

Special Borough Council Meeting

April 13, 2020

A Special Virtual Conference Meeting of Souderton Borough Council was called to order, on the above date, at 7:10 pm by Council President Brian Goshow with the following members present:

President Brian K. Goshow	Councillor Daryl Littlefield
Vice-President Julie Munden	Councillor Edward Huber
Councillor Donna Rogers	Mayor John R. Reynolds
Councillor Ned Leight	Solicitor Charlotte Hunsberger
Councillor Richard Godshall	Borough Manager P. Michael Coll
Councillor Daniel Yocum	EMC and PW Director Steven R. Coll
Councillor Matthew Mscichowski	Police Chief James P. Leary

Council President Brian Goshow noted the primary purpose of the virtual conference is to receive updates on the status of the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration, reports from the Emergency Management Coordinator, Police Chief and Borough Manager on municipal operations and to discuss recommendations for future operations of Souderton Borough during this continuing emergency declaration. This meeting will not be recorded. Minutes of this virtual conference will be taken by the Borough Manager and posted to the website. The general public can review and comment on the minutes via email through the Borough Manager/Secretary.

Borough Manager P. Michael Coll reported that the administrative offices continue to be closed to the public. Staff is working 8:30 am to 12:00 noon weekdays to address resident telephone calls and email inquiries, receive mail and utility payments. The Borough Manager expects to continue this practice through the month of April. Governor Wolf and the State Legislature are discussing relaxing the restrictions and we are hoping to receive further guidance towards the end of the month.

The Borough Manager noted that several construction projects within the Borough have received written waivers from the Governor to resume work. North Penn Water Authority will resume work on S. Fifth Street as early as April 14th. They are initially planning to complete some property restoration work and will gradually resume service connections for the individual properties. PECO received waivers for both of their contractors to resume construction of gas mains on W. Broad Street and the gas main extension on N. Second Street. They just submitted the waivers today, a schedule to resume work has not been developed, but we expect work to resume shortly. A number of other building projects received waivers, Broad Theater has resumed work, renovations of the former Markey building at 17 Penn Avenue have recently received a waiver, and Jurin Roofing has a waiver to replace the roof on the Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company building on N. Second Street. Code Enforcement Officer Steven Toy has been working with some residents to complete emergency sewer lateral replacements, electric service panels and a few fence permits. Steven Toy is also working with Broad Theater contractors. A few real estate sales were completed, with Occupancy Permits issued. Overall, we have not experienced too many issues with non-compliance with the Governor's restrictions.

Borough Manager Michael Coll expressed concern with the ability to open the Community Swimming Pool this season. Should the Governor maintain restriction into the summer months, the shortened season will impact revenue opportunity, and most likely the pool will operate at a loss. Membership rates will need to be reconsidered if the season is shortened. A shortened season will also impact on the pending lease agreement to operate the concession stand. Borough Council discussed a desire to open the facility as a needed service to the community, especially given the current circumstances. Borough Council discussed the overall financial concern and questioned the lead time to open the facility and steps that may need to be taken to preserve the pool if it has to be closed through the year.

Council President Brian Goshow then moved to reports from Public Works Director and Emergency Management Coordinator Steven R. Coll. Starting with public works operations, Steven Coll noted that the crew will need approximately three weeks to open the swimming pool. The first two weeks will be devoted to cleaning, installation of the water features and set up of the pool furnishings. The last week is spent on filtration, chemical balancing, and water quality. Crews will usually begin work the first week in May to prepare for our customary Memorial Day weekend opening. Steven Coll further noted that he has been in conversation with our commercial pool service about plans to properly care and secure the pools in the event it must remain closed this year.

Our Public Works crew continues to operate on a rotating shift each day. Crew time has been increased to working 6 hours per day. The rotating crew may return to a full 8 hour day later in the month. The modified crew rotation and hours was implemented to protect the overall health of our employees. There are no health issues within our crew. Crews will install the Veteran banners throughout the Borough and complete brush collection and curb side leaf collection. We plan on beginning our normal street sweeping throughout the entire Borough. Crews began mowing of the parks which will certainly increase as the weather warms.

From the standpoint of emergency management, Steven Coll reported that he continues to circulate daily reports to the Council President and Mayor Reynolds as provided by the Montgomery County Emergency Operations Center. Souderton Borough requested and received 40 N95 masks which were distributed to the Police, five masks were distributed to the North Penn Goodwill Service, and the remainder have been placed in reserve. The ambulance and fire company currently have sufficient PPE for their crews. Steven Coll reported on current statistics for Montgomery County, which can be found on the County website, and he further discussed the Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD) that Montgomery County utilizes to notify emergency responders of any known COVID-19 cases associated with a specific call for service.

Montgomery County Emergency Operations is now focusing on the needs of long term care facilities, which include nursing homes and assisted living facilities. These facilities account for a number of COVID cases and a number of the recorded deaths. The residential communities at the Valley Vista and Indian Valley Apartments do not fall into this specific category, but their status and their needs are closely monitored.

Police Chief James Leary reported that the Souderton Police Department continues to be

fully staffed and all shifts are fully covered. Police officers have access to PPE, hand sanitizers and gloves. Call volumes are down. Police officers have been supporting the various food distribution sites operating in the Borough.

Council President Brian Goshow and Vice-President Julie Munden attended a recent teleconference with State Representative Steven Malagari and Senator Collett concerning the food distribution programs operating in the Indian Valley and North Penn Areas. Vice-President Julie Munden shared some of the following highlights from this conference:

Numbers

Keystone Opportunity Center - 200 Families a month

Emmanuel Lutheran Church – 2,500 meals since March 16th

North Penn School District – 12,000 meals last week, up from 4,000 the previous week

Manna on Main – 1584 meals the week of March 23rd, up from 760 around the same time last year. More than 400 families, up from about 170 at the same time last year.

Operational Changes

Keystone Opportunity Center – Moved to delivery model to avoid contact due to small operational space

Emmanuel Lutheran Church – Daily bagged meal distribution during lunch time

North Penn School District – Switched from daily distribution to twice a week (Monday – Thursday). Distribution tripled after switch

Manna on Main – Ability to use North Penn Commons lobby as additional space. Still open 9-5 each day, but now with social distancing measures in place

Bean Bag Program – Distribution on Fridays at Penn Valley Church. Likely to expand operations in upcoming weeks, including adding an additional pick up location in Harleysville.

Big Red Picnic Program – Distribution stopped due to operational challenges. Will reevaluate after spring break.

Items of Immediate Action

- Public officials use platform to let residents know about local resources and to solicit donations for the various organizations.
- Suggested that North Penn Area resources are added to the Community Resources page that was created by Ruthe Potter because school district boundaries aren't enforced during this crisis. <https://www.smores.com/g57tp>
- Communication with County Officials Emergency Response Management

Short to Medium Term Future Issues

- Each Organization is currently well equipped, but as the demand extends for the next several months, resources may get depleted. Monetary donations are the most efficient way of getting more resources

- Each organization is switching to cloth masks if they haven't done so already. Each organization has plenty of gloves but as this continues there may be a future need.
- Bring Business Community into further discussions.

Long Term Issues

- Long term development of a regional food bank

Julie Munden worked with staff to post this information more prominently on the Borough website and she noted that some of our residents have forwarded monetary donations and support to these programs. Council President Brian Goshow noted that this emergency has brought to light the need for consideration of a local food bank for our area. Our emergency management plan discusses needs and resources for emergencies that displace residents and who require alternative shelter and food. This specific emergency has residents sheltering in place, but the need for food due to economic conditions remain. Our local organizations are filling this need as best as they can, but future emergency planning to evaluate the need for food banks and food distribution will undoubtedly be considered following this event.

Borough Council members discussed the platform for the May 4, 2020 Borough Council meeting during this emergency. The Zoom platform has been the subject of recent reports of potential security issues and concerns. Some Borough Council members have expressed this concern. Vice-President Julie Munden has been working with staff to review security and to establish a process to open the May 4 meeting to the public through invitation. Vice-President Munden will assist the Council President with administrative controls for public participation. Borough Council expressed general agreement with maintaining use of the Zoom platform for the May 4th meeting. The regular May 4, 2020 Borough Council meeting will be recorded and posted to the website for viewing.

There being no further business, the special meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

P. Michael Coll
Borough Secretary