

Langhorne Borough Council Minutes

July 14, 2021

A meeting of the Langhorne Borough Council was held on Wednesday, July 14, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. as a hybrid meeting, both in-person in Council Chambers and virtually via Zoom. President Thomas called the meeting to order and invited everyone in attendance to join in the Pledge Allegiance to the Flag.

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

Announcements and Presentations: Pat Mervine, on behalf of the Langhorne Borough Council for the Arts, reported that the jigsaw puzzles sold to help fund scholarships were still available for sale. The banners installed around the Borough will be part of a project to create a walking tour brochure through the town. As the brochures will be placed around town, Ms. Mervine requested and was granted permission to place some outside the office at Borough Hall. Langhorne Borough Council for the Arts was initially given permission to install 20 banners, with the agreement that once installed, Council would re-evaluate the project and consider installing additional banners. Ms. Mervine had two requests for banners. One at the Mount Olive Cemetery and the other at a private residence on West Marshall. Council agreed to have a banner placed at Mount Olive Cemetery, but had concerns about recognizing individual houses and creating an issue of everyone with a Historic Home wanting a banner placed in front of their property. President Thomas stated any resident interested in having a banner placed at their home would need to come to a council meeting and present their request.

Pat Mervine thanked Manager Schoell for handing out chalk for the Langhorne Borough Chalk Walk last year and asked if they could hold another Chalk Walk on September 25th, with a rain date of September 26th, and with chalk left at Borough Hall again. At the same time as the Chalk Walk, a Porch Fest would be held, consisting of four homes having paid musicians play from their porch every half hour to 45 minutes and with the music starting at a different location to keep people from gathering in one area. The Porch Fest would be on S. Bellevue, W. Maple, Hill and Station Avenues from noon to 4:00 p.m. There would be free Covid-safe wrapped refreshments for the community. Donation boxes would be placed at the four porches. Council approved.

Pat Mervine reported that the 2020 Speaker Series, put on hold as an indoor event during Covid, had been put off another year due to the concerns surrounding the Covid surge. An event known as Edward Hicks Day was planned for April 23, 2022 with an actor reenactment, a petting zoo, and the painting of a mural recognizing Langhorne as Edward Hicks' birthplace. As 2020 was supposed to be a recognition year for women, painting a mural depicting five women who went above the limitations of their respective times was being discussed.

Councilman Murdock asked about maintenance of the banners. Pat Mervine advised that they were expected to last 3-5 years, would be reprinted as necessary and that the hardware was more expensive than the printing of the banners. It was agreed that Council would have their banners reprinted when necessary.

President Thomas advised that the next Concert in the Park was scheduled for July 28th.

Public Comment: None

Mayor' Report: Mayor Taylor reported on the accessibility issues on Richardson Ave. due to Danella Construction blocking the road with their vehicles and equipment and expressed concerns about the metal plates and traffic cones on Pine St. between Richardson Ave. and Cherry St., which were severely limiting the flow of traffic. Manager Schoell advised that Danella Construction would be moving some of the plates next Wednesday and that she would check with PECO on the new time frame for the work to be completed.

Chief's Report: Chief Godzieba noted that while June had been a pretty quiet month, a letter was circulating among the residents of National Ave. citing the problems caused by traffic cut-through and insufficient room on the sidewalks. The Chief presented several photos of the area, focusing on the sidewalks and the "Local Traffic Only" sign which was placed too far into National Ave. to be effective and had become obscured by surrounding tree branches. To serve as a deterrent for traffic cutting through, the Chief suggested that the "Local Traffic Only" signs should be placed before motorists turn onto the street. Councilman Murdock asked if there could be a "No right turn" sign from Maple Ave. onto National Ave. between certain specific hours of the day. Councilwoman Horwatt supported such a sign, but advised that a traffic study was required before taking action and that the data from the speed sign did not reach the threshold for speed or volume to support such a change. Councilwoman Horwatt advised that additional signage placed at National Ave. was removed at PennDOT's insistence. While a survey done a number of years ago indicated that several National Avenue residents supported the idea, there was not a consensus from the residents on how to proceed.

Chief Godzieba stated that there had been an increase in fraudulent PA Unemployment Compensation applications and that he would provide a link for residents on Twitter. Although there were only minor complaints about fireworks in the Borough, the Chief wanted Council to know how difficult firework calls were because once the police got to a location they were over.

Manager's Report: Manager Schoell reported that the Borough received its first payment of \$82,688.68 from the American Rescue Plan Act on June 29th and that the Borough was scheduled to receive the next payment in July of 2022. President Thomas appointed Councilwomen Horwatt and Farry and Vice President Haldeman to a committee to develop a list of projects to utilize the funds.

Manager Schoell reported that House Bill 1621 established standards for deploying small cell infrastructure while preserving the local authority over rights-of-way. Solicitor Porter advised that the Borough must pass a new ordinance before October 29, 2021, or else wireless providers can use the provisions in the House Bill.

Manager Schoell reported that due to the success of last year's African American Cultural Event Day, Morris Derry submitted a Request for Recreational Facilities to hold the Langhorne Borough Cultural Event Day on August 21st, 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Mayors Playground. Mr. Derry was advised and agreed to provide proof of insurance, to pay for the police services at the event, to schedule a meeting with Chief Godzieba and to notify residents near the Mayors Playground in advance of the event. In the future Mr. Derry would like to hold the event in July. Councilwoman Horwatt asked that future dates not be too close to other events and that no event may run after 3:00 p.m. The hours were changed to 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

As PLGIT was not performing well, Manager Schoell asked Ellyn Schoen to obtain CD rates from First National Bank of Newtown (36 months @ .55%, 48 months @ .80%, and 60 months @ .95%). Manager Schoell asked Council if they would like to move some or all of the PLGIT funds. Councilwoman Horwatt suggested moving some of the funds not earmarked for other items. Solicitor Porter will check into the options municipalities have for investments.

Manager Schoell reported that State Representative Frank Farry and Senator Tommy Tomlinson would be willing to set up an appointment to meet with PennDOT to discuss Council's concerns regarding the Route 1 interchange project. Manager Schoell stated that the Borough could request a traffic analysis from PennDOT to try and determine just how much the new interchange will affect Borough traffic. President Thomas suggested setting up a meeting as soon as possible, but to be attended by no more than three Council members.

Vice President Haldeman discussed a backyard pool on West Richardson Avenue that was installed more than 15 feet away from property lines as per the Borough ordinance, but with its mechanical equipment less than 15 feet away from one of the property lines. As the equipment was not really affecting anyone else, he suggested that it should be allowed as is. President Thomas suggested that in the future the Borough should ask for approval letters from affected neighbors if pool equipment is installed within 15 feet of a neighboring property. Solicitor Porter recommended that the proposed installation points be marked before the zoning officer does an inspection so nothing could be accidentally installed within the 15 feet setback. Councilman Mason suggested that the property owner should seek a zoning variance to avoid any future conflict. Council discussed permitting the equipment to remain if acceptable to neighbors. If the neighbors don't object and Council decides to permit the equipment remain, Solicitor Porter suggested drafting a form for the property owner and the affected neighbors to sign to allow the pool equipment to stay at the current location until it is replaced or could be efficiently moved.

Engineer's Report: None.

Approval of the Minutes:

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt seconded by Vice President Haldeman, Council voted unanimously to approve the June 2021 Council Minutes, as revised by the Solicitor.

Approval of the Treasurer's Report:

Motion: On motion of Councilman Murdock seconded by Councilman Mason, Council voted unanimously to approve the July Treasurer’s Report.

Payment of the Bills:

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Farry seconded by Councilman Marfia, Council voted unanimously to approve the payment of the bills.

EAC: Councilman Mason reported that EAC would meet via Zoom on July 15th at 7:00 p.m. He reported that John Hediger submitted an application to join the EAC. President Thomas appointed him to be a new member.

Councilman Mason discussed installing electric vehicle charging stations in the Borough, at a cost of \$4,000 to \$5,000 each to install. The EAC would provide 3 possible locations for 2 charging stations. If the EAC’s application for the charging stations was accepted, the Borough would pay for installation and then be reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Borough would be responsible for paying for the electricity to run the stations, which was negligible. Councilman Mason will look into getting quotes from Energy Star and come to the next Council meeting with more specific information on the estimates and locations.

HARB: HARB recommended the approval of the following applications:

1. Scott Blaydon 320 W. Maple Ave.
Description of Proposed Work: Remove and replace 11 windows and 1 patio door with vinyl windows. When advised that vinyl windows were not permitted on historic houses within the Historic District but that composite or aluminum clad windows could be considered, the Home Depot representative agreed to recommend to the owner the use of a Home Depot composite window. Although the patio door was acceptable, the rest of the application was tabled until the August meeting.
2. Amy and Jerry Mladjen 417 N. Bellevue Ave.
Description of Proposed Work: Install Pella architect series aluminum exterior clad windows; replace existing siding with white Hardie plank siding; and paint window shutters “mop board black.”
3. Anthony Marfia 132 E Marshall Ave.
Description of Proposed Work: Replace existing concrete apron and a portion of the existing concrete sidewalk with like material.
4. Bob and Florence Wharton 301 N. Bellevue Ave.
Description of Proposed Work: Install a handcrafted wrought iron railing on the upper porch steps identical to the railing existing on the lower concrete steps.

Motion: On motion of Vice President Haldeman seconded by Councilwoman Horwatt, Council voted unanimously to approve HARB applications 2 and 4.

Manager Schoell stated that application 3 did not need Council approval because it was appropriate for RRIK approval.

Farm/LOSI: Carol Zetterberg requested Dedication of Catawissa event on October 9th, with an October 10th rain date. Councilwoman Horwatt stated that the Open Space signs in the Borough should all say “Langhorne Borough” on them. President Thomas asked Councilwoman Horwatt to give Manager Schoell more information on the signs to see what could be done about them. Carol Zetterberg hoped that people would walk through Catawissa to see the new poster of a fox, which was done by a photographer.

Carol Zetterberg stated that the invasive bamboo on Watson Avenue had finally been removed. Carol Zetterberg reported that the Heritage Farm needed a new lawn mower and that Paul Shanahan, the volunteer who fixes the mowers, had a Toro commercial grade lawn mower that could be purchased for less than \$10,000. It had been recommended by people with experience in lawn maintenance that the Borough use a commercial grade mower to maintain the property. Councilwoman Horwatt stated that there was approx. \$15,000 in the farmhouse rental budget. Councilman Haldeman recommended financing the mower instead. Council asked Ms. Zetterberg to get more information on the mower and more prices for mowers and then come back to Council for further discussion when more information was obtained.

Carol Zetterberg stated that the washer at the Heritage Farm needed to be replaced, that \$1,000 in emergency expenses at the Farm had been incurred, and that all of the studios for Artists at the Farm have been filled. President Thomas and Manager Schoell will sign the studio rental contracts when they are provided to them.

Planning Commission: President Thomas stated that the Planning Commission met and discussed their concerns regarding the Route 1 Interchange Project and having a representative go to the PennDOT meeting. Brian Smiley of the Planning Commission discussed the possibility of an upgrade at the Maple Ave. exit so Route 413 did not bear the brunt of the increased traffic. Councilwoman Horwatt would like to see a reroute of Route 413 in conjunction with I-95.

Recreation Board: None.

Shade Tree Commission: None.

Public Comment: None.

Solicitor’s Report: Councilman Murdock suggested having a work session to discuss purchasing the Mayors Playground. President Thomas stated that the next work session would be held in September in order to discuss the matter further.

Adjournment: With no other business, on motion of Councilman Murdock seconded by Councilwoman Horwatt, Council voted unanimously to adjourn the July 2021 Council Meeting at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Schoell
Borough Secretary

Christine Schoell