



**Borough Council- Work Session Meeting
February 20, 2024**

The Work Session Meeting of Souderton Borough Council, held on the above date, was called to order by Council President Tracy W. Burke at 7:10 pm.

The following Borough Council and staff were present:

Council President Tracy W. Burke
Councilor Matthew J. DiNenna
Councilor Stephanie Hall
Councilor Edward M. Huber
Councilor Daryl W. Littlefield
Councilor Julie A. Munden
Councilor Donna M. Rogers
Councilor Matthew R. Sholly
Councilor Richard M. Walczak

Mayor Daniel L. Yocum
Junior Councilor Elijah S. Steglik
Borough Manager Stacy E. Crandell
Police Chief Brian A. Newhall
Public Works Director Steven Coll
Administrative Assistant Christine Nicholas
Borough Solicitor John A. Torrente

Borough Manager Stacy Crandell started the meeting with a presentation of Actuarial Results of our Pension Plans. The presentation was given by Ron Bitner of Girard Pension Services, LLC. Mr. Bitner made the introduction of himself and his firm and the services they provide to the borough. He discussed their role as Investment Manager working with various mutual fund and ETFs and described the difference between the two. Their work with administrative benefits including the DROP program and the preparation of financial plans not to mention audit support. He provided information to help the borough plan for the funding and budget for 2025-2026. He reviewed the documentation showing that the current pension is currently underfunded. This is a result of 2022 being the worst market year since 2008. Other factors include salary increases, cost of living increases, and market value of assets. He provided scenarios to deal with the current situation:

- Asset smoothing – deferring losses for 5 years then review.
- 10-year amortization
- Lowering the salary scale.

He recommended a combination of asset smoothing and credit amortization to help weather the current underfunding. It was also recommended that we update the language used to “may” as opposed to “shall” regarding the cost-of-living adjustments. Borough Manager Crandell stated this was our only option. Borough Manager Crandell also suggested the formation of a Pension Sub-Committee to meet quarterly.

The addition of a handicapped parking sign for a resident for when he is picked up weekly as he cannot drive himself was discussed. He is picked up at his residence on E. Summit Street. After much discussion the council found that there were enough other options available and that having a sign without the resident owning a car was unnecessary. No motion was made, and no sign will be approved. Council President Burke will speak to those involved regarding the outcome.

Chief Newhall reported the capture of a rabid cat, the destruction of our new basketball nets (Manager Crandell stated they were installed incorrectly and Public Works is aware of this) and thanked the council for meeting the new police recruit.



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Borough Manager Stacy Crandell asked for approval for signal upgrades for Broad and School Lane. The discussion of the Broad and School Lane updates including accessible pedestrian signals and push buttons were reviewed. Manager Crandell stated that she will use ARPA funds to pay for the updates, \$6,000 and \$11,000 respectively if approved. This is necessary as it is becoming an increasingly busy intersection. A motion was made by Councilor Sholly and seconded by Councilor Hall to approve the proposal from Armour to Upgrade the Accessible Pedestrian Signals and Push Buttons. The motion passed.

Six bids were received for the Pool Plastering project. Three were incorrectly submitted and of the remaining three, American Pools of Pennsylvania was the top bid. Administrative Assistant Christine Nicholas contacted their references and received glowing reviews. Discussion of the frequency of plastering the pools ensued. The lap pool was plastered last year with a life expectancy of 10 years. Councilor DiNenna suggested that we include plastering as a Capital Project in 10 years. A motion was made by Councilor DiNenna and seconded by Councilor Littlefield to award the pool plastering project to American Pool of Pennsylvania. The motion passed.

The Parks and Recreation Committee updated the Park Rental Fees and the Non-Profit Waiver policy. There was much discussion by council regarding the discount opposed to a waiver policy for non-profits. Mayor Yocum felt strongly that many of our local organizations should receive a waiver. Council President Burke asked Administrative Assistant Christine Nicholas how the committee came to their decision. She replied that after reviewing the costs involved with clean up and operation of the park, the committee found it necessary to charge for events. With a slight amendment to the Non-Profit Waiver leaving the decision to the Council and an update to the form to allow for organizations to request to have fees waived a motion was made by Councilor Littlefield and seconded by Councilor Walczak to approve the park rental fees and the waiver of fees for the Park Rental policy. The motion passed. A motion was also made to approve the waiving of fees for Generations of Indian Valley's event on May 22, 2024. The motion passed.

Borough Manager Stacy Crandell stated that she would like to attend the professional development opportunities for APMM Conference in Bethlehem, PA and the DVTWC Conference in Annapolis, MD. The DVTWC Conference is fully covered and there is no cost to the Borough. A motion by Councilor Sholly and seconded by Councilor Rogers for Borough Manager Stacy Crandell to attend the professional development conferences mentioned above. The motion passed.

Borough Manager Stacy Crandell stated that an RFP for Accounting and Financial Services was sent out and three proposals were received. Two of the proposals were logistically too far away so only one proposal could be considered. This led to the discussion of the need for a full-time Finance Director. At the past work session, a temporary hold was put on hiring making this transition exceedingly more difficult. The borough finances are very complex and not without "inherited problems." Partnered with the costs incurred with the RFP on a short term or "stop gap" time frame, it would seem more prudent to entertain the search for a full time Finance Director. Councilor Hall suggested that we could hire someone on a 1099 basis, but the council felt we would not get the best candidate that way. Council President Burke asked Solicitor Torrente if we used the RFP Accounting



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Service what language was used in the contract and how long we were obligated to use their services. Mr. Torrente stated that it was a three-month contract but could be terminated at any time with 30 days' notice. A motion was made by Councilor Sholly and seconded by Councilor DiNenna to approve proceeding with the interview process for a viable Finance Director as well as approving Bee Bergvall as the consultant for the Accounting and Financial Services for a three-month period of time with an option to terminate the contract with 30 days' notice. The motion passed.

Borough Manager Stacy Crandell requested Authorization to advertise for RFP – Architecture and Design Services for the Public Works Facility. Councilor Hall suggested with the updates to the property we consider keeping the center building. A motion was made by Councilor Littlefield and seconded by Councilor Hall to approve the Authorization to advertise for RFP – Architecture and Design Services. The motion passed.

Councilor Hall stated the Economic Development Committee met and discussed the sale of Cherry Lane property. The Committee wants to make sure the 2nd Street Location works for the Public Works Facility and also, they wanted to know the cost of constructing and renovating the 2nd Street Location that is why the RFP was suggested as the next step. Mayor Yocum asked if the borough is obligated to accept the highest offer. Borough Manager Crandell said that per Borough Code we are obliged to accept the highest offer.

Borough Manager Crandell presented the information regarding our Community Park Improvements. The borough has spent \$822,920.74 and Rotary has contributed \$300,000, along with some other contributions (DCNR grant), improvements to date total \$1.3 million. Rotary has promised to raise \$1,000,000 and rename Community Park "Rotary Park". The borough took out a loan to cover improvements and will be paying \$7698.04 a month in payments. In 2019, the estimate to improve the park was \$1.6 million. It was discussed that we put a hold on some of the improvements, only finishing the rain gardens as required by DEP and possibly paving the trails. Mayor Yocum will contact Rotary regarding obtaining some more of the promised funds.

In 2006, the Borough's policy regarding alleys was to plow and patch when materials were available, but the responsibility of the alley was on the homeowner. There are two alleys (Noble & E. Broad and Spruce Alley) that residents have come to the Borough with pending petitions. The alley at Noble and E. Broad will need engineering due to the grade. As there was much discussion regarding rescinding or changing the policy, the matter has been put on hold to discuss at another time.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Stacy E. Crandell
Stacy E. Crandell, Secretary