

## **Borough Council Work Session Meeting**

**November 16, 2020**

A Work Session Meeting of Souderton Borough Council was called to order at 7:00 pm, on the above date, by President Brian Goshow with the following members present:

President Brian Goshow	Councillor Daryl Littlefield
Vice-President Julie Munden	Mayor John R. Reynolds
Councillor Donna Rogers	Junior Councillor Nick Mancini
Councillor Ned Leight	
Councillor Richard Godshall	Borough Manager P. Michael Coll
Councillor Daniel Yocum	Police Chief James P. Leary
Councillor Matthew Mscichowski	Public Works Director Steven Coll

Absent from this meeting was Borough Councillor Edward Huber. Access to the work session was also available through Zoom, which was coordinated through Vice-President Julie Munden.

### **PRESENTATION**

Joe Chairo, owner of 160 N Main Street, presented Borough Council with a conceptual development idea for this property. The property was the former Fast Tags office which he purchased with the intent to renovate as commercial space. Once they began evaluating the structure it was determined that the damage was too great to salvage and the building was demolished. Since that time he explored the construction of a new mixed use building, but the overall cost between purchase and construction approached \$1 million to create two commercial units. The cost was simply too great to make the investment.

With the assistance of Harry Boardman, Joe Chairo presented a conceptual model to construct a “Cargo Village” out of shipping containers. This concept will create small incubator spaces to provide opportunity for business startups. The conceptual design shows up to 6 commercial units operating out of the complex with a shared courtyard space to support the businesses and also provide a unique space to complement Third Fridays. The interior courtyard could serve as a pocket park for the downtown business district creating interest for visitors to walk up Main Street. A second level can provide inside seating. Borough Council expressed interest in the concept and suggested that he make a presentation to the Souderton Planning Commission to start the project.

### **HIGHWAY COMMITTEE**

Various construction and paving projects delayed leaf collection from the planned schedule. Only one truck has been out this fall. The west side of the Borough has been completed and the crew started the east side this week. The second leaf truck will go out to catch up on leaf collection following the completion of the granite curb installation at the Broad Theater. Granite curb along Broad Street is complete and crews are working on the radius into Washington Avenue. Crews will return to install the granite paver blocks when leaf collection is caught up

and the sidewalk is completely installed. The individual property owners are coordinating and financing the installation of the new sidewalk.

Souderton Borough completed the purchase of the Volvo dump truck from Telford Borough.

#### SANITATION COMMITTEE

Borough Manager Michael Coll explained issues with significantly increased suspended solids and BOD loading in the sewer effluent from Leidy's, Inc. The Borough has been in conversation with Leidy's employees about the issues for several months with no measurable improvement. The Borough Manager suggested the engagement of our special environmental solicitor and engineer to address the matter with Leidy's to avoid an inevitable upset of the Souderton Waste Water Treatment Plant. Borough Council agreed with the recommendation.

#### RECREATION COMMITTEE

Borough Council discussed the proposal of Bennington Pool Services to provide management and staffing services to operate the Souderton Community Pool. The company currently operates a number of private swim clubs in the tristate area. The proposed cost is comparable to the 2019 expenses incurred by the Borough to operate with our own staff. As an alternative option, a contact was made with Stand Guard Aquatics, Inc. concerning possible interest in an operating lease of the entire facility. The proposal has not been received to date, however, this option was not specifically preferred by members of Borough Council.

The Community Park Renovation Committee will be meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup>. The Borough is focused on completing the Bandshell and Pavilion renovations. Final grading and seeding is complete in front of the Bandshell and County Line Nursery will be completing the landscaping along the wall. Arrow Tree Service removed the walnut trees from behind the Bandshell which became a major nuisance. Work is scheduled to begin on the monument dedicating the concert lawn area in honor of Marcus Rosenberger. We finalized plans for the steel framework to elevate the speakers and provide future opportunity for digital displays during the concerts. Crews will then focus on the removal of the ballfield, swing set and begin preparations for the storm drainage improvements. The 2021 Budget will include funds for the construction of the new parking lot, pathway paving and the installation of playground equipment and outdoor gymnasium which will be financed in part with the DCNR grant announced at the Borough Council meeting.

#### POLICE COMMITTEE

Police Chief Leary distributed and summarized his monthly statistical report to Borough Council. Council President Brian Goshaw expressed his appreciation to the Souderton Police Department in assisting with the 2020 "Cranksgiving Event" which grew to over 140 participants. Councillor Dan Yocum also assisted with the event. The event provided nearly 6,000 pounds of food for the Keystone Opportunity Center pantry.

Councillor Julie Munden reported that the Police Chief Selection Committee completed the three scheduled candidate interviews on Saturday, November 7. An Executive Session is scheduled at the end of the work session items to further discuss the next steps in the process.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

Borough Council discussed the proposed Souderton Business Improvement District Re-Authorization Plan. Borough Manager Michael Coll reported that notice was sent to all property owners listed in the proposed BID Re-Authorization Plan. The response period ended at the close of business on November 12, 2020. Responses to the proposed reauthorization plan were reconciled against the specific properties listed in the plan. The final tabulation of responses has 47 parcels expressing objection to the plan, representing 23% of the 196 listed parcels, which is well below the threshold of 40% to defeat the proposed reauthorization plan from moving forward. The Borough Solicitor has prepared the required Ordinance to expand and extend the Business Improvement District which will be placed on the December 7, 2020 Borough Council agenda for formal consideration.

The Communications Committee circulated a Code of Conduct for the proposed Borough Council office hours. The Committee is suggesting holding designated office hours on one Saturday of each month accessible through a Zoom format. The Solicitor has made a few comments on the proposed Code of Conduct which the Committee will address. They are hoping to begin the program in January, 2021.

#### DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Borough Manager Michael Coll provided an update on the status of the development plan review for Berkeley Court Phase 2. The Souderton Planning Commission met with the developer on November 4, 2020. The developer presented revised conceptual plans for the plaza area and the park area of the development. Progress is being made on the plans, however, more discussion will be required on the proposed phasing plan and the completion of specific site improvements to address concerns of the neighboring residents.

The Planning Commission recommended condition final approval of the minor plan of subdivision for 61 Franklin Avenue. The plans will be revised to meet the conditions and will be presented to Borough Council at the December 7, 2020 meeting for formal consideration.

#### FINANCE COMMITTEE

Borough Manager Michael Coll recommended consideration of a Resolution at the December 7 Borough Council meeting authorizing a \$250,000 Tax Anticipation Loan for the 2021 calendar year to help bridge available revenue through the first quarter. Univest Bank & trust Company is offering the loan at a fixed interest rate of 2.40%.

The Borough Manager reviewed a few revisions to the 2021 Budget following comments from Borough Council and members of the public. The Capital Reserve Fund Budget was revised

to specifically earmark funds towards improvements to the Council Chambers and to purchase associated equipment to improve virtual access to the meetings. The Communications Committee has not made any specific recommendations for the improvements at this time, but specific funding is now earmarked in the budget to implement recommended improvements.

The Debt Service Fund Budget was revised to remove revenue transfers from the Pool Fund in 2021. Previously the Pool Fund transferred up to \$14,000 in revenue to offset debt service on the renovation loan. Given uncertainty on how the pool will operate in 2021, this potential transfer has been removed from the budget.

The Borough Manager addressed the salary concerns made by a resident at the November 2, 2020 Borough Council meeting. The Borough Manager noted that the Borough has customarily provided non-uniformed employees with the same percent increase as provided in the police collective bargaining agreement, which calls for a 3% increase in 2021. He recommended that Borough Council consider continuing this practice. However in response to the resident criticism, Michael Coll did reduce the base salary of the Borough Manager to \$100,000 and suggested that this salary remain fixed through the 2024 calendar year, at which time he plans to retire. This will defer nearly \$12,000 in salary expense over the next four years that can be allocated to the other employees. Borough Council will need to consider a transition to the next Borough Manager at the beginning of 2024 to provide sufficient time for the next manager to become acclimated with the operation of the Borough and determine future administrative and staffing needs to prepare the 2025 Budget.

Formal consideration of the 2021 Budget Resolution and the 2021 Real Estate Tax Ordinance will be recommended at the December 7, 2020 Borough Council meeting.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Borough Council adjourned to Executive Session at 9:15 pm to consult with the Police Chief Selection Committee. Borough Council convened to public session at 10:14 pm and there being no further business the work session was promptly adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

P. Michael Coll  
Borough Secretary