, the letter would be sent. Solicitor Porter confirmed that a work session not on the regular calendar needed to be advertised in advance.

Motion: On motion of Councilman Mason, seconded by Councilman Marfia, Council voted unanimously to advertise a work session for Monday, April 25, to discuss the wording of the response letter to Representative Farry's letter to Council.

As the Borough now owned the Mayor's Playground, Councilwoman Horwatt recommended changing the zoning from R2 to Open Recreation as soon as possible. Councilwoman Horwatt will make a list of adjacent property owners and their addresses and provide it to the Solicitor.

Joanne McDonald, 203 West Gillam Avenue, Langhorne Manor, stated that walking on 413 was dangerous and that she would like a copy of PennDOT's 2014 plan for RC3.

Public comment: Michael Berling, 224 North Pine Street, again complained about the behavior of Councilman Marfia's tenant on East Marshall Avenue and lack of an adequate response. He appreciated President Murdock's willingness to listen.

Beth Delaney, 119 West Marshall Avenue, presented PennDOT with the original and President Murdock with a copy of a petition with a list of 250 signatures opposing the partial cloverleaf plan.

Elizabeth Gilbert, 502 South Bellevue Avenue, noted that when the Route 1 superhighway was built and divided the community, residents thought they would get a means of connection but instead got the blinking light and a dangerous curve. Roundabouts will not allow trucks to pass. She believes that mitigation money owed to Langhorne went to Woods Services instead.

Wanda Search, 221 South Bellevue Avenue, stated that people loved historic Langhorne and couldn't understand why PennDOT wanted to build the interchange, cutting the Borough in half and making Langhorne the bypass to Newtown.

Janet Bayer, 212 North Bellevue Avenue, thought the Borough had totally changed and might not survive what was coming and that yesterday's road closures proved the point.

Peggy Malandra and her husband, 203 Station Avenue, opposed the cloverleaf plan, raised the possible conflict of interest caused by Woods School employees and objected to council members who took an oath to protect the Borough and failed to do so.

Beverly Adams, 118 West Richardson Avenue, thanked Borough officials for their volunteer service, opposed the project, questioned how effective Council's responses to PennDOT had been, and stated the need to be realistic and develop a backup plan in case the project goes through.

Pat Carr, 240 North Green Street, amended Beth Delaney's description of the petition, clarifying that it requested not mitigation but that alternatives be considered, and that the signatories were not necessarily opposed to safety improvements but were opposed to the proposed partial cloverleaf.

Paul Schneider, 233 North Bellevue Avenue, thought the first priority was to negotiate with PennDOT to change its plan and create a traffic flow that worked for all and if unsuccessful then address "Plan B". He noted that several officials at a recent Middletown Township meeting described PennDOT as being in the "early days" of planning for RC3.

President Murdock clarified that no one on Borough Council was paid by PennDOT and that Councilwoman Farry, who works for Woods Services, was in regular communication with Solicitor Porter about when she needed to recuse herself.

Councilwoman Horwatt offered to provide Beverly Adams with a timeline of the Borough's efforts to address traffic in the Borough including the decision to analyze traffic by four quadrants and not street by street and the approval of resources for SAFE Engineering to review the PennDOT process.

President Murdock explained that the Borough had been in conversation with PennDOT for about a year but had not been invited to the 2020 public officials' meeting where updates to the 2014 plan were discussed. In the summer of 2021, the Borough expressed opposition, but did not submit alternative plans until early 2022, which were rejected by PennDOT. In February Safe Engineering was retained and in March a letter from SAFE Engineering was sent to PennDOT. PennDOT expects to hold a public meeting in late May to present its plan, but no date has been set yet. Councilman Haldeman stated that \$1,200 of the \$5,000 approved for work by SAFE Engineering had been expended. While all on Council were opposed to the project, he wanted to be realistic and to try negotiate some concessions with PennDOT. He voted against sending Alternative 4 to PennDOT because four roundabouts were unreasonable and because it did not include the partial cloverleaf, which is inevitable.

Councilwoman Farry stated that this was the second time she had been publicly attacked for an alleged

conflict of interest even though there was nothing before Council that involved Woods Services. She had always disclosed her employment at Woods Services, had received legal advice from Solicitor Porter, had recused herself from past votes when advised. She is not a CEO or involved in property decisions but is an advocate for the disabled. It was wrong to suggest that she didn't care about the Borough where she lived, was raising her family, and volunteered many hours. Councilman Haldeman's and her votes regarding the RC3 project had not been fairly represented in the media. They simply differed from others on Council in how they opposed the project.

In clarification, Councilman Mason stated that Planning Commission had provided a Plan B to PennDOT in writing, that the Borough did not have authority over state roads, that it was difficult to determine what mitigation would be needed, that we didn't know if northbound Pine Street would become four lanes, and, that while he would like to see a pedestrian bridge over Pine Street near the library, we didn't know what type of bridge would be needed. Even though the Borough can't mitigate a tidal wave, some measures may be effective.

Councilwoman Horwatt was proud of Councilwoman Farry's statement and said that Woods Services' plan to sell some of its property had taken everyone on Council by surprise.

President Murdock was also tired of being yelled at and told that he was wrong and didn't care about the Borough, just because he didn't agree with the majority on some issues. He objected to misinformation that St. Mary Medical Center was asking to widen the road all the way to the hospital, and to secret meetings, including a meeting of a community group, a state representative and PennDOT, which members of Council attended or knew about but did not inform the rest of Council. He had objected to expending money for the traffic engineer because it was unbudgeted.

Personnel Committee: Councilman Mason reported that he, President Murdock and Councilman Haldeman would be interviewing a candidate for the Manager position. In response to Councilwoman Culleton's inquiry, he discussed how the Borough clerk and others were pitching in to help with managerial tasks and said that new applications would be solicited if no one was hired soon. Councilwoman Farry suggested using a consultant service to find a temporary employee with expertise in government services. Councilman Haldeman had been doing some of the manager's tasks regarding permits.

Councilman Haldeman noted that heater and chimney certification were needed to get a certificate of occupancy and while he wanted to retain the heater and chimney certification requirement, he was in favor of eliminating the need for a certificate of occupancy, as Middletown Township did in 2006. The matter was tabled a month until the Solicitor could be present.

Thermoplast: With Council approval, Armour was ready to complete the work prior to Edward Hicks Day. Councilman Haldeman stated that some roads on the parade route, Richardson Avenue in particular, urgently needed attention and should be highest priority. All intersections needed to be upgraded with thermoplast. If PennDOT paves a road, it must replace the thermoplast. Councilwoman Horwatt will provide a list to Armour so they can provide a quote for the work.

ARPA Funding: President Murdock reported that the second-round application for ARPA funding was due by April 30th. Listing specific uses for the money was not required.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt, seconded by Councilwoman Farry, Council voted unanimously to approve \$3700 for Armour and Sons to replace the thermoplast at the pedestrian crossing at Maple Avenue and Green Street.

Renewal of Auditor's Contract: President Murdock reported that the auditor's contract needed renewal. Councilman Mason will work on that in the absence of the manager. Councilwoman Horwatt will work with the clerk to find the needed RDA grant reports.

Approval of the Minutes: In the absence of February and March minutes, approval was postponed.

Treasurer's Report:

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt, seconded by Councilman Mason, Council voted unanimously to approve the Treasurer's Report.

Payment of the Bills:

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Farry, seconded by Councilman Haldeman, Council voted unanimously to pay the bills.

Fire Company: No report.

Environmental Advisory Committee: Councilman Mason reported that EAC continues to communicate with Middletown Township regarding shared responsibility for the retrofit of the stormwater basin behind Langhorne United Methodist Church.

HARB: Councilman Marfia reported that HARB reviewed and approved one application.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt, seconded by Councilwoman Culleton, Council voted unanimously to approve the HARB recommendation for Tom Asta to replace a fence at the Langhorne Hotel.

Heritage Farm/LOSI: Pat Carr reported on upcoming events at the Farm (April 23-24 cub scout camp out, May 7th jazz concert, May 14th flea market, and June 11th folksong society meeting and concert); Kevin Transue's repair of the mower; LOSI's expenditure to replace all windows at the Farm; the Community Gardens selling out in two weeks and opening on April 1st, the recent very successful Clean-Up Day, and the need to get quotes to separate the heating systems on the first and second floors.

Due to worsening erosion at Catawissa at the Watson trail entrance and parking area, Pat would like to meet with an engineer. Councilwoman Horwatt suggested consulting Seifert, and President Murdock advised asking CKS Engineering for their person who deals with wetlands and streams. President

Murdock will discuss the process with Solicitor Porter. It was agreed that the Stop PennDOT sign at the Farm was inappropriate and should be removed.

Recreation Board: Councilwoman Horwatt reported that the Board postponed the Mayor's Playground dedication to the date of the Rotary Pet Fair.

Shade Tree Commission: President Murdock will distribute the report received just before the meeting.

Communications Team: Councilwoman Culleton reported that the new Documents tab on the website will be reconfigured to contain Council minutes and agendas, notices, ordinances, permits and budgets. She would like to see additional ordinances posted on the website, but as they might be misunderstood without the input of the Borough manager, the new Borough manager, Communication team and Council liaisons should discuss the issue. The Communications Team expects to meet once each quarter.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Culleton, seconded by Councilman Haldeman, Council voted

unanimously to post approved Council minutes on the Borough website.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Culleton, seconded by Councilwoman Horwatt, Council voted unanimously to post Councilmembers' Borough Council email addresses on the Borough website.

Public Comment:

Celeste Oliver, 124 E Maple Avenue, would like to see a greater variety of businesses in the Borough and wanted to know about the Borough economic development plans.

Beverly Adams, 118 West Richardson, thanked Councilwoman Culleton for taking minutes and President Murdock for speaking his truth openly. She supported hiring a temporary borough manager and making the Zoning Book easier to use.

Pat Carr, 240 N Green Street, was advised that Council approved SAFE Engineering reviewing the PennDot process.

After tonight's meeting, Becky Gilbert, 502 S Bellevue Avenue, was hopeful that the Borough could be saved and mitigation funds could be awarded to the Borough.

Solicitor's Report: No report.

PECO Green Regions Grant: The final report was submitted by Councilwoman Kathleen Horwatt for the 2019 PECO Green Regions Grant in the amount of \$10,000. The funds were used as matching for the Langhorne Community Memorial Association Park Development/Walkway/Trail at the Richardson House.

Motion: On motion of President Murdock, seconded by Councilman Mason, Council voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Culleton
Councilwoman/Interim Secretary