

Langhorne Borough Council Meeting

March 10, 2021

A meeting of the Langhorne Borough Council was held virtually on zoom on Wednesday, March 10, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. President Thomas called the meeting to order and invited the participants to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

Announcements and Presentations: Larry Langhans, the President of the Langhorne Community Memorial Association, stated that 2021 marked the 100-year anniversary of the Richardson House being open to the public. Council approved the placement of a banner, to be hung between the posts on the front porch between April and June, that would say “Langhorne Community House, 100th Anniversary, 1921-2021” and would cover the “Peace Center” banner. Due to the pandemic restrictions, an open house may be held later in the year. Mr. Langhans reported that the eaves of the Richardson House were being repaired and that they were speaking to groups in an attempt to acquire more grant money to help repair the building.

President Thomas acknowledged the passing of Scott Mitchell, who was the former Borough Manager and expressed her condolences to the Mitchell family. After discussion, Council approved returning to in-person meetings, with a virtual component in case a Council member did not feel comfortable attending in-person and to provide ready public access.

Mayor’s Report: Mayor Taylor thanked Chief Godzieba for quickly getting the Tasers in service and stated that he was looking forward to seeing everybody in person again.

Chief’s Report: Chief Godzieba reported that seven of the eight Borough Police Officers were fully vaccinated, that all the equipment purchased with RDA grant money had arrived or was in transport and that an extra AED unit for Borough Hall was ordered. The intersection cameras had not been installed due to missing parts and inclement weather. As the grant could not be extended beyond the end of March, the Chief asked Council to approve the final payment to TWG Security in the amount of \$11,048.94 and payment to Armour & Sons for installation.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt seconded by Councilman Murdock, Council voted unanimously to approve the signing of the final check for \$11,048.94 to TWG Security before March 31, 2021.

At the request of Don Minnick, for the Jesse Soby American Legion Post, the Chief reported that a meeting was scheduled for the following Monday regarding the Memorial Day parade. Council was in receipt of the letter sent by Don Minnick requesting donations for the parade and inviting Council to participate in the parade.

As a result of a recent post on social media, Councilman Murdock asked Chief Godzieba to discuss the crime rate in the Borough over the past two years. Chief Godzieba reported that the Borough was a very safe place, that there were no reported Part 1 crimes (burglaries or assaults), that the State Police responded to a recent attempted break-in on South Bellevue Avenue and apprehended a suspect, and that there was video of the person who had attempted to break into cars on Wells and West Marshall Avenues and who was arrested in another township attempting to commit the same offenses. Chief Godzieba emphasized that most of the complaints to the police are very minor offenses.

Manager's Report: Manager Schoell reported that all of the backup batteries were successfully installed in the Borough's traffic signals, that the Langhorne Rotary Club had officially confirmed a rain date of September 18, 2021, for the Annual Pet Fair & Family Fun Day and that the Bucks County Department of Health sent its annual request for the Borough to participate in the Mosquito Control Program.

The Jesse Soby American Legion Post submitted a Request for Special Events for the annual Memorial Day Parade, May 31, 2021, 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m and invited Council to attend. They also submitted requests for the placements of Memorial Day Parade banners and for the Auxiliary Parade Collection banners from May 10th to June 1st. Council approved the requests, conditioned on adherence to the then current COVID-19 restrictions and requirements.

Manager Schoell reported that the McGrath construction escrow account would be closed and the money moved into the Borough's General account, that she attended the March 4th virtual meeting on the Bucks County Hazard Mitigation Plans, that the Borough was preparing for the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry audit for commercial properties from 2016-2020 and that she was reviewing the Borough's insurance policies for renewal.

Councilwoman Horwatt commented that the Borough needed to complete their Hazard Mitigation Plan by April 8th, which would include updates to the existing plan as well as noting what had been done regarding the mitigation of traffic and railroad hazards.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt seconded by Councilwoman Farry, Council voted unanimously to approve the donation of \$750.00 to the Jesse Soby American Legion Post for their Memorial Day Parade.

Engineer's Report: None.

Approval of the Minutes: On motion of Councilman Murdock seconded by Councilwoman Farry, Council voted unanimously to approve the February 10, 2021 Council Meeting Minutes, as revised by the Solicitor.

Approval of the Treasurer's Report: On motion of Councilman Mason seconded by Councilman Marfia, Council voted unanimously to approve the February Treasurer's Report.

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

EAC: Councilman Mason reported that the EAC did not meet this month and that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, April 15th at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

HARB Report: HARB reviewed the following applications:

1. Adam Zielinski 133 W. Maple Ave Change color of window shutters at front of home to a shade of green.
2. Sarah Graham 135 W. Marshall Ave Build a chicken coop in the backyard.
3. Christina Swain 154 W. Marshall Ave Replace garage door with a 6-panel door.

Motion: On motion of Vice President Haldeman seconded by Councilman Murdock, Council voted unanimously to approve the HARB Report for March of 2021.

Heritage Farm/L.O.S.I.: Pat Carr reported that the tentative date for the flea market was June 5th (rain date of June 12th), that the community gardens were off to a great start with many garden applicants and that he had concerns with oversight of COVID-19 protocols at upcoming events. President Thomas stated the special event request form required applicants to follow COVID-19 protocols such as social distancing and wearing masks. Due to an increase in requests to host marriages and bridal showers at the Heritage Farm, Mr. Carr will work with Solicitor Porter to set the requirements given to applicants.

Recreation Board: Councilwoman Horwatt stated that the Board drafted an application to reserve the pavilion in Mayors Playground for a maximum of three hours on Saturdays. Board members would volunteer their time to enforce the rules and hours of use. Councilman Murdock was concerned that Manager Schoell would be the person fielding the calls to rent the pavilion and to enforce the rules. He suggested there be a sign on the pavilion with the rules, reservation dates and times. Manager Schoell was concerned about regulating a public area where usage of the pavilion had always been on a first come, first serve basis and about getting multiple calls for the same date. Councilwoman Farry agreed that it would be difficult to enforce reservations, would lead to multiple calls from those wanting reservations for other times and suggested that a sign be posted in the park that usage of the pavilion was on a first come, first serve basis and that it was a shared public space. Councilman Murdock agreed that a sign should be posted asking people to limit their time at the pavilion to two hours out of respect to others wanting to use the pavilion. Council decided against allowing the pavilion to be reserved for exclusive use.

Councilwoman Horwatt reviewed the playground expenses covered by the McGrath construction escrow and confirmed they exceeded \$26,000. She suggested using the funds transferred to the Borough's General Fund for capital improvements to the playground and to the equipment, noting that the cars enjoyed by many children cost from \$3,000 to \$4,000 each. Councilman Murdock asked about the long-term plans for the playground and was advised that the Neshaminy School District had not responded to our requests to modify the lease. He and Councilwoman Horwatt will meet to go over the history of the playground and the lease and to develop strategies to move the matter forward with the School Board.

Shade Tree Commission: After its purchase, Jeff Bartlett volunteered to plant the memorial tree for Lucille Messina. After the Shade Tree Commission approves the purchase at its April meeting, Councilwoman Horwatt will discuss its location at the next Council meeting.

Public Comment: Because not all of the string lights at the Maple/Bellevue Avenues intersection are working, Pat Carr suggested that they be unplugged rather than only partially lit. President Thomas advised that they could not be unplugged due to the way they were installed, but that the LBBA was working on installing new bulbs. Mayor Taylor and Treasurer Schoen will coordinate road closure dates, times and details. While he appreciated Manager Schoell's work with PECO, Mr. Carr noted that the old telephone poles were still down on Green Street.

Solicitor's Report: Solicitor Porter asked that Council review the mowing contract with LS Land Construction and authorize continuing it under the same terms and conditions.

Motion: On motion of Councilman Mason seconded by Councilman Marfia, on a 6-0-1 vote, Council approved renewing and signing the mowing contract with LS Land Construction for the 2021 mowing season. Councilwoman Horwatt abstained for personal reasons.

Solicitor Porter asked for comments on the updated Stormwater Fee and Management Ordinance. Councilman Mason thought that certain areas of the ordinance were still ambiguous, citing the non-residential rate of \$60 per tax map parcel or principal structure. Council agreed that it should only be "per tax map parcel." Councilman Mason preferred a single line for residential rates and a second line for non-residential rates. There was discussion of the term "residential" only applying to properties in the R1 and R2 zoning districts with a principal residential structure and everything else being either non-residential or industrial. Solicitor Porter indicated that non-residential properties in residential zones tended to have more impervious surface, which supported a higher fee and that there needed to be a definable way to assess fees based on the impervious surface rates of properties based on location and principal use.

Councilman Murdock suggested reviewing the impact of the fees on tax-exempt properties after one year. Treasurer Schoen suggested reviewing which properties promptly paid and how much money was raised after one year. Councilwoman Horwatt raised concerns about tenants unable to pay rent due to COVID-19 and suggested reducing the residential fee. She also suggested removing the "Additional Residential Rate" and the "Additional Non-Residential Rate" and simply using three flat rates: industrial, residential and non-residential. Councilman Murdock did not think it needed to be simplified. Treasurer Schoen agreed with Councilwoman Horwatt due to the difficulty in determining the number of units in each property. Councilman Mason suggested delaying the vote on the ordinance to clarify the residential and non-residential classifications and to meet with neighboring townships part of the watershed to figure out a more agreeable and suitable set of fees. President Thomas suggested a single fee for additional units in a property, regardless of their use.

Councilman Mason suggested increasing the base non-residential and industrial rates and setting the additional charge at \$12 per unit regardless of its use. Council agreed with the suggestion, setting the base charges at \$28, \$75, and \$100 for residential, non-residential and industrial properties respectively and an additional \$12 charge per unit. President Thomas directed the Solicitor to revise the Ordinance.

Motion: On motion of Councilwoman Horwatt seconded by Councilman Murdock, Council voted unanimously to re-advertise the Stormwater Fee and Management Plan Ordinance.

Adjournment: With no other business, on motion of Councilman Mason seconded by Councilman Mason, Council voted unanimously to adjourn the March 2021 Council meeting at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Schoell
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Borough Secretary