

Special Borough Council Meeting

May 26, 2020

A Special Virtual Conference Meeting of Souderton Borough Council was called to order, on the above date, at 7:04 pm by Council President Brian Goshow with the following members present:

President Brian K. Goshow	Councillor Edward Huber
Vice-President Julie Munden	Mayor John R. Reynolds
Councillor Donna Rogers	Solicitor Charlotte Hunsberger
Councillor Richard Godshall	
Councillor Daniel Yocum	Borough Manager P. Michael Coll
Councillor Matthew Mscichowski	EMC and PW Director Steven R. Coll
Councillor Daryl Littlefield	Police Chief James P. Leary

Absent from this meeting was Borough Councillor Ned Leight.

Council President Brian Goshow noted the primary purpose of the virtual conference is to receive updates on the status of the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration, reports from the Emergency Management Coordinator, Public Works, Police Chief and Borough Manager on municipal operations and to discuss preparations for future meetings. This meeting will not be recorded. Minutes of this virtual conference will be taken by the Borough Manager and posted to the website for public review and comment.

Council President Brian Goshow started with an update from Public Works Director and Emergency Management Coordinator Steven Coll. The public works crew is currently working on base repairs to the service trenches on S. Fifth Street. An additional storm drain connection was made in Woods Alley for a residential property. The alley is now ready to be paved. Foreman Tim Kelly and Steven Toy are working on restorations to the pavilion in the Community Park. Later this week crews will be working on the irrigation system along Main Street in preparation to hang the flower pots for the season. The plaza fountain will also be turned on for the season. Mowing is in full operation. Our summer help employee has joined the crew this week and will work with our regular part time employee on mowing. Three additional Veteran Banners were delivered today and will be installed later this week. In response to a question from Borough Council, Steve Coll confirmed that all crew members have face masks to be worn in close proximity to residents or when entering business establishments. All crew members are well and have no virus symptoms.

Emergency Management Coordinator Steven R. Coll noted that the Montgomery County website continues to be the best source of information concerning the COVID-19 emergency declaration. Montgomery County had 115 new cases identified today with the number of cases in Souderton Borough rising to 74. Governor Wolf recently announced that he will move counties in southeastern Pennsylvania to yellow starting June 5, 2020. The Governor is further easing some restrictions for counties in yellow starting next week as well. Steve Coll and Borough Council discussed the various food pantry operations, noting that this was not a food supply issue, but rather the pandemic created financial hardships resulting in the inability to purchase

food. Our local groups and organizations did a remarkable job mobilizing and addressing the food needs of our community.

Police Chief Jim Leary reported that the Souderton Police Department continues to be fully staffed. Call volume remains low. The Souderton Police have participated in a number of family birthday celebration requests.

Councillor Julie Munden provided a report on the progress of the Police Chief Selection Committee. Committee members met via Zoom conference with SafeCity Solutions last Thursday evening, May 21st, to review and finalize a list of 15 candidates to move forward in the selection process. The next step is a Video and Questionnaire exercise that will be coordinated through SafeCity Solutions. The Committee hopes to complete this step in July.

Borough Manager Michael Coll summarized administrative operations. The Borough Office continues to operate on our normal schedule, the lobby is open to the public, with a requirement to wear masks. Building permit activity is increasing and we are experiencing a higher volume of permit applications for backyard swimming pools. In response to a question from Borough Council, the Borough Manager noted that permitting for swimming pools is very important to secure that the pool is properly fenced and secured and that the filter system is connected to a protected electrical circuit. Borough Council suggested that we put out a specific message concerning safety requirements for backyard pools. We recently tagged a number of properties seeking voluntary compliance to cut grass.

The Borough Manager reported growing interest in a lease for the freight building as a professional office for a local law firm. We recently met with the interested party and discussed lease terms, fit out responsibilities and potential occupancy dates. We shared a template for both the Letter of Intent and formal lease agreement that will need to be approved by SEPTA. Some disappointment was expressed that the primary vision for this building was to attract a food venue, however, several food venues opted not to pursue a lease and the current COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the restaurant market. Administration will proceed with negotiations and report back to Borough Council on progress.

The adjoin property at 110 S. Front Street is apparently back on the open market. The Souderton Zoning Hearing Board approved a variance request to use this property for the storage of classic cars back in March of this year. The interested party apparently opted not to pursue the purchase. Some interest has recently been expressed in the property. One party expressed interest as a residential development and most recently we received an inquiry about a winery use. Borough Council expressed more support for a commercial redevelopment of this property.

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf surprisingly announced that community swimming pools will be permitted to operate in yellow, which contradicts a recent statement from the Montgomery County Commissioners that public pools will not be permitted to operate in yellow. Unfortunately the Governor's announcement did not impress upon the public that the operation of community swimming pools must adhere to the CDC social distancing guidelines and sanitation guidelines. The CDC guidelines will significantly restrict the number of patrons

permitted in the complex at a given time. Sanitizing requirements suggest that pool furniture and use of the slides will not be available this season. The earliest opening will be around July 1 with closure around August 15. The Borough Manager discussed access through a membership only, with no daily admissions. Swim lessons, pool parties and other special events will not be provided this season. There remains a question about the ability to offer concessions. Staff is suggesting that the restrictions will make it very difficult to open the facility and provide patrons the recreational experience that they are accustomed to receiving. There will most certainly be conflicts concerning the limitation of access into the facility and social distancing conflicts between patrons once inside the facility. We will be relying on a young staff of 14 to 16 year olds trying to address these issues. Additional training of staff will be required. Most likely a police presence will be required along with stronger management. The facility will undoubtedly operate at a financial loss this season. Borough Council members had an extensive discussion on the issues surrounding the potential opening of the pool this season. The discussion will resume at the June 1, 2020 regular meeting, at which time Borough Council will work towards a final decision regarding opening of the pool facility.

Councillor Daniel Yocum reported that the Souderton-Telford Rotary Club is considering hosting a drive-in movie event in the Souderton Community Park at some point this summer. Borough Council initially discussed the potential of this event and will place the item on the June 1st regular meeting agenda for formal consideration.

There being no further business, the special meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

P. Michael Coll
Borough Secretary