

October 4, 2023

ANNOUNCEMENT

Borough Manager Keller explained the format for this evening's meeting, advising that the meeting is a public in-person and a GoTo Meeting and available on-line as well. Public comments are being accepted through email and chat until 7:05 p.m. and will be announced to all. Comments are limited to 300 words to be in compliance with Council's three-minute rule and participants shall be identified accordingly.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

The October 4, 2023, Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with President Weand in the Chair.

INVOCATION

President Weand requested a moment of silence. He asked all to remember West Pottsgrove Commissioner Tom Palladino and former First Ward Councilman Robert Douglass, who recently have passed away.

ATTENDANCE

Councilors present were Ryan Procsal, Lisa Vanni, Donald Lebedynsky, Trenita Lindsay, Dan Weand, Andrew Monastra and Joseph Kirkland. Also present were Mayor Stephanie Henrick, Borough Manager Justin Keller, Solicitor Charles Garner and Borough Secretary Virginia Takach.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENTATION – ELIAS SCIPIO

Mayor Henrick and Chief Markovich presented a Civilian Award to Elias Scipio for his courageous actions on March 27, 2023, wherein he assisted Officers Martin and Stolfus during a physical disturbance in process. Mr. Scipio was instrumental in apprehending the suspect, who carried a stolen handgun.

Mr. Scipio received a standing ovation from Council and the audience.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Infrastructure – Councilor Lebedynsky noted that the reports were in the packet.
- b. Transportation – There was a report in the packet.
- c. Efficient Methods Committee – Councilor Lebedynsky reported that handouts were provided at the recent meeting, making monitoring of change orders and work orders more efficient. He added that there is improved communication between Public Works and Licensing and Inspections.

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- d. Ordinance Review Committee – Councilor Procsal noted there was no meeting.

BOARDS & COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Human Relations Commission – Ms. Levengood advised that National Hispanic Heritage month continues to October 15th. She added that October 9th is Indigenous People Day and Columbus Day. She also reviewed other events throughout October.

- b. Library – Ms. Lipsky announced that the Library has received a Gold Star Library in the Pennsylvania Library Association Power Forward Program and voted Best Library by the Mercury in 2023. She also explained the need to increase the Library’s budget.

- c. Ricketts Community Center – There was no report.

- d. Pottstown School District – Councilor Lindsay advised all of the ongoing discussions for the Full and Fair Funding status for the School District. The protests will continue with Power. She also urged all to vote in November.

SOLICITOR’S REPORT

Solicitor Garner provided an overview of the budget process. The budget goes hand in hand with the tax ordinance. He advised that a draft budget is required 30 days prior to adoption, which will be presented this evening. The budget must be adopted by December 31st, adding that the final draft must be available for inspection 10 days prior to any action by Council. He added that it must be published in a paper of general circulation. Solicitor Garner advised that the tax ordinance, which funds the budget, is adopted at the last meeting of the year.

Solicitor Garner also explained that after every municipal election, Council is allowed to open and change the budget and tax ordinance, as new Council members may have been elected in November. This can be done prior to February 15th.

MAYOR’S REPORT

Mayor Henrick announced that November 13th is World Kindness Day and she is again conducting the Random Acts of Kindness challenge for members of Council. She also provided information on recent events in which she participated, including the event at the Pottstown Middle School and Ride for the River. Mayor Henrick reported that she met with some homeless individuals in the Encampment and urged Council to do so as well. Mayor Henrick outlined the upcoming fall events in October. She also thanked Kyle is Public Works for his assistance and polite customer service with her trash pick-up issue.

MANAGER’S REPORT

Manager Keller urged all to view the Newsletter available to all on the website and to sign up for notifications on the website. He added that the Schuylkill Passenger Rail Service meeting is scheduled for an in-person meeting on October 23rd 3:00 p.m. at the MCCC, North Hall. Mr.

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Keller also provided information on the September 26th Limerick Generating Drill, which was successful with a positive response from the PEMA observer present at the meeting.

President Weand announced a very positive report from the FTA commending Staff for the successful Triennial Review and the recent Foreign Car Show.

Mr. Keller noted that the Review is overseen by Kourtney High, Grants Assistant, and commended her for her efforts.

2024 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Manager Keller and Finance Director Marley Boone presented the first draft of the 2024 budget. Mr. Keller advised that the current overall deficit stands at \$504,259, which would result in a tax increase of 4.93%. This would equate to a tax bill increase of \$70.11 for a home in the Borough assessed at \$100,000. Mr. Keller advised that certain items such as wage increase and health care costs, along with funding the capital budget are some drivers for the increase. He noted a payment from Tower Health Pottstown Hospital is being held in escrow, due to the pending court case.

Mr. Keller explained the major capital purchases which include 2 police vehicles and a jet-vac truck and a \$100,000 to create a grant program to repair sidewalks damaged by street trees. Mr. Keller referred to the analysis of the real estate assessments from 2004 to 2024. He also outlined the tax bill breakdown, being 68% school tax, 25% Borough and 7% County tax.

Ms. Boone referred to the tax-exempt parcels, which increased from 305 in 2011 to 332 expected in 2024. If these parcels paid taxes on their property, the extra revenue would be an increase of \$2,161,816. She also reviewed the trend of overall tax increases, such as the Local Enabling tax with an increase of 4%.

Ms. Boone reviewed the General Fund with a deficit of \$403,000. She also reviewed the major capital purchases in the general budget, which included one new police vehicle and police document management system upgrade for 2024-2025. This also includes maintaining the capital savings contribution of \$100,00 and the OPEB funding of \$250,000. She also advised that the 2024 estimated assessment is \$758,330,808.

Mr. Keller reviewed several projects under the Capital Plan, which include the HVAC upgrades, boiler replacement, roof repair for the Borough Hall and stormwater arch repairs.

Ms. Boone reviewed the Parks & Recreation budget with a deficit of \$62,000. Capital projects for 2024 include the Memorial Park Pedestrian Bridge, the Riverfront Park Bridge and streambank restoration. She also noted that the library has requested funds in the amount of \$212,000 and the Trash Fund budget is \$3,672,696 and proposing a trash rate increase of 10%. The bond for the Borough Garage Facility will be paid off in 2028. She added that Fire budget is balanced for 2024 with no tax increase anticipated.

Ms. Boone summarized that the budget is at \$64,021,578 with a deficit of \$504,000, which would result in a 4.93% increase or a \$70.11 annual increase to homes assessed at \$100,000.

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Mr. Keller added that Staff continues to work on reducing the deficit and will provide Council the update at his earliest convenience.

Councilor Monastra questioned the assessment analysis as related to the Common Level Ratio equalizer.

Mr. Keller agreed to review this matter.

Councilor Vanni commented that she is pleased to see the contribution towards sidewalk repair due to damage by tree roots.

Chief Markovich confirmed that the Department assists other departments through a Mutual Aid Agreement.

Solicitor Garner advised that the appeal for the Hospital goes back to 2017 and the status of the case is that the Commonwealth Court reversed the decision of the Montgomery County Court that the Hospital should be subject to real estate tax. The Hospital has filed a petition to be heard at the Supreme Court, which is still pending.

PRESENTATION – PRPL

Mindy Lipsky, Executive Director of the Pottstown Regional Public Library, provided a brief explanation of the Library's programs and offerings. She advised that the Library provides service to the Borough of Pottstown, Lower Pottsgrove, West Pottsgrove and Upper Pottsgrove. Ms. Lipsky also outlined the challenges for upkeep of the Library, educational resources and staff compensations. She announced a venture with the Pottstown School District for students to use their School identification for Library services.

PRESENTATION – PARRC

Michael Lenhart, Director of Parks & Recreation, provided a five-year funding plan for the Pottstown Area Regional Recreation Committee. He outlined the collaboration with the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation, Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee and the Schuylkill River Greenway, along with the 8 municipalities, being Pottstown Borough, Upper, Lower, West, North Coventry, East Coventry, Douglass and Washington Townships. Mr. Lenhart provided the success of having Patricia McClosky as the Regional Recreation Planner, in preparing and administering grants and coordination of staffing. Since 2012, PARRC has benefited from \$4.9 million in grants and private donations. He also provided a list of major park development projects, including the Utility Box murals and a new Parks & Recreation assistant for PARRC. Mr. Lenhart provided the contribution of each of the eight municipalities for each of the five years, beginning September 2024 through August 2029.

President Weand added that a Resolution will be listed for consideration on the regular agenda.

MANATAWNY GREEN LEASE AGREEMENT

Mr. Keller requested approval of a vendor for a one-year lease for the use of the kitchen area at Manatawny Green.

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PART – FIRST AMENDMENT TO CONTRACT AGREEMENT

Mr. Keller referred to the amendment to the contract related to compensation paid by the FTA to the contractor. The amendment is stating for a three-year term and two one-year extension, the compensation would not exceed \$11 million.

PART ACT 44 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Manager Keller also noted that another result of the Triennial Review was associated with Act 44, requiring local transportation organizations that receive state operating assistance to participate in periodic reviews to assess agency performance.

President Weand advised that these PART items will be listed for consideration at Tuesday's meeting.

ZONING – EDWARD GOODWIN, 28 NORTH HANOVER STREET

Solicitor Garner reviewed the request of the applicant to establish a brewery at the 28 North Hanover Street property.

ZONING – FREDERICK WILLIAMS, 920 GLASGOW STREET

Solicitor Garner reviewed the request of the applicant to develop an event facility at the former Levensgood green houses.

ZONING – PALLADINO METAL FABRICATORS, 337 WEST HIGH STREET

Solicitor Garner outlined the request of the applicants to have two storage containers on the property at 337 West High Street.

President Weand advised that the zoning matters would be listed for possible action on Tuesday's agenda.

YWCA ART RESTORATION – CLOSE KING STREET, OCTOBER 19 – 21, 2023

Mr. Keller referred to the request of the YWCA to close King Street for the maintenance of the mural on King Street and a final event on October 21st. The event has been reviewed and approved by the Police and Fire Departments.

This will be listed for consideration on the regular agenda.

HALLOWEEN PARADE – OCTOBER 22, 2023

Possible action on the request of Hobart's Run to hold the Halloween Parade on October 22, 2023 resulting on the closing of High Street from Madison to York Streets from 3:00 p.m. 5:00 p.m., subject to review of the Police and Fire Departments.

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Mr. Keller explained that due to the short timeline, the applicant has begun to advertise the event and requested a favorable outcome this evening.

Solicitor Garner advised that public comment should be allowed on this matter prior to a vote.

HALLOWEEN EVENT, JANET FREEDLINE, 806 NORTH FRANKLIN ST- OCTOBER 31, 2023

TOSS YOUR TURKEY, KEYSTONE BLVD – NOVEMBER 23, 2023

FUNKY SANTA, COLLEGE DRIVE – DECEMBER 3, 2023

Mr. Keller reviewed the above requests for road closures for upcoming events and requested that these be listed for consideration on Tuesday's agenda.

DISCUSSION ON SCHEDULING TIMES FOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Councilor Vanni suggested that times for certain committee meetings be moved to an evening time slots in order for additional applicants to join committees. She also addressed the possibility of having Staff being paid overtime if required to attend. She would like a dialogue and conversation on this issue and requested interested constituents and Council to contact her.

Mayor Henrick noted that she likes the idea of moving committee meetings to virtual or hybrid afternoon meetings.

UPCOMING BOARD VACANCIES

President Weand reviewed the upcoming board vacancies as follows:

- a. Blighted Property Review - one vacant term to expire December 1, 2023
- b. EAC – one vacant term to expire August 10, 2024 (for November)
- c. HARB – one vacant term to expire April 1, 2027 (Wayne Fenstermacher) (for November)
- d. Land Bank Board – one vacant term to expire April 9, 2026
- e. Planning Commission –one vacant term to expire February 1, 2025 (for November)

Mr. Keller noted that one applicant for the Land Bank has withdrawn the application.

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS PRESENT

a. Kyle Weaver, 556 King Street – noted that he is in favor of the funding for repairing sidewalks from tree damage and would hope it will include tree trimming as well. He reiterated his concerns regarding the trash throughout the Borough. He noted he has gathered 40 bags of trash since complaining about trash that he has picked up on his own.

b. Doug Slick, 474 North Evans Street – praised the Licensing & Inspections Department for addressing his concerns about trash and an abandoned car in a nearby alley, which was addressed and resolved in 2 days. He commented on the unhoused individuals on trails and throughout the

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Borough. He urged Council to find housing and keep the individuals warm throughout the winter. He outlined the services available in the area to assist these citizens.

HALLOWEEN PARADE – Councilor Procsal moved to approve the request of Hobart’s Run to hold the Halloween Parade, on October 22, 2023 resulting in the closing of High Street, from Madison to York Streets, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., subject to review of the Police and Fire Departments. Councilor Lindsay seconded the motion.

Mayor Henrick requested Council’s participation with the Monster Mash during the parade.

The motion carried: 6 ayes, 1 abstention. Councilor Monastra abstained due to his affiliation with Hobart’s Run. (Affidavit attached.)

COUNCILORS’ GENERAL DISCUSSION

Councilor Monastra commented that certain financial records should be requested of anyone or any organization seeking funding from the Borough, along with a report showing how money will be used. He also reminded all of the October 7th Edgewood History Walk with tickets still available and the October 21st Edgewood Clean- up event.

President Weand noted that there was a discussion on these financial requirements during today’s Finance Committee meeting. He suggested at least an annual financial report.

Councilor Lindsay noted that this week is National Newspaper Week. She added that there will be another safety alarm on October 11th. She thanked all involved in providing a Halloween Parade. Councilor Lindsay also congratulated the Veterans honored at the recent Veterans’ Day event.

Councilor Vanni advised that her visit and discussions with certain members of the unhoused community was quite humbling. She would like Council and the community to reach a solution. Councilor Vanni urged all to contact elected officials to address the AI ongoing issues. She also praised Gail in the Finance Department for her outstanding customer service.

Councilor Procsal expressed appreciation on behalf of his sons for the upcoming Halloween Parade.

Mayor Henrick added that the North End Swim Club will have an event on October 14th, 5-8pm.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Weand recessed the meeting to executive session at 9:08 p.m. for collective bargaining and litigation matters, with no action to follow.

ADJOURNMENT

President Weand adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

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VOTING CONFLICT MEMORANDUM

In accordance with the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act, I am filing this memorandum to publicly announce and disclose my abstention from voting on the matter listed below, and the reasons for abstention.

Name of Official: Andrew J. Monastre

Position Held: Councilor

Date of Public Meeting: 10/4/23

Matter Voted Upon: Hobart's Run Halloween Parade Request

Reason for Abstention / Nature of Conflict of Interest:

Board Member of Hobart's Run

I direct that this memorandum be filed, as a public record, with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting in which the vote is taken.

Date: 10/4/23


Signature