

March 24, 2026 Workshop Meeting

Meeting minutes

The Mount Penn Borough Council met for the Monthly Workshop Meeting on March 24, 2026, at Borough Hall at 200 N. 25th Street, Reading, PA 19606. Council President Rick Lombardo called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM and adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Council President Rick Lombardo, Council Vice President Christine Dise, Council Member Thomas Baer, Council Member Kelly Dudash, Council Member Troy Goodman, Council Member Michael Kindlick, Council Member David Korinchock, and Mayor Ryan Maurer were present. Staff and professionals present included Borough Manager Hunter L. Ahrens, Special Counsel Tom Wyatt and Dave Nasatir. One member of the public was present.

Meeting Opening

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. All present were asked to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance, which was led by Mr. Lombardo.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Discussion of Conveyance-Leaseback Proposal

Mr. Ahrens presented several items related to the leaseback proposal. He first addressed concerns raised by AVMA's chair at the Lower Alsace board meeting, explaining that he had prepared a letter with input from Mr. Lombardo to reassure them that a Public Works department with AVMA was not currently being discussed.

Mr. Ahrens shared that the Authority had requested more organizational details. He presented a memo with the same information from the previous presentation. The organizational structure showed the Borough Manager as the Chief Administrative Officer, with a Business Manager and Water Superintendent reporting directly to the Borough Manager as management staff. Mr. Lombardo suggested elevating the Business Manager's position to be more in line with wider management responsibilities and proposed making that position an Assistant Borough Manager rather than a Business Manager. This would designate that role as the senior administrator under the Borough Manager and provide succession preparation if the Borough Manager was unavailable.

Mr. Ahrens explained that the Water Superintendent position needed to be classified as management rather than union because the person has authority to sign contracts in emergency situations, which constitutes policy-making responsibility. He acknowledged this would likely be contentious but emphasized it was necessary given the technical nature of water operations and the need for autonomous decision-making during emergencies.

Council discussed offering Christeena Hauck a longer-term contract (5 years) compared to the Borough Manager's 2-year restriction to provide stability and recognize her experience and value to the organization. The consensus was that she deserved this recognition given her ability to maintain borough operations during transitions and her extensive institutional knowledge.

Mr. Ahrens shared reviews from other Berks County municipalities (Kutztown, Leesport, Shillington) and New Hanover Township in Montgomery County about their public works operations. He found that leaseback arrangements are common, with different approaches to cross-training and emergency response. Most use flexible staffing where employees work across departments as needed, with New Hanover offering voluntary overtime for plowing.

The group discussed implementing a rotating schedule during significant storms rather than requiring all water operators to plow, addressing concerns about operators working 12-hour snow shifts before responding to water emergencies. Discussion emphasized that routine snow events would not require additional help, only major storms.

Mr. Ahrens presented a draft resolution for the Authority to consider that would authorize formal discussions about the conveyance and leaseback structure, with key objectives including preserving Authority independence, protecting public ownership, ensuring operational continuity, financial sustainability, workforce stability, and transparency.

Discussion turned into the Authority's decision to seek a separate \$70,000 financial analysis rather than using PFM, the firm already contracted by the Borough for \$29,500 and would have been extended to the Authority at no cost. Council members expressed frustration that a decision appeared to be made via email without proper board discussion or vote. Mr. Ahrens noted that PFM had internally reviewed and approved to work for both parties with appropriate ethical walls, but the Authority Board chair had shared concerns about using the same consultant.

Mr. Lombardo emphasized that all future communications from the Authority should go to the entire Authority Board, not just individual members, to ensure transparency and proper oversight.

Discussion/Updates on Lower Alsace Township Merger

Mr. Lombardo reported they are waiting for a meeting date from Lower Alsace Township to continue merger discussions.

Discussion of Codes Car Vehicle Use Agreement

Mr. Ahrens explained that he and Chief Johnson wanted a formal agreement rather than relying on verbal arrangements for the Ford Explorer obtained through a grant. The proposed agreement makes the Borough responsible for vehicle replacement and insurance while the police department handles all maintenance and operational costs. Mr. Lombardo asked if there was a contingency if the vehicle needed to be returned to the Borough. Mr. Ahrens responded that the agreement includes provisions for returning the vehicle to the Borough if the relationship changes, with 90 days notice. Council found the terms acceptable as they limit the Borough's long-term financial exposure while supporting the police department.

Discussion of Intern Hiring for Summer 2026

Mr. Ahrens reported that a Kutztown University master's student in public administration was available for a summer internship. The total cost would be \$5,032 for 12 weeks at \$15 per hour for 24 hours per week, plus employer taxes. Originally planned to split costs with the Authority, the Authority Board Chair had indicated they were no longer interested, possibly due to confusion about the total cost versus hourly rate.

Council discussed the value of having the intern focus on comprehensive plan updates, zoning amendments, economic development, and grant applications while Mr. Ahrens concentrates on the leaseback negotiations. They agreed to fund more of the internship cost and make a counter-offer to the Authority for partial participation based on their original budget expectations.

Discussion of Employee Handbook Revisions

Mr. Ahrens presented revisions to align the employee handbook with the collective bargaining agreement. Changes included clarifying sick leave (80 hours annually, 480 hour cap), vacation leave accrual based on years of service, increasing personal leave from 24 to 40 hours, standardizing bereavement leave at 3 paid days, aligning compensatory time with the 240-hour cap requirement, clarifying holiday interactions with work schedules, and adding the health reimbursement account. Mr. Ahrens noted that while not required to match handbook benefits to union benefits, it promotes fairness and team cohesion.

The discussion expanded to considering a 4-day work week based on New Hanover Township's model. Mr. Baer suggested various scenarios, such as 7:45 AM to 5:15 PM for four days, which would provide employee retention benefits since private companies like PA American and Aqua cannot offer such flexibility. The 4-day schedule would also provide operational savings through reduced utilities and give employees effective 3-day weekends. Council agreed to have the Borough Manager develop scenarios for consideration, noting the need to address holiday scheduling and coverage requirements.

No Parking Ordinance Draft for Woodvale Ave

Mr. Ahrens reported receiving a draft map from Mr. Okonski and will send it to Solicitor Tom to prepare the ordinance for next week's meeting. This addresses parking challenges related to Saint Catherine's Church activities.

Minutes for February 24, 2026 Meeting

No questions were raised during the meeting.

March 2026 Treasurer's Report

No questions were raised during the meeting.

Reports

Public Relations Liaison

Mrs. Dise proposed having a Borough representative attend school board meeting, similar to Lower Alsace Township's practice. Council discussed rotating attendance among members, with Borough Manager Hunter offering to coordinate a schedule for Borough Council. The meetings occur on the fourth Monday of each month, and attendance would focus on the main voting meeting rather than committee meetings.

Public Works Committee

Borough Manager Hunter reported on the day's Public Works Committee meeting covering four main grant opportunities:

- Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant: Will pursue smaller projects with a 30% local match requirement.
- 902 Recycling Grant: Plans to purchase new 48-gallon blue recycling totes with attached lids and wheels, estimated at \$180,000. This amount is competitive given the borough's recycling volume.
- Greenlight GO Program: Will update Opticons (emergency vehicle signal readers), convert to LED lighting, and improve school crossing signals at Carsonia & 23rd Street intersection and Saint Catherine's Church & Perkiomen Avenue crossing.
- Speed Management: Plans to purchase temporary speed bumps for up to \$2,500 using liquid fuels funding, with deployment around the high school as a pilot program. Police will help assess behavioral effectiveness before expanding to other locations like Fairview Street.
- Facilities Projects: Discussed converting the municipal garage to a shared file room for both Borough and Authority use.
- New Truck Purchase: The total cost of approximately \$160,000 exceeds the \$75,000 grant funding, requiring financing through liquid fuels similar to the bobcat purchase. Dave noted a 2-year delivery timeline, which aligns well with paying off the bobcat before the truck payments begin.

The Borough Council members agreed to attend the Authority's April 8th meeting at 7:00 PM to introduce themselves and demonstrate unified support for collaboration, since many Authority members primarily interact with only three council members.

Other Business

Mr. Kindlick requested a second representative for COG since Mr. Maurer can no longer serve. Mr. Baer suggested approaching Patrick McDevitt for this volunteer position, with Mr. Ahrens offering to contact him. Borough Council believed that appointment would be beneficial.

Finance Committee

Mr. Maurer confirmed a Finance Committee meeting for April 16th at 7:00 PM, noting that Mr. Baer had been added back to the committee in his role as Borough Controller.

Adjournment

Mr. Lombardo announced that Borough Council would adjourn into an Executive Session to discuss personnel, potential litigation, and property acquisition matters.

Motion by Christine Dise, seconded by Thomas Baer, to adjourn that meeting at 9:03 PM.

Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by:

Hunter L. Ahrens

Hunter L. Ahrens (Apr 17, 2026 09:17:18 EDT)

Hunter L. Ahrens, MPA, SHRM-SCP
Borough Manager






January 2026 Reorganization Meeting - Meeting Minutes

Final Audit Report

2026-04-17

Created:	2026-04-17
By:	Hunter L. Ahrens (manager@mtpennborough.com)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAA5kXKpeNQMyPe2HF-VM93_e-GZa2b5O-t

"January 2026 Reorganization Meeting - Meeting Minutes" History

-  Document created by Hunter L. Ahrens (manager@mtpennborough.com)
2026-04-17 - 1:16:51 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Hunter L. Ahrens (manager@mtpennborough.com) for signature
2026-04-17 - 1:16:54 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Hunter L. Ahrens (manager@mtpennborough.com)
2026-04-17 - 1:17:05 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Hunter L. Ahrens (manager@mtpennborough.com)
Signature Date: 2026-04-17 - 1:17:18 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.
2026-04-17 - 1:17:18 PM GMT