

February 24, 2009 CAUCUS MEETING
MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE BOROUGH OF MT. EPHRAIM

MEETING CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Wolk called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

SALUTE TO FLAG:

All present pledged their allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT

ABSENT

Commissioner Gilmore	___x___	_____
Commissioner Greenwald	___x___	_____
Mayor Wolk	___x___	_____

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Borough Solicitor – Joe Marrazzo
Borough Engineers – Joe Federici & Doug Aiken
PW Supervisor – Ken Jones
Zoning Officer – Chris Fitzgerald
Police Chief – Ed Dobleman
Richard Schwab - Consultant

“OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW” ANNOUNCEMENT:

Mayor Wolk announced this Meeting has been advertised and notices posted in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

See comments under Other Public Safety Items

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS:

Administration & Finance:

Mayor Wolk advised those present that the process of developing this year’s budget is evolving. The Borough is trying to reduce the amounts that are currently over the budget cap and are approximately \$133,000. There is a Joint Insurance Claim which the

Borough has requested to be spread over a three year period as opposed to having the full amount due this year. There will be a line by line review of all budget items in an effort to further reduce the cap overage. Commissioner Gilmore reported that the Police Department will be reviewing departmental figures at an upcoming meeting on Thursday, February 26th. They will be looking at the possibility of re-negotiating some items. Mayor Wolk indicated that the Borough is following the State guidelines, but it will be at least a month or more before a final budget is prepared and submitted.

The possibility of conducting a new dog census was discussed. The Acting Borough Clerk advised that, after the free rabies clinic to be held on March 7th, late notices would be sent out to those who have not yet obtained their dog licenses for 2009. An extra effort will also be made at that time to re-visit the dog licensing records from 2006 to ensure that those, who had dogs licensed in that year and who still have the pets, will need to obtain a 2009 license. After that process is completed, the Clerk will report back on what will need to be done as far as a census.

Richard Schwab, a consultant to the Borough, reported on a proposal to create a new COAH plan. He indicated that a line item would probably be needed in the budget to cover the writing of the plan and legal coverage. This step would be necessary before the Borough could contract with Bill Harris, a certified planner. Joe Marrazzo, Borough Solicitor, was to look into providing a proposal for legal coverage. In other COAH matters, Richard Schwab noted that a letter has been sent to the State regarding the desire of the Borough to remain in the program, and a request that the Borough be permitted to temporarily suspend participation while the Borough moves toward other steps to ensure compliance with COAH requirements.

Richard Schwab reported on the progress being made on filling the Borough Clerk position with an individual who is certified by the State as a Registered Municipal Clerk as required by statute. Details are being finalized and a copy of the tentative agreement is being sent to Dan Kaminski, Department of Community Affairs, for his review and approval. The Borough has proposed a shared services agreement with the Borough of Barrington which will enable Terry Shannon, who is currently the Borough Clerk in Barrington, to also serve in the same capacity for Mt. Ephraim.

The Acting Borough Clerk reported that there are two water delinquencies, not related to bankruptcy filings, which remain unresolved at this time. Joe Marrazzo is to send a letter to the two delinquent parties to advise them of possible legal action which may be instituted due to their failure to pay the past due amounts. Because the delinquencies occurred in locations outside the Borough, but were serviced by the Borough, they could not be included in the Tax Sale held annually to sell liens on outstanding prior year delinquencies.

Richard Schwab and the Acting Borough Clerk reported on the progress of the Doc Star program which was designed to make access to records faster, provide a secure back-up off-site in at least two other locations, and reduce the use of paper. Richard Schwab and

Marie Darlington attended a training session in Camden and will take part in additional on-site training in the Borough on February 26th.

A discussion took place regarding the Davis Avenue property on which a Tax Title Lien acquired by the Borough had been foreclosed. Joe Marrazzo explained that the Borough can sell the property by public auction or bid and has the legal right to set a minimum price as well as the right to refuse to accept any bids if desired at the time of the sale. Since this will raise additional revenue for the Borough, there was a consensus that the Borough should move forward with holding a public sale to liquidate the property. Joe Marrazzo is to move forward with the preparation of the necessary legal notice to advertise the sale.

The Acting Borough Clerk reported that a request has been made for the Borough to provide a week long use of the Borough Courtroom for the purpose of the Census Bureau holding training sessions for the 2010 Census. Because of the limited parking available in the school parking lot, it was determined that the Borough facilities would not be sufficient for that purpose. However, the Borough would make its facility available if needed for an occasional testing site.

The Acting Clerk advised that the Borough was asked by the Camden County Board of Elections to confirm the polling locations it would use for the 2009 Primary Election in June and the General Election in November. When an email was sent to the Fire Company to confirm the use of the Bell Road Fire Hall for the Primary, they responded that the use of the building might be in jeopardy due to the time schedule for the new building. A meeting was to be scheduled for Thursday to visit MEPRI to see if that site would meet the requirements a polling place. If that proves to be suitable, the County Board of Elections will schedule a meeting to determine if the facility can serve as the polling place for a two year period of time while the new Fire Company building is constructed and the Lambert Avenue facility is converted into a Senior Citizen center.

Police:

The Police Chief indicated that he attended a meeting with State and County Police officials to discuss the viability of having other departments or the State Police cover Audubon Park in light of their desire not to renew their contract with Audubon. The Chief said that the cost of coverage by the State Police exceeded that of having Audubon cover the services. In reviewing whether other local departments could provide the coverage, the question of what type of services Audubon Park was seeking was raised. The Chief suggested that they were looking for basic service such as traffic enforcement 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Another major variable to be decided was the manpower need to service both communities. The Chief was to put together some figures and information for Commissioner Gilmore to review. Yet another question to be addressed was what type of administrative cost was to be added to cover increased Borough expenses. Commissioner Gilmore will meet with the Chief on Thursday, February 26th to examine these and other issues in greater detail.

Emergency Management:

Fire:

It was reported by the Borough Engineer at a previous meeting that the Phase I environmental assessment revealed some soil contamination at the Bell Road Fire House site due to some minor leakage from an old oil tank on the premises. This discovery will probably result in the need for removal of some soil and water from the site, but remediation of the condition is expected to be minimal. Moving forward on this will require an amendment to the agreement of sale as to who will cover the cleanup and contingencies so that the Borough and Fire Company can go to closing and complete the transfer of title to the property. Joe Federici advised that Earth Engineering will need to be on-site during the demolition. Joe Marrazzo, Borough Solicitor, is to draw up an amendment to the agreement of sale which would make provision for the Borough to take possession of the property and agreeing to cover clean-up costs to a maximum of \$25,000. Joe Marrazzo also advised that the lease agreement document should undergo a final review prior to closing. Joe Federici, Borough Engineer, suggested that the Fire Company set up a check list of what is happening when, so that progress and deadlines can be monitored more carefully.

Other Public Safety Items:

Robin Tiedeken, who was representing the Audubon Band Boosters, asked to address the Commissioners regarding having a coin toss at the Black Horse Pike and Kings Highway as a fund raising activity for the Audubon High School Band. The organization has successfully conducted the event during the last several years. Commissioner Gilmore said that his first concern was for the safety of those involved. He advised Mrs. Tiedeken that the officers on duty will have the authority to shut down the activity if there is any disregard for safety regulations. Mrs. Tiedeken responded that all necessary permits will be obtained by the organization and that every effort will be made to ensure that safety precautions are taken. She expressed her appreciation for the consideration given her by the Commissioners.

Public Works:

Ken Jones reported that construction and repair work on the manhole cover on Market Street should begin in about two weeks.

Commissioner Greenwald indicated that the Borough is looking down the road to better prepare for retirements and personnel changes in the Public Works Department when they occur. In order to maintain continuity of service, he recommended that the Borough establish a "Working Foreman" position for one of the current employees to allow time for proper training and at least 2 years of schooling. Richard Schwab noted that, in order to be appointed as a Certified Public Works Manager, the State requires that one must be

involved in supervisory work for a period of 5 years as one of the conditions of becoming certified. Ken Jones indicated that there were a few union related issues which had to be resolved and noted that no disciplinary action could be enacted by anyone holding the position of Working Foreman if he is still a member of the union. It was agreed that Richard Schwab would meet with the union representative to clarify this plan and ensure there is no conflict with the union contract.

Richard Schwab advised that correspondence was sent to John Daly at the County Community Development Block Grant Office clarifying the fact that the CDBG Grant would be used for the removal of architectural barriers at the Lambert Avenue site. The Borough will soon be authorizing the preparation of bids for some of the work to be done at that site.

Commissioner Greenwald commented on a recent Planning Board review of the old Black Horse Pike Redevelopment Plan. It was the opinion of the Camden County Improvement Authority that the plan was too vague and needed to be defined more clearly with respect to the Fantasy Showbar and Budget Inn areas. The CCIA indicated their willingness to help in further developing and refining a new plan for the area. Mayor Wolk commented on a recent Daily News article regarding the Showbar site. He expressed what appeared to be a common sentiment that Borough officials desired to replace the existing two locations noted with other businesses that would be more desirable in the community. Joe Marrazzo explained various issues pertaining to possible acquisition of properties by a municipality through purchase.

Chris Fitzgerald, Zoning Officer, advised that the Borough has been making some progress on the removal of junk cars. He said that some permits have been issued which allow residents to work on a car so long as specific conditions are met with respect to storage of the vehicle and length of time during which work can continue. Chris also noted that there had been a complaint regarding a residence being used as a possible boarding house. Because boarding houses are not permitted in the Borough, the situation will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Ken Jones, Public Works Supervisor, informed the Commissioners that work on the Library renovation has begun. The interior of the building has been repainted and work on the bathroom facilities will be underway shortly. The Library will be closed during the time while the renovations are taking place but the Librarian will make every effort to accommodate the reader's requests during that time.

Engineer:

Joe Federici reported that the Borough has been very proactive in trying to get funding for some of the road reconstruction work that needs to be done in town. He has attended meetings regarding the possible availability of stimulus funds to be doled out by the State for creating jobs by making infrastructure improvements. He advised that he submitted a

cost estimate to the State League of Municipalities for a number of Borough streets which are in need of resurfacing that might qualify for use of those grants funds.

The Acting Borough Clerk was contacted by Congressman Andrews Office and asked to submit possible projects to them which are “shovel ready” and which could start almost immediately if Federal stimulus money becomes available. She noted that, in December, several projects were submitted to Andrew’s Office for consideration. However, because some of those items are dependent upon a new Redevelopment Plan, the areas needing attention were prioritized in such a way that roadwork would be ready to be worked on more quickly and benefit the town immediately. The Borough Engineers were asked to get a detailed listing along with cost estimates to the Acting Borough Clerk by Thursday, February 26, so that the information could be delivered to Congressman Andrew’s Office by Friday.

It was reported that the work on implementing the sewer easements in the area of Linden, Adams, and Linwood Avenues is continuing. To date, two of the parties have signed the easements and the third party is expected to sign sometime next week.

A discussion took place regarding the parking situation along Centre Avenue near Kingsway Station. There was a recommendation made to limit parking to one side along the affected area.

Ken Jones and Joe Federici discussed the impact of the new Kingsway Station homes on trash collection in the Borough. The added homes will undoubtedly raise disposal costs due to increased trash collection. Joe Federici also noted that the trash trucks will also have some impact on the streets within the development due to the weight of the trucks.

Joe Federici mentioned that resurfacing work in Cedar Avenue was expected to start around July 6th. He also noted that improvement work on the Harding Avenue Pump Station is underway.

Bid openings for the Harding Avenue generator will be taking place next week. In another matter, Bob Henry sent a letter to Walgreens regarding the shrubs at their location.

Solicitor:

Richard Schwab advised that there had been a request for information related to any legal activity which occurred as a result of the enforcement of a Public Intoxication ordinance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

COMMENTS BY OFFICIALS: None

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Commissioner Gilmore and seconded by Commissioner Greenwald to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Darlington
Acting Borough Clerk