

Special Borough Council Meeting

April 27, 2020

A Special Virtual Conference Meeting of Souderton Borough Council was called to order, on the above date, at 7:05 pm by Council President Brian Goshow with the following members present:

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

Absent from this meeting were Borough Councillors Ned Leight and Daniel Yocum.

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, Public Works, Police Chief and Borough Manager on municipal operations and to discuss preparations for the next regular meeting of Souderton Borough Council scheduled for Monday, May 4, 2020. This meeting will not be recorded. Minutes of this virtual conference will be taken by the Borough Manager and posted to the website for public review and comment.

Council President Brian Goshow then moved to reports from Emergency Management Coordinator Steven R. Coll. Steven Coll noted that the Montgomery County website continues to be the best source of information concerning the COVID-19 emergency declaration. Montgomery County also conducts daily press conferences, usually around 3:00 pm. As of April 27th there were 84 new cases confirmed in Montgomery County, the number of cases in Souderton Borough remains at 51. At the last meeting it was reported that supplies of PPE were low. Inventory of PPE is now being replenished in the County. Montgomery Hunger Solutions is another support organization in the County to assist our local food pantries. Local emergency agencies are doing well. Cloth masks were recently donated to the fire company. COVID-19 testing is running fairly well in the County. The County is running over 2% of the population being tested which appears to be a comparable average. Borough Council discussed whether there is enough testing within Montgomery County to satisfy the Governor's guidelines to relax restrictions.

Police Chief Jim Leary reported that this past Thursday Officer Tom Lawson was not feeling well and went home. The station and patrol car was cleaned and Officer Lawson was scheduled for testing. The test came back negative and Officer Lawson has returned to work today. A few child custody cases have been handled this past week. The Souderton Police Department has honored a few requests for neighborhood drive byes to help families celebrate child birthdays. The Souderton Police Department continues to be fully staffed. Chief Leary summarized statistics for our local food pantries. Emmanuel Lutheran is doing an excellent job, surpassing 5,000 total meals. They are also aiding with diapers and other household supplies. The

Bean Bag program at Zion is also doing very well. Souderton School District has restarted their food distribution program at Indian Crest Middle School. Keystone Opportunity conducted a food drive today in the Railroad Avenue municipal parking lot.

Public Works Director Steven Coll reported that the Public Works crew continues to operate on a rotating split shift, with all shifts now working a full 8 hour day. The modified crew rotation was implemented to protect the overall health of our employees. There are no health issues within our crew. Crews all have masks when working near residents or going to various retail suppliers or repair shops. Crews completed the installation of Veteran banners throughout the Borough and will continue with brush collection, curb side leaf collection and street sweeping. Beginning Monday, May 4th, the Public Works department will return to a full daily crew working normal eight hour days. The crews will be split between various projects and tasks.

Borough Manager P. Michael Coll forwarded information to Borough Council last week concerning an announcement that the Governor has eased restrictions on small construction activities beginning May 1st. Given this relaxation, the Borough will need to better service this increased activity and as such, the Borough Manager instructed all departments to return to full work schedules starting Monday, May 4th. This week department heads are implementing certain social distancing guidelines to accommodate the resumption of full work crews and associated operations. Starting Monday, May 4th the Borough Office will resume normal operations from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. A plexi-glass screen is being installed over the administrative office counter and the lobby will re-open to the public. Masks must be worn to enter the lobby and we are working to install hand sanitizing stations at the entrance. The front vestibule will continue to be open 24/7 for delivery of mail and payment of utility bills.

The Borough Manager discussed the resumption of certain public works projects. The focus will be on completing various infrastructure projects to prepare for the eventual release of paving projects. Park construction will be delayed until later in the year, with exception of some exploratory excavation for the development of rain gardens associated with the pending Conservation District permits. We will look to schedule pressure washing of the Bandshell and lighting upgrades. Concert Sundaes has cancelled their June performances, but the July schedule is still under consideration. We also need to be flexible with our work schedules should there be an opportunity to open the pool for the summer season. The Borough Manager noted that the lease agreement for the pool concession stand has been executed, but may need to be modified depending on a final determination about opening the pool. In response to a Borough Council inquiry, the Borough Manager noted that the first quarter budget comparison reports were distributed to Borough Council. Revenue from Real estate taxes is near budget estimates, but as expected revenue from real estate transfer taxes and earned income tax is slowing. The tax anticipation loan was repaid in the first quarter and there is sufficient cash balances for the next quarter. The Budget will continued to be monitored through the coming months. The Borough Manager also noted that the search for a new employee for the public works department will be suspended for several months.

Considerable discussion was held concerning the uncertainty of COVID-19 restrictions and their effect on the summer pool schedule. Borough Council and Mayor Reynolds stressed the

importance of opening the pool facility this year if opportunity permits. The Borough Manager estimated that July 1st will probably be the first available option, however, the realistic feasibility of opening diminishes every week the restrictions remain in place. The Borough Manager also noted concerns with the required response should a positive COVID test arise at the pool facility, the feasibility of implementing limits on crowd size and social distancing and the ability to properly staff the facility. Currently all Red Cross lifeguard certification classes have been postponed. The Borough Manager acknowledged that staff will make every attempt to open the pool facility should sufficient opportunity be presented, hopefully the decision will become clearer by the end of May. The Governor and the Montgomery County Board of Health will ultimately guide this decision.

Council President Brian Goshow noted the resumption of construction activity at the Broad Theater and questioned the status of the planned streetscape improvements. The Borough Manager reported that the granite curb for the project has been ordered late last week through the Williams Stone Company in Otis, Massachusetts. They are in operation and the granite curb is expected to be shipped by the middle of May. The Borough Manager will contact PPL Electric to schedule relocation of the utility pole that was postponed because of the COVID-19 emergency declaration.

Borough Manager discussed the proposed subdivision plan for the Borough property at 160 Cherry Lane. The plan is ready for submission to Franconia Township for formal consideration. The application will require approximately \$12,000 in fees and escrow review funds. Delaying a decision to proceed for another month should be fine.

Councillor Ed Huber questioned the status of the BID reauthorization plan. President Goshow summarized his past discussions with BID representatives, noting that unfortunately now is not an appropriate climate to be asking small business to support an assessment. The process will probably not be extended. President Goshow requested the Solicitor to research the timeline for reauthorization. This item may need to be on the agenda for our June regular meeting.

Solicitor Charlotte Hunsberger briefly summarized the new legislation enacted by the Commonwealth and signed into law by the Governor concerning the process for holding meetings through virtual conferencing.

Borough Council members discussed the platform for the May 4, 2020 Borough Council meeting during this emergency. 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. The agenda for the May 4, 2020 regular meeting will consist of routine business, staff reports, payment of bills and public comment. There will not be any business items on the agenda for consideration. The Agenda will include direction for requesting an invitation into the meeting for public comment. Vice-President Munden will assist with the invitations and instruction to access the Zoom meeting.

Mayor John Reynolds discussed a Proclamation that is being circulated throughout the

Commonwealth proclaiming Sunday, May 3, 2020 as Bells Across Pennsylvania Day. Residents and churches are asked to ring bells for three minutes beginning at 7:00 pm on Sunday, May 3, 2020 to honor those on the front lines of this COVID-19 emergency disaster. Borough Council expressed support for this proclamation. The signed proclamation and news release will be posted to the web site and also on the Borough sign.

Prior to adjourning the meeting, Mayor Reynolds again expressed his sincere appreciation to Borough Council and the Borough staff for their exemplary service during these amazing times in our history.

There being no further business, the special meeting was adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

P. Michael Coll
Borough Secretary