

MOUNT PENN BOROUGH
BOROUGH COUNCIL BUSINESS MEETING
June 24, 2025

The Mount Penn Borough Council met for a Business Meeting on May 27, 2025, 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 8:42 PM.

Council President Rick Lombardo, Council Member Christine Dise, Council Member Kelly Dudash, Council Member Yrisol Garcia, and Council Member Michael Kindlick were in attendance. Council Vice President Roger Stief, Council Member Thomas Baer, and Mayor Ryan Maurer were absent. Staff and Professional Members present were Borough Solicitor Tom Klonis, Borough Engineer Ty Leinneweber, Borough Manager Hunter L. Ahrens, Chief of Police Ray Serafin, and Codes Administrator Arthur Kelly, Jr. Several community members were also in attendance, including Linda Dapcic-Angst, Amanda Stief, Kaylyn Stief, and Don Pottiger, Lower Alsace Township Manager.

Attendance Roll Call

The meeting was called to order, and a roll call was conducted. All members were present, establishing a quorum.

Public Comment

Linda Dapcic-Angst, 2529 Perkiomen Avenue, addressed the council regarding her property at 2529 Perkiomen Avenue, which is a rental property in need of repair. She explained that after purchasing the property, she received an email from Mr. Kelly in March and met with him on April 21st. She was given until May 30th to fix the back steps to the porch, along with other issues. Ms. Dapcic-Angst expressed concern that the property had been rented for six years in that condition before she purchased it. She requested an extension beyond the current July 1st deadline as she had difficulty finding a reasonable contractor. Her neighbor, who is a contractor, said he could do the work in August.

Solicitor Klonis advised that if Ms. Dapcic-Angst gets the work under contract with a commencement date in August and provides Mr. Kelly with a copy of the contract by July 1st, he believes that Council would not have a problem with the extension. The Council's goal is compliance with the ordinances rather than punitive action.

Present the Codes Department Updates

Hunter Ahrens presented a presentation on the Code's functions updates. He noted that the presentation had previously been shared with the codes committee.

Mr. Ahrens outlined the current configuration of code services, which involves several different groups providing various services, including the codes department, Systems Design

Engineering (SDE), and two part-time inspectors. For 2024, permit activity increased to 372 permits from 233 the previous year, partially due to more effective WebCBC reporting and economic factors. Transfer inspections were identified as the largest category of permits. Rental activity also increased, with 220 registrations representing 417 residential units, generating revenue of \$49,645.05. Code enforcement activities were summarized, showing exterior property areas as the primary category for violations.

The financial overview showed that revenues from fees cover only about 52% of the total cost of enforcement services. Mr. Ahrens highlighted productivity increases in inspections, violations identified, and rental income from 2023 to 2024 and to 2025.

Mr. Ahrens presented examples of structural issues found in rental properties, including rotted steel girders and foundation cracking. He emphasized that most homes in the borough are over 50 years old and require additional maintenance. He also noted the problem of people doing work without permits, particularly during evenings and weekends.

Mr. Ahrens reviewed recommendations from the STMP program, including:

- Reviewing costs and services provided by joint codes to ensure cost-effectiveness.
- Considering leveraging existing staff to bring services in-house.
- Ensuring joint code staff have the required licenses.
- Reviewing the rental oversight program.
- Ensuring multifamily dwelling conversions are reassessed by the County.
- Updating the codification of ordinances on the borough's website.

Consider Change Order for Road Project with MPBMA

Steve Riley, P.E., engineer for the Mt. Penn Borough Municipal Authority, attended the meeting regarding a water main replacement on Laurel Avenue between Summit and Cameron. He explained that the authority had previously been unable to commit to doing the water main replacement before the borough's paving project. However, they now propose deferring the water main work and the road paving for Laurel and the portion of Summit until 2026, which would allow the authority time to complete the water main replacement before paving.

Mr. Riley noted that the authority understood they would be responsible for paying a remobilization charge to the borough's contractor. He estimated the water main project would cost between \$125,000 and \$150,000.

The borough engineer added that they had discussed this with Allan Myers (the contractor), who indicated the remobilization and escalation cost would be approximately \$22,000, which would be less than what the water authority would pay for paving restorations if the work were done after the Borough completed its road work. The paving for these roads would still be covered under the grant, which has a three-year timeframe.

Michael Kindlick made a motion to defer work on Laurel and Summit Streets until 2026 pursuant to the authority's request, subject to the authority paying any and all remobilization costs associated therewith. Christine Dise seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Following the vote, a council member requested that the water authority and borough work together to notify residents on these streets about the change in schedule, noting that they have been waiting for their streets to be paved for a long time.

Consider Proposal for Comprehensive Planning Process with Hawk Valley Associates

Mr. Ahrens presented information on a proposal from Hawk Valley Associates for joint planning and joint zoning ordinance updates and updates to the subdivision land development ordinance. Mr. Ahrens noted that Jerome Skrincosky, a principal at Hawk Valley Associates who holds AICP certification (American Institute of Community Planners), was offering to perform this work for a modest fee compared to what the county or other firms might charge.

Council members noted that Jerome had participated in the previous joint zoning ordinance development and is familiar with the project. It was also mentioned that Jerome's mother had previously served on the council and as mayor, and was instrumental in creating the Central Berks Regional Police Department.

The proposal was for \$7,800, with the cost to be split evenly between Mt. Penn and Lower Alsace. Mr. Ahrens shared that Berks County had previously offered to contribute up to \$20,000 to facilitate joint zoning for municipalities, and they were trying to get confirmation that this offer was still available, which could potentially reduce the cost further.

Michael Kindlick made a motion to accept the proposal from Hawk Valley Associates at a cost of \$7,800, to be split between Mt. Penn and Lower Alsace. Kelly Dudash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Consider Employment Action for Potential Borough Employees

The council went into executive session at 7:28 PM to discuss personnel matters. Upon returning to open session at 7:43 PM, the following action was taken:

Michael Kindlick moved to approve the full-time employment for Borough Secretary Kaylyn Stief at the rate of \$25.00 per hour for a 40-hour work week with other benefits determined by the employee handbook. Kelly Dudash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Following the vote, Ms. Stief was introduced along with her mother, who was in attendance. Mr. Ahrens noted that Ms. Stief had gone through two rounds of interviews and was the standout candidate to both him and Christeena Hauck, who assisted with the interviews. Her estimated start date was July 14th, though they were still finalizing the first day.

Consider Compensation Adjustments for Employees

The council discussed continuing the current compensation arrangement for Mr. Ahrens until Ms. Stief's start date.

Yrisol Garcia made a motion to extend Mr. Ahrens' current compensation arrangement, an additional \$500.00 per week, until Ms. Stief's start date. Christine Dise seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Consider the Appointment of Fran Kelly to the Mt. Penn Planning Commission

The council considered Resolution 04-25 to appoint Francis Kelly of 230 Laurel Avenue as a member of the planning commission.

Christine Dise made a motion to approve Resolution No. 04-25, appointing Francis Kelly to the Mt. Penn Planning Commission for a term from the present until the next Mt. Penn borough reorganization meeting in January 2028. Michael Kindlick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Annual Road Project

Ty Leinneweber, P.E., the Borough Engineer, provided an update on the annual road project. On June 9 and 10, SDE met with Allen Myers and the Authorities to discuss the roads scheduled for repair, including Brooke Street, Oak Terrace, Cameron Street, Laurel Avenue, Summit Avenue, Hill Avenue, and Endlich Avenue, and potentially adding two additional streets: 25th Street from Brook Street to Endlich Avenue and Brighton Street off High Street.

The engineer reported that Doug Lamb Construction had started removing curbs that day and planned to begin pouring new curbs on June 30th, with completion expected by July 9th. The paving project would begin after July 4th, though a specific schedule had not yet been received from Allan Myers.

The engineer mentioned rejecting Allan Myers's proposed aggressive schedule. This schedule would have required milling all roads before paving, which would have left residents driving on loose stone for about six days. The engineer deemed this unacceptable. The engineer also discussed an unexpected issue with a confined gutter on Endlich Avenue that would require curb replacement, which would likely extend the project timeline to July 10th or 11th.

Regarding the emergency repair project at Brooke Street off of Friedensburg Road, the engineer reported receiving two quotes: one from Construction Masters for \$57,250 and one from Summit Valley for \$31,416.50. The engineer noted that upon inspection, the pipe appeared to be fractured but not completely broken through, as no water leakage was detected. Mr. Ahrens mentioned that the Sewer Authority had offered to include the purchase of pipe lining under their upcoming public bid contract, which would be a more cost-effective solution.

Michael Kindlick made a motion to approve the quote from Summit Valley for the emergency work on Brooke Street and Friedensburg Road at a cost of \$31,416.50. Yrisol Garcia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Comprehensive Planning Process & Task Force

Mr. Ahrens discussed the composition of the task force for the comprehensive planning process. Lower Alsace Township and Jerome suggested having representatives from the zoning hearing board, planning commission, council, managers, and Arthur from both municipalities.

For the zoning hearing board, Mr. Ahrens suggested Charlie Miller or Ryan Kehl, who are full members of the Zoning Hearing Board. For the Planning Commission, he recommended choosing someone who's also not on the council to avoid overrepresentation of elected officials. He noted this would be either Fran Kelly, Jim Cocuzza, or Patrick McDevitt.

For the council representative, Mr. Ahrens suggested Tom might be willing due to his interest in rental issues, though Christine and Roger, who are also on the codes committee, were mentioned as possibilities as well. Council members indicated they would consider the options and get back to Mr. Ahrens with their selections.

Discussion of Permit Parking Expansions

The Council discussed ongoing issues with permit parking, particularly on Cumberland Avenue. Similar to what happened on Grant Street, as permit parking was implemented in one area, vehicles were now parking in adjacent blocks, specifically at the bottom end of Cumberland. Residents of Glen Terrace were parking in that area of Cumberland, taking spots away from people who live there.

Yrisol Garcia mentioned concerns about vehicles that aren't being moved regularly. The solicitor clarified that as long as the vehicles are properly inspected and registered, there isn't much that can be done about them parking on the street.

Council members debated whether to expand permit parking to this area, with some expressing concern about creating a "Pandora's box" situation where each block would

successively request permit parking as parking is restricted in adjacent areas. It was suggested that the Public Works Committee, which now handles street-related matters, should analyze this issue and make recommendations to the council.

Discussion of Handicap Parking Spots Updates

Mr. Ahrens reported that the borough had removed all the handicap parking signs that were on the list in the previous memo, and about half of them had been reinstated after residents provided proper identification. He acknowledged that some residents were irritated by the process.

Mrs. Dise noted that this would likely become an issue and reminded everyone that residents need to reapply for their placard when it's renewed. Mr. Ahrens acknowledged that he still needed to draft the adjustment to the ordinance for handicap parking requiring a permit if you reside in the permit area, which had been discussed at a previous meeting.

Discussion and Consideration of Letter regarding Variance Application for 28 S. 23rd Street

Mr. Ahrens presented information about a resident at 28 South 23rd Street who had purchased a shed and placed it in their driveway with a proper zoning permit in 2019 or 2020. The resident subsequently purchased a second shed and placed it next to the first one without obtaining a permit. When they applied for a zoning permit after the fact, they were denied.

The zoning officer's denial was based on the removal of parking from the driveway and concerns that the total impervious surface coverage exceeded what the zoning ordinance permits. There may also have been setback issues, as the second shed appears to extend to the property line.

The resident is seeking a variance from the zoning hearing board. The zoning officer noted that the first shed probably should not have been granted a permit originally, but it was approved by Motley and Associates, the previous zoning officer.

The council declined to comment on the variance application, noting that the zoning hearing board would handle the matter appropriately.

Discussion of Merger Process

Mr. Ahrens reported that Lower Alsace Township had asked for potential merger meeting dates. Based on responses, July 16 and July 17 were identified as possibilities, with a 6:30 PM start time to accommodate schedules.

Don Pottiger from Lower Alsace suggested having an initial meeting with only the elected officials before involving the Department of Community and Economic Development

(DCED). He proposed that the first meeting would be to identify the key issues to discuss, and then DCED could be brought in for a second session to help address those issues.

Areas identified for discussion included how the police department would be structured (maintaining the regional framework or bringing it into the municipal structure), code enforcement, and other aspects of municipal operations. Chief Serafin noted that the regional police department structure currently limits their grant funding opportunities, and a change in incorporation structure (though not necessarily the name) might provide more grant opportunities.

The council agreed to have Mr. Ahrens circulate the dates to Lower Alsace and plan for an initial meeting without DCED, followed by a session with DCED once the key issues had been identified.

Discussion of Garage Lease with AVMA

This item was not discussed during the meeting.

Discussion of Borough Hall Lease with MPBMA

Mr. Ahrens reported that he had provided a paper copy of the updated lease agreement to the solicitor and a digital copy to the authority. The authority had requested the removal of archaic language (thee's and thou's) from the 2005 version. Mr. Ahrens had used AI tools to update the language to more conversational English without changing the substance of the agreement. The water authority would review it at their next meeting, and based on preliminary feedback from Tom Staron, they didn't have concerns with the parameters of the lease.

Approve Meeting Minutes for May 27, 2025

Michael Kindlick made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 27, 2025, meeting. Christine Dise seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Conditionally Approve the Treasurer's Report for June 2025

Mr. Ahrens requested conditional approval of the Treasurer's Report, as Tom Baer had not had an opportunity to review it due to being on vacation. After discussion, the council decided to defer approval until the next meeting rather than grant conditional approval.

Reports

Fire Company

No report was provided.

Central Berks Regional Commission

No report was provided.

Codes Committee

Arthur Kelly presented the Codes Committee report for the period from May 28, 2025, to June 24, 2025. He reported 91 notices of violations and warnings, 72 closed and 19 open. Five rental inspections were completed.

He noted issues with rental program registration compliance and mentioned that after three notices and two certified mailings, they were preparing to issue citations next week. He also reported ongoing property maintenance issues with grass, bushes, and trash, as well as problems with unregistered or uninspected motor vehicles.

Arthur brought up a specific concern about numerous inoperable vehicles being stored on properties along Woodvale, behind Perkiomen Avenue. The solicitor suggested a two-pronged approach: having the zoning officer investigate potential zoning violations and looking at possible code violations related to the storage of inoperable vehicles. The solicitor noted that zoning enforcement is a civil action while code violations are summary criminal matters, which can sometimes provide a quicker resolution.

Chief of Police

Chief Serafin reported that his successor's interview committee is set to meet on July 15th. He also provided an update on an investigation into Perkiomen Avenue's trafficking location that has grown significantly, involving national agencies and substantial amounts of money.

Other Business

Mr. Lombardo raised the issue of summer workshop meetings, noting that with numerous projects underway, having only one meeting per month during the summer was insufficient. It was explained that historically, the borough had one meeting per month, then moved to two meetings plus workshops, but would reduce to one meeting during the summer months when there was typically less activity.

After the discussion, there was consensus to consider scheduling a workshop meeting for August 19th, the week before school starts on August 25th. Mr. Ahrens noted that the workshops would be advertised as such rather than as business meetings, since they would not involve voting.

A council member also raised concerns about solicitation permits, which currently are valid until the end of the calendar year regardless of when they are issued. The council discussed changing the duration to 90 days (one quarter) rather than the remainder of the calendar year. Mr. Ahrens agreed to draft an ordinance amendment for consideration at a future meeting.

Adjournment

Yrisol Garcia made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Michael Kindlick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned, after which the council held an executive session on personnel matters with no action to be taken.