

AMBLER BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES

April 17, 2018

The regular monthly meeting of Ambler Borough Council was held Tuesday, April 17, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at Borough Council Chambers located at 131 Rosemary Avenue, Ambler, Pennsylvania, 19002.

Council President DeRuosi called the Council Meeting to order. He led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call – Present: Mr. DeRuosi, Mr. Pasceri, Mr. Zaccone, Mrs. Deininger, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Hertz, Ms. DiPietro, Ms. Endicott and Mrs. Siskind. Solicitor Bresnan of Dischell, Bartle & Dooley, Chief Foley and Borough Manager Aversa were present. Mayor Sorg was absent.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. DeRuosi made a motion to approve the Minutes of the March 20, 2018 Council Meeting. Seconded. Carried.

Pension Plans Presentation: A presentation on the state of the Borough's Police Department and Non-Uniformed employee pension plans was made by Joe Duda of Joe Duda Actuarial Consulting and by Financial Advisor Scott Repke of Alliance Bernstein.

Mr. Duda stated all funds are solid and both are overfunded. Specifically, the Non-Uniformed Employee fund was overfunded by \$361,000 on 12/31/16 and by \$594,000 on 1/31/17. The Police Department pension was overfunded by \$817,000 on 12/31/16 and by \$1,300,000 on 12/31/17. Looking ahead, Mr. Duda stated he would consider lowering the interest rate's rate of return to about six percent in 2019, balancing trying not to need to have a Borough-funded contribution. He stated that longevity assumptions are retirement at age 50 with 25 years' service for the Police and retirement at age 62 with 25 years' service to collect unreduced benefits for a Non-Uniformed employee. Borough Finance Manager Gail Gordon noted that the fund is strong because realistic numbers are used to calculate returns and because the pension has always been funded conservatively.

Mr. Repke stated that at present the funds are experiencing flat, break-even returns. He stated that the funds began in 1986 with \$1,193,000 in funding and at present are valued at \$15,162,000. He anticipates lower returns with more volatility during this investment year.

Council Vice President Hertz inquired about how investment decisions are made, noting that she does not favor investing in tobacco, defense, and extractives (oil and mining). She asked whether the fund always maximizes investment at any cost or whether Council could limit categories for investment. She stated she would like to add a 'sustainable portfolio.' Mr. Repke replied that he is a 'discretionary manager' and as such self-determines investment decisions. He stated that limitations on investment options could hinder performance of the portfolio. Councilperson Tomlinson stated that the pension is managed

for the benefit of the employees and that Council should not be making a statement by influencing investment decisions.

A discussion was held regarding how to involve Council in investment selections and how to obtain Borough employee input. Several residents spoke up stating that if there is a shortfall because investments have not been maximized, Borough residents will have to pay for the shortfall. Vice President Hertz stated that Council has not yet made decisions on this matter and that no vote would be taken this evening on pension investments.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Committees of Ambler Borough Council met Tuesday, April 3, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at Borough Council Chambers located at 131 Rosemary Avenue, Ambler, Pennsylvania, 19002. Present: Mr. DeRuosi, Ms. Hertz, Mr. Pasceri, Mr. Zaccone, Mrs. Deininger, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. DiPietro, Ms. Endicott and Mrs. Siskind. Mayor Sorg, Solicitor Bresnan of Dischell, Bartle & Dooley, Chief Foley and Borough Manager Aversa were present.

At the Council Meeting this evening, the Committees conducted business as follows:

Public Safety Committee – Mr. Claudio Zaccone, Chairperson

Committee members: Mrs. Deininger, Mrs Siskind

The Public Safety Committee report was given this evening by Mr. Zaccone.

The Committee will consider the following action this evening:

1. Consider adoption of **Resolution 2018-07** supporting legislation to further regulate firearms including assault weapons ban.

Discussion ensued. Brian Quinn of 323 Valley Brook Road stated his support of the Second Amendment, that gun statistics are skewed and that prohibitive measures do not address motive. Furthermore, he stated concern about Council rubberstamping the resolution without their knowledge of support for the resolution in the Borough.

In other business the following was reviewed:

1. The Police Department, Fire Department and Community Ambulance Association reports were received.
2. The Public Works and Code Enforcement reports were received.
3. Borough Council is considering options to address the concerns of the residents as regard stormwater plans and traffic studies for the proposed St. Mary's Development.

Pedestrian Detour Plans were reviewed as well as traffic counts for Lindenwold Avenue and Bethlehem Pike.

4. A scope of work and fee proposal for the Small Bridge and Culvert Visual Condition Assessments was received.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Tomlinson questioned what she considered to be the high cost for these services. Ms. Aversa clarified that the quote was to include load ratings for the Hendricks, Maple and Ridge Avenue bridges. She stated she would review the cost proposal with the engineer.

5. Staff provided a 24/7 Assistance Helpline card for “2-1-1“ which is a helpline for housing and homelessness, food access, physical and mental health services, job search and training assistance, and disaster services.
6. Staff is preparing a plan for the Ambler Square lot and the use of bollards is being reviewed. The grassy area at the lot is not part of the Borough parcel.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Siskind stated that she had hoped for an aesthetic temporary fix and asked that staff consider approaching CVS Pharmacy to work with them on the grassy area. She noted that by the Borough allowing parking, individuals were parking downtown for free.

7. The Red Cross has scheduled a blood drive at Ambler Borough Hall Gym to be held Wednesday, June 13th from 2:00-7:00 p.m.

Mr. Zaccone asked if there were comments or questions from Council or the public. There being nothing further, it was moved the Committee’s report be accepted as filed. Seconded. Carried.

Public Utilities Committee – Mr. Salvatore Pasceri, Chairperson

Committee members: Mr. Zaccone, Ms. Tomlinson, Mrs. Siskind

The Public Utilities Committee report was given this evening by Mr. Pasceri.

The Committee will consider no actions this evening.

In other business the following was reviewed:

1. The Engineer’s report was provided.
2. The Borough is considering moving forward to change the status of the Ambler Borough Water Department to form an Authority. After discussion at a previous

Committee Meeting it was agreed by Council that the Solicitor would prepare a memorandum outlining the process.

Discussion ensued. Solicitor Bresnan stated he was awaiting a PUC Law Bureau opinion before preparing a memorandum for Council.

3. Staff is obtaining quotes for the repaving of the Well 8 driveway at Loch Alsh.
4. Staff is obtaining quotes for the repair of the Loch Alsh Reservoir automatic valve.

Mr. Pasceri asked if there were comments or questions from Council or the public. Judy Baigis of 172 Tennis Avenue asked the Solicitor whether it had been determined if the WWTP could accept a bid if only one bid was received. Mr. Bresnan stated in the affirmative that they could do so. He added that if zero bids are received, noting that one does not have to go to bid when there is a sole source, then the project or item must be rebid. There being nothing further, it was moved the Committee's report be accepted as filed. Seconded. Carried.

Finance and Planning Committee – Ms. Francine Tomlinson, Chairperson

Committee Members: Ms. DiPietro, Ms. Endicott

The Finance and Planning Committee report was given this evening by Ms. Tomlinson.

The Committee will consider the following actions this evening:

1. Consideration that **March 2018** invoices in the amount of **\$886,278.01** be paid as follows: General (**\$184,322.02**); Street Lights (**\$4,504.35**); Fire (**\$9,401.79**); Refuse (**\$34,432.29**); Parks & Rec. (**\$2,237.04**); Water (**\$88,895.74.**); Sewer (**\$153,419.83**); WWTP (**\$372,916.37**); Debt Fund (**\$0.00**); Water Capital (**\$35,833.58**); Liquid Fuels (**\$315.00**).
2. Consider making a recommendation regarding the draft Ordinance addressing the planting and spread of bamboo in the Borough.

Discussion ensued. Brook Marshall of 157 Edgewood Drive stated her lack of support for any bamboo ordinance, stating specific scenarios that an ordinance might or might not cover, that such an ordinance goes against personal property rights, is discriminatory in that it targets only one invasive species, and is not enforceable. Ms. Siskind stated that the Committee had stripped back the ordinance because it could not anticipate all scenarios. Essentially, the ordinance would set forth a restriction on the planting of new bamboo. After making a correction for a typographical error, the Committee was prepared to make a recommendation to forward the draft ordinance to the Planning Commissions.

3. Consider purchasing, upon recommendation of the Parking Committee, three solar Strada BNA EVO2 display parking meters at a cost of \$25,950 as well as programming the existing kiosk meter at the Lindenwold Lot to accept credit cards.

Discussion ensued regarding where the Strada meters should be placed in the Borough's lots. The Parking Committee plans to have two installed at the Cavalier Lot at either entrance and have one installed at the Short Street Lot near the SEPTA station. Additional discussion was held on the "drop off" space in front of Ambler Theatre. Borough Manager Aversa stated that the curb would be painted yellow since the meter had been removed and people had been observed parking at that location. Bernadette Dougherty of 338 Tennis Avenue asked the Borough to consider reselling meters removed to another community. Finally, Ms. Hertz asked about the turnaround time for the meter order. Judy Baigis of 172 Tennis Avenue asked that the Parking Committee test the equipment they were considering purchasing, including studying the directions on use to ensure that their use would be clearly understood. Finally, Manager Aversa stated a 60-90 day turnaround was expected for the meter order and that new signage would be rolled out in time for the conversion.

In other business the following was reviewed:

1. The Borough Engineer's report was received.
2. Staff has prepared documents for the Finance and Planning Committee for the solicitation of Statements of Qualifications for specified professional services.
3. Staff has been working with SEPTA on the 2018 Farmers' Market lease.

Ms. Tomlinson asked if there were comments or questions from Council or the public. There being nothing further, it was moved the Committee's report be accepted as filed. Seconded. Carried.

Parks and Recreation Committee – Ms. Sara Hertz, Chairperson

Committee members: Mrs. Deininger, Ms. Endicott

The Parks and Recreation Committee report was given this evening by Ms. Hertz.

The Committee will consider no recommendations this evening.

In other business the following was reviewed:

1. The Committee will consider establishing a new program – *Friends of Borough Parks* – with residents who would like to volunteer their time and energy to improve the parks.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Endicott stated her intention to put a survey on the Borough website and a flyer in the parks to garner interest in the new program.

2. Knight Park Summer Day Camp will be held June 18 through July 27 (8:30-4:00 p.m.) weekdays. Camp registration is May 2nd (5-7 p.m.) at Ambler Borough Hall. Proof of Amber residency is required at registration. Camp is for children 5-11 and must have completed Kindergarten. Camp is \$40 per week per child. No extended Camp Care.
3. The Committee discussed EAC projects and would like assurance that the grant requirements are being met.
4. Earth Fest is scheduled for April 21 (10-2 p.m.) at Borough Hall.
5. The Committee would like a coordination of efforts between the Borough, Ambler Main Street, Plant Ambler and business owners to achieve a unified approach to Ambler's streetscape.
6. The Committee has received a request to consider permitting dogs in Ricciardi Park.

Discussion ensued. Ms. McKenna stated she was in favor of allowing dogs in the park. Both Mrs. Deininger and Mrs. Siskind stated Ricciardi Park is a 'tot park,' with Ms. Siskind adding that in addition to young children at the park, soccer players and pickleball courts add to park activity. As such, both stated they would not support allowing dogs at this park. Mr. Zaccone stated he sees a number of unleashed dogs at the park and that he would like the park to be maintained cleanly. A number of residents spoke in support of or against allowing dogs at Ricciardi Park or at any other additional parks in the Borough. Frequently mentioned were the issues of dog owners not leashing their dogs and not cleaning up after them. Ms. Siskind suggested that the Police Department conduct a targeted enforcement day. Sgt. Hoffman stated the PD would rather educate the public than be their dog police, but certainly headed the PD could involve more. Council President DeRuosi then tabled this discussion for a future Committee Meeting.

7. The Committee will be scheduling two Yoga Sessions and two Mindfulness Sessions in the parks as well as Family Movie Nights for the 2018 season.
8. The Wissahickon Valley Water Shed (WVWA) has extended an invitation to residents in our watershed to participate in the annual Creek Clean-up to be held April 28th. Volunteers can sign up with the WVWA. The project will be conducted between 9-11 a.m. followed by a picnic at Fort Washington State Park from 11-1 p.m.
9. Wissahickon Summer Pops director Ken Miller would like to schedule two Pops Concerts once again this July. Requested dates are Monday, July 23rd (7-8 p.m.) at Pickering Field and Thursday, July 26th (7-8 p.m.) Alley of the Arts. Wissahickon Summer Pops concerts are community service orchestral performances involving approximately 50 young musicians enrolled in the Wissahickon School District's Summer Music Program.

Ms. Hertz asked if there were comments or questions from Council or the public. There being nothing further, it was moved the Committee's report be accepted as filed. Seconded. Carried.

Salary and Personnel Committee – Mrs. Deininger, Chairperson

Committee members: Mr. Pasceri, Mr. Zaccone, Ms. DiPietro

The Salary and Personnel Committee report was given this evening by Mrs. Deininger.

The Committee will consider the following action this evening:

1. Consider a recommendation to hire applicants for the Water Department and Public Works Department positions. [An Executive Session will be held on this and other matters.]

In other business the following was reviewed:

1. Resolution 2018-06 was presented to student Jack Silverman who completed his Wissahickon High School Senior project by videotaping Borough meetings.
2. An Executive Session was held on an employee matter.
3. Chief Foley has entered the DROP Deferred Retirement Option Program with a last day of October 1, 2018. A Committee will meet to create a comprehensive plan to search for his replacement.
4. Vacancies exist on the Environmental Advisory Council. Interested residents should forward a letter of interest/resume to the attention of the Borough Manager.

Discussion ensued. Jill Sanchez of 149 Rosemary Avenue stated that prospective EAC members should be required to attend a meeting before being appointed. Councilperson DiPietro asked that Council be given more time to review resumes of applicants. Councilperson Deininger stated that the Committee has no requirement and does not caveat appointment to any applicant based upon their attendance at an EAC meeting. Borough Manager Aversa stated that at times a quick turn-around from receipt of resume to appointment is needed by other Borough Committees.

Executive Session:

Mrs. Deininger stated that an Executive Session was held regarding consideration of hiring applicants for the Water Department and Public Works Department positions.

Additionally, Council has accepted the resignation of an employee upon advice of a Department Supervisor.

Ms. Deininger asked if there were questions or comments from Council or the public. There being nothing further, it was moved the report be accepted and filed. Seconded, carried.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Safety Committee – The Committee recommends and Mr. Zaccone moves:

Consider adoption of **Resolution 2018-07** supporting legislation to further regulate firearms including assault weapons ban. Seconded. Carried.

Public Utilities Committee – The Committee will make no recommendations this evening.

Finance & Planning Committee – The Committee recommends and Ms. Tomlinson moves:

Recommend that **March 2018** invoices in the amount of **\$886,278.01** be paid. Seconded. Carried.

Recommend forwarding the draft Ordinance addressing the planting and spread of bamboo in the Borough to the Planning Commissions. Seconded. (8-Aye; 1-Nay [Mr. Pasceri]). Carried.

Consider purchasing three solar Strada BNA EVO2 display parking meters at a cost of \$25,950 as well as programming the existing kiosk meter at the Lindenwold Lot to accept credit cards. Seconded. Carried.

Parks & Recreation Committee – The Committee will make no recommendations this evening.

Salary & Personnel Committee – The Committee recommends and Mrs. Deininger moves:

Consider hiring Jugwang Lee for the Water Department position (Water Operator I). Seconded. Carried.

Consider hiring Victor Solis for the Public Works Department position (Highway Laborer). Seconded. Carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

At the conclusion of the public meeting, Council allows the public time to comment on matters of interest or concern. Comment is not limited to current agenda items. During the Public Comment Period, Council will not answer questions or engage in dialog with the speaker. Residents are asked to state their name and address. Comments regarding any and all employee issues are not entertained. Council may address items or questions raised at the next scheduled Committee or Council meeting, but reserves the right to determine agenda items. Council requests those in attendance refrain from engaging the speaker during public comments.

Antonio Isabella of 300 Highland Avenue stated that the public should remember to state their name and address for the record before speaking.

Judy Bagis of 172 Tennis Avenue stated her displeasure with the video and sound quality of the meeting videos available on the Borough website.

There being no further business, Mr. DeRuosi moved the meeting be adjourned. Seconded, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Russell
Assistant Secretary
Borough of Ambler