

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

1. Call to order and roll call: President Deardorff called the public meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Moore and the Mayor were absent. Hogarth and Kern were also in attendance

2. Citizen Comments on Agenda Items – N/A

3. Discussion and Action Items

- A. Officers Aquiler and Norton were in attendance to discuss concerns over the police pension plan fees, the Borough's obligation payment into the fund and the participant's payroll contributions. Recent plan documents revealed that PMRS is charging over \$112,000 for administrative fees. The 2025 MMO increased over \$30,000 from last year's MMO. All involved are willing to entertain switching plan providers. Solicitor Kern provided details on the plan's policy and what would be involved should we pursue getting bids and making the change. Shaw suggested Hogarth reach out for advice from the Auditor General's staff. Kern also suggested contacting the PA Borough's Association for information. Hogarth said that the most pressing issue is the 2025 employee contributions. He will have an action item on the December agenda to waive the 5% required contribution in lieu of a 1.5% requirement like in years past. Council didn't believe, considering the proposed General Fund budget, that would be an issue and they are ready to act on the Resolution. Further discussion on this topic likely to appear on the December Caucus Agenda.
- B. A sample packet of municipal newsletters was passed around prior to the meeting. The samples are from hometown press, a company that publishes newsletters for several municipalities in the Midstate area. The cost of publication is subsidized through advertising so the only cost to a municipality is bulk postage. Council is in agreement that this is the best option moving forward and had some follow up questions for Hogarth to send to the company. Content will have to be sent to the office staff for collection and dissemination to the publisher. Shaw believes that Council needs to address the content approval policy before moving forward. Deardorff asked that this be placed on the December Caucus agenda to discuss a policy to address the content approval process.
- C. Codes Committee Chair Burdine sent out some draft ordinances to Council in anticipation of the referendum involving brew pubs. Burdine is asking for input before asking Kern to review and comment. Kern suggests cleaning up the zoning ordinances to make things easier for the zoning officer who has to apply the ordinance without interpretation. Discussion also involved whether to allow brew pubs in the village and commercial district and lifting the restrictions on off-street parking. Further discussion to be on the December Caucus agenda.

- D. Hogarth provided Council with an email from the Borough's engineer regarding the SALDO app at 650 S 28th St. In September, Council approved the application with conditions and relented, despite the engineer's and solicitor's recommendation that the applicant get a performance bond for infrastructure improvements. As stated in the MPC, the applicant is required to hire a professional engineer who would then estimate the amount of the bond to be secured. The applicant insisted that they be able to do the improvements prior to the plan being submitted and filed. The applicant cited financial hardship concerns. Both Smith and Kern stated that there is a typical process to be followed with SALDOs and requiring the bond is more than common and designed to protect the municipality. Council did approve their request to allow improvements under the street cut ordinance. Now the applicant is not able to move forward because CRW will not approve the water main split before the plan is filed. The applicant is now wanting Council to solve this problem. Council agreed that they followed the applicants wishes in approving the application as they proposed and will take no further action on the applicants behalf.
- E. Questions have been asked about the Holiday event schedule in December. Deardorff said that Moore reached out to him wanting to have a Breakfast with Santa event on December 14, but Deardorff didn't have any more information. Hogarth commented that the room was booked because of carpet cleaning but if Council wishes he will have that cancelled.

4. Citizen Comments – N/A

5. Council Comments – Newcomer noted his appreciation for all the borough employees and wanted to follow up with Hogarth on staff input and professional development.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Hogarth
Borough Secretary