

**Borough Council Work Session**

**October 17, 2022**

The monthly Work Session meeting of Souderton Borough Council, held in the rear Conference Room of the Souderton Municipal Building on the above date, was called to order by President Tracy Burke at 7:00 p.m. The Borough Council Work Session was attended by the following members and staff:

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|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| President Tracy W. Burke     | Mayor Daniel Yocum                  |
| Vice-President Edward Huber  |                                     |
| Councillor Matthew DiNenna   | Junior Councillor Elijah S. Steglik |
| Councillor Daryl Littlefield |                                     |
| Councillor Julie Munden      |                                     |
| Councillor Donna M. Rogers   | Borough Manager P. Michael Coll     |
| Councillor Matthew Sholly    | Police Chief Brian A. Newhall       |
| Councillor Richard Walczak   | Public Works Director Steven Coll   |

Absent from the work session meeting was Councillor Courtnee Wampole.

President Tracy Burke first recognized Penelope Price, Souderton Borough resident and the Souderton Borough representative to the Indian Valley Public Library Board of Directors. First and foremost, Penelope Price expressed appreciation for the past and continued financial support of the Library. The Library and Souderton Borough have always had a strong partnership. The Library understands that the 2023 draft budget includes a reversal in millage rates between the library tax rate and the fire tax rate. This policy shift is not consistent with the neighboring municipalities and will make Souderton Borough the lowest contributor to the Library. The Library agrees that both organizations need to be funded appropriately, however a loss of \$17,000 will have a significant impact on the operating budget of the library and may impact future state funding. The Library asked Borough Council to reconsider the budget allocations in favor of a balanced allocation of 0.30 mills for the library tax and 0.30 mills for the fire tax rate.

**POLICE ITEMS**

Police Chief Brian Newhall summarized police activities for the month. A grant application has been filed for operational support and equipment through the State and with the support of State Representative Steve Malagari. Souderton Police will participate in the national drug take back program on Saturday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. The Department is experiencing a number of fraud scams targeting the elderly population.

Chief Newhall confirmed that the gates to better implement the One Way traffic restriction on S. School Lane have been ordered. The Borough public works crew will install the gate at S. School Lane and Lincoln Avenue first when they are received.

Councillor Julie Munden discussed the final draft of the proposed Nuisance Ordinance. The Public Safety Committee will consider truck exhaust brakes separate from this proposed legislation. The issue with restricting wind chimes is more of a civil matter between neighbors and will not be part of this legislation. The committee recommended that the proposed Ordinance be advertised in November for formal action at the December Borough Council meeting.

Police Chief Brian Newhall discussed the proposed Ordinance concerning the Emergency Management Agency. While the Borough does have an Emergency Management Plan and an Emergency Management Director, it is preferable to have this documented and approved by Ordinance. He Borough Solicitor drafted a proposed ordinance for review. The Public Safety Committee recommended that the ordinance be advertised for formal consideration at the December Borough Council meeting. Council President Tracy Burke stressed that our current Emergency Management Plan be reviewed and updated by the end of this year.

#### HIGHWAY ITEMS

Public Works Director Steven Coll summarized public works activities for the month.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

President Tracy Burke further discussed an action plan to begin the process to transition to a new Borough Manager. A series of subcommittees were recommended and he encouraged Borough Council members to volunteer to serve on a subcommittee.

The vacancy on the Civil Service Commission has been posted on the web site. Borough Council continues to search for candidates to serve in this capacity.

Councillor Daryl Littlefield presented a draft of the proposed Social Media Policy. The Committee is proposing to open a Facebook page to post agendas, messaging and events. Considerable discussion was held on whether to permit comments and who will monitor comments. Messaging may also become burdensome for the committee to properly manage. The committee also discussed an alternative venue such as Instagram. The Committee recommended formal adoption of the Social Media Policy at the November Borough Council meeting.

#### DEVELOPMENT ITEMS

Borough Manager Michael Coll reported progress with Brass Collar Brewing Company, execution of the Lease Agreement, and the development of construction plans to fit out the interior of the Freight Building.

Borough Manager Michael Coll provided Borough Council with a conceptual plan as prepared for Joe Chiaro for a commercial retail development at 162 N. Main Street constructed with shipping containers. This concept was previously presented to Borough Council. The Souderton Planning Commission will provide a cursory review of the plan at their November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

The Planning Commission has completed a cursory review of a redevelopment plan for property at 30 W. Chestnut Street. Developer Kyle Hoff recently sold the property to Nate Clemmer who is proposing to redevelop the former automotive service garage into a tap room and café. A revised site plan and architectural rendering of the building was presented for review. The Souderton Planning Commission recommended that the owner submit a basic land development plan for the property prior to formal approval. The owner will need to secure a shared parking agreement to support the proposed use.

The Souderton Planning Commission has been working on a revised sign ordinance, which includes regulations for murals. The Planning Commission has a rather divided opinion of restricting the size of murals on buildings. They are asking Borough Council for an opinion on the appropriate size of murals particularly on the front façade of a building. Council president Tracy Burke preferred that the Souderton Planning Commission advance a specific recommendation for consideration by Borough Council.

Borough Manager Michael Coll reported that the Souderton Planning Commission formally recommended a Zoning Ordinance amendment regulating Small Wireless Facilities within the public rights of way. A draft ordinance was developed with assistance of the Montgomery County Planning Commission. A recommendation will be made to authorize the Borough Solicitor to prepare and advertise a formal ordinance for consideration at the December Borough Council meeting.

## SANITATION ITEMS

Borough Council reviewed and discussed the draft 2023 Sewer Operating and Sewer Capital Budgets. Borough Council discussed potential capital improvements that may need to be considered in the relative near future. The Borough Manager noted that a third treatment unit has been under consideration for several years primarily to address flow equalization. Concern with future NPDES permit requirements has slowed this consideration.

## RECREATION ITEMS

Public Works Director Steven Coll reported on progress with the installation of playground equipment as part of the Community park improvement project. Crews installed the stone subbase ahead of the installation of the safety surfacing.

The pool plastering project has been completed. The pool is being filled and crews will be brushing the plaster and starting up the filter system to properly cure the plaster. Crews will complete the winterization of the activity pool and bathhouse.

Borough Council reviewed the draft 2023 Pool Budget and discussed a one year management contract with Bennington Pool Service. The Committee is scheduling another meeting with Bennington to discuss operational issues and improvements in overall management.

## PROPERTY ITEMS

President Tracy Burke discussed a marketing agreement with Schwartz and Company to sell the front three acre parcel on the Borough's Cherry Lane property for commercial development. The process will have some complication since the Borough is bound by State law to sell the parcel through an advertised sealed bid process. The services of Schwartz and Company are intended to bring a field of potential bidders to the process. There is a shared stormwater retention basin on the front parcel which will require the completion of at least a portion of the planned site work to accommodate the anticipated sale of the property.

A tabulation of bids received on October 10<sup>th</sup> for the Chestnut Street Green Parking Lot project was circulated to Borough Council. The Borough has a grant from Montgomery County in the amount of \$140,000 and was hoping to see bids come in around \$300,000. Four bids were received with a low bid of \$562,814 and three other bids at \$599,429; \$830,536.89 and \$1,727,850. The low bid was nearly twice the estimated budget cost and therefore a recommendation was made to formally reject all bids at the November 7<sup>th</sup> Borough Council meeting. The Borough Manager noted that this will be the second extension of the project grant, suggesting that Borough Council may consider a relatively simple upgrade to the lot without the green initiatives mandated under the grant funding.

Borough Manager Michael Coll expressed concern with the construction market and difficulty in obtaining reasonable competitive bids for projects. Material costs remain high, with some products still having long delivery times. Given this difficult market, the Borough Manager suggested that the Municipal Building Renovation Committee may want to evaluate breaking the project into smaller phases, with focus on the renovation of the Police Department. The rear addition and possibly the basement could be eliminated or further reduced in scope. The overall construction market will make it very difficult to attract good competitive pricing. A meeting will be set up with the Committee and architect to further discuss.

## FINANCE ITEMS

Borough Council further discussed the proposed 2023 Budget, specifically

concerning the tax rates for the Library and Fire Tax Funds. After much discussion a motion was made by Councillor Julie Munden, with a second from Councillor Daryl Littlefield, to set the millage rate for the Fire Tax at 0.30 mills and the Library Tax at 0.30 mills. The motion was narrowly approved.

A subsequent motion of Councillor Edward Huber, seconded by Richard Walczak, to eliminate the special Library Tax rate and move the contribution to the Indian Valley Library as a specific line item in the General Fund Budget was not approved.

A motion of Councillor Julie Munden, seconded by Councillor Matthew Sholly, to advertise the 2023 Budget and the 2023 Tax Ordinance for formal consideration at the December 5, 2022 Borough Council meeting was approved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Michael Coll, Secretary