

## AMBLER BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES

March 16, 2021

Ambler Borough Council held their scheduled monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 16, 2021 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. As such, the meeting was not held at Borough Hall. A public copy of the meeting agenda was posted on the Borough website. 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, Ms. Henderson, and Ms. Sheedy. Mayor Sorg, Chief Hoffman, Solicitor Joe 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. Public Works Supervisor Marco Resente and Water Superintendent Steve Smallberger also were in attendance.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mr. DeRuosi made a motion to approve the Minutes of the February 16, 2021 Zoom Council Meeting and the March 2, 2021 Zoom Committee Meeting. Motion Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The Committees of Ambler Borough Council met via Internet vehicle ZOOM on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Present: Mr. DeRuosi, Ms. Hertz, Mrs. Deininger, Ms. DiPietro, Ms. Endicott, Mrs. Siskind, Ms. Henderson, Ms. Welch, and Ms. Sheedy. Mayor Sorg, Chief Hoffman, Borough Manager Aversa and Solicitor Joe Bresnan were in attendance. Finance Manager Gail Gordon, Code Enforcement Officer Glenn Kucher, Public Works Supervisor Marco Resente, and Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Russell also were in attendance.

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 no actions this evening.**

**Approved at Committee Meeting:**

1. Consider adoption of the Emergency Declaration for COVID-19 for the month of March 2021. Seconded. (9-Aye). Carried.

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

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

Ms. Endicott asked if there were further 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. Sheedy

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

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

**Approved at Committee Meeting:**

1. Consider award of the WWTP ET5 trickling filter rebuild to Zimmerman for the low quote of \$12,500. 8-Aye. Absent Mr. DeRuosi.

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

1. The WWTP engineer's report was provided.
2. 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 has been advertised. Formal protests and petitions were received.

Discussion ensued. Solicitor Bresnan stated the Pleadings were complete and the process has now moved to Discovery requests. The Harrisburg attorney is in the process of responding and is stating objections to some of the Townships' questions. Mr. Bresnan stated the Borough has received no response from its prior correspondence to the Townships. He stated the ultimate end is unknown and that at some future point in time the Borough might need to consider parallel filings with the PA PUC for a rate increase. He stated the Borough will not give ultimate control away or ownership of the water franchise. Borough Manager stated she was aware that filing for an emergency rate increase is a

mechanism to be considered. She noted the Borough would need to pull money out of Reserves in 30 to 60 days.

3. Quotes are being obtained for the Phase II piping replacement project at Whitemarsh.
4. Water Department will conduct routine system hydrant flushing beginning the first week of April. The flushing schedule will be posted daily on the Borough's website.
5. Water Department billing clerks are making payment arrangements with customers who are experiencing difficulties paying their water bills due to COVID 19. Interest has not been charged on accounts during the pandemic.

Discussion ensued. Finance Manager Gordon stated that \$140,000 water / \$40,000 trash / \$25,000 sewer are not collected and that these departments will need the payments to pay the bills. Manager Aversa stated that PECO began collections several months ago. Manager Aversa suggested the department send out friendly reminders notifying customers that the collections process is underway and stating that payment arrangements will be considered. Procedures for 30-day notices and subsequent water shut-offs if accounts are not satisfied are required. Ms. Siskind agreed that now is the time.

Mrs. Siskind asked if there were further 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. Sheedy

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 **February 2021** invoices in the amount of **\$1,356,418.44** be paid as follows: General (**\$121,147.15**); Street Lights (**\$6,783.87**); Fire (**\$5,283.00**); Refuse (**\$54,600.78**); Parks & Rec. (**\$222.06**); Water (**\$687,656.43**); Sewer (**\$140,006.60**); WWTP (**\$327,252.57**); Debt Fund (**\$0.00**); Water Capital (**\$0.00**); Liquid Fuels (**\$13,465.98**).
2. Consider advertising for adoption the draft Ordinance to define Mural Language. The review letters from the Ambler Planning Commission and Montgomery County Planning Commission were received.
3. Consider advertising for adoption the draft Ordinance amending the area calculation that triggers stormwater requirements. The review letters from the Ambler Planning Commission and Montgomery County Planning Commission were received.

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

1. The Borough Engineer's report was received.
2. The County Planning Assistance contract will be submitted to the County. The County Planning Commission will be authorized to provide input on future projects.
3. An Intermunicipal Collaboration Resolution has been prepared for review to extend the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the development of a Water Quality Improvement Plan for the Wissahickon Creek Watershed.

Ms. DiPietro asked if there were further 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 no actions this evening.**

**Approved at Committee Meeting:**

1. A grant Application was submitted to obtain \$43,000 from the MontCo 2040 Implementation Grant Program to provide funding for the Knight Park Community Garden Project. Resolution 2012-02 was adopted in support of the MontCo 2040 Grant application.

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

1. The final Parks Planning Workshop will be held Tuesday, March 23 at 6:00 p.m. via ZOOM to discuss Jean Thompson Park, Wahl Playground, Locust Street Park and Ambler Square. Residents may access the link to attend the ZOOM meeting at [www.boroughofambler.com/departments/parks-recreation](http://www.boroughofambler.com/departments/parks-recreation) .
2. The Community Garden Committee will meet at Knight Park on Sunday March 21 at 3:30 p.m. For further information on the project residents should email Councilperson Jen Henderson at [Jhenderson@borough.ambler.pa.us](mailto:Jhenderson@borough.ambler.pa.us) .
3. Ambler Main Street Manager Elizabeth Kunzier and Rotary member Bob King spoke with Council regarding Main Street activities for 2021. Ms. Kunzier stated a serious review of events was undertaken in January. She stated the County has advised maximum outdoor crowd capacity is set at 2,500. Mr. King stated that a new plan for 2021 events has been set, with safety measures a priority. He stated events such as Arts & Music Festival draw 10,000 to 15,000 people which is unacceptable. Additionally,

he stated AMS had to consider safety and security availability from surrounding jurisdictions when scheduling events. He announced the Auto Show will be moved to the end of August. He announced that Oktoberfest will be an expanded event and will feature a music event Friday and Saturday along with regular Oktoberfest activities. Mrs. Kunzier stated no food trucks will be invited so that attendees could dine at Ambler restaurants. Arts & Music Festival will return in 2022. Mr. King stated that First Fridays will be scheduled for May, June, August and September and that road closures would be in effect (Fridays only!) for outdoor dining. Manager Aversa stated that while portions of Butler Avenue will be barricaded, Main Street will not be closed off due to the traffic safety issues involved.

Mr. King announced that the Rotary check traditionally donated to Arts & Music Festival will be given to the new Ambler Square Park fund. The donation is for \$10,000.

4. Park clean-up days, rain garden maintenance and managing competing demands for recreational space were discussed by the Committee. Ms. Nancy Roecker Coates of the Ambler Environmental Advisory Council spoke on the subject of park clean-up day. She stated that “Pick Up Pennsylvania” will be held Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup> and is organized by the Great American Clean-Up. She stated the EAC would be enlisting residents to volunteer to help with the clean-up at Ambler’s parks. She asked that Council Member be posted at each park during the day. Ms. Endicott stated this was a great initiative for Friends of the Parks to involve with and that they could partner with the EAC.

Ms. Endicott suggested Red Tail be contacted to provide an informational session on how to properly clean out a rain garden. She suggested that perhaps they could run a demonstration. Manager Aversa stated she would review Red Tail’s contract to determine whether additional costs were involved. Ms. Hertz stated this should be coordinated with the EAC and sent back to the EAC for review.

Ms. Hertz stated the Committee is gathering input and additional information to better manage competing demands for recreational space with the focus being on use of Ricciardi Park courts for pickleball games. She stated there had been an incident the prior week. Ms. Endicott stated this is a multi-purpose court and that due to the incident two of the four pickleball nets had been temporarily removed. Chief Hoffman was asked about the Borough ordinance restricting motor vehicles in all Borough parks. He stated he was evaluating the spirit of the ordinance, but that it was drafted in the 1980’s that different “vehicles” such as scooters are used by children today. He stated there would be no “Barbie jeep” citations. Ms. Endicott stated Council needed to draft a separate set of rules for Ricciardi Park.

**Public Comment:**

Norina Zajack of 215 Grist Mill Court stated some pickleball players are friendly and some are mean the way they speak to the children at the park. She defended the children riding their scooters and stated the children have the right to be in the park.

She stated her concern that parking in the vicinity of the park was out of control. She noted that 60-65% of pickleball players do not live in Ambler Borough.

Joe Miller of 225 Fulling Mill Lane suggested the Borough consider construction of pickleball courts at Knight Park. He suggested installation of speed bumps near Ricciardi Park to control traffic speed.

Judie Maida of 32 School Street stated that while the Ricciardi Park courts were deficient and in need of repair, it is the only place to play pickleball. She stated all participants are aware they must share the court and that she has seen players including children interested in playing along. She requested a designated scheduled time allowing for pickleball playing. Additionally, she suggested the Borough expand the four courts to six courts. Ms. Endicott responded that she also had had great experiences with pickleball players. She stated the Committee could budget to repave and restripe the courts. She approved of designated hours and suggested that "all wheels allowed" hours be designated as well. She agreed that a set of printed rules would be beneficial.

Ms. Hertz asked if there were further 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 the following actions this evening:**

1. Consider making an offer of employment to the recommended candidate for the Assistant Water Superintendent position.
2. Consider the recommendation to hire Administrative Sgt. Jeff Borkowski for the soon-to-be-vacant Police Chief position.
3. Consider appointment of Ms. Vanessa Williams to the vacant Water Authority seat representing Whitpain Township.

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

1. Chief Robert Hoffman announced his intention to retire in April 2021. Mr. DeRuosi thanked him for his service to the Borough.
2. Resumes are being accepted for the Assistant Public Works Supervisor position.

3. Phillip Moore was hired for the Water Operator I position.
4. An Executive Session was held on February 18 and February 25 to discuss a personnel issue.

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

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Public Safety Committee** – The Committee will make no recommendations this evening.

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

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

Consider that **February 2021** invoices in the amount of **\$1,356,418.44** be paid. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

Consider advertising for adoption an Ordinance to define Mural Language. Seconded. All Aye. Carried.

Consider advertising for adoption an Ordinance to reduce the trigger for stormwater requirements. Seconded. 7-Aye; 2-Nay (Ms. Siskind, Ms. Endicott). Carried.

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

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

Consider offering employment to the recommended candidate for the Assistant Water Superintendent position. Seconded. (9-Aye). Carried.

Consider the recommendation to hire Administrative Sgt. Jeff Borkowski for the soon-to-be-vacant Police Chief position. Seconded. (9-Aye). Carried.

Consider appointment of Ms. Vanessa Williams to the vacant Water Authority seat representing Whitpain Township. Seconded. (9-Aye). Carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Russell  
Assistant Secretary  
Borough of Ambler