

## REMARKS FROM MAYOR GINAMARIE ELLIS AT 9-2-2025 COUNCIL MEETING

On the agenda tonight is a resolution about an annual firefighter award.

This resolution, rather than a proclamation, is illustrative of a concerning pattern from Council President Driscoll that the community needs to be aware of. A pattern of doing borough things the way she wants to rather than following the Municipal Code or the Borough Code, while spending thousands of taxpayer dollars in solicitor fees to skirt the law and get her way. A person who is governing like a dictator rather than serving the people.

Since taking control of Council, Ms. Driscoll has requested or caused four people to resign and was almost successful in replacing the Zoning Hearing Board solicitor.

Starting with the Mayor's role in the Borough – according to the Mayor's Manual and the Borough Code, it is my job to be the liaison to the Police and the Fire Company. That responsibility has not been mine since she became president. I have been stripped of those duties. Despite getting legal input that this honorific should come from the Mayor's office, she is making an executive decision to do a council resolution, so her signature is on it. That is not serving the community, that's politics.

The Mayor is supposed to be the voice of the Borough, the person people come to for information, and be in charge of communications- I WAS, but since she became president, I have been stripped of those responsibilities. That is not serving the community, that's politics.

In January, the taxpayers spent almost \$500 in legal bills for over two hours of research on The Sunshine Law and the Mayor's role in public meetings, because I was saying true things in meetings that she didn't want to hear. Councilperson Hudack asked if I was even "allowed" to speak during council discussions since I don't vote. \$400+ of your dollars later, the answer was delivered that yes, I am allowed to participate in discussions. Do you think that's a good use of taxpayer dollars?

I was co-founder with late Mayor Stacey Smith of the Mayor's event committee. That committee was disbanded and absorbed into another. I was stripped of those duties. Again, that is not serving the community, that's politics.

According to our Borough Code, the Comprehensive Plan is a project council formally asks the Planning Commission to perform, and the PC names a subcommittee of their choosing. But President Driscoll consulted with our solicitors (at taxpayer expense) to find a way to skirt the way it's supposed to be done, to do the Comp Plan the way SHE wanted, so she had full control of the members of this committee. She calls it a task force, and she alone chose who is in this group.

When our 30+ year PC president pushed back on her plan and wanted to follow the Code to do the Comp Plan, she refused – basically, it was her way or the highway, so he resigned, choosing the highway. The next PC president felt the same. He knew the Borough Code and wanted to follow it. I read the email I sent him in public. He didn't want to fight with Marta, so he resigned – another 30+ years GONE. A third planning commissioner resigned this summer, tired of the politics. Combined, we lost 80 years of combined historical knowledge and expertise due to President Driscoll playing politics and her inability to stay in her lane and know the boundaries of her role.

***Publication of This Statement Has Been Paid for by Chester Heights GOP***

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The Mayor is traditionally not only on the Comp Plan subcommittee, the mayor co-chairs the committee. I am not on the committee, and when Councilperson Baum made the motion to add me to the committee, no one seconded it and the motion failed. How embarrassing. That is not serving the community, that's politics.

A few months ago, President Driscoll, off the record, told a new business in the Borough that they would easily get their zoning exception. To be clear – that is not at all appropriate, borderline illegal, and definitely unethical. The ZHB is an independent quasi-governmental board, and council has ZERO say in their determinations. Council CAN send the Borough solicitor to a hearing if council has an opinion needing to be heard. But a member of council CANNOT promise a decision. When the decision didn't go the way she expected and promised, Council President Driscoll made a decision to replace the ZHB solicitor.

It was the ZHB Chair and Vice-Chair who pulled the Municipal Code and pointed out via letter that the choice of the ZHB Solicitor is up to the ZHB. We never saw that letter. Our solicitors fell on the sword for that "mistake." When pressed in a meeting, Council President Driscoll said that she wanted to replace him because he made decisions she didn't agree with. That is not serving the community, that's politics.

We have an issue with whether or not the condos that suffered a fire in DW need to have sprinklers. We have a BCO who was paid to for that outstanding project who made a determination of NO, based on his expertise, where he referred to professional documents and definitions to make that determination. In April. Our Fire Marshall disagreed. Our governing documents say the only professional who can make that call is the BCO, but President Driscoll disagreed with the BCO and agreed with the FM, so more taxpayer dollars were spent to get legal input to support making them have sprinklers. As Alex said in our last meeting, they are here to call balls and strikes and give advice. It's up to Council to decide whether or not to take it. Sadly, in this situation, Council was not given the full story by President Driscoll and made a recommendation without all the facts.

Here are the facts as I see them: Fact – the building does not require sprinklers according to the BCO assigned this project. Fact – it is his determination that should be binding. Fact – the Borough Code referenced in the letter signed by a different BCO is our Fire Code. Fact – this Code, passed in the early 2000's we assume, was never filed with the State L&I Department because it cannot be found, so it's unenforceable and undefendable in court. Fact – President Driscoll has been referencing this Code to enforce residential rental inspections that the FC made \$16K from last year, and the Borough lost money on. I am the only landlord who fought my inspection because I knew these things. I would like to believe if Council had known these facts, the recommendation would not have been to require sprinklers in DW, and these residents would be that much closer to moving back into their homes. I am thrilled that Council decided to rescind the sprinkler decision tonight. And I thank Drew for bringing Council and the residents the full picture.

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In the spring, after being asked AGAIN to lower his permit fees by President Driscoll and then refusing – she asked that BCO for his resignation. You have heard that he resigned, but it was demanded of him.

For the last 20+ years, the Borough has been served by Council with ten or more committees. Chairs of those committees have been bipartisan, where regardless of which party was in the majority, every council person had a committee they chaired. Until now. When Marta became president, she reorganized the committees, making less of them so only members of her party had Chair positions. That is not serving the community, that's politics.

The agenda was also changed for the first time in over a decade by President Driscoll. The Mayor's Report was in the first ten agenda items. I have been moved to the end, right before new and old business. That was a personal slight – again, politics over serving the community.

There has been a pattern of a one-woman show, skirting the Borough and Municipal Code, and thousands of dollars of taxpayer money wasted going to solicitors for her to continue to do this. The fire resolution, or proclamation, is the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

I refuse to enter into a contest on how the Firefighter of the Year will be honored and whose signature will be on the document. The appropriate vehicle is via Mayoral Proclamation. If Council prefers a resolution despite that lack of appropriateness, and despite that fact that Councilperson Block specifically requested this come from the "Mayor's office." that is fine. This firefighter will be recognized, and that is the most important thing.

This report of mine tonight is so the community is fully aware of how things are going here among the elected officials. Politics is playing a bigger role than it should.