

March 31, 2026 Business Meeting

Meeting minutes

The Mount Penn Borough Council met for the Monthly Business Meeting on March 31, 2026, at Borough Hall at 200 N. 25th Street, Reading, PA 19606. Council President Rick Lombardo called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Council Vice President Christine Dise, Council Member Thomas Baer, Council Member Michael Kindlick, Council Member David Korinchock, and Mayor Ryan Maurer were present. Council President Rick Lombardo, Council Member Kelly Dudash, and Council Member Troy Goodman were absent. Staff and professionals present included Chief of Police Justin Johnson, Code Administrator Arthur Kelly, Jr., Borough Engineer Ty Leinneweber, P.E., Borough Solicitor Tom Klonis, Esq., Special Counsel Tom Wyatt, Esq., and Borough Manager Hunter L. Ahrens. Several members of the public were present, including Heather Adams, Carmen Campbell, Patti Rose, and Patrick Rose.

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 Mrs. Dise.

Public Comments

Heather Adams, 1930 Neversink Mountain Road [Lower Alsace Township] – Ms. Adams raised concerns regarding the 21st and Fairview Street intersection. Ms. Adams explained that Lower Alsace Township had directed her to borough council since she must traverse this intersection to reach her residence. She requested additional traffic control signage at the intersection, noting extremely limited visibility in three directions and that the current two-way stop does not indicate it is not a four-way stop. Ms. Adams suggested adding "cross traffic does not stop" signage for awareness, observing that at least three times per week someone cruises through the intersection without stopping.

Chief Johnson agreed with the concern, acknowledging the quirky nature of the intersection. He expressed support for extra signage and indicated he would discuss the matter with Mr. Ahrens to research whether anything had been done in the past to address this issue or consider making it a four-way stop.

Motion by Michael Kindlick, seconded by Christine Dise, to obtain Cross Traffic Does Not Stop signs for the 21st & Fairview Streets intersection. Motion carried unanimously.

Carmen Campbell, 203 Endlich Avenue – Ms. Campbell addressed trash pickup concerns. She first commented on the borough's alert system, describing an incident where her car was towed during street cleaning because she was unaware of the street cleaning schedule. Ms. Campbell explained she received a ticket and had her car towed, requiring her to

borrow money from a neighbor to retrieve it. She requested that the alert system notify residents the day before street cleaning rather than just 24-hour notice.

Mr. Ahrens explained that alerts go to all communities since the system is managed by the Water Authority, making it difficult to use the system regularly for borough activities as it would diminish its effectiveness for real emergencies. He noted that street sweeping is scheduled for right before Memorial Day and occurs only once annually.

Chief Johnson explained the practice is to knock and try to get people to move vehicles before ticketing and towing, preferring to avoid such actions when possible.

Ms. Campbell then questioned whether the borough considers keeping costs down given rising prices. She inquired about trash pickup frequency, wondering when it changed from once to twice weekly and whether it could be reduced to once weekly to lower costs. She noted she only puts out trash every five to six weeks and suggested the twice-weekly pickup plus recycling and leaf pickup was excessive.

Mrs. Dise explained that when the last contract was negotiated, that was discussed, but the pricing difference between one and two-day pickup was minimal because contractors need the same amount of trucks regardless. She confirmed the recycling company cannot mix materials without facing significant fines and license loss. The contract runs three years with extension options and must go to the lowest responsible bidder by law.

Mr. Ahrens noted they had analyzed rates compared to private haulers and found municipal service was approximately \$100 lower annually. He mentioned plans to work with county expert Jane Meeks to explore cost reduction options when considering contract extension or rebidding this fall.

Discussion of Engineers Report

Mr. Leinneweber provided updates on paving contract liquidated damages, noting he and Mr. Ahrens still needed to finalize plans for Endlich Avenue and other streets completion before meeting with contractor Allan Myers. He reported waiting for additional documentation from Allan Myers regarding disputed pay application items.

Mr. Leinneweber indicated he had not been notified when Summit and Laurel road work would begin, though Mr. Ahrens confirmed the water company had a preconstruction meeting and would start either the following week or the week after. The borough had requested a 90-day waiting period after water work completion before paving, targeting late June or early July.

Mr. Maurer questioned whether oil price increases would affect contracted road prices. Mr. Leinneweber confirmed the water company agreed to pay additional costs above the original contract due to the road work delay.

Mr. Leinneweber reported on the letter to the water authority regarding Endlich Avenue road opening ordinance requirements. The ordinance requires full-width road milling from

curb to curb for new roads rather than just patching. While the authority didn't file a permit application as required, Mr. Ahrens accepted their written notification. Council had previously authorized sending this letter in February.

Mr. Leinneweber provided an update on the LSA grant for the garage, noting it expires in June. Mr. Ahrens confirmed the grant wouldn't be extended until the moratorium is lifted, with audits expected to conclude this month. Mr. Leinneweber reported that Saint Lawrence was not interested in participating in a shared garage project.

Mr. Baer brought attention to a damaged handicap ramp on Hollywood Court near the apartments, apparently caused by a trash truck driving over the curb. The ramp was split almost down the middle. Ty estimated repair costs at \$1,500 to \$2,000. Mr. Ahrens agreed to have staff investigate.

Discuss and Consider Speed Enforcement Measures

Mr. Ahrens raised the topic of speed humps and speed cushions for the Endlich Avenue and Filbert Street intersection. He shared that Mr. Leinneweber had precedent examples where PennDOT didn't accept speed control devices unless municipalities were willing to forfeit liquid fuels funding for those roads. The Street Crew had prepared a cost proposal for speed cushions or humps as a pilot program around the Filbert and Endlich intersection.

Mr. Leinneweber explained that PennDOT looks for permanent fixtures rather than temporary ones, and devices like cushions nailed to roads are considered temporary. He cited Cressona Borough in Schuylkill County where PennDOT told them that installing such features would disqualify that road section from liquid fuels funding. Alternative options include raised crosswalks with stop word stamping and street narrowing techniques used in West Reading.

Mr. Maurer asked about borough liability if someone damaged their vehicle or caused an accident. Solicitor Obermeyer explained that people can always sue and insurance carriers defend, but utilizing insurance causes premiums to increase the following year even without adverse verdicts.

Mr. Leinneweber suggested signage accompanies any speed control devices to provide advance warning. He agreed to contact PennDOT's Charlie Paris to determine what they will and won't accept regarding speed control measures.

Mrs. Dise inquired whether PennDOT would consider a trial run without pulling liquid fuels funding. Mrs. Dise referenced PennDOT Publication 383 that covers speed bumps, suggesting Mr. Leinneweber might be mistaken about restrictions. The publication indicates traffic studies can be conducted by certified traffic engineers, streets personnel, or police.

Discussion of Conveyance-Leaseback Proposal

Mr. Ahrens presented a comprehensive overview of the conveyance leaseback proposal. He explained this legal process would have the Mount Penn Borough Municipal Authority convey water system assets to the borough, which would then lease them back to the authority to operate. The structure would include a binding legal covenant against sale, merge water and borough staff into a public works department, and create revenue for essential services, primarily public safety.

Mr. Ahrens explained the proposal addresses long-term structural problems revealed in a five-year forecast showing increasing deficits driven by public safety cost increases. The borough's core revenue system relies on property taxes at 17.35 mills. Continued tax increases create behavioral effects where people choose rental over ownership and convert properties to multi-unit rentals, which strain older housing stock more acutely than suburban townships.

The proposed annual leaseback amount is \$295,300 for 2027 with 5% escalation in 2028 and 2029. Mr. Maurer questioned the 5% escalation rate given police contract increases of approximately 6.5%, suggesting the escalation should be higher to keep pace with wage increases. Mr. Ahrens agreed to consider a higher percentage.

The amount would be renegotiated in 2029 for a three-year term covering 2030-2032, with this cycle continuing perpetually. A one-time transition payment of \$60,000 would cover administrative costs. Mr. Maurer questioned why this wouldn't cover all incurred legal fees, and Mr. Ahrens explained the intention to be responsive to authority infrastructure investment concerns while maintaining the established \$60,000 figure.

Mr. Ahrens detailed budget impacts, showing the general fund would achieve a surplus of \$180,611.12 under the proposal, helping reestablish fund balance. The Water Fund would experience a significant deficit, with 45% of the deficit already committed to debt repayment increasing from \$72,000 this year to approximately \$250,000 next year.

Mr. Maurer sought clarification on debt responsibility if the borough takes assets. Mr. Ahrens explained the authority would remain an independent entity responsible for rates and debt payments, reimbursing the borough for operational costs. The legal team at Obermeyer noted the debt may require possible refinancing or delaying implementation until PENNVEST approves the arrangement.

Mr. Ahrens presented water rate impact analysis showing current average quarterly bills of \$112 increasing to \$183 over 10 years under the most aggressive scenario. This amounted to a \$71 increase averaging \$7.10 annually. Mr. Ahrens compared this to Pennsylvania averages and emphasized that property tax increases create worse behavioral effects on the region.

Regarding infrastructure investment, Mr. Ahrens emphasized the authority remains responsible for funding investment decisions. The financial modeling assumes \$800,000

annually for infrastructure investment over 10 years (\$8 million total), higher than the historical average of just under \$500,000 annually. The authority maintains approximately 760 days cash on hand, with modeling targeting 600 days to allow emergency response capability.

Mr. Ahrens reported conversations with seven municipalities operating public works systems, finding this arrangement common without the problems people worry about. The most unique example was Ambler Borough, regulated by the PUC and preferring to move in a different direction due to expensive PUC processes that cost over \$70,000 to complete their last rate increase.

Consider Resolution Entering Negotiations with MPBMA on Leaseback Agreement

Mr. Wyatt presented Resolution 22-26 authorizing formal discussions with the Mount Penn Borough Municipal Authority regarding conveyance and leaseback structure and directing staff and professionals to advance such efforts.

Motion by Thomas Baer, seconded by David Korinchock, to adopt Resolution 22-26 authorizing formal discussions with the Mount Penn Borough Municipal Authority regarding a conveyance and leaseback. Motion carried unanimously.

Consider Advertising Ordinance to Convey MPBMA Assets

Mr. Wyatt explained that if the authority doesn't adopt their resolution entering negotiations at their April 8th meeting, the borough could adopt an ordinance requiring them to convey the water system property and assets under Municipal Authorities Act sections 5619 and 5622.

Motion by Thomas Baer, seconded by Christine Dise, to authorize advertisement of an ordinance requiring the Mt Penn Borough Municipal Authority to convey the water system and all property and assets to the borough in the event the authority does not adopt the resolution entering into discussions regarding the conveyance and leaseback structure. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Kindlick sought clarification that this was only necessary if the authority fails to enter negotiations. Mr. Wyatt confirmed the ordinance advertisement would only proceed if the authority doesn't cooperate, allowing the borough to proceed without their cooperation under statutory authority.

Discuss and Consider Intern Hiring

Mr. Ahrens reported that Authority Chair indicated the authority had no need for intern assistance based on conversations with Christina and Matt, though this hadn't gone through a formal authority meeting. Given accelerating discussions around conveyance leaseback and other moving targets including merger, comprehensive planning, zoning amendments,

economic development task force, and pulling these pieces together, Mr. Ahrens recommended council approve additional project-based assistance this summer.

The expected additional expense would be \$5,032.68 based on 24 hours per week at \$15 per hour including employer taxes.

Motion by Thomas Baer, seconded by David Korinchock, to hire a Special Project Intern at a rate of \$15.00 per hour, 24 hours per week. Motion carried unanimously.

Discuss Rental Ordinance Reforms

Mr. Ahrens explained that a recent Pennsylvania Superior Court case, *Pottstown v. Rivera*, calls into question the constitutionality of the current rental ordinance language. The case found that municipalities creating mandated inspection schedules don't have grounds to compel those inspections without probable cause.

Currently, the ordinance says violations result in fines and district justice proceedings if properties lack inspections, but the court found these inadequate grounds for forced inspections. Mr. Kelly noted most property owners comply currently, with only a couple people refusing inspections. Mr. Klonis confirmed the ordinance lacks enforcement teeth since administrative search warrants require probable cause beyond mere inspection non-compliance. He anticipated less compliance as more landlords learn about this case limitation.

Mr. Ahrens proposed eliminating the change of tenant inspection requirement, which hasn't been realistically achievable for Mt. Penn or Lower Alsace Township and burdens good landlords. He requested permission to send a letter to Lower Alsace proposing joint ordinance revision. Code Administrator Ahrens supported the change, noting change of tenant notifications often come after people have already moved in, and most landlords maintain compliance anyway. Council agreed to have a letter sent regarding this work.

Discuss and Consider Appointments the MP3 Committee

Borough Manager Hunter reported that Patrick McDevitt was willing to serve on the MP3 committee, replacing Mr. Maurer.

Motion by Thomas Baer, seconded by Michael Kindlick, to appoint Patrick McDevitt to replace Ryan Maurer on the MP3 committee. Motion carried unanimously.

Discuss and Consider Vehicle Use Agreement

Chief Johnson explained uncertainty about cost allocation for maintenance, service, and repairs for codes cars, seeking clarification on how municipalities handle vehicle ownership, insurance, general maintenance, and major repairs. The new Mt. Penn codes car was titled to Mt. Penn after receiving a grant, while Central Berks Regional Police currently handles the other codes car.

Mr. Ahrens explained that Lower Alsace had bought cars with Mt. Penn providing used patrol vehicles. The current agreement builds on previous verbal arrangements, though Mr. Ahrens suggested transferring the vehicle title to Central Berks to centralize responsibility.

Mr. Klonis recommended all codes vehicles be titled to Central Berks Regional Police since codes operations fall under police authority, with the department maintaining all vehicles as part of their budget.

Chief Johnson agreed conceptually but noted budget allocation uncertainties since vehicle maintenance wasn't necessarily budgeted appropriately this year. The matter required police commission discussion scheduled for the following Thursday. The matter was tabled pending guidance from the police commission.

Discuss and Consider Employee Handbook Revisions

Mr. Ahrens explained the handbook revision synthesizes benefits including vacation, sick leave, personal time, and bereavement to match the collective bargaining agreement. Personnel committee reviewed the changes in January, and the 30-day comment period had passed.

Mr. Klonis requested attaching the complete handbook to the resolution as an exhibit to clearly establish the current version.

Motion by Michael Kindlick, seconded by David Korinchock, to adopt the employee handbook revisions resolution. Motion carried unanimously.

Discuss and Consider Employee Handbook Revisions

Mr. Ahrens tabled this item, needing to send the map to Mr. Klonis' office for ordinance development.

Minutes for February 24, 2026 Meeting

Motion by Michael Kindlick, seconded by David Korinchock, to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2026 business meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes for March 24, 2026 Meeting

Motion by David Korinchock, seconded by Thomas Baer, to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2026 business meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

March 2026 Treasurer's Report

Motion by Michael Kindlick, seconded by David Korinchock, to approve the March 2026 Treasurers Report. Motion carried unanimously.

[AMENDED] Advertise Mount Penn Preserve COG Bylaws Ordinance

Council first needed to amend the agenda to include this item and the transient retailer permit revision since they were not posted with the agenda publication.

Motion by Michael Kindlick, seconded by David Korinchock, to amend the agenda to advertise for the Mt Penn Preserve bylaws. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Michael Kindlick, seconded by Thomas Baer, to advertise the Mt Penn Preserve COG bylaws ordinance. Motion carried unanimously.

[AMENDED] Advertise Transient Retailer Permit Revision

Motion by Michael Kindlick, seconded by David Korinchock, to advertise the transient retailer permit ordinance. Motion carried unanimously.

Reports

Borough Mayor

Mr. Maurer asked about Borough Manager Hunter's follow-up with PPL regarding power outages. Hunter acknowledged needing to circle back on this task and agreed to contact PPL.

Codes Committee

Mr. Kelly reported 80 total cases and notice violations from February 24 to March 31, with 58 closed and 28 open. Fifteen inspections were conducted with 14 closed and one open. Six zoning permits were issued and one zoning application was denied. Six citations were issued.

Mr. Kelly discussed ongoing issues with a property owner on the 2200 block of Woodvale Avenue who failed to appeal and refuses inspection compliance. He planned to file a citation if the property owner doesn't comply after issuing a second notice with 10 days to comply. Mr. Kelly reported problems at a three-unit property on Weimoor Court that hasn't been inspected since 2020 due to COVID and hasn't passed inspection. Four citations are currently with the magistrate for unsafe structure and a failing retaining wall. The owners have an engineer's report and agreement for retaining wall removal, but Mr. Kelly and Mr. Ahrens discussed concerns about what might fail next given the property's overall condition.

Joint ordinance zoning work with Lower Alsace continues well, with another meeting scheduled for April 9th. Police department coordination resulted in approximately 30-35 vehicles being towed or moved, with 20 in Mt. Penn, through effective collaboration with the department.

Mr. Kelly thanked the borough for the new codes vehicle, noting it significantly helps the department. He reminded residents that seasonal enforcement activities will increase with improving weather.

Mr. Maurer asked about the denied zoning application, which was for a property on Fairview seeking to convert from two to three units but lacking sufficient parking (needed six spaces, had three). The property owner was concerned about reverting to one unit, but the two-unit use is grandfathered.

Public Works Committee

Mrs. Dise noted that PennDOT Publication 383 covers speed bumps and may allow their installation contrary to earlier discussion. The publication indicates traffic studies can be conducted by certified traffic engineers, streets personnel, or police.

Mr. Baer reported needed patchwork on Cumberland Street and deterioration at the Butter Lane intersection near his residence. He noted snow plowing damage to new curbs and asked about storm sewer repair procedures.

Mr. Ahrens explained the borough's responsibility for storm sewers and discussed potential lining options, though uncertainty exists about products suitable for larger storm sewer pipes compared to smaller sewer authority lines. Given the age of corrugated steel pipes from 1972, Mr. Ahrens emphasized the importance of maintaining adequate fund balance for eventual major failures, citing the expensive Brooke Street Creek project as precedent. Mr. Kindlick noted several large potholes on Fairview requiring attention.

Other Business

There was no other business.

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. Dise announced that Borough Council would adjourn into an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.

Motion by Michael Kindlick, seconded by David Korinchock, to adjourn that meeting at 8:52 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by:

Hunter L. Ahrens

Hunter L. Ahrens (Jul 24, 2026 10:33:27 EDT)

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

January 2026 Reorganization Meeting - Meeting Minutes

Final Audit Report

2026-07-24

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