

**Penbrook Borough
Caucus Meeting
Minutes
March 18, 2024
6:30 PM**

1. Call to order and roll call: President Deardorff called the public meeting to order at 6:30 pm. All members present. The Mayor arrived at 6:35 pm and Council member Burdine had to leave at 7:00 pm.

2. Citizen Comments on Agenda Items – N/A

3. Discussion and Action Items

- A. Hogarth presented Council with the bid tab results for the Thomas St Sewer replacement project along with the engineer's recommendation that lowest bid, from Farhat Excavating, was the lowest responsible bid at \$186,625.00. Hogarth commented that the CDBG grant for this project is for \$135,000 but the 2024 budget was prepared for the total project cost of \$185,000.00. Armbruster made a motion to accept the bid from Farhat as the lowest responsible bid. Newcomer seconded the motion. Shaw commented that he needs to abstain as he is friends with the owner of the company. All other council members voted to accept the Farhat Excavating bid.
- B. Council was presented with Rettew's proposal to do an Act 57 Tapping Fee Study. The proposed cost is \$4,000.00. Hogarth asked for a motion to accept or reject the proposal. Armbruster is concerned with the proposal because Assumption #3 states that the study will not include calculation of the Connection Fee. Hogarth said they can't provide that because that would be a contractor cost that's unforeseen. Armbruster disagreed. Council asked if Rettew could provide further explanation at the April Caucus meeting.
- C. Hogarth provided Council with the spreadsheets provided by USG outlining the status of the sanitary and storm sewer infrastructure. Hogarth suggested that a capital project plan be discussed at this year's budget meetings. Newcomer asked if there was more data. Hogarth offered to share the data with all elected officials, but the files are too large to email.
- D. Hogarth asked Council to discuss approving expenses for elected officials such as business cards and training. To date there has been nothing budgeted. Hogarth is asking for an approval process to be implemented because he doesn't believe it's his place to approve or deny Council expenditures.

- E. Solicitor Kern provided Council with some options to collect delinquent taxes and fees more efficiently. Currently the trash and sewer fees are on the property tax bill which is collected by the County. The County also collects the delinquent taxes and fees, but the only proactive collection methods are the tax sales which don't happen frequently. Does Council want to explore an alternative delinquent tax collection option? Council asked Hogarth to get some more data and this topic will be added to a future agenda.
- F. Hogarth had follow-up questions before he submitted the STMP application to DCED. The documents provided by DCED were reviewed. This topic will be on future agendas as the need arises.
- G. Hogarth advised Council that he did not have any follow-up information at this time. Nothing further.
- H. Hogarth provided all elected officials and the Solicitor with his report and supporting documents into the allegations that a public works truck plowed snow onto the Lincoln Cemetery property, damaged a gate and caused a tree to fall down. These allegations were brought to Hogarth's attention by a PennLive reporter that showed up at the March Council meeting and showed Hogarth a letter written to PennLive detailing the allegations. Hogarth's report, which included an investigation by the Susquehanna Twp Police, showed there was no evidence to support the claim. Alex Gern and Rachael Williams of Saving Our Ancestor's Legacy (SOAL) were in attendance. Both Gern and Williams asked Council to support their efforts in helping clean up and maintain the property. One specific item was for the removal of trash. Trash accumulates on the property and there is a volunteer that bags it each week, but the cemetery doesn't have any trash removal service and doesn't have a way to pay for one. Moore asked if there's any way the Borough can help them with this. Deardorff asked Hogarth if there would be room in the dumpsters for this. Hogarth said yes. Council agreed to allow SOAL to use the dumpster for their trash collection which takes place the third weekend of each month. Williams also mentioned that as SOAL applies for grants they may be asking Council for letters of support.

4. Citizen Comments – Gern and Williams from SOAL were the only visitors in attendance. See comments under 3H.

5. Council Comments

- A. Moore commented on the Council Expense topic and believed that having business cards is a good way to engage the community.
- B. Shaw asked Hogarth if there would be a change in the way snow is plowed on 30th St. Hogarth said it appeared, from the piles of snow in front of the gates across from Booser and Short Streets that snow was plowed down

each of those streets across 30th. He will make sure snow is plowed in a manner that doesn't have any more snow than necessary in front of the cemetery gates.

6. The public meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm and the Solicitor asked for an Executive Session to discuss a legal issue. The Executive Session was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Hogarth
Borough Secretary