

January 27, 2009 CAUCUS MEETING
MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE BOROUGH OF MT. EPHRAIM

MEETING CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Wolk called the meeting to order at 3:12 pm.

SALUTE TO FLAG:

All present pledged their allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT

ABSENT

Commissioner Gilmore	___x___	_____
Commissioner Greenwald	___x___	_____
Mayor Wolk	___x___	_____

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Borough Solicitor – Joe Marrazzo
Borough Engineers – Joe Federici & Doug Aiken
PW Supervisor – Ken Jones
Zoning Officer – Chris Fitzgerald
Police Chief – Ed Dobleman
Richard Schwab - Consultant

“OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW” ANNOUNCEMENT:

Mayor Wolk announced this Meeting has been advertised and notices posted in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

None

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS:

Administration & Finance:

The Chief Financial Officer submitted data to enable the Borough to proceed with the introduction of the budget to the State. However, due to uncertainty in the State’s financial position, the State has delayed submission of the budget figures until March

17th. Budget figures will be more realistic and viable once there is some firm indication from Trenton with regard to the availability of State Aid for municipalities.

The Borough is continuing to look into the sale of a building lot which it acquired as a result of completing a foreclosure on the property. With the depressed current market conditions, the Borough is examining what may be the best time during which to conduct an auction of the property and the need to set a minimum bid price. The Borough will advertise for a public sale to be conducted when the details are completed.

The Acting Borough Clerk reported that a number of Camden County towns were surveyed regarding dog licensing fees and the various methods used to conduct a dog census. There was considerable variation in the licensing fees from municipality to municipality. Some area towns indicated that they were not fully satisfied with how the census measures were conducted. Additional research will be done in this area. It was noted by Richard Schwab that any shortage in the dog fund must be covered from the general fund. The objective of the review is to ensure that the dog fund operates as fully funded strictly from revenues generated from dog licensing.

Richard Schwab gave an update on the status of the COAH program. There was an interest expressed in retaining the services of Bill Harris, a certified planner, to continue to assist the Borough in preparing the necessary reports and planning for the program. At this time, there are no fines involved in a failure to meet the requirements of the program. However, it was noted that the risk in not going forward is that a builder may file a complaint seeking relief. Plans in this area are temporarily being put on hold until the budget process proceeds.

It was noted that plans were about to get under way on the Library renovation and accessibility plans. It was noted that Ken Jones, Public Works Supervisor, was able to do an outstanding job of retaining contractors to complete the necessary work. He was also able to arrange an inter-local agreement with Bellmawr Public Works Department for some paving work to be completed at the Library.

It was reported that the Borough is continuing to explore various possibilities with regard to ensuring that a certified Borough Clerk is in place by April 1st. The most likely case scenario is that a part-time person will fill the position as part of an inter-local agreement with another municipality. This arrangement would benefit the Borough financially and be consistent with the State concept of shared services.

Richard Schwab summarized an update on the Paris Grant program with the City of Camden. The scanning equipment has been set up and is ready to be used. Richard and the Acting Borough Clerk will be attending an additional training session in mid-February in Camden. Document imaging will take place from the present and move forward rather than operating in retrospect.

The Acting Borough Clerk noted that there were still two delinquent water accounts that have not yet been resolved.

Police:

Bids for towing services were received by the Acting Clerk this morning. There were two bidders, Elmer's Auto Body and Towing and Poleese Towing. The low bid was submitted by Elmer's and will be reviewed by the Borough Solicitor to ensure that it meets all of the bid specifications. If so, a one year contract will be awarded at the next Borough meeting.

Mayor Wolk advised those in attendance that he had been contacted by Audubon Park officials regarding the possibility of having Mt. Ephraim Police provide services to them. He reported that Audubon has been providing police services for the last five years. It was noted that Audubon Park has been negotiating with the Borough of Audubon, but those talks did not result in an agreement being reached to date. Therefore, Audubon Park has chosen not to renew the agreement at this time. For that reason, Mt. Ephraim was asked to explore establishing a possible inter-local relationship and to make a proposal since Audubon Park must notify Audubon by March 1st of its intention to continue its relationship with them or to sever it at that point. The Solicitor advised that he also represents Audubon Park and may have to remove himself from any discussions so as not to present a conflict of interest. A roll call vote to enter into negotiations with Audubon Park to discuss and pursue a possible inter-local agreement was taken with the following results:

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Wolk:	yes
Commissioner Gilmore:	yes
Commissioner Greenwald:	yes

The motion carried.

A concern was expressed that leaving Mt. Ephraim to service Audubon Park calls might leave a shortage of coverage in Mt. Ephraim. The goal of exploring the inter-local relationship is to provide the best service to Mt. Ephraim while covering Audubon Park in a more efficient manner, both logistically and economically

Emergency Management:

Fire:

It was reported that the financial closing on the Fire House project was slated to take place on February 11th. Financing has been secured from TD Bank through the Camden County Improvement Authority. Phase II environmental work will begin after the demolition of the building. The Borough Engineer reported that the Phase I environmental assessment revealed some soil contamination due to some minor leakage from an old oil tank on the premises. This will probably result in the removal of some soil and water from the site, but remediation of the condition is expected to be minimal.

Other Public Safety Items:

Commissioner Gilmore advised that a request to run a fund raising activity by conducting a coin toss had been received from the Audubon High School Band Parents organization. Commissioner Gilmore indicated that a review of the regulations would take place and that he would report back at the next meeting. He expressed his concern for the safety of all concerned and wanted an opportunity to review the situation in greater detail.

Public Works:

Commissioner Greenwald indicated that a review of the Public Works Department has resulted in the development of a 5 year plan with regard to both projects and personnel. This will enable the Borough to plan more effectively economically and enable smoother transitions in personnel changes when retirements take place. As part of this plan, the department will be initiating training at the foreman level to ensure proper training.

The Acting Clerk reported that PSE&G will begin a tree trimming project along the railroad starting March 1st. She indicated that PSE&G was to contact the Borough before commencing work. The PSE&G representative informed the Acting Clerk that they would work closely with the Public Works Department. The Public Works Department was asked to ensure that the cherry trees along the railroad tracks, which were donated by private citizens of Mt. Ephraim, are properly pruned where necessary.

Commissioner Greenwald also reported on the Lambert Avenue Fire House conversion to a senior center. He indicated that he will check at the next Community Development Block Grant meeting to check on the status of Year 29 and Year 30 funds. He noted that it will be necessary to review the plans with Becica, the project architect, to facilitate any needed advertisement for bids or quotes. The Borough Engineer stressed the need to determine the final date for awarding such contracts.

Commissioner Greenwald advised that the local plan for the Black Horse Redevelopment area will need to be re-done.

Work on the Library improvements will begin soon and include painting, carpeting, a handicap ramp and some paving work. The Public Works Supervisor was commended by Commissioner Greenwald for his work on securing vendors to complete the work and for his efforts in working with the school district and with the Borough of Bellmawr through an inter-local agreement. It was noted that the Librarian was eagerly awaiting the improvements.

The Commissioner reported on several zoning issues. The Milano Funeral Home has resolved an issue relating to a fence on the rear of his property. Martin Sander was to notify Mt. Ephraim Dodge with regard to zoning violations on the west side of the Pike. The Acting Clerk advised that the Mercantile License would not be issued until the Zoning Officer signs the application indicating his approval which would also require that all escrow fees are paid to date.

The Zoning Officer has been addressing the problem of inoperable cars being improperly stored at residential premises. It was noted that some cases, such as a George Street property, may present a fire hazard. He will continue to issue new warnings to residents as violations are discovered or reported.

The Borough received a complaint from a resident regarding multiple occupancy of a single family residence. The Borough Solicitor advised that the problem would be covered under zoning regulations and that the situation would be reviewed.

Engineer:

Joe Federici reported that the Tax Map will be submitted to the State for certification and that necessary changes necessary as a result of subdivisions and consolidations will gradually be incorporated.

He advised that the requirements of an economic stimulus package are not specific or concrete at this time. He noted that he will be meeting with a group of municipal engineers on February 11th to further explore this topic and to try to obtain more specific requirements.

The Engineer noted that the additional markings for the speed bumps on Fourth Avenue will be completed after the winter weather breaks. Richard Schwab noted that there was a request from a resident at 85 Sartori Avenue resident to have speed humps placed there as well, but that may be limited due to the state of the economy at this time. The Police Chief advised that he will speak with the resident and suggested that the Borough may need to increase the police presence in the area to reduce speeding.

Joe Federici indicated that the roadway at Centre and Eighth Avenues will need some remediation of the underpinning as a result of the ongoing presence of heavy construction vehicles using the area to access Kingsway Station.

It was reported that the work on implementing the sewer easements in the area of Linden, Adams, and Linwood Avenues is continuing and that Ken Jones is still working on the communications with those parties involved. A second reading of the ordinances relating to these sewer easements is expected to take place at the February 5th meeting.

The Borough Engineer has prepared a traffic flow plan for dealing with the manhole replacement at Northmont Avenue and Market Street. Plans for Cedar Avenue

resurfacing are progressing and the base plans have been prepared. All necessary utilities have been contacted as well.

Bid openings for the Harding Avenue generator will be taking place next week. In another matter, Bob Henry sent a letter to Walgreens regarding the shrubs at their location.

Solicitor:

Joe Marrazzo questioned what had been done with the check from the Courier Post for excess advertising charges and was told that it had been deposited.

It was also advised that the meeting should proceed in closed session to discuss Family Leave and Light Duty.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Commissioner Gilmore and seconded by Commissioner Greenwald to go into closed session at 5:05 PM to discuss Family Leave and Light Duty. The motion carried.

The closed session ended at 5:35 PM and the general session resumed.

COMMENTS BY OFFICIALS: None

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Commissioner Gilmore and seconded by Commissioner Greenwald to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Darlington
Acting Borough Clerk