

**BOROUGH OF PENNS GROVE
COUNTY OF SALEM, STATE OF NEW JERSEY
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING – 6:30 P.M.
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE (VTC)
MAY 4, 2021 – AGENDA**

Mayor LaDaena D. Thomas led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation by Sharon Williams, Municipal Clerk.

Mayor LaDaena D. Thomas made the open public meeting statement – STATEMENT: In accordance with section V of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231 P.L 1975, Notice of this meeting was posted on the Borough of Penns Grove Municipal Bulletin Board designed for that purpose. Notice was also posted on the Borough of Penns Grove website: www.pennsgrove-nj.org and was emailed to the official newspaper as provided by Resolution. Additionally, stating that in response to the state of emergency in New Jersey regarding COVID-19 ("Coronavirus"), this February 16, 2021 Meeting will be held via "Zoom" online meeting platform.

Roll Call: Carter-absent, Giordano-present, Martin-present, Mincey-present, Rambo-absent., Scarpaci-present

MINUTES:

March 2, 2021 – regular session

April 6, 2020 – regular session

Motion to adopt by consent by Martin; second Scarpaci. Roll Call. All ayes.

PAYMENT OF BILLS & APPROVAL OF BILL OF BILL LIST:

Motion to approve payment of bills and approval of bill list by Mincey; second Giordano. All in favor.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY CONSENT:

2021-5-64 – CANCEL MUNICIPAL LIEN #9-00574

2021-5-65 – DUPLICATE TAX SALE CERTIFICATE

2021-5-66 – DUPLICATE TAX SALE CERTIFICATE

2021-5-67 – A RESOLUTION APPOINTING ALTERNATE FUND COMMISSIONER

2021-5-68 – SOUTHERN COASTAL REGIONAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FUND RESOLUTION TO RENEW

2021-5-70 – RESOLUTION CELEBRATING THE 100th BIRTHDAY OF ANN SAIENI

2021-5-71 – RESOLUTION OF CONDOLENCE TO THE FAMILY OF EDWARD A. JOHNSON, SR.

2021-5-72 – AUTHORIZING LIEN ASSIGNMENT OF CERTIFICATE #20-00516

Mayor Thomas read Resolution No. 2021-5-70 and Resolution No. 2021-5-71 into the record.

Motion to adopt Resolution No. 2021-5-64 – 2021-5-68, 2021-5-70 and 2021-5-71 by consent by Mincey; second Scarpaci. Roll call. All ayes

Resolution No. 2021-5-69 – RESOLUTION CERTIFYING RENEW OF THE ANNUAL AUDIT

Motion to adopt by Scarpaci; second Martin. Roll call. All ayes.

CY2021 BUDGET HEARING:

Motion to Open Budget Hearing to the public by Mincey; second Giordano. Roll Call. All ayes.

Unknown resident used the chat feature on zoom to question the budget per department. Resident was advised to follow up with the Finance Officer for detailed explanation and also advised that the budget document will be posted to the Borough website.

Motion to close Budget Hearing to the public by Scarpaci; second Mincey. Roll call. All ayes.

Motion to table the Budget, pending the certification and release of Transitional Aid, by Scarpaci; second Mincey. Roll Call. All ayes.

FIRST READING AND INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE(S):

2021-11 – AN ORDINANCE REPEALING ORDINANCE 2020-17, AMENDING CHAPTER 206 OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF PENNS GROVE

Mayor Thomas solicited public comment.

With no comment from the public, motion to adopt by title only by Mincey; second Scarpaci. Roll call. All ayes.

SECOND READING AND ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE(S):

2021-10 – AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 387 OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF PENNS GROVE - STORM WATER CONTROL

Motion to open to the public by Mincey; second Scarpaci.

Carol Walker, West Main Street, questioned if this Ordinance is relative to the issues she is experiencing with her property located at 127 West Main Street, Penns Grove.

Sean Smith, Engineer, provided a summary of the Ordinance – Only for new development from March 2020. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is looking to mitigate flooding; General application principles for Stormwater Control Ordinance includes goals aimed at stormwater planning, process for identification of stormwater planning agencies. Reduce flood damage, minimize any increase of storm water runoff from new developments, reduce soil erosion, to assure the adequacy of existing and proposed culverts, bridges and instream structures, maintain ground water recharge, preventing an increase in non-point pollution, maintain the integrity of streams and channels for biological function as well as drainage, minimize pollutants in stormwater runoff, protect public health and fish and aquatic life, protect public safety through proper design and management of stormwater basins.

Mr. Smith advised Ms. Walker that there are remedies within the Ordinance, such as, address the bulkhead along the river front, cleaning of inlets and drains, and putting together a maintenance management plan.

Carol Walker, stated that she has had to place her home on the market. Ms. Walker stated that four families were interested in her property, however, due to the basement water, it deterred them from finalizing the purchase. Ms. Walker stated that they had made repairs to help resolve the issue, however, the water continues to flood her basement. Ms. Walker also stated that, after the repairs and an inspection of her home, it was brought to her attention that the issue is a result of the negligence of the Borough as a result of the riverfront construction. Ms. Walker stated that she contacted the Street Department who temporarily resolved the issue and also advised that the issue is result of the installation of the River Walk. Ms. Walker requested to be reimbursed for repairs, and the issue to be resolved. Mayor Thomas stated that the governing body is aware of the flooding and are working diligently to resolve the issue.

Ms. Walker stated that she no longer resides in her home.

Attorney Tarver suggested she reach out to him for further discussion.

Michael Walker, North Carolina resident, stated that the flooding issue, his mother, Carol Walker is experiencing has been ongoing for several years, which began and has persisted during the construction of the Riverfront. Mr. Walker expressed concern regarding the flooding along West Main Street as well as at his mother's home. Mr. Walker stated that this is the reason his mother has not been able to sell her home, and feels that the Borough should be held liable for the costs she has incurred in trying to sell the home.

Mayor Thomas stated that they are working hard to address the issues.

Mr. Tarver suggested contacting him for further discussion.

Councilman Giordano questioned whether his concerns were addressed with the prior administration.

Mr. Walker stated that they didn't learn what was causing the flooding until recently, when the Street Department had identified the problem.

Councilman Giordano asked for patience for the Borough to resolve the issues.

Gregory Martin, Spruce Street, Penns Grove, suggested compassion for Ms. Walker, further stating that all council had to be aware of the flooding issues along West Main Street, and suggested resolving the problem.

Jeremiah Carter, North Broad Street, Penns Grove, questioned the simpler items that can be done to help relieve the flooding.

Engineer Sean Smith stated he will investigate the area to institute a resolution.

Mayor Thomas stated she and the Business Administrator met with Carneys Point Township Mayor, who advised that they have a new machine to clean out the stormwater drains, which will be implemented on a short term basis until a permanent resolution is achieved.

Motion to adopt by Scarpaci; second Mincey. Roll call. All ayes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Buildings & Grounds (Martin, Giordano, Rambo): Councilwoman Martin stated/addressed the following: Hiring of two contractors to cut overgrown grass on Borough owned properties; Barber Avenue Park to reopen upon completion of electrical repairs, kids equipment is off limits until replaced or repaired; Borough Hall to reopen in early July after having the building thoroughly cleaned and CDC guidelines followed; She and Council President Mincey met at the River Walk – no flag on poles, landscaping will be addressed and a few more trash receptacles will be put in place; in the process of hiring a Custodian and Code Enforcement Officer, encouraged individuals to apply.

General Government/Clean Communities (Scarpaci, Martin, Giordano): Councilwoman Scarpaci stated/addressed the following: On April 27th the Planning Board Engineer submitted a general reexamination of the Master Plan, which contains 38 updates. Tri-Co JIF has issued a reimbursement check of \$3,450.00 for safety compliance. Monies are earmarked for the safety, health and wellness for the employees. Next three Saturdays designated towards clean up. Four groups will clean up one mile of roadway from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 this Saturday; three groups on the following Saturday, and four groups the Saturday thereafter. Encourage groups and organizations to apply for the \$250.00 mini grant.

Housing/Zoning & Planning/Shade Tree (Giordano, Martin, Rambo): Councilman Giordano stated/addressed the following: Nine Zoning Applications for the month of April – seven approved, two denied. Two Zoning citations in a residential zone, and collected \$800.00 for Certificate of Occupancy.

Recreation/Board of Health (Carter, Mincey, Martin): On behalf of Councilman Carter, Council President stated/addressed the following: Met with Mayor Thomas, Sean Brown and Councilwoman Scarpaci regarding recreating the Board of Health, which consists of eight members to assist with reporting code violations to the Code Enforcement Officer. Due to inclement weather, the Car Cruzin has been rescheduled until the first Wednesday in June.

Mayor Thomas questioned the status of volunteers for Recreation.

Council President stated that she is awaiting the criminal background form; further stating that the Police Clerk will set aside a time to conduct checks.

Public Works/Streets & Roads (Rambo, Mincey, Carter): No report.

Public Safety (Mincey, Martin, Giordano): Council President stated/addressed the following: Met with Emergency Management Coordinator, John Ashcraft, who will research notification to the public in the event of the emergency.

Business Administrator: Sean Brown stated/addressed the following: He and Mayor Thomas spoke with Mayor Brown and Mr. Bomba regarding resident complaints regarding their trash is not being picked up by Public Works. Mr. Brown stated that he has confirmed that trash will not be picked up by Public Works, if a vehicle is parked in front of the trash cans; further stating that Carneys Point suggests that the residents park their car elsewhere on pick up day, or if possible, placing the receptacles across the street where parking is prohibited.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Finance Officer Report: Stephen Labb stated/addressed the following: Will have the budget posted to the website. The Budget was introduced with the state mandate of anticipating 85 percent of the 2020 Transitional Aid award, which would result in a local increase of .196 cents, with an effect on an average assessed house of \$86,250.00 would translate to a local increase of \$151.98 per year or \$37.99 per quarter. Applied for \$550,000 in the 2021 Transitional Aid application, which is the same amount received in 2019. If received, would result in a local tax rate of .069 cents, which translates to a local increase of \$42.33 per year or \$10.58 per quarter. Invited residents to contact him regarding budget questions. Tax Collection rate increase as of May 3, 2021 is 65.34 percent versus 61.34 percent in May 3, 2020

Police Director Report: Richard Rivera stated/addressed the following: Report for the month of April – Two vehicle thefts, which were unattended and running; individual over dose for the third time; Looking to Hire of five full time officers within next 30 days. Will present candidates to Business Administrator and Public Safety Committee. Officers are engaged in the community. Interviewing two African American male, two Latinos, one Caucasian and one female. Looking for Special Officers for part time positions and Clerks as well.

Fire Chief Report: Adam Hartsough stated/addressed the following: Report for the month of April – One drill, one brush fire, five mutual aid, three ambulance assists, one special assignment, one motor vehicle

accident, one pedestrian struck. Commended all those who assisted in extrication during motor vehicle accident. Questioned the status of the Small Cities grant to install the parking lot at the Fire Department lot.

Sean Smith, stated that the plans and specs are currently being addressed.

Ambulance/EMS Captain Report: No report.

Business Administrator: Sean Brown stated/addressed the following: Recovery Plan is broken into five areas, which are to establish a senior management team, improve tax collection, expand ratable base, process for individuals who desire to acquire Borough owned properties, maximize shared services agreements, and to control spending. Continuing to implement policy to address the many issues the Borough is facing.

Mayoral Comment: Mayor Thomas stated/addressed the following: Expressed appreciation to EMS Captain, Deborah Ashcraft, Corporal Frett, Penns Police Department and all those who participated in the drive by birthday celebration for Saintquay Webb, who celebrated his 21st birthday. Mayor Thomas stated that Mr. Webb was diagnosed with Autism and other detrimental health issues, and his parents had been advised that he would not live to see 21.

Announced the Penns Grove NFL Youth Flag Football League, which is a part of the NFL. Mayor stated that it's the first league in Salem County. League is open to all youth from surrounding municipalities. Registration is \$50, looking for volunteer coaches. Registration from May 15th through June 5th, with the season beginning June 12th. Coed from ages 4 through 14. Summer Basketball league. Councilman Carter will lead the effort. Encouraged participation from all races.

Mayor Thomas addressed changes to the permit process, which would create a seamless process for the community.

Mayor Thomas addressed reopening of the parks and Borough Hall. Borough Hall will open in June, with the hiring of a custodian and following CDC guidelines. An application for a \$500,000 grant will be sought for upgrades to the Park. Reminded all that there will be zero tolerance regarding the use of drugs, alcohol or smoking in the parks.

Mayor Thomas announced that a Town Hall meeting will be held during the first week of June to discuss bringing the cannabis industry to the Borough; following with a second Town Hall meeting to be held to discuss flooding and upgrades as well as street paving.

Attorney Report: Robert L. Tarver, Jr. stated/addressed the following: New systems in place, such as personnel and accountability. Reported that there are no new litigation filed against the Borough.

APPOINTMENT(S):

Donald E. Williams – Liberty No. 1 Fire Department

Motion to appoint by Scarpaci; second Mincey. All in favor. Roll call. All ayes.

Southern Coastal Fund Commissioner – Tabled till May 18, 2021 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Add on and adoption by title only Ordinance No. 2021-12 – AN ORDINANCE CREATING THE PENNS GROVE YOUTH ATHELETIC LEAGUE FOR THE BOROUGH OF PENNS GROVE

Motion to adopt by title only Scarpaci; second Martin. Roll call. All ayes.

Aunjanette Scott request to block streets at Walnut and Deming, Smith and Willis, and Walnut and Cumberland from 2:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. on July 17, 2021.

Aunjanette Scott stated that she is requesting to block in front of the American Legion (Smith Avenue), just before Cumberland and Walnut, block off at Whispers; and Walnut to Cumberland.

Councilwoman Martin questioned if the surrounding neighbors will be notified.

Ms. Scott stated that they will be notified.

Scarpaci expressed concern regarding the end time of 11:00 p.m.

Ms. Scott stated that it allows her and her team to properly cleanup the area after the event.

Councilwoman Mincey questioned the Clerk as to how soon the neighbors would need to be notified.

Clerk Williams advised that she was unaware of a time frame for notification.

Attorney Tarvey stated no notification is required because the residents aren't restricted from entering or exiting their homes, and the Ordinance doesn't address it.

Councilwoman Mincey questioned the use of Borough Police Officers.

Ms. Scott stated that she has security who will be present, and noted that she has never had any issues.

Richard Rivera, questioned the number of people in attendance. Mr. Rivera suggested if approved, it should be approved with conditions and those conditions discussed with the Business Administrator and Borough Attorney.

Sean Brown recommended approving with further discussions to set conditions.

Mr. Tarver suggested approving conditionally upon the safe conditions imposed by the Borough.

Councilwoman Scarpaci questioned the use of alcohol.

Ms. Scott stated that she has never sold alcohol and there will be no outside drinking will be permitted.

Motion to conditionally approve road closure upon the safe conditions imposed by the Borough by Martin; second Mincey. Roll Call. All ayes.

PUBLIC PORTION:

Aunjanette Scott, Mary Street, Penns Grove, expressed appreciation to Mayor and Council for approving, and invited Mayor and Council's attendance.

Gregory Martin, Spruce Street, Penns Grove, questioned if the "one-way" sign removed from the corner of Beach Avenue and State Street.

Mayor Thomas stated that it will be removed.

Gregory Martin questioned if there is a contract for detailing the Police vehicles.

Mr. Rivera stated that it is difficult as they're running 24/7, however, it is under the review.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Mincey; second Martin. All in favor.

MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM