

Borough Council Work Session

May 15, 2023

The monthly Work Session meeting of Souderton Borough Council, held in the rear Conference Room of the Souderton Municipal Building on the above date, was called to order by Vice-President Edward Huber at 7:00 p.m. The Borough Council Work Session was attended by the following members and staff:

Vice-President Edward Huber
Councillor Matthew DiNenna
Councillor Daryl Littlefield
Councillor Julie Munden
Councillor Donna M. Rogers
Councillor Richard Walczak
Councillor Courtnee Wampole

Mayor Daniel Yocum

Borough Manager P. Michael Coll
Police Chief Brian A. Newhall

POLICE ITEMS

Representatives from Souderton Connects attended the work session to discuss their request to close the Main Street parking lot during the Third Fridays event. The parking lot will be used to stage the Kids Zone along with Downtown Scoop. The parking lot will be a much safer environment for the Kids Zone and it will help draw more participants down Main Street. Souderton Connects will discuss the closure of the parking lot with Red Brick Office Suits and Chief Newhall will assist with posting temporary no parking signs. Borough Council discussed the request and authorized the parking lot closure for the May 19th Third Friday event and will evaluate continuing the closure for the remaining events.

Souderton Connects also requested the closure of Main Street for the October 20th Third Friday event. Police Chief Newhall noted that he has assigned an additional officer for each Third Friday event with a specific task of monitoring load vehicles.

Police Chief Brian Newhall recommended an amendment to the Borough’s open container regulations to address Third Fridays and other potential community events that are permitted to host alcoholic beverages in public places. Chief Newhall suggested a formalized procedure to apply for and receive a permit specific to the sanctioned event. The permit will require insurance and other documentation. The matter was referred to the Public Safety Committee for review and recommendation.

Councillor Julie Munden confirmed that Michael Moffitt has tendered his resignation as a member of the Police Civil Service Commission. The Public Safety Committee will be accepting letters of interest through the summer with a recommendation for appointment by the fall. Interested residents should forward their letters to Borough Council or to the Borough Manager.

Mayor Yocum noted an inquiry from a resident on W. Summit Street about the potential to reconsider provisions of the Open Burning Ordinance to allow the use of fire pits in twin and townhouse dwellings. The current setback restrictions effectively limit the use of fire pits to single family detached dwellings on larger lots. The nuisance of smoke, and the potential danger of fire exposures to decks, sheds and other combustible structures led to the current regulations. Concern was raised with the relaxation of the current restrictions, however, there are new products on the market which may be suitable for use in tighter lots. There are smokeless fire pits and a variety of propane fueled units. The matter was referred to the Public Safety Committee for further review and recommendation.

HIGHWAY ITEMS

Public Works Director Steven Coll was not present but provided Borough Council with a summary report of public works activities for the month. A majority of the month of May will be devoted to preparing the swimming pool for the summer season, installation of banners and continuation of work at the Community Park and Freight Building plaza.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Committee members held a Zoom conference with the consultant from the Meyner Center to review the status of the Borough Manager search. The consultant had a very informative meeting with our current Borough Manager to provide background information on daily operations to assist with the development of a job description for the new Borough Manager. The Committee is scheduled to meet again on May 31st.

DEVELOPMENT ITEMS

Borough Manager Michael Coll reviewed the status of the Towne Gate Commons revised land development plan and the location of the Starbucks restaurant at the East Broad Street entrance to the development. The Planning Commission reviewed the plans at their May 3rd meeting and formally recommended approval of the proposed plans along with a few waivers. Vice-President Edward Huber noted that one of the landscaping waivers was conditioned on the planting of a hardier species of shrubbery along Souder's Way as approved by the Borough Engineer. A recommendation will be made at the June Borough Council meeting to formally approve the revised development plans and recommended waivers.

SANITATION ITEMS

Borough Manager Michael Coll reviewed operations at the Waste Water Treatment Plant. The old ferrous sulfate tank has been removed and the new tank is now in service. Crews will be draining tank "A" for routine maintenance.

RECREATION ITEMS

Borough Council discussed progress on preparations for the opening of the Souderton Community Pool. The Borough has assembled adequate staff to oversee the front gate and perform deck hand and patron support services through the summer. Bennington pool Service will be responsible to provide lifeguard services. There are no plans to host swim lessons or other special events this season. The swimming pool will open for the season on Saturday, May 27th.

PROPERTY ITEMS

The Borough Manager has a scheduled meeting with Phillips and Donovan Architects on Wednesday, May 24th to review plans and finalize preparations of the bid documents for the Municipal Building renovation project. Gilmore & Associates completed the site survey to provide grade for the building addition along with drainage improvements. The project may go out for formal bidding in June.

Councillor Julie Munden questioned the status of marketing the Cherry Lane property. Borough Manager Michael Coll reported that the Borough just received final approval of the storm water management plans by the Montgomery County Conservation District. This was one of the major conditions for the completion of final plans. The Borough manager instructed CKS Engineers to complete the final record plans for signature and recording, along with the development of an engineer estimate of probable cost for the required site improvements. Upon the recording of the final plan the lot can then be marketed for sale by Swartz and Company.

FINANCE ITEMS

No items were discussed.

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

Police Chief Brian Newhall discussed a grant opportunity to provide funds to mount license plate readers on the traffic signal poles at main and Broad Streets. The stationary cameras will be rather visible when mounted on the poles. The license plate readers will be helpful with tracking potential stolen or wanted vehicles. There is an annual license fee of \$2,400 per camera, with three systems proposed. The grant will purchase the equipment and the Borough will be responsible for the annual license fees. Borough Council expressed concern over the look of the cameras. The matter was referred to the Public Safety Committee for further review and recommendation. Purchase will be dependent on the grant.

There being no further business the Borough Council work session was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Michael Coll, Secretary