

October 5, 2016

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

The October 5, 2016 Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President Weand in the Council Meeting Room, Pottstown Borough Hall, and 100 East High Street, Pottstown, PA.

### ATTENDANCE

Councilors present were Ryan Procsal, Carol Kulp, Sheryl Miller, Dan Weand, Rita Paez and Joseph Kirkland. Also present were Manager Mark Flanders, Solicitor Charles Garner, Mayor Sharon Valentine -Thomas and Borough Secretary Virginia Takach. Councilor Arms was absent.

### INVOCATION

President Weand requested a moment of silence.

### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Infrastructure – Councilor Kulp reported that hydrant flushing continues. She also noted that the Carousel is progressing and nearly completed.
- b. Economic Development & Business Liaison – Manager Flanders advised that the last FARM event for this season is scheduled for October 13th.
- c. Transportation – Councilor Kulp advised that there was no meeting.
- d. Ricketts Community Center/OBGC – Councilor Paez commented that it has been difficult getting a report and may have a report for the regular meeting.
- e. Pottstown School Board – There was no report.
- f. Ad hoc Zoning – Councilor Procsal advised that the committee is seeking to schedule Ray Ott form Phoenixville for a presentation.

President Weand added that at the recent Pottstown Regional Planning Commission, there was an agreement to forward a letter of opposition regarding the proposed developments in Lower Pottsgrove Township and Douglass Township.

g. Ad hoc Animal – Vice President Miller noted that a meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

h. Safety – Chief Drumheller advised that the camera project is on schedule with a few minor changes in the original plan and should be operation by mid-November. The Chief also announced the first “Cops with Coffee” event is scheduled for October 20<sup>th</sup>, 12 – 2:00 p.m. at Connections on High.

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Chief Drumheller reported that he is working with the NAACP in an effort to have the new officers introduced and become more familiar with the various communities throughout the Borough.

### MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Thomas reviewed several events in which she recently attended, including the First Latino Festival, the Friends of the Forgotten, the 20-year anniversary of the Vietnam Memorial located in Memorial Park and the Carousel of Flavor festival.

### MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Flanders reported that Staff and Councilor Miller met with Habitat for Humanity and members of the YWCA to transfer ownership of the properties located at 323 and 325 King Street from the YWCA to habitat for Humanity in order to return the properties to owner-occupied dwellings. The YWCA has requested that Council authorize suspending the collection of back taxes and utilities in order for this plan to occur. Mr. Flanders advised that he would be forwarding the same request to the School District.

Mr. Flanders also advised that a meeting was held to discuss the Land Bank process to assist for-profit and non-profit developers to acquire vacant, blighted and tax delinquent properties to market value, owner-occupied properties. He noted that all taxing bodies will need to waive back taxes and liens on properties. Mr. Flanders added that he would be approaching the School District and the Authority and expected to have the report for discussion at next month's meeting.

Mr. Flanders reminded all of the upcoming PAL Food Festival scheduled for October 10<sup>th</sup> and also the October 10<sup>th</sup> Columbus Day holiday, and Borough Hall will be closed. He also noted that the Halloween Parade is scheduled for October 25<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Flanders provided a status of the draft 2017 budget, noting that originally there was a \$1.2 million delta. After meeting with each department head, the deficit in the general fund now stands at \$380,657, mostly due to the shrinking tax base through property reassessments and the granting of non-profit tax exemptions, along with an expected 15% in health care cost. Mr. Flanders welcomed suggestions from Council as to how to close the \$380,657 deficit.

### PRESENTATION – FIRE FIGHTERS & CIVILIAN

Chief Richard Lengel presented a Citizen Service Award to Billy Hill, caretaker of a local group home for underprivileged residents. Mr. Hill coordinated the evacuation of all residents of the building, wherein no one was injured and all were safely removed prior to the arrival of the Fire Department, allowing the Department to focus on fighting the fire.

Chief Lengel also presented lifesaving and exceptional duty awards to Battalion Chief Chad Quinter, Battalion Chief Mark Gibson, Firefighter and Driver Russell Blair, Captain Matthew Burfette and North Coventry Fire Chief Joel McMillan. Paramedic Richard Sweeney was unable to attend. Chief Lengel explained that an incident occurred on June 9, 2016, wherein a bridge inspector was physically stuck in mud in the Schuylkill River.

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Chief Lengel also provided comments acknowledging October as being Fire Prevention Month, urging all to use smoke alarms and precautions when cooking.

#### PROCLAMATIONS FIRE PREVENTION MONTH

Mayor Thomas presented proclamations to Chief Lengel and each of the four fire companies acknowledging Fire Prevention Month. Accepting the proclamations were Goodwill Fire Chief Kevin Yerger, Phillies Fire Chief Joe Groff, North End Fire Chief David Ondik and Empire Fire Chief Brian Sierocinski.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MONTH

Mayor Thomas that October is also Domestic Violence Month, along with it being Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The Mayor urged all to be aware of domestic violence incidents and report immediately by calling 911. She also provided the domestic violence statistics according to each ward, with Ward 1 and 3 being the highest.

#### REFINANCING BOND, PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jamie Schlesinger, Director of Public Financial Management Advisors was present to explain the cost savings in refinancing the Borough's General Obligation Bonds, Series of 1999. He noted that as interest rates are low at this time and the recent refinancing of the Authority bonds, it presents the Borough with a AA rating. Mr. Schlesinger advised that the closing could occur in early January and requested Council's approval in advertising a Parameter Ordinance, which is essentially establishes a savings threshold, parameters for maximum interest and principal amount.

President Weand noted that this would be listed for approval on Tuesday's agenda.

#### COLLECTION REAL ESTATE TAXES

Manager Flanders recommended having Portnoff Law Associates collect the delinquent real estate taxes.

Solicitor Garner noted that at one point, there was going to be a fee from the County pertaining to the collections, but that has gone away and is no longer an issue.

#### POLLOCK PARK

Assistant Manager Keller advised that through a \$25,000 DCNR mini grant, an RFP was advertised to hire a consultant for the design and master plan for the Pollock Park on Cross Street. Mr. Keller advised that the plan will include a base line mapping and a community outreach for the best use of that park. He added that nine proposals were received and Staff will have a recommendation for the regular agenda.

#### VACANT POSITIONS

Manager Flanders reviewed the various open positions and requested that any interested parties submit a letter of request.

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Mayor Thomas expressed an interest in being appointed to the Environmental Advisory Committee.

Manager Flanders confirmed that the Human Resources Department will assist in the Child Clearance and Criminal History requirements for anyone appointed to the Human Relations Commission.

#### COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS PRESENT

None.

#### COUNCILORS GENERAL DISCUSSION

Vice President Miller advised that the second Borough Buzz, titled “Sites, Sounds and Scents” was filmed and will air next week. Brent Wagner, Director of Utilities will host a community outreach and tour of the Wastewater Treatment Plant scheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup> 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Councilor Miller also thanked all involved with the Pet Fair, as she adopted a dog at the Fair.

Councilor Kulp advised that the Borough’s Association dinner was a success and commended Twila Fisher of The Hill School, for her presentation.

Councilor Procsal announced that there is one more week for the Pottstown FARM event and looked forward to next year.

Councilor Paez thanked Mayor Thomas for her proclamation presented at the Latino Festival and urged more Councilors to attend next year.

Mayor Thomas reiterated her concerns regarding the state budget and school funding. She advised that she has pamphlets explaining the equitable funding scenarios.

President Weand commended a Phoenixville official who recently spoke of the assets and liabilities of Pottstown who advised that Pottstown has more to offer in the area of economic development than Phoenixville had when it began its revitalization. President Weand added that \$11 million has recently been invested into the Borough of Pottstown. He also noted that when approved by the County, LERTA will be another incentive for investing in the Borough.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Attested,

Mark Flanders  
Borough Manager