

AMBLER BOROUGH COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 1, 2020

Ambler Borough Committees held their scheduled monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 1, 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 31, 2020. The public was invited to access the ZOOM meeting and offer questions or comments.

In Attendance - 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. Code Enforcement Officer Glenn Kucher and Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Russell also were in attendance. Mr. DeRuosi and Ms. Hertz were absent.

Mrs. Deininger chaired this evening's meeting. She began the meeting by reading the Zoom Meeting Procedures into the record.

1. Pre-registration is required. Attendees must provide their email, first and last name, and home address. Once registration is processed, a link to attend will be provided via email.
2. All participants, except for the Borough Council, Borough Manager, Borough Solicitor, Borough Police Chief, and invited Borough Staff will be muted with video camera/web camera turned off automatically upon entry to the virtual meeting.
3. There will be a Public Comment section regarding agenda items at the end of each Committee's report and before vote by Council. A Public Comment period regarding non-agenda items will occur after voting.
4. The Public Comment section will begin with the Council President reading aloud the comments that were emailed to the Borough ahead of this meeting. Each emailed comment must include the first & last name of the resident, as well as their address. The Council will discuss each comment individually.
5. Participants who wish to speak during the Public Comment section will be instructed to press the "Raise Your Hand" button.

6. One by one the Borough Zoom administrator, will call on each participant with their virtual hand raised. That participant will be unmuted. That participant will have 15 seconds to respond to being called on. If there is no response, the next person “in line” will be called on.

7. It is asked that anyone who speaks during the Public Comment section announce their first and last names, as well as their home address for the record. After the comment, that participant will be muted.

8. The Council President, at any time reserves the right to mute a participant, end the video stream of a participant, or terminate/end the meeting at his discretion, due to hackers, inappropriate language, or any other activity the Council President deems inappropriate.

9. We ask for everyone’s patience and understanding as we navigate through these unprecedented times and work through the unique challenges of virtual public meetings.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Public Safety Committee - Ms. Erin Endicott, Chairperson

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

The Committee Report was read by Ms. Endicott.

1. Public Works & Code Enforcement reports were received.
2. A Declaration of Disaster Emergency for Ambler Borough for the month of September 2020, empowering the Borough to manage its emergency response was received. Consider adoption of the proposed Declaration,
3. The next Restaurant Weekend will be held the second weekend of September.
4. A Resolution to be considered by Council authorizing the PennDOT Winter Service Agreement was received. This 5-year agreement would involve the Borough accomplishing snow and ice clearance for State Routes.
5. Council received correspondence from Gilmore Engineers with two estimates for installation of a crosswalk (with and without installation of speed bump) at the intersection of Lindenwold and Race Street.

Discussion ensued. Mrs. Deininger stated the design was preliminary. Mayor Sorg inquired about considering the addition of a stop sign on Race Street. Chief Hoffman stated he had not looked into this in the past and would like to see if the intersection would be manageable solely with the addition of a crosswalk.

Public Comment

Madge Monser – 372 Forest Avenue. Ms. Monser stated that trees are great calming devices for streets. She suggested the addition of a tree near Sweet Briar. Ms. Monser stated she was aware that several senior citizens were confused by new traffic directions during the Restaurant Weekend event.

Salvatore Boccuti – 300 Rosemary Avenue. Mr. Boccuti requested that the Borough erect a Yield Sign at the proposed location of the crosswalk being considered at Lindenwold and Race Streets.

Public Utilities Committee - Mrs. Glynnis Siskind, Chairperson

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

The Committee report was read by Mrs. Siskind.

1. The WWTP report will be provided to the Committee.
2. 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. Council is asked to consider rescinding their prior vote taken March 3, 2020 to request an increase in the permit.
3. Consider adoption of a Resolution granting authorization to execute a Master Agreement for Castings Adjustment, which is made with PennDOT allowing for their adjustment and/or replacement of utility castings deemed necessary during PennDOT's performance of general maintenance and reconstruction projects on State Routes. Terms of the agreement are 9 years with price changes every 3 years.

Finance & Planning Committee - Ms. Nellie DiPietro, Chairperson

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

The Committee report was read by Ms. DiPietro.

1. The Borough Energy Transition Plan in line with the Ambler Borough Ready for 100 Renewable Energy Resolution adopted by Council in March 2019 has been distributed to Council for their review. A PDF of the plan is available for review on the Borough website.

Discussion ensued. Mrs. Deininger stated she had reviewed the Plan and found it to be informative. Ms. Welch found the Plan to be thorough but requested a review of the sidewalk network gaps as discussed on Page 18. Ms. Marshall asked the Committee to allow time for the public to weigh in on the Plan before adoption by Council. Ms. Endicott requested that Council schedule a Public Comment Period on the Plan at the September Council meeting.

2. The proposed Zoning Map change for 24 N. Ridge Avenue from Institutional to R-3 Residential will be advertised and a Public Hearing will be scheduled.
3. The Borough Engineer's report was received.
4. A Public Hearing will be held September 15, 2020 to consider **Ordinance 1116** authorizing an increase in the annual charge for residential refuse collection from \$300 per year to \$440 per year.
5. Borough employee pension Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) documents are being prepared by Joe Duda, Borough Actuary, and will be presented at the September Council Meeting.
6. Council discussed Borough Stormwater requirements (referencing the current Ordinance), specifically the area calculation that triggers storm water requirements.

A presentation was made by Madge Monser, Chair of the Ambler Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC). Ms. Monser asked the Committee to consider decreasing impervious surface exemption thresholds for residential activity; consider decreasing erosion and sediment (E&S) pollution control exemption thresholds; consider owner operations and maintenance education and requirements; require better management of roof drains; conduct official inspections of affected properties; encourage low impact development; and create a Tree Ordinance to encourage increased tree planting. When asked by Ms. Endicott about stormwater fees, Ms. Monser suggested Council consider implementation of a stormwater fee added to the Water Bill to supplement cost of these new measures.

Solicitor Bresnan stated the Borough does not have the authority to tack on a stormwater fee. This may only be undertaken by an Authority or a Second Class Township. Regarding measures suggested by Ms. Monser, Solicitor Bresnan stated that there are costs to the resident if the threshold is lowered from 1,000 sq ft that might be disproportionate to the cost of the construction project. Code Enforcement Officer Kucher stated that E&S plans

currently are reviewed by the engineer, noted that such plans would need to be notarized and recorded in Norristown, and that there are fees associated with filing with the County Conservation District.

Parks & Recreation Committee - Ms. Sara Hertz, Chairperson

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

The Committee report was read by Ms. Endicott.

1. A grant extension request is being prepared for the EAC Growing Greener Grant.
2. The Committee is moving forward with plans for creation of a Community Garden to be installed next spring.
3. Ambler EAC is coordinating Electronics Recycling for Area Communities on September 19th (9-1 pm) at the Calvary Church at 16 E. Park Avenue. Anything with a plug will be accepted including laptops, small appliances, printers, fax machines, cell phones, cameras, TVs, servers. Certain fees will apply. This event is made possible by Ambler Savings Bank.
4. Consider authorizing Ambler Borough's Northern Montgomery County Recycling Commission representative to execute an NMCRC Resolution which adopts enforcement procedures for handling of recycling and solid waste disposal violations (Act 101 violations).

Discussion ensued. Ms. Russell, the Borough's NMCRC representative, stated the objective of the enforcement procedures was to hold haulers accountable for proper hauling of trash, recycling and yard waste items. Solicitor Bresnan stated that if any problem affects multiple municipalities these procedures would give the municipalities another layer for enforcement. He added that resident violations were included in the documents so that haulers could not claim that residents were not being held to the same standard. He emphasized that residents would not be held accountable for 'peanut butter left in the peanut butter jar.' He added that he would contact the NMCRC attorney to discuss this matter, including to determine why businesses were not considered for inclusion in the proposed enforcement procedures.

Public Comment

Brian Quinn -323 Valley Brook Road. Regarding the NMCRC enforcement procedures Mr. Quinn wanted assurance that the Resolution would not be punitive, setting neighbor against neighbor.

Madge Monser – 372 Forest Avenue. Regarding the NMCRC enforcement procedures Ms. Monser stated that while hauler compliance was the bigger issue, it was important for the Borough to also focus on compliance of downtown businesses.

Salary & Personnel Committee - Mrs. Nancy Deininger, Chairperson

Committee Members: Mrs. Siskind, Ms. DiPietro, Ms. Henderson

The Committee report was read by Ms. Henderson.

1. Resumes are being accepted for the Water Department Superintendent position.
2. Interviews are being held for the vacant Equipment Operator position.
3. Vacancies exist (1 commissioner and 1 alternate) on the Ambler Human Relations Commission. Residents interested in being considered for appointment should contact the Borough Manager at manager@borough.ambler.pa.us .

RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Safety Committee

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Anthony Giannetti – 16 Center Street. Mr. Giannetti, who commented at the August Council meeting on flooding issues at Locust and Center Streets, thanked Ms. Henderson for checking out the intersection that floods. He thanked Mr. Kucher for their phone conversation discussing options and possibilities. He expressed his gratitude to Council and Code Enforcement for acknowledgement of this issue. He suggested the Borough consider installation of a stormwater basin towards the Borit site. Mrs. Deininger stated that Ambler has been prone to flooding for over 100 years. She noted the Borough’s engineers and Code Enforcement do try to help to fix the issue. Ms. Henderson stated she had been accompanied by Mrs. Siskind and Ms. Hertz on her walk about Locust and Center Streets. Ms. Endicott recommended Mr. Giannetti look at what goes on outside the Borough since the water comes from upstream. She suggested he contact Wissahickon Trails (formerly Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association) for further information on the issue of flooding. Ms. Monser offered to introduce him to Wisshickon Trails staff.

Brian Quinn – 323 Valley Brook Road. Mr. Quinn advised that residents and businesses need to plan ahead for flooding. He advised use of sump pumps and sandbags.

Madge Monser – 372 Forest Avenue. Ms. Monser announced the EAC’s email address at AmblerEAC@gmail.com. She thanked Council for changes made to the ‘public comment’ format. She asked how many attendees were at this evening’s meeting. Mrs. Deininger replied seven residents were in attendance.

Cecilly Rudalavage – 333 Euclid Avenue. Ms. Rudalavage spoke about Block Parties and asked Council to consider ways that neighborhoods could be permitted to hold Block Parties during the pandemic, given Council’s recent statement that Block Party and park usage permits would not be issued during the pandemic. Mrs. Deininger stated that all Borough activities have been cancelled, that Council holds only Zoom meetings and that Ambler Main Street Restaurant Weekends are controlled situations where social distancing can be enforced. Ms. Marshall noted that these events are allowed to help businesses survive in the Borough and pointed out that these events are held in the business district and do not impact the residential neighborhoods. Ms. DiPietro stated that once Council meets again in person perhaps their determination would change. Mrs. Deininger stated that Council will not revisit this issue at this time.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Russell
Assistant Secretary
Borough of Ambler