

Langhorne Borough Council Meeting

January 13, 2021

A meeting of the Langhorne Borough Council was held Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. President Thomas called the meeting to order and invited everyone in attendance to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Present were: President Kari Thomas, Vice President Scott Haldeman, Mayor Joseph Taylor, Councilwomen Kathleen Horwatt and Kristen Farry, Councilmen Anthony Marfia and Rich Mason, Police Chief John Godzieba, Borough Manager/Secretary Christine Schoell, Treasurer Ellyn Schoen and Solicitor Catherine Anne Porter. Absent was: Councilman Paul Murdock.

Presentations: President Thomas thanked Woods Services for being a great neighbor to the Borough and an asset to the community. President Thomas submitted the 2021 list of Borough offices and appointments.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt seconded by Councilman Marfia, Council voted unanimously to approve the following Borough appointments:

Manager/Secretary – Christine Schoell
Open Records Officer – Christine Schoell
Assistant Secretary – Open
Treasurer – Ellyn Schoen
Solicitor – Catherine Anne Porter
Borough Engineer – Gilmore & Associates
Building Inspector – Keystone Municipal Services
Zoning Officer – Keystone Municipal Services
UCC Code Enforcement Officer – Keystone Municipal Services
Plumbing Inspector – Keystone Municipal Services
Borough Code Enforcement Officer – Steve Schoell

Mayor's Report: Mayor Taylor wished everyone a happy new year and hoped that 2021 would be a better year for all.

Chief's Report: Chief Godzieba also wished everyone a happy new year and reported that the few trees that came down during the December 16th snowstorm were quickly taken care of. The license plate cameras were installed in the Chevy Tahoe and were operating perfectly; the company hired to install the traffic light cameras finally had all the needed part to complete the project in the next month; and, all three campuses of the Bucks County Community College are serving as COVID testing sites. COVID vaccines were being distributed to 1A recipients (healthcare professionals, doctors, and paramedics) at Woods Services, the vaccine distribution center for Lower Bucks County. The Chief will advise Council if elected officials are classified in a higher category for vaccinations, and when Woods Services begins to process people in the general public.

Public Comment: Pat Carr noted that there were reports of hunters near Catawissa and asked the Chief about the laws regarding hunting and discharging firearms in the Borough. Chief Godzieba was aware of the report, which was investigated on the day of the complaint and it was confirmed that Catawissa was not involved and that no hunters had been on the property. The Chief advised that people cannot hunt with a rifle anywhere in Bucks County, but with permission hunting with a shotgun is permitted in certain areas of Bucks County.

Manager's Report: Manager Schoell reported that Road Technician Steve Schoell was removing the brush from E. Marshall Ave., which was discussed in the December Council meeting. Langhorne Manor Borough no longer needed to use the Borough's Public Works truck as they used RDA Grant money to purchase their own truck. Manager Schoell was advised by APPI, the Borough's energy consultant company, that the Borough could sign a contract, effective June of 2022, with Constellation reducing the current rate of .04450 kw/h to .04320. After discussion, President Thomas directed Manager Schoell to sign a 42-month contract.

Manager Schoell reported that PECO would be installing a new gas line under the entire length of East Richardson Avenue, that she asked Mayor Taylor to inform the fire company of the work, and that she will advise Council, the Mayor, the Chief and the Fire Company of the exact dates when she knows them. While the road would not be completely closed down for resident use, due to the size of the fire trucks, they may have to be moved out.

The Borough Engineers (Gilmore & Associates) notified the Manager that they were hired by Woods Services to complete a land design project, which may include subdivision and land development of property located in the Borough. If an application was submitted to the Borough, the Borough would need to hire another firm to review it. Gilmore did not advise the Manger which properties might be involved, but indicated it may be a year before it became an issue. Council appreciated Gilmore's diligence in providing early notice, discussed Pennoni's engineering work on stormwater management and transportation projects, and the possible need to transition to a new firm. Councilwoman Farry noted that the Woods project was still in the early stages of planning and that the Borough would more than likely not need to address the issue before next year. Council agreed to retain Gilmore as the Borough Engineer until applications for next year were submitted by other firms and their prices and scope of work were reviewed by Council.

Manager Schoell reported that the Borough received a Request for Recreational Facilities from the Cub Scouts requesting use of the Heritage Farm property for their meetings. She stated that the meetings would occur occasionally on Fridays starting from January 15, 2021 to June 18, 2021, with the meetings normally being held outdoors and from 6-8:30pm with an 8:30-9pm clean up. Manager Schoell stated that the insurance certificate the Cub Scouts supplied the Borough will expire in March 2021 and said that she would follow up with them regarding a new insurance certificate if Council approved the use. Councilwoman Horwatt asked if the Cub Scouts would be moving any of their other equipment to use at these meetings, to which Mr. Carr stated they would not.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt seconded by Councilwoman Farry, Council voted unanimously to approve the Cub Scouts using Heritage Farm for their meetings from January to June of 2021.

Manager Schoell reported that most of the Borough's RDA grant proposals were approved, but not the RDA grant requests for police body cameras or police radios.

Motion: On motion of Councilman Mason seconded by Councilman Marfia, Council voted unanimously to approve the following RDA Grant Resolutions:

- Resolution 2021-1 \$20,360 to improve Municipal Building security
- Resolution 2021-2 \$50,275 to purchase an unmarked police vehicle
- Resolution 2021-3 \$4,308 to purchase Tasers
- Resolution 2021-4 \$6,750 to purchase AED equipment
- Resolution 2021-5 \$2,886 to purchase backup batteries for traffic signals
- Resolution 2021-6 \$27,883 to cover the costs of LMFC SCBA equipment

Engineer's Report: None.

Approval of the Minutes: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt seconded by Vice President Haldeman, Council voted 8-0-1 to approve the December 2020 Minutes, as revised by the Solicitor. Councilman Mason abstained as he was absent from the last Council meeting.

Approval of the Treasurer's Report: On motion of Vice President Haldeman seconded by Councilman Marfia, Council voted unanimously to approve the December Treasurer's Report.

Approval of the Bills: On motion of Councilwoman Farry seconded by Councilman Mason, Council voted unanimously to approve payment of the December bills.

EAC: Councilman Mason stated that the stormwater report was submitted to DEP and that the Borough can anticipate some follow up items within the next 30 to 60 days. The next EAC meeting will be on Thursday, January 21, via Zoom.

H.A.R.B. Report: None.

Farm/L.O.S.I.: Pat Carr reported that Hollingsworth was addressing problems with the relatively new hot water heater at Heritage Farm. After Treasurer Schoen noted some unusually high water bills, Mr. Carr agreed to look into the issue. Mr. Carr advised Ms. Schoen that the Caretaker had not received the December reconciliation check yet. Treasurer Schoen advised that it was included in the December checks signed at this Council meeting.

Vice President Haldeman asked Pat Carr about a tree across from his property on the Middletown Country Club golf course, which appeared at risk of losing limbs. Pat Carr advised that he did call the Country Club, but had not received a response. Mr. Carr will follow up with the Country Club.

Planning Commission: No report.

Recreation Board: No report.

Shade Tree Commission: No report.

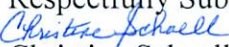
Public Comment: Pat Carr asked when the old utility poles would be removed. Manager Schoell had been in contact with Ted Dorand of PECO who informed her that most of the poles still had cable wires on them, preventing them from being removed. Pat Carr stated that several trucks came through and removed some wires but overall a lot of cables were still on the poles. Vice President Haldeman asked what would happen with the old poles that they were cut down and laying on the ground near West Marshall Avenue. Manager Schoell advised that the company would be removing them soon.

Vice President Haldeman raised a number of questions regarding the new fee schedule. Solicitor Porter advised that the gross floor definition was correct for construction permits as building permits involve work involving the interior square footage as opposed to the exterior footage and was different from land development calculations which involved the exterior footprint on a lot. Vice President Haldeman was concerned that the re-inspection fees were too low but understood if we still wanted to keep the fee low for the property owners. Solicitor Porter advised that the rate represented the fee paid to the inspector plus a \$10 administration fee, which is applied to most application fees. Manager Schoell stated that the cost depends specifically on what the inspector was going back to do and that usually re-inspections involve less work and time than the original inspection.

Motion: On motion of Councilman Marfia seconded by Vice President Haldeman, Council voted unanimously to approve the 2021 Fee Schedule as presented.

With regards to the stormwater ordinance, Treasurer Schoen asked for clarification on the specifics of mixed use, distinctions between residential uses in commercial business buildings and accessory commercial/office uses in otherwise residential buildings and the base charging rate. Solicitor Porter advised that she had revised the term “base rate” with “residential rate” which applied to all residential units within the R1 and R2 zoning districts. President Thomas clarified that residents would pay for separate rates for commercial and residential spaces within a property, but not to exceed a maximum charge of \$360 per year. Councilman Marfia stated that while the stormwater fees were significant, they didn’t necessarily warrant the Borough imposing a lien on a property if the fees were not paid. Solicitor Porter stated that the expense and time involved with litigation to collect fees exceeded the cost and time involved in placing a lien which would get paid when the property was sold or re-financed. Council agreed that the penalties should be lowered, but the right to lien should remain in the ordinance. Treasurer Schoen thought the 5-yr sunset provision would provide a review mechanism and that Council could consider these issues better then. President Thomas suggested that the EAC again review the ordinance and advise if re-wording some sections was needed and stated the upcoming EAC meeting date and time would be posted on the Borough website and would be held via Zoom. President Thomas said that the ordinance would be clarified before being voted upon at the next meeting.

Adjournment: With no other business, on motion of Vice President Haldeman seconded by Councilman Mason, Council voted unanimously to adjourn the January meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Schoell
Borough Secretary