

MOUNT PENN BOROUGH
BOROUGH COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
July 30, 2024

The Mount Penn Borough Council met for a Business Meeting on July 30, 2024, at Borough Hall at 200 N. 25th Street, Reading, PA 19606. Council President Troy Goodman called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM and adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Members in attendance were Mayor Ryan Maurer, Council President Troy Goodman, Council Vice President Rick Lombardo, Council Member Thomas Baer, Council Member Christine Dise, and Council Member Roger Stief. Council Member Michael Kindlick was absent. Staff and Professional Members present were Borough Manager Hunter L. Ahrens, Solicitor Tom Klonis, Chief of Police Raymond Serafin, Traffic Engineer Chris Williams, and Engineer Ty Leineweber.

Amanda Stief, Patrick McDevitt, Robert Miller, Jennifer Lopez, Richard Odenweller, Renee Katzenbach, James Cocuzza, Shannon Billman, Veronica Gonzalez, John Milano-Reeves, Mitch Wasik, James Sparks, and several other community members were also present.

Public Comment

Patrick McDevitt – 2326 Grandview Avenue: Mr. McDevitt opened the discussion by expressing concerns about introducing \$15,000 worth of signage around the school. The resident mentioned that this would likely make it difficult for homeowners in the area to sell their properties. Mr. McDevitt emphasized that the borough might not have the financial capacity to enforce the new obligations being discussed. He questioned the practicality of placing this burden on the police department or outsourcing it.

Robert Miller – 1 Earl Gables Court: Mr. Miller raised several questions regarding the ordinance, specifically about time limits for permits and exceptions for contractors or visiting family members during school hours. The main concern was how these exceptions would be enforced under the new ordinance.

Mr. Stief responded that a visitor's pass is under consideration. The residents in the area would receive a sticker for their cars and a visitor's pass, which would help manage parking for temporary visitors. Mr. Stief also mentioned that step-by-step guidance would be provided to the residents on how to handle parking, including a special exemption pass.

Jennifer Lopez – 2413 Cumberland Avenue: Ms. Lopez shared that she lived directly across the street from the elementary school and shared her frustration about the lack of parking available for residents during the school year. She criticized the school district for not enforcing parking regulations for staff, leading to the current need for permit parking. Ms. Lopez expressed her concerns about the financial burden of implementing permit parking and argued that the school district should be responsible for the costs, as they were the ones who created the problem by not enforcing parking rules.

Mr. Stief explained that the borough had initially estimated a cost of \$30,000 for the permit parking system, which was then reduced to \$11,000. This cost-saving was achieved through negotiations and re-evaluating the required materials and services.

The school district's obligation to contribute financially to the permit parking system was discussed, with references made to previous agreements in which the school board president had committed to covering these costs.

Richard Odenweller – 101 Endlich Avenue: Mr. Odenweller questioned where the public notifications about the Ordinance were made and shared a concern that members of the Council living within the proposed permit parking area may have a conflict of interest. The discussion then shifted to concerns about how the ordinance and the potential financial obligations for the borough might lead to a lawsuit.

Mr. Ahrens addressed questions about the transparency of the ordinance process and how the public was informed about the changes. It was noted that the information was published according to legal requirements.

Some residents expressed dissatisfaction with the communication methods, particularly regarding the accessibility of information for senior citizens.

Renee Katzenbach – 19 Endlich Avenue: Ms. Katzenbach shared her concerns about the lack of communication with the community's senior citizens and shared concerns about the safety of the school zones. Ms. Katzenbach also shared her concerns about the contractors having exemptions to be able to do work at resident's homes.

Chris Williams, the Borough's Traffic engineer, responded to some of the concerns Ms. Katzenbach shared about the safety of the school area and a traffic study that was being done by the School District and reviewed by the Borough.

Jim Cocuzza – 126 Endlich Avenue: Mr. Cocuzza shared his concerns about the impact on his property's resale value. He also shared that he understood the Council's motivation to adopt, but recommended not approving the ordinance. He shared that he was concerned that results would not align with the program's objectives.

Shannon Billman – 2515 Philmay Terrace: Ms. Billman inquired how the end-time of 3:30 PM was determined. She shared that the time was too early and that she would not be able to take advantage of the extracurriculars and sports at the high school. Ms. Billman also suggested the program would help with a home's resale value because it would ensure that residents have parking near their homes.

Mitch Wasik – 7 Earle Gables Court: Mr. Wasik asked if the school district was relying on the Borough for parking support. He also suggested that a permit program would be a burden for

the Central Berks Police Department, which should be focusing on other matters that are a concern for the community.

Chief of Police Raymond Serafin suggested that the program would be challenging for the Department, but they would implement it as the law requires. He emphasized the importance of residents adhering to the Ordinance and helping support the officers when implementing, including giving understanding as residents see things that Officers will not.

James Sparks – 8 Earle Gables Court: Mr. Sparks shared that he supported the permit parking program and recommended that the Council consider expanding the times of the program to cover after-school activities.

Permit Parking Ordinance

Mr. Stief provided details on the development and cost-reduction efforts for the ordinance. After reviewing the program's implementation, the initial cost was estimated as much as \$30,000.

The revised cost estimates for the permit parking program, including signs, poles, stickers, and hangers, were presented, showing a significant reduction to \$12,405.90. The council discussed the logistics and implementation timeline. Roger Stief provided detailed calculations and highlighted the importance of fiscal responsibility while ensuring the program's effectiveness.

There was some discussion with school board members of the Antietam School District and the District's Superintendent, Dr. Timothy Matlack, regarding the school district's policies and procedures for the beginning of the school year.

Hunter Ahrens discussed the anticipated impact of the ordinance on local traffic and parking. He emphasized the need for ongoing community feedback and mentioned that the ordinance could be revisited if significant issues arose during its implementation.

Mr. Goodman addressed the need to balance enforcement while allowing the new school superintendent to implement parking solutions.

Roger Stief moved to adopt Ordinance 895, establishing a Permit Parking Program. Christine Dise seconded the motion. Mr. Goodman asked for a roll call vote. Mr. Baer voted no; Mrs. Dise voted yes; Ms. Garcia voted yes; Mr. Goodman voted yes; Mr. Kindlick was absent; Mr. Lombardo voted yes; Mr. Stief voted yes. The motion was agreed to 5-1. Mayor Maurer vetoed Ordinance 895 and shared that he would issue a formal veto in the next few days.

Other Priority Action Items

A brief discussion on a potential budget adjustment under Resolution 42-24 was had by the Council. The proposed change to the general fund budget was to integrate revenues and expenditures related to trash and recycling services in the general fund budget.

Yrisol Garcia moved to approve Resolution 42-24 amending the General Fund Budget. Roger Stief seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

The meeting then moved on to other business, including ongoing discussions with the school district about the traffic management plan and updates on other borough projects.

The discussion shifted to a review of a traffic study conducted by the Antietam School District. Hunter Ahrens and Chris Williams from Bowman Consulting presented the findings, indicating that the study did not fully meet the borough's expectations.

They pointed out that while some requested information was provided, the study failed to address all concerns, particularly regarding traffic management and parking issues around the school. The council agreed that more work needed to be done, including coordinating with the school district to develop a comprehensive traffic management plan.

Discussion of Hourly Rates for Systems Design Engineering

The council discussed potential action on hourly rates for Systems Design Engineering, engineering, and other public, institutional, and special projects-related services.

A proposal was made to provide a rate schedule allowing for consistent charges for building permits, especially those associated with public institutions. The rates were presented, and the council considered adopting them to cover inspection fees and administrative costs.

Thomas Baer moved to approve the hourly rates for Systems Design Engineering for Public Institutional permit work. Troy Goodman seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

Discussion of ADA Ramp Bid Contract

The council moved to discuss a potential agreement with Lamb Construction to install ADA-compliant ramps under the previously issued public bid.

Mr. Ahrens highlighted that the project would cost approximately \$250,000, which would be covered by a state grant. The council reviewed the contract documents and found them acceptable.

Richard Lombardo moved to approve the hourly rates for Systems Design Engineering for Public Institutional permit work. Troy Goodman seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

Priority Discussion Items

Arthur Kelly, the newly appointed Central Berks Regional Codes Department Administrator, introduced himself to the Borough Council and emphasized his readiness to assist in getting the department and the Borough aligned on key priorities.

Mr. Leineweber shared that the Endlich Avenue survey was being completed for the grant funds to renovate the Endlich Avenue street between Philmay Terrace and Hill Avenue.

Mr. Ahrens shared that after a recent conversation with Solicitor Klonis, it became clear that the Borough needed to prepare a new ordinance to update the Building Codes to the current building codes in effect. Mr. Ahrens shared that an ordinance would be prepared for the next meeting.

Discussion about the Permit Parking Policy was summarized based on an email sent to Borough Council and further conversation was tabled.

Discussion about the Employee Handbook was tabled.

Mr. Ahrens gave a brief presentation about the iWorq software, a digital option to centralize and synchronize the Borough's operations on a central software to be shared with the Water and Sewer authorities. Borough Council asked that the software be reviewed in the regular budget process.

Amendment to Appoint AVMA Board Member

Mr. Goodman reported that there was an applicant to be on the Governing Board of the Antietam Valley Municipal Authority. Mr. Goodman shared that the potential appointee is Susan Goad or 2626 Fairview Avenue.

Thomas Baer moved to amend the agenda to appoint a Board Member to AVMA. Rick Lombardo seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

Thomas Baer moved to adopt Resolution 43-24 appointing Susan Goad to the AVMA Board. Troy Goodman seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

Regular Approvals

Roger Stief moved to adopt the Minutes for June 11, 2024. Thomas Baer seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

Roger Stief moved to adopt the Minutes for June 25, 2024. Thomas Baer seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

Richard Lombardo moved to accept the Financial Report for July 2024. Thomas Baer seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

Adjournment

Richard Lombardo made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 PM. Roger Stief seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was agreed to unanimously.

Submitted,

Hunter L. Ahrens

Hunter L. Ahrens
Borough Manager

These meeting minutes were developed with the assistance of Otter.ai and ChatGPT 4.0