

February 23, 2016

POTTSTOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL
POTTSTOWN SCHOOL BOARD JOINT MEETING

The Joint Meeting of the Pottstown Borough Council and the Pottstown School Board was called to order on Tuesday, February 23, 2016 at 7:20 p.m. at the Pottstown Senior High School, 750 North Washington Street, Pottstown, Pennsylvania.

Councilors present were Dan Weand, Sheryl Miller, Dennis Arms and Rita Paez. Also present were Borough Manager Mark Flanders, Assistant Manager Erica Batdorf, Mayor Sharon Valentine-Thomas, Finance Director Janice Lee, Attorney Matthew Hovey and Borough Secretary Virginia Takach.

Present for the School Board were Kimberly Stilwell, Thomas Hylton, Polly Weand, Ron Williams, Kurt Heidel and Emanuel Wilkerson. Also present were Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Sparagana, Solicitor Stephen Kalis, Director of Community Relations John Armato, Administrative Assistant Joanne Rhoads.

WELCOME

Dr. Sparagana welcomed all and introduced Pottstown High School Principal, Danielle McCoy. He also invited all to attend the all-district musical production of *The Wiz*, March 4-6.

Mrs. McCoy provided a tour of the High School.

SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

Donna Fabry and Jon Leshner, Montgomery County Planning Commission, were present to provide an update of the Pottstown Sustainability Plan.

Ms. Fabry explained that the Plan is a joint effort between the School District and Borough Council and consists of a Steering Committee and a Stakeholder Committee. She noted that the four different areas to develop are principles, vision, goals and individual action items. Ms. Fabry presented the new logo adopted by the Committee.

Ms. Fabry advised that she has met with the Environmental Advisory Council and the EAC will be the vehicle to implement the plan between the Borough and the School District.

Jon Leshner noted that this Sustainability Plan for Pottstown has become a model for various municipalities and is one of the first in the State to be a joint partnership between a municipality and a school district. Mr. Leshner also announced that his group has been selected to make a presentation on March 4th before the Delaware Valley Tri-State Symposium to discuss sustainability plans, with Pottstown as a case study. He also invited requests and comments through the Pottstown Sustainability Plan website.

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TRAFFIC SAFETY TOWN PROGRAM

Assistant Manager Erica Batdorf and David Genova, Wellness Coordinator for the Pottstown School District, provided an update on the Traffic Safety Town Program, a project under the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Association. Ms. Batdorf advised that this will be an educational and safety program, primarily geared to third graders, to interact with vehicular traffic and understand traffic signals.

Mr. Genova noted that the primary goal is the safety of the students adding that this program will be in conjunction with the Walking School Bus and other wellness initiatives geared toward the health and education of students.

UPDATE TRec DISTRICT, FILM FESTIVAL, CARES

Ms. Batdorf provided an update on the progress of the TRec (Tourism and Recreational) District, which encompasses the western gateway and the Carousel, Colebrookdale Railroad, Pottsgrove Manor and the Manatawny Green MiniGolf. She noted that the Carousel and Colebrookdale Station are scheduled to be open in the Spring/Summer of 2016. The Colebrookdale platform should be in place with new construction and design of a building. Ms. Batdorf added that the group is working with PennDOT for the replacement of the King Street Bridge to include safety and pedestrian friendly enhancements for the TRec District.

Ms. Batdorf also explained *In Focus*, the short film festival coming to Pottstown in June 2016. She encouraged all to become involved and requested film submissions to tell the Pottstown story. Ms. Batdorf provided the week-long schedule adding that the red-carpet gala is scheduled for June 10th, at the Steel River Playhouse.

Ms. Batdorf invited all to participate in the spring CARES project scheduled for April 15th in conjunction with the Rock the Block event, partnering with Habitat for Humanity, Glocker Realty, Genesis Housing and Victory Christian Life Ministries.

PAID UPDATE

Steven Bamford, Executive Director of the Pottstown Area Industrial Development, provided an update on activities and productions in the Borough. In the last 15 months, there has been an investment of \$4.6 million in the 100 and 200 blocks of High Street. Mr. Bamford explained the proposals for the properties, including restaurants and a brewery, including parking arrangements for the 200 block of High Street.

Industrial Redevelopment

Mr. Bamford also provided an update on the industrial area of Keystone Boulevard, the 255 acres within Pottstown and West Pottsgrove Township. He added that a \$200,000 grant was awarded from the County Redevelopment Authority and is being evaluated and planned under this grant. Mr. Bamford also reported that PennDOT is redesigning the "S" curve on the 422 bypass and the Stowe interchange, which would enhance the redevelopment of this area. He also provided a draft of a brochure for the TRec district to promote and cross market that area.

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LERTA

Dr. Sparagana referred to the Borough's draft ordinance and the School Board's draft resolution in consideration of adopting a LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance) District. He explained that this would allow development of properties with no tax increase on significant development and improvements to a property.

Manager Flanders also explained the process of being approved for LERTA. He advised that only the taxes of the increased value of the property would be deferred during the LERTA time-period. Mr. Flanders added that the property improvements would also be subject to all zoning and land development ordinances of the Borough.

Mrs. Weand questioned if a LERTA board would be established to oversee applications and criteria or would the Borough be the focus of the applications to LERTA. She also questioned if every applicant will be accepted into the program.

Mr. Flanders responded that any industrial, commercial or other business can apply if initial qualifications are met.

Attorney Kalis added that there are certain discretionary aspects that would relate to the enactment of the resolution and ordinance once established. He added that once application is submitted, it would be subject to the criteria and guidelines of the resolution and ordinance and therefore a board would not need to exist. Mr. Kalis also suggested that the Borough would have the first review.

Attorney Hovey agreed with Attorney Kalis' comments adding that certain criteria would have to be met based on the resolution and ordinance in place.

Mrs. Weand noted that her concern is that the School District have sufficient participation in the matter, being the largest taxing body.

Solicitor Kalis commented that the criteria would be driven by the amendments to the ordinance with agreement and review for compliance by the County and School District.

Mr. Hylton questioned the status of the tax abatement provided to Heritage Coach Company in the Keystone Opportunity Zone. He also noted that he obtained the inventory of businesses and employees throughout the Borough through the Right to Know process.

Mr. Bamford advised that Heritage is operating and has leased space with 58 people employed. He also noted that the inventory of business is available on tax data.

Mr. Hylton commented that in order to consider additional jobs in the Borough, one would need to know how many jobs presently exist and provided the numbers as obtained through the Right to Know data. Mr. Hylton also noted that in order to maintain the tax base and current spending practices, at least one hospital would need to be added in the Borough each year.

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President Weand suggested that once an applicant entered in the LERTA program, a reassessment of the property through the County, should be prohibited. He added that a threshold amount for improvements be established in the ordinance.

Vice President Miller commented on the recent updates and amendments to the Borough's Zoning Ordinance and suggested that a component in the LERTA ordinance be addressed for first responders and teachers in the School District.

It was the consensus of both Boards to form an ad hoc committee and meet in the near future to discuss the parameters of LERTA. The members assigned were Vice President Miller and Councilor Dennis Arms along with School Board members, Polly Weand and Ron Williams.

ROUND TABLE

President Weand reiterated his goal of establishing 100 new jobs in the Borough.

Mr. Williams expressed a concern regarding the lack of attendance at public meetings.

Councilor Arms thanked Principal McCoy and the culinary staff for hosting the meeting. He also commended staff at Barth Elementary during the recent water main break.

Board President Kim Stilwell advised Ms. Batdorf that Mr. Williams had a part in a movie as a suggestion for the *In Focus* event.

Manager Flanders advised that the next meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2016 with the location to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Submitted by,

Mark D. Flanders
Borough Manager