

AMBLER BOROUGH COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 4, 2020

Ambler Borough Committees held their scheduled monthly meeting on Tuesday, August 4, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM Software Program. Consistent with Council President's and the Mayor's Declaration of Disaster Emergency, this action was taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our community and to promote our commitment to maintain social distancing in our community. As such, the meeting was not held at Borough Hall. A public copy of the meeting agenda was posted on the Borough website on Monday, August 3, 2020. The public was invited to access the ZOOM meeting and offer questions or comments.

In Attendance - Mr. DeRuosi, Ms. Hertz, Mrs. Deininger, Ms. DiPietro, Ms. Endicott, Mrs. Siskind, Ms. Henderson, Ms. Welch and Ms. Marshall. Mayor Sorg, Chief Hoffman and Solicitor Bresnan also were in attendance. Finance Manager Gail Gordon, Code Enforcement Officer Glenn Kucher and Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Russell also were in attendance.

Committee Meeting Reports -

Public Safety Committee - Ms. Erin Endicott, Chairperson

Committee members: Ms. Hertz, Mrs. Deininger, Mrs. Siskind

1. Public Works & Code Enforcement reports were received.
2. A Declaration of Disaster Emergency for Ambler Borough for the month of August 2020, empowering the Borough to manage its emergency response was received. Consider adoption of the proposed Declaration,
3. A Red Cross Blood Drive is scheduled on August 28, 2020 from 2-7 p.m. at the Borough Hall Gym.
4. New street parking meters and signage have recently been installed in the Borough. The new meters are now operational. The new parking rate is set at **\$1 per hour**. You may pay with coins or you may install the ***Flowbird Mobile Parking APP***. The APP may also be used for parking in the lots. Parking regulations will be enforced beginning Monday, August 10th and tickets will be issued. The Department is not currently ticketing. Warnings will be issued by the Police Department prior to that date. This information is being relayed with a flyer by the Police Department as this project is completed.

5. The Borough closed down Butler Ave for Restaurant Week events. The Borough has received very positive feedback. Chief Hoffman stated that after settling some minor issues the event went well. Ambler Main Street stated this was one of the busiest weekends since March and added they would like to hold one event per month during good weather months.

Public Utilities Committee - Mrs. Glynnis Siskind, Chairperson

Committee members: Ms. Welch, Ms. Henderson, Ms. Marshall

1. The WWTP report will be provided to the Committee.
2. The Butler Pike Water Main Replacement Project at the Prophecy Creek bridge location will be advertised and is scheduled to go to PennBid September 1st. Bid opening and award are scheduled for October.
3. Consider award for the rebuild of the WWTP Clarifier ET-8 to Blooming Glen in the amount of \$24,696. Two quotes were received. The second quote was from Jeff Zimmerman in the amount of \$27,400.
4. The DEP is satisfied with the WWTP's timing change of the sampler and the amount of sample for BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) testing. Per DEP no organic overload exists and the WWTP does not need to ask for a change in the limits.
5. The Borough has been approved by the PA PUC to form a Water Authority. An application of the Borough of Ambler for approval of the abandonment of public water service to the public in Pennsylvania has been filed and a notice will be advertised. Formal protests and petitions to intervene must be filed with the PA PUC by August 24, 2020.

Finance & Planning Committee - Ms. Nellie DiPietro, Chairperson

Committee members: Ms. Endicott, Ms. Welch, Ms. Marshall

1. The Borough Engineer's report was received.
2. The Borough Planning Commission has completed the energy transition plan in line with the Ambler Borough Ready for 100 Renewable Energy Resolution adopted by Council in March 2019. Council has received a copy of the plan which will be discussed at the August Council Meeting.

3. The Planning Commissions have provided correspondence recommending Zoning Map change for 24 N. Ridge Avenue from Institutional to R-3 Residential. A recommendation is requested to advertise for a public meeting on the zoning change.
4. Consider award of the hauler contract to the lowest responsive bidder J.P. Mascaro & Sons with bid price for a 3 year/3 month contract of \$1,710,300 and bid price for a 5 year/3 month contract of \$2,807,772.

Discussion ensued. Al DeGennaro, Deputy General Council of J. P. Mascaro & Sons made a guest presentation to Council on the company's bid. He provided an overview on pricing and type of service. He stated cost was determined by factoring labor, insurance and transportation. He noted the recycling market is "in the tank." He stated that with consolidation of the industry there are fewer haulers and less competition. As such, he urged Council to consider the 5 year/3 month bid. He stated that service in Ambler, which he described as a tight community, requires smaller trucks and use of a rear loader for the totes. He emphasized that Mascaro's service now is tried and true service that works. He highlighted that Mascaro knows the alleys.

Ms. Marshall stated the Borough should consider that residents purchase trash bags and pay per bag. Mr. DeGennaro stated he is not aware of any contracts in the area where individual trash is weighed. He was aware of a hybrid model where senior citizens pay a reduced rate.

Mr. DeGennaro stated that Mascaro invested \$20 million in their Total Recycle Plant. He noted that Mascaro accepts flexible packaging. He stated Mascaro is committed to recycling. Ms. Marshall asked whether recycling may do better during the five years of the proposed 5 year/3 month bid amount. Mr. DeGennaro replied that trash is always heavier than recyclables and again encouraged Council to lock-in with the 5 year/3 month bid proposal.

Ms. Marshall questioned Mr. DeGennaro on Mascaro's service, noting that at times trash is missed and cans are left in the street blocking driveways. Mr. DeGennaro stated he would put Mascaro's service up against any other company. He stated the route supervisor is to check in before the truck leaves and that any issues should be resolved within 24 hours. Solicitor Bresnan noted that these are small service issues that can be resolved with a hold-back of payment. He stated the issue before Council is to consider the 3 or 5 year contract. Mrs. Siskind noted that residents should be reminded to call the Borough directly if they have a service issue. Mrs. Siskind stated she would like to see residents involve proactively in a trash reduction plan to include composting, bags, etc.

5. Consider advertising for adoption an Ordinance authorizing an increase in the annual charge for residential refuse collection from \$300 per year to \$440 per year.

Discussion ensued. Mr. DeRuosi stated Council must consider which bid plan to award with the reality that rates must be raised because the Borough can no longer offset the cost. Ms. Hertz noted the challenges a hauler faces collecting in the Borough which is why the bid was run this way. She suggested that one year before the next contract terminates that Council set up a Task Force with Borough employees included to consider alternatives. Ms. Endicott agreed, and stated her preference for a 3 year/3month contract and establishment of a Task Force. The Committee was not prepared to authorize advertisement of the proposed Ordinance this evening and will discuss this issue at the August Council Meeting.

6. Consider adoption of a Resolution granting a temporary reduction to \$120 in 2020 in the collection of the BPT in consideration of economic hardships resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion ensued. Mr. DeRuosi stated this is not the time to reduce the tax rate. If the trash fee is increased for residents, he did not believe a tax decrease should be made for businesses. Ms. Siskind agreed. Ms. Marshall said this was comparing apples with oranges since the trash contract would be multi-year and the proposed BPT reduction would be for one year only. Ms. DiPietro stated the proposed BPT reduction was to provide good will to the business community during COVID and the issue was not about the numbers. Ms. Endicott stated a number of landlords had not been able to collect rents and the reduction would be good will to the community. Solicitor Bresnan stated Council had provided real estate tax relief earlier this year. Ms. Welch stated that in the aggregate a full \$240 BPT collection is of benefit to the Borough. Finally, Solicitor Bresnan clarified that by living in the community, Council members subject to the tax did not need to recuse themselves from a vote on this issue because they do not receive a unique benefit. The Committee was not prepared to authorize the resolution this evening and will discuss this issue at the August Council Meeting.

Parks & Recreation Committee - Ms. Sara Hertz, Chairperson

Committee members: Mrs. Deininger, Ms. Endicott, Ms. DiPietro

1. The concept of a Community Garden is being studied.
2. Staff is working with Council members and Ambler Main Street businesses to discuss plans for when restrictions are lifted in Montgomery County,
3. The feasibility of scheduling Family Movie nights for the remainder of the year was reviewed. It was agreed that Council should err on the side of caution and cancel the events.

4. A presentation was made by the Ambler Environmental Advisory Council on the status of the Growing Greener Grant. The EAC has asked the Borough to file for a grant extension.

Jill Sanchez of the EAC began the presentation highlighting that clean streams begin in your own backyard and may be achieved with the installation of rain gardens, pervious patios, rain barrels and downspout plants. Wes Pipitone of the EAC outlined the grant goals and achievements: 18 of 75 rain gardens installed; 65 of 250 rain barrels; 23 of 60 downspout planter boxes; 8 of 22 pervious paver projects; 0 of 4 steep slope projects; and 4 of 20 riparian buffer sites. He stated that 1,961 volunteer hours had been logged. He noted that EAC has held several EarthFests, conducted tree inventory and provided stormwater management training. He added that COVID restrictions had slowed down the EAC's ability to get everything accomplished.

Madge Monser, EAC Chair, noted initial challenges involved start-up organization and identifying and meeting with contractors who would work within the parameters of the grant budget. Current challenges involve the Borough stormwater ordinance which she stated was not in line with the grant goals. She noted that the ordinance only kicks in for redevelopment projects for additions of 1,000 square feet or more. She stated she would like to see it apply to 10x10 additions. Successes include the Growing Ambler Greener website, three EarthFests, the neighbor-to-neighbor campaign, on-line webinars and virtual rain garden tours, and helping the Borough meet its MS-4 requirements. She stated the EAC was employing best management practices and was providing virtual stormwater assessments. She thanks Finance Manager Gordon for financial management of the grant and public works crews for their assistance with several projects. She asked that the Borough prepare a letter in August/September requesting a one-year extension to implement the grant. Mr. DeRuosi asked any way Council could help facilitate the grant. Ms. Monser asked that Council look at revising the stormwater ordinance to engage residents and make them accountable for their stormwater.

Salary & Personnel Committee - Mrs. Nancy Deininger, Chairperson

1. Resumes are being accepted for the Water Department Superintendent position.
2. Interviews will be scheduled for the vacant Equipment Operator position.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Boccuti of 300 Rosemary Avenue commented that a No Parking sign on Park Avenue fell down and he asked that Public Works reinstall the sign. He stated the railroad station

clock is “correct twice a day.” He asked about replacement of recycling carts. He noted that while the BPT costs \$20 per month but is collected annually, the \$240 tax is a hit to businesses. He discussed that the trash bid cost \$43,850 for the 3 year and \$44,567 for the five year bid.

Madge Monser of 372 Forest Avenue requested correction in the July 14, 2020 draft Minutes. She highlighted the County’s ‘Montco Restart’ program. She commented that the Borough’s goal for trash, beyond cost, was to grow a sustainable future by encouraging residents to reduce the amount of trash they put out. She suggested encouraging composting and doing more research to look for other avenues.

Wes Pipitone of 149 Rosemary Avenue encouraged Council to take a long-term view on trash and be prepared both financially and environmentally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Safety Committee

Recommend adoption of a Declaration of Disaster Emergency for COVID 19 for the month of August, 2020. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

There was no further public comment at the conclusion of the meeting. There being no further business, Mr. DeRuosi moved the meeting be adjourned. Seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Russell
Assistant Secretary
Borough of Ambler