

## AMBLER BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES

June 16, 2020

Ambler Borough Council held their scheduled monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM Software Program. Consistent with Council President's and the Mayor's Declaration of Disaster Emergency executed Wednesday, June 3, 2020, 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, June 15, 2020. The public was invited to access the ZOOM Meeting and offer questions or comments.

**Roll Call – Present:** Mr. DeRuosi, Ms. Hertz, Mrs. Deininger, Ms. DiPietro, Mrs. Siskind, Ms. Endicott, Ms. Welch and Ms. Marshall. Mayor Sorg, Chief Hoffman, Solicitor Bresnan and Borough Manager Aversa also were in attendance. Finance Manager Gail Gordon, Code Enforcement Officer Glenn Kucher and Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Russell also were in attendance. Ms. Henderson was absent.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mr. DeRuosi made a motion to approve the Minutes of the May 19, 2020 Council Meeting. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Committees of Ambler Borough Council held no meetings in June. At the Council Meeting this evening, the Committees conducted business as follows:

**Public Safety Committee – Ms. Erin Endicott, Chairperson**  
Committee members: Ms. Hertz, Mrs. Deininger, Mrs. Siskind

The Public Safety Committee report was given this evening by Ms. Endicott.

#### **The Committee will consider the following actions this evening:**

1. Consider adoption of the Emergency Declaration for COVID-19 for the month of June.
2. Consider working with Borough restaurants and businesses with the closure of side streets, consistent with state COVID-19 guidelines, for the benefit of local businesses.

Discussion ensued. Manager Aversa stated a meeting was held end of May between Ambler Main Street business owners, Chief Hoffman and Fire Chief Leadbeater to discuss options for businesses. It was agreed not to close Butler Avenue which would impede restaurant take-out business. It was agreed that consideration of closing a parking lot

would be difficult to maintain crowd control. Chief Hoffman stated there are traffic safety concerns and that side streets are better to manage. He noted that meters would be bagged and barricades set up. Manager Aversa stated that once the county goes ‘green’ restaurants may operate at 50 percent capacity. Council discusses allowing side street space to all restaurants if they want to participate in outdoor dining. Mayor Sorg stated it was necessary for Council to act now to provide a safe place and a safe way to operate. Ms. Endicott suggested Council start with closure of York Street. Restaurant Vida & Comida has indicated an interest. Ms. Endicott stated she would like businesses participating to provide a loose floor plan and added that she would like to ensure safe distancing on Borough sidewalks. Ms. DeRuosi stated he would contact Vida & Comida regarding the proposed road closure. It was suggested that Chief Hoffman and Manager Aversa should have the authority to determine future street closures.

**In other business the following was reviewed:**

1. The Police, Community Ambulance Association and Fire Department reports were received.
2. The Public Works and Code Enforcement reports were received.

Ms. Endicott 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 – Mrs. Glynnis Siskind, Chairperson**

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

The Public Utilities Committee report was given this evening by Mrs. Siskind.

**The Committee will consider the following actions this evening:**

1. Consider contracting for Ambler Wastewater Treatment Plant electricity rates for 2021 through Tradition Energy to take advantage of current lower market conditions to lock-in savings.

Discussion ensued. A representative of Tradition Energy stated that the COVID-19 situation had resulted in a discount for market prices. He anticipated an 8-12 percent reduction in rates by contracting beginning January 2021 and moving forward. He stated the Borough will remain with Free Point until the end of the year. He noted that Tradition Energy had negotiated getting ‘collected taxes’ returned to the Borough since they should not have been applied. Ms. Siskind inquired as to sustainable energy sources. Tradition Energy replied that 5 percent must be provided by the energy provider, but that Council has the option of going to 100 percent green. He said the purchase of sustainable energy credits would cost approximately \$4,000 per year. This could be imbedded into the KWH rates at

1/10<sup>th</sup> of one percent per KWH or Council could go to bid and pay lump sum directly. If Council is not prepared to make this commitment now, it could consider an Addendum to the agreement or go directly to a renewable energy supplier and be invoiced. He noted that since last month costs have started to increase resulting in an \$8,000 annual increase over initial estimate. He illustrated that 24-month contract would cost \$0.04335 (\$0.4435 for renewable energy). He stated the current rate is \$0.0488. Natural gas costs have been low, these being the primary fuel source, and have been the main driver of reduced costs. Ms. Siskind stated that the current WWTP provider, Free Point had the proposal that interested her most. Council deliberated on the intended length of contract. Manager Aversa suggested, along with several Council members, consideration of a 2- or 3-year contract. Tradition Energy stated that a collective clause for flexibility could be added should the Borough 'go solar' resulting in different energy demand.

**In other business the following was reviewed:**

1. PFAS sampling results obtained from sampling on March 12, 2020 have been received and reviewed by the Water Engineer. The results have been posted on the Borough website.

Discussion ensued. Manager Aversa clarified that results may vary from prior test results due to external conditions such as heavy rains.

Mrs. Siskind 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.

**Finance and Planning Committee – Ms. Nellie DiPietro, Chairperson**

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

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

**The Committee will consider the following actions this evening:**

1. Consider that **May 2020** invoices in the amount of **\$864,596.02** be paid as follows: General (**\$448,548.75**); Street Lights (**\$2,368.30**); Fire (**\$116,735.57**); Refuse (**\$36,193.92**); Parks & Rec. (**\$1,994.80**); Water (**\$71,665.84.**); Sewer (**\$13,378.99**); WWTP (**\$173,709.85**); Debt Fund (**\$0.00**); Water Capital (**\$0.00**); Liquid Fuels (**\$0.00**).
2. Consider authorization to purchase a 2020 dump truck at the purchase price of \$133,592.
3. Consider with the settlement of conveyance for the Poplar Street parcel, authorization for four paid parking space rentals in the Cavalier Street Parking Lot.

**In other business the following was reviewed:**

1. The Borough Engineer's report was received.
2. The Borough Planning Commission is working to create a preliminary energy transition plan in line with the Ambler Borough 'Ready for 100' Renewable Energy Resolution adopted by Council March 2019.
3. The trash/recycling collection bid was advertised. Bid opening is scheduled for July 7, 2020.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Siskind asked that future bids consider assessing trash fees by weight or volume and not be assessed the residents across the board.

4. The Planning Commissions have provided a review letter recommending a zoning map change for 24 N. Ridge Avenue from Institutional to R-3 Residential.
5. Deborah Bacon of auditing firm Zelenkofske-Axelrod will send out a powerpoint presentation relative to the recent Borough audit.

Ms. DiPietro 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, Ms. DiPietro

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

#### **The Committee will consider the following action this evening:**

1. Consider budgeting \$600 for activities stencils and paint to be used on sidewalks around parks and playground areas in the Borough.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Endicott and Ms. Deininger suggested that local artistic talent could be tapped to provide creative painted areas and that the purchase of stencils would not be needed since it appears that playgrounds may be opening soon. Ms. Endicott suggested the Borough consider painting colorful crosswalks and recommended painting a diversity crosswalk at the corner of Wahl playground. Chief Hoffman stated he would look into any PennDOT restrictions or regulations regarding crosswalks.

2. Consider a donation from Ambler Borough of the Ambler-Whitpain Trojans.

A presentation was made by John Casani of the Trojans. He stated the Trojans is a youth organization providing youth football for ages 7-14 and cheerleading for ages 4-15. He stated the Trojans was organized 20 years ago. They operate out of Stony Creek Park.

There are approximately 300 youths in the program, with about 44 percent from Ambler. He stated Whitpain Township supports the Trojans at a cost of \$11,000 per year. He asked Council to consider providing a level of support. Council stated its concern about available Borough funding for 2020. Ms. Endicott suggested Council defer decision until preparation of the 2021 budget. Several donation amounts were discussed by Council. It was agreed to table the discussion until the July meeting.

**In other business the following was reviewed:**

1. The EAC will offer a Zoom ‘Ambler’s Summer Rain Gardens, a virtual tour” program on Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup> from 10-11 a.m. Over the course of an hour the tour will visit 11 rain gardens in the Borough where participants will learn about rain garden features and designs.
2. The Ambler Square project has been advertised. Bid opening is June 17<sup>th</sup>.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Hertz stated she was looking for sponsors to help the Borough afford our share of the grant project obligation.

3. YMCA Knight Park Summer Camp has begun. Registration is still available through the YMCA.
4. Consider creation of a Community Garden.

Discussion ensued. Council determined to ask for a written proposal so that they might respond.

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. Nancy Deininger, Chairperson**

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

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

**The Committee will consider no actions this evening.**

**In other business the following was reviewed:**

1. Committees will be selected for the AFSCME and Police Contract negotiations.

Mr. DeRuosi announced the committees as follows: Police Contract: (Mr. DeRuosi, Ms. Hertz, Mrs. Deininger, Ms. Endicott, Ms. DiPietro, Mayor Sorg and Manager Aversa). AFSCME Contract: (Ms. Hertz, Mrs. Dieninger, Mrs. Siskind, Ms. Welsh and Manager Aversa).

Mrs. 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.

### **NEW BUSINESS / PUBLIC COMMENT**

Zoom Guest: Madge Monser of 372 Forest Avenue. Ms. Monser requested that Council verify the number of youths from Ambler Borough participating in Ambler-Whitpain Trojans. She supported obtaining renewable energy credits consistent with the goal of the RF100. She encouraged residents composting their trash, stating that composting would account for approximately 25-30 percent of trash volume.

Zoom Guest: Christopher Canan of 276 N. Main Street. Mr. Canan supported Council's deliberation on painting crosswalks. He suggested considering wall murals as well. He asked about Council's considerations on race and inclusion. Mr. DeRuosi stated this had not been discussed as a Council. Mayor Sorg stated that she and Chief Hoffman meet with the Ambler Area NAACP regularly and discuss policing issues.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Public Safety Committee** – The Committee recommends and Ms. Endicott moves:

Recommend adoption of the Emergency Declaration for COVID-19 for the month of June. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

Recommend authorizing Borough Manager and Chief Hoffman to determine side street closures, consistent with state COVID-19 guidelines, for the benefit of local businesses. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

**Public Utilities Committee** – The Committee recommends and Mrs. Siskind moves:

Recommend contracting with Free Point for a 24-month energy contract for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

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

Recommend that **May 2020** invoices in the amount of **\$864,596.02** be paid. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

Recommend purchase of a 2020 dump truck in the amount of \$133,592. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

Recommend offering four parking spaces in the Cavalier Street Parking Lot for rental to the seller of the Poplar Street Parcel in addition to the parcel purchase. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

**Parks & Recreation Committee** – The Committee recommends and Ms. Hertz moves:

Recommend tabling a decision for consideration to make a donation to Ambler-Whitpain Trojans until the July meeting. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

**Salary & Personnel Committee** – The Committee will make no recommendations.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Russell  
Assistant Secretary  
Borough of Ambler