

COLLEGEVILLE BOROUGH COUNCIL
ZOOM MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 2, 2020

The meeting was called to order by Council President Cathy Kernen at 7PM.

Roll Call: Council President Cathy Kernen, Council VP Shannon Spencer, Council Pro Tem Gary Hoffmann, Council Member Marion McKinney, Council Member Craig Farr, Council Member Kathy Costello, Council Member Valarie Beckius and Mayor Aidsand Wright- Riggins.

Also in attendance: Solicitor Dan Grieser, Engineer David Leh, Police Chief Bart Bucher, Borough Manager Tamara Twardowski and Administrative Assistant Suzanne Robertson.

MOTION to approve the Minutes from the November 4, 2020 Council Meeting by Ms. McKinney with a second by Ms. Spencer. **MOTION** carries 7-0

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Tom Leahy-495 Shakespeare Dr-noted that the Perkiomen Trail below the new Glenwood Ave development has deteriorated quite a bit and he wondered who is responsible for that.

Ms. Kernen said that the trail is owned by Montgomery County and that we have a contact there to have an assessment.

Chris Louten-39 E 4th Ave- said that the developer on Glenwood was supposed to have water run off controls in place that are obviously not working. He wondered when they will be held accountable and made to remedy the situation.

Mr. Leh said there had been a complaint last year (and none since) that Mr. Thompson had asked him to evaluate. It was determined at that time that the issue was due to the steep slope (which is owned by the County) and natural erosion. He said he will go out again and take a look to see if anything has changed.

Mr. Louten said there are more issues than the trail. There is ongoing water run off issues to the homes on 4th Ave. The builder's water mitigation efforts are not working and it's been an issue for three years.

Ms. Kernen said she and Mr. Leh will follow up on his concerns.

Public Comment CLOSED

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Budget & Finance: Ms. Twardowski read the Treasurer's Report and reported that we are expected to end the year close to budget numbers.

MOTION to approve checks #4575-4623 by Ms. McKinney with a second by Ms. Spencer

MOTION carries 7-0

Mr. Hoffmann thanked Ms. Twardowski, Ms. Augustine and Ms. Robertson for their help on the 2021 Budget and noted that it has been a difficult year. He is pleased that his goals were met in completing a

budget that does not involve raising taxes, takes a more “pay as you go” approach and does not tie Ms. Twardowski, as the new manager, to a difficult to balance budget her first year. Ms. Beckius thanked Mr. Hoffmann for his tireless work in bringing next year’s budget together. Everyone agreed!

MOTION to adopt the 2021 Budget by Ms. McKinney with a second by Ms. Spencer

MOTION carries 7-0

Mr. Grieser said that there has been a change to the Borough Code since last year. If there is no tax increase, the same rate can be passed by Resolution.

MOTION to approve Resolution 2020-10 keeping the tax rate at 5.2 mills by Ms. McKinney with a second by Ms. Spencer

MOTION carries 7-0

Business Development: Ms. Kernan said there were four main topics discussed at the last BDC meeting:

- Mark Evans, building and landscape architect, shared his ideas for our Main Street
- Discussion about murals for the Colledgeville Station and Verizon buildings
- Ursinus College representatives noted that the students have all gone home and that the public is now welcome to walk on campus and visit the bookstore and cafe
- Ed & Laura Simpson visited the Key Bank building that has been purchased by Keenan Law Firm to consider it as a possible second location for Steel City. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, they have decided that they are not in the position to open a second coffee house at this time.
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Communications: Ms. Spencer said that she and Ms. Twardowski are planning to work on the newsletter tomorrow and it will be out next week.

CPVRPC: Ms. Beckius reported that at the last meeting, they did a recap of activities for the year and announced the meeting dates for 2021. She noted that when they do resume meeting in person, it will be at the new Schwenksville Borough Hall. Ms. Beckius said they discussed Montco 2040 grants of which we were the recipient of two this year. She noted that they worked on the virtual and physical trail map and that it should be completed in January. Ms. Twardowski shared the map on her screen. Ms. Beckius reported that the committee checked for consistency among all of the municipalities involved with regards to zoning, ordinances and Land Development plans and then compared them to those of the County. Mr. Hoffmann asked if the map will be advertised at the trail heads. Ms. Beckius said that is the plan and physical maps will be available at all of the participating businesses as well. Ms. Kernan noted that Mike Lowrey from MCPC is also working on developing a map of Colledgeville that will work in sync with Regional Planning’s map.

CTMA: Mr. Farr said there has not been a decision yet about the sewer rates.

LPVRS: Ms. Twardowski relayed that Ms. Stagliano said there is nothing new to report this month.

Personnel: Ms. Kernen requested Council to approve Resolution 2020-11, appointing Ms. Twardowski as Secretary, Zoning Officer and Right to Know Officer and Ms. Robertson as Assistant Secretary. That would allow for Ms. Robertson to stand in if Ms. Twardowski is unavailable. **MOTION** to approve Resolution 2020-11 appointing Ms. Twardowski and Ms. Robertson in these roles by Ms. McKinney with a second by Mr. Hoffmann **MOTION** carries 7-0

Public Works: Ms. McKinney said there was a discussion with Ms. Veres about the budget for Public Works. She feels it is necessary for the committee to find a way to pass a small increase, perhaps 1%, every year to cover the increased cost of water service. Ms. McKinney feels this would be easily absorbed by most families. This increase would go toward savings to cover costly repairs and avoid the necessity of doing a large increase every couple of years that may cause stress. Another topic discussed was the release of the \$35K to the boroughs for the cell towers. Mr. Farr agrees with Ms. McKinney and said he has not gotten a satisfactory answer as to why there are large amounts of money in CD's that keep being rolled over and yet there is a working deficit. Mr. Grieser noted that there is \$1M in liquid funds and \$1M in CD's that will mature in 18 months. Mr. Hoffmann said he plans to be at the meeting next month to ask for clarification.

Streets, Public Safety & Lighting: Mr. Farr reported that a letter was sent to all residents on W 5th Ave regarding NO PARKING on the street and many attended the meeting. The overall feeling of most residents is that they would prefer parking be allowed on the street. Most feel that having parked cars on both sides of the street acts as natural speed control. Mr. Farr said the issue is still under consideration. He plans to send letters to residents on Park Ave in the hopes of getting the resident's input regarding the installation of speed pillows. He noted that another discussion at the meeting is the new crosswalk buttons at 6th & 7th Streets and Main. The buttons have been unreliable and many complaints come in to the borough and the college. Upon research, it was discovered that there is an agreement in place between the College and the Borough that Ursinus will cover the cost of maintaining the button. We are in the process of working with PennDOT to obtain the new equipment which only requires a wave in front of the sensor to activate the light. This, hopefully, will be less problematic and also a contact-free option. Chief Bucher said the plan is to try it at 6th & Main and if it works well, look at replacing more of the buttons around town. Ms. Twardowski said she spoke with a representative of PennDOT and that this new equipment does not yet have "provisional approval" and may take a while to get it. We will continue to work to move the process along.

Parks: Ms. Costello reported that she ordered five trees for Collegeville Park and they will be planted next week. She and Mr. Leh met with the Eagle Scouts regarding placement of the Gaga Pit. Fundraising has begun for the supplies and the project will begin in the spring.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

Engineer: Mr. Leh reported that the realigned First Avenue opened to the public on November 17. Construction on the vacated portion of First Ave, near Monro Muffler, is scheduled to be completed the week of December 7. The store plans to reopen in January. WB Homes has submitted their conditional

use application and land development plans for the Freeland Square project. (former Rees building) The plans will be reviewed by the Planning Commission at their December meeting (Dec 19) and a conditional use hearing will be subsequently scheduled.

Solicitor: Mr. Grieser reported that he has been working on a draft revision of the ordinance regarding open fires. As is, the ordinance restricts open flame within 50 feet of any structure and 25 feet from a fence line or bushes/trees. He said he spoke with the Fire Chief and the Fire Marshall and that their main concern is having the authority to extinguish any fire they deemed unsafe. Ms. Spencer and Mr. Hoffmann added that they feel that the wording in the current ordinance is unclear and needs more work. Many people enjoy fire pits and grills in their backyard and most do not have those placed 50 feet from their homes. Mr. Hoffmann feels that the ordinance was written before these things were so popular and was written to deal with outdoor burning. Ms. Twardowski thinks outdoor burning should be removed completely since no one should be burning leaves or cardboard, as they are both recyclables. It was agreed that more research in how neighboring municipalities handle this issue needs to be done before the new ordinance gets advertised.

Manager: Ms. Twardowski reported that we are now using Keystone Municipal Services for our inspection agency, and they do not do electric reviews or inspections. They work in conjunction with United Inspections and she would like council to approve this clarification. She is looking into our inspection costs, the companies themselves, and our fee schedule to make sure they are comparable.

MOTION to approve United Inspections for electric permit reviews and inspections by Ms. McKinney with a second by Ms. Spencer **MOTION** carries 7-0

She noted that there was a resident complaint from 6 E First Ave regarding some dead trees on borough property that could potentially affect power lines. Mr. Hastings went to check and confirmed that they are all on borough property and that they should be addressed before winter. Three estimates were obtained and the lowest was about \$4K. This was not a budgeted item, but our manager feels confident the funds can be reallocated to be able to pay for this necessary work now. Ms. Twardowski noted there was correspondence from the Library and the Visiting Nurses thanking the borough for their donations.

She also spoke with Mr. Grieser about exercising the option to extend the plowing contract with B&M in anticipation of winter and both agree it should be extended.

MOTION to extend the plowing contract with B&M for 2021 by Ms. McKinney with a second by Mr. Hoffmann. **MOTION** carries 7-0

Police: Chief Bucher noted that his report is available for review. He noted two bad accidents this month, but said overall all numbers of accidents and incidents are down. Ms. McKinney expressed concern and hopes that our first responders are taking care of themselves. The Chief said that they are all healthy and thanked her. The Chief reported that there was a series of car break ins and implored everyone to lock their cars.

Collegeville Fire Co: Mr. Freas reported that there were 31 calls last month, 15 of which were in the borough. The average time from call to on scene is 10 minutes. There were 287 man/woman hours of service last month which consisted of calls, meetings, maintenance and training.

Mayor: No report

MOTION to approve the committee and administrative reports by Ms. McKinney with a second by Mr. Hoffmann
MOTION carries 7-0

Public Discussion:

Chris Louten – 39 E 4th Ave – Mr. Louten asked Mr. Farr if liquid filled speed pillows were considered. Mr. Farr said he is not familiar with those and asked Mr. Louten if he had any experience driving over them. Mr. Louten said he has not and thinks they are popular in Europe but not sure if they are here. Mr. Leh added that to use liquid fuels funds, the material has to be approved by PennDOT and this product is not listed as acceptable in the traffic calming book. Mr. Farr said that the borough does not have the money for the project and has to be able to use liquid fuels money.

Alex Tweedie -316 Colonial Ave- Mr. Tweedie agreed that more work needs to be done to the ordinance regarding fire pits. He said that most residents would find it a problem if the setbacks stay what they are presently. Most people do not have yards big enough to accommodate such setbacks. He also expressed concern about the lack of a reserve account at Public Works. As a taxpayer, he would like clarification on how the funds are held. He appreciates our committee members questioning this and looks forward to answers.

Robert Botti -713 Clahor Ave- Mr. Botti asked Mr. Leh if there will be an arrow added to southbound Route 29 near Transfleet and also if there are plans to add a NO TURN ON RED sign on Main St. Mr. Leh said he will check and advise.

Chris Louten -39 E4th Ave- Mr. Louten noted that the fire ordinance in Upper Providence they have items in specific sections for fire pits, grills etc and he thinks we should consider that for our ordinance.

Public Comments CLOSED

Ms. Kernen reflected since this is the last meeting of 2020, she wanted to share her appreciation and pride in the current council. She said that they maximized our existing revenues so that taxes did not have to be raised. She thanked Mr. Hoffmann for his hard work on the 2021 budget and said how happy everyone is with their decision to hire Ms. Twardowski. Ms. Kernen noted that the partnership with Ursinus College is strong and is looks forward to collaborating with them to continue with revitalization plans to turn Collegeville into a vibrant college town for residents and students. She praised Ms. Costello for her efforts in fencing in the park for the safety of the kids and looks forward to further enhancements there. WB Homes is moving forward to take a property that was an eyesore and make it into upscale townhomes that will support our future vibrant downtown. Thanks always to our Mayor

who is such a great ambassador for our borough! Our annual tree lighting ceremony had to be replaced with a new Holiday House Decorating Contest. Residents can nominate their neighbors and the police officers on patrol can also nominate.

Ms. McKinney thanked Ms. Kernan for her leadership and hard work this year and all agreed.

Happy Holidays to all!!

Meeting Adjourned 9:38PM