

MOUNT PENN BOROUGH
BOROUGH COUNCIL BUSINESS MEETING
May 27, 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 Vice President Roger Stief, Council Member Thomas Baer, Council Member Christine Dise, Council Member Kelly Dudash, Council Member Michael Kindlick, and Mayor Ryan Maurer were in attendance. 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.

Council President Rick Lombardo departed the meeting at 8:02 PM and turned the gavel to Council Vice President Roger Stief.

Meeting Opening and Pledge to the Flag

Attendance Roll Call

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

Announce Executive Session on May 22, 2025

It was announced that an executive session had been held on May 22, 2025 to discuss personnel matters.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Present January–April Financial Update

Mr. Ahrens presented a financial update for January to April 2025. He explained that the finance committee had reviewed the budget line by line to assess the year's financial progress.

Key points from the update included:

- January through March typically has the lowest account balances for municipalities.
- Revenue progress was at 44.5% of the total budgeted for the year through May 27th.
- Business privilege tax income had already exceeded expectations for the whole year through April.
- Grant revenues are distorting regular income figures. Without grants, revenue would be at 72% of the total for the year.
- The police department is the largest expenditure category.

- Actual expenses year-to-date through May 27th were at 31.8% when controlling for a large fund balance transfer.
- There are 4 major grants totaling \$2,694,000, which represents a significant portion of the \$4.2 million total budget.

Mr. Maurer noted that the Borough had purchased its first CD through its investment policy for \$247,000 at 4.45% interest for a 3-month term with Firstbank Southwest in Amarillo, Texas. He shared that the Borough planned to purchase another \$100,000 CD soon.

Council members asked clarifying questions about specific budget items and grant funding. Overall, Mr. Ahrens indicated they are in a healthy financial position so far this year.

Consider Employment Action for Potential Borough Employees

Mr. Ahrens presented the recommendation to hire Richard "Ricky" Lombardo, III for the full-time Street Laborer position. He shared that there had been over 117 applications, which were narrowed down to 4 interviewees. Mr. Lombardo was the unanimous recommendation of the personnel committee, Mr. Ahrens, and Mr. Okonski.

Michael Kindlick made a motion to approve the hiring of Richard Lombardo, III to the position of Street Laborer at a starting rate of \$24.00 per hour and an increase to \$24.51 per hour upon successful completion of his probationary period. Seconded by Thomas Baer. The motion passed unanimously, with Richard Lombardo, Jr. abstaining due to a conflict of interest. The motion passed unanimously with one abstention

[Abstention Note is attached to the Minutes].

Ricky Lombardo introduced himself and his family members who were present at the meeting.

Mr. Ahrens also requested approval to extend the hours for a seasonal hire helping with grass cutting from the previously approved 10 hours per week for 4 weeks to a total of 40 hours for the entire summer. This was due to the pace of grass growth and to avoid tying up other staff while not having used 40 hours yet.

Roger Stief made a motion to extend the seasonal hire's hours to a total of 40 hours for the entire summer. Seconded by Christine Dise. The motion passed unanimously.

Consider Compensation Adjustments for Employees

Mr. Ahrens recommended continuing the additional payments for the staff gap for Mr. Okonski for the current week and for Mr. Ahrens until a new Borough Secretary is hired.

Michael Kindlick made a motion to extend the additional payments for Mr. Okonski to \$300.00 per week for the current week and for Mr. Ahrens to \$500.00 per week, pending the start of a new hire or until the next meeting. Seconded by Thomas Baer. The motion was passed unanimously.

Consider Committee Reassignments

The committee reassignments were finalized, including ensuring Mr. Stief had another assignment, Ms. Dudash being assigned to Mr. Goodman's prior positions, and Kelly O'Leary

being assigned to the police commission. The requirement to advertise committee meetings was removed, reverting to the previous practice of closed committee meetings where a quorum was not present.

Discussion of Handicap Parking Spots Updates

A discussion was held regarding handicap parking spots in permit parking zones. It was unclear whether the existing ordinance required vehicles parked in handicap spots within permit zones to display both a handicap placard and a parking permit. The council decided to amend the ordinance to clarify this issue.

Discussion of Emergency Resolution for Friedensburg Road

Mr. Leinneweber introduced the emerging issue of a sinkhole at the intersection of Friedensburg Road and Brooke Street, where a cavity near a stormwater pipe opened and dislodged the end of the stormwater pipe.

Thomas Baer made a motion to amend the meeting agenda to consider the emerging issues at the intersection of Friedensburg Road and Brooke Street. Seconded by Roger Stief. The motion was passed unanimously.

Thomas Baer made a motion to adopt Resolution Number 03-25, declaring an emergency near Friedensburg Road in the alleyway known as Brooke Street, in accordance with the borough engineer's letter dated May 27, 2025, and to take remedial measures to rectify the emergency. Seconded by Roger Stief. The motion was passed unanimously.

The council also approved a motion to authorize the engineer and staff to solicit quotes for the necessary work to repair the damage at Friedensburg Road and the Brook Street alleyway.

Roger Stief made a motion to authorize the engineer and staff to get quotes for repair work on Brooke Street. Seconded by Thomas Baer. The motion was passed unanimously.

Discussion of Annual Road Project

Mr. Leinneweber reported that some change orders were coming up for both projects. For Contract B, the Engineer was directed to review adding 2-3 additional roads: a portion of 25th Street, from Endlich Avenue to Brook Street; Brighton Avenue, from High Street to the end of the stub; and possibly a third road to round out the remaining grant funds.

A discussion occurred regarding trees that have encroached into the cartway on Endlich Avenue, which needed to be removed. Discussion identified that a 30-day notice was provided to the homeowners of these properties, and the Council determined to approve staff's ability to lien the properties if the trees needed to be removed by the Borough.

Roger Stief made a motion to approve the Borough Staff to obtain quotes, approve work, and file liens on properties where appropriate notice to remove trees was provided, in the interest of the 2025 Road Project. Seconded by Thomas Baer. The motion was passed unanimously.

Discussion and Consideration of Letter regarding Variance Application for Faith Lutheran Church

Faith Lutheran Church was seeking a variance to subdivide a house they had been using as a rental property. The issue was that the remaining church property may not meet minimum lot size requirements under current zoning. The council discussed the potential implications but decided not to take a position and deferred to the zoning hearing board.

Fire Company Report

Mr. Lombardo reported that the fire company was doing tool mounting for a new ladder truck.

[Mr. Lombardo departed the meeting at 8:02 PM]

Discussion of Restoration Letter for MPBMA on Laurel Avenue

A draft letter regarding restoration requirements for potential water main work on Laurel Avenue was presented to the Council. The water authority had indicated the pipe and main needed work, but it was not financially feasible this year. The letter proposed that if work is done within 5 years, full curb-to-curb restoration would be required. The Council agreed with this approach to maintain road quality, given the recent state grant funding for the project. Staff indicated that the letter would be sent to the water authority.

Discussion of Merger Letter from Lower Alsace

Lower Alsace Township provided a letter to the Borough indicating their Board of Supervisors was open to the Borough's suggestions and requests regarding a potential merger. The next step would be to schedule a meeting with all elected officials from both municipalities present. Staff would circulate potential dates for this meeting.

Discussion of Garage Lease with AVMA

Mr. Klonis reported that he had spoken with the counsel for AVMA about a longer-term lease for the garage. They were willing to consider a 29-year lease, up from the initially proposed 20 years. There were some concerns about potential transfer taxes on long-term leases, but Mr. Klonis indicated this may not be an issue if the lease is not recorded. The Borough was awaiting further communications from the AVMA Board.

Discussion of Borough Hall Lease with MPBMA

Mr. Ahrens reported that MPBMA was generally okay with the draft lease that had been circulated. They requested updating some of the language to more modern terms. Mr. Ahrens will send the updated draft to Mr. Klonis for review.

Approve Meeting Minutes for April 22, 2025

Michael Kindlick made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the April 22, 2025, Special Voting meeting. Seconded by Yrisol Garcia. The motion was passed unanimously.

Approve the Treasurer's Report for May 2025

Michael Kindlick made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for May 2025. Seconded by Thomas Baer. The motion was passed unanimously.

Planning Commission Report

It was noted that a vacancy still existed on the Planning Commission and that council members were encouraged to recommend potential candidates.

Central Berks Regional Commission Report

The next meeting was scheduled for June 5th.

Public Works Committee Report

Mrs. Dise reported on a recent issue with trash collection where bags were not being picked up properly. She had a conversation with Jose Martins from J.P. Mascaro, who explained that new staff were being trained and there was some confusion between the rules of Allentown and Mt. Penn. Mrs. Dise emphasized that residents should call the office promptly if they have issues with trash collection, rather than waiting to post on social media.

Personnel Committee Report

The committee chair reported having nothing to report for the first time in a while.

Codes Committee Report

Hunter reported that the committee was working on revising the rental ordinance and had discussions with Arthur about service changes.

Finance Committee Report

It was reported that they would be purchasing a second CD this week.

Merger Ad-Hoc Committee Report

Nothing additional was reported beyond the earlier discussion of the letter from Lower Alsace.

Chief of Police Report

Chief Serafin provided an update on a recent investigation into a trafficking and prostitution operation at a location on 23rd Street. He reported that the investigation had grown to involve multiple locations in Pennsylvania and nationally. The chief emphasized the complexity and sensitivity of the ongoing investigation. He noted that arrests were pending and that the investigation had already resulted in the closure of two 9klocations in Mount Penn and Exeter Township.

Codes Administrator Report

The Codes Administrator reported:

- 90 notices of violations and warnings were issued from April 30th to May 27th, with 72 closed and 18 still open.
- 4 rental inspections were conducted.

- There is an ongoing issue with homeowners doing work without permits, especially on weekends and after hours.
- Rental owners are slow to comply with the inspection program.
- Property maintenance continues to be an issue, especially with grass, trash, and trees growing quickly.
- Two properties had issues with doors on the second floor, but both have now complied.

The council discussed ways to improve communication about permit requirements and agreed to post reminders on the borough website and Facebook page.

Solicitor Report

The solicitor had nothing further to report.

Borough Manager Report

Mr. Ahrens reported that he was preparing to send a letter of support on behalf of the council for a grant application by the sewer authority. The grant is for an update to their filtration beds, which are part of necessary infrastructure improvements.

Other Business

No other business was discussed.

Adjournment

Michael Kindlick made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 PM. Yrisol Garcia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session on Personnel Matters

An executive session on personnel matters was held following the adjournment of the regular meeting.