

## Special Borough Council Meeting

March 27, 2020

A Special Virtual Conference Meeting of Souderton Borough Council was called to order, on the above date, at 4:00 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

The Virtual Conference was held via Zoom. Council President Brian Goshow noted this is the first such meeting ever conducted in the history of Souderton Borough. 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 emergency declaration. Council President Brian Goshow noted that Zoom has an option to record meetings, however, 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 Solicitor Charlotte Hunsberger was asked to comment on the Sunshine Act and Open Meeting regulations concerning remote meetings via teleconference or through other technology platforms. Solicitor Charlotte Hunsberger noted that the Office of Open Records has provided some initial guidance to local municipalities and public agencies in light of the Emergency Declaration. Additional guidance is expected. Given the Emergency Declaration by Governor Wolf a virtual conference of Borough Council is permitted, however, public comment still needs to be accommodated. The Solicitor further suggested that Borough Council should clearly identify a special meeting from the mandated regular monthly meeting. Borough Council should further consider maintaining routine business during the Emergency Declaration and postponing significant legislative matters until after the emergency declaration is lifted.

Council President Brian Goshow then moved to reports from the Borough administrative staff. Emergency Management Coordinator Steven R. Coll has been circulating daily reports to the Council President and Mayor Reynolds as provided by the Montgomery County Emergency Operations Center. President Goshow has been providing a summary report to Borough Council members. Montgomery County has also maintains a great deal of public information on their website for any member of the public to view. Steven Coll noted that there is no event existing or expected at this time to require the opening of our local Emergency Operations Center which is located at the Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company. Police, Fire and EMS is fully setup and operational should services be required. Montgomery County maintains a Computer Aided

Dispatch System (CAD) and has a system in place to notify emergency responders of any known COVID-19 cases.

Police Chief James Leary reported that the Souderton Police Department is fully staffed and officers have access to PPE, hand sanitizers and gloves. Mutual aid requirements between our neighboring municipalities of Telford Borough and Franconia are regularly reviewed by the Police Chiefs. The Montgomery County District Attorney is providing guidance on enforcement of the Governor's restrictions. Courts are closed and training is cancelled at this time. To date, the community as a whole has been fairly quiet during this emergency declaration. Only three, relatively unfounded, calls were addressed regarding the COVID-19 emergency.

Borough Manager Michael Coll reported that the lobby has now been closed to the public. The Borough has always maintained a drop box in the vestibule of the municipal building which is always open. Sewer, trash and Real Estate Tax bills can be dropped in the box at any time. Payment by check or credit card is preferred. The Administrative staff are in the office weekdays from 8:30 am until 12 noon to address telephone calls, receive mail and process payments. The Governor has restricted all non-essential business operations, including residential and commercial construction activity. All active permit sites have been issued stop work orders and the Borough has ceased all public works construction activities. Both North Penn Water Authority and PECO has ceased their utility construction projects. The Public Works department is working half days with a rotating 2 man crew to handle routine maintenance services. The Waste Water Treatment crew is working on a modified weekend shift. All full time employees will receive their base pay as budgeted during this period. We continue to try to maintain services while taking measures to protect our employees. We stopped receiving pool memberships at this time given the uncertainty of the length of the restrictions.

In response to a question concerning revenues, the Borough Manager reported that Real Estate Tax revenue is slightly behind normal collections for this time. Nearly 90 percent of real estate taxes are paid within the discount period which ends March 31. Earned Income Tax revenue will need to be monitored through the year. As we experienced in 2008, a sudden economic downturn will present a delayed effect on Earned Income Tax revenue. This emergency and the growing rate of unemployment may become visible in the third and fourth quarter of the year. Realty Transfer Tax revenue will probably be down during this period given restrictions on real estate offices and lending institutions. Capital construction has been suspended, so mostly recurring expenses will be realized in the short term. The Borough did order drainage pipe for the park project and we are in the process of closing out the Hillside Avenue curb and sidewalk CDBG project. Starting up construction projects will undoubtedly be challenging given growing backlogs of work with our subcontractors and suppliers.

The Montgomery County Commissioners are considering an extension of the discount period for Real Estate Tax payments. A recent survey is showing mixed reaction between the municipalities. While no decision has been made, the Borough Manager suggested that Souderton Borough should defer to the opinion of the Montgomery County Commissioners.

The application period for the Police Chief position has been advertised to run through

April 17, 2020. Applications have been forwarded to the consultants and the Search Committee as they have been received. The consultant will review and evaluate each application and prepare a report and recommendation of candidates to move further along in the process. The COVID-19 Emergency Declaration will limit our ability to move forward in the process.

Borough Council members discussed future Borough Council meetings during this emergency. The next scheduled regular meeting of Borough Council will be Monday, April 6 beginning at 7:00 pm. An agenda should be prepared and posted to the website with instructions to make public comment on the agenda. Council President Brian Goshow suggested the agenda be limited to general routine business. Public comment will be a challenge during this period. A Resolution for the DCNR Grant application for the Community Park will be considered on April 6, 2020 since the grant deadline has not been extended from the April 22, 2020 deadline. The Business Improvement District re-authorization and Fire Code ordinance will be postponed. The formal vote during the regular meeting will be through roll call.

Special meetings to update Borough Council on the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration may continue weekly, a date and time to be determined.

There being no further business, the special meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

P. Michael Coll  
Borough Secretary