

BOROUGH OF CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

PUBLIC MEETING held via GoToMeeting video/teleconference

PRESENT: Colleen Leonard, Council President
Tina Sokolowski, Council Vice-President
Robert Stokley, Senior Council Member
Anita Barton, Council Member
Kathleen Kingsley, Council Member
James Griffin, Council Member
Yaniv Aronson, Mayor

ALSO PRESENT: Stephanie Cecco, Borough Manager
Michael E. Peters, Borough Solicitor

CALL TO ORDER

The Public Meeting of the Conshohocken Borough Council duly advertised, was held remotely using the GoToMeeting platform. Colleen Leonard, Council President, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Leonard thanked everyone for attending the virtual Council meeting. She reviewed the meeting logistics and participation instructions. She announced that Council held an Executive Session prior to the regularly scheduled meeting on personnel and property matters.

PRESENTATIONS

There were no presentations.

LAND USE MATTERS, PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ORDINANCES

There were no land use matters, public hearings and ordinances.

PRESENTATIONS

There were no presentations.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

a.) Conduct an interview for the Municipal Sewer Authority Board

Ms. Leonard introduced Thomas Lonergan who was present to interview for the Sewer Authority Board. Mr. Lonergan stated that he would like to give back to his community and discussed how his experience in government affairs and real estate advising would contribute to the Board. He shared that he has watched the virtual Sewer Authority Board meetings to better understand current sewer related matters.

b.) Conduct interviews for Board and Commission reappointments

Ms. Leonard introduced Mark Bonvitacola who was present to interview for reappointment to the Board of Code Appeals. Mr. Bonvitacola described the role of the Board of Code Appeals and how his professional experience has prepared him to perform the duties of the Board. He discussed the strengths of the Borough, including public participation, commitment to strategic development and sense of community.

Ms. Leonard introduced Judy Smith-Kressley who was present to interview for reappointment to the Planning Commission. Ms. Smith-Kressley explained that parking and traffic could be improved in the

Borough. She shared that she is passionate about community engagement and discussed how she prepares for meetings and makes decisions on applications. She explained how the Borough's Comprehensive Plan and Codes are the foundation for development decisions.

MANAGER MATTERS

- a.) **Consider approving 120 West 11th Avenue maintenance bond release in the amount of \$3,973.60**

Ms. Cecco stated that the Borough Engineer completed site inspections and prepared escrow release recommendations for items a.), b.) and c.) under Manager Matters.

Ms. Barton made a motion to approve 120 West 11th Avenue maintenance bond release in the amount of \$3,973.60, seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion carried 6-0. The motion carried 6-0. (Tutino absent)

- b.) **Consider approving 120 West 11th Avenue professional services escrow release no. 2 (final) in the amount of \$696.38**

Mr. Griffin made a motion to approve 120 West 11th Avenue professional services escrow release no. 2 (final) in the amount of \$696.38, seconded by Ms. Barton. The motion carried 6-0. (Tutino absent)

- c.) **Consider approving 7 Tower Bridge financial security escrow release no. 4 in the amount of \$345,940.68**

Ms. Sokolowski made a motion to approve 7 Tower Bridge financial security escrow release no. 4 in the amount of \$345,940.68, seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion carried 6-0. (Tutino absent)

- d.) **Consider approving payment application no. 2 (final) for the 2019 Road Program in the amount of \$136,169.55**

Ms. Kingsley made a motion to approve payment application no. 2 (final) for the 2019 Road Program in the amount of \$136,169.55, seconded by Ms. Barton. The motion carried 6-0. (Tutino absent)

- e.) **Consider approving a block party request for the 300 block of West 7th Avenue**

Ms. Cecco shared that the residents of the 300 block of West 7th Avenue are requesting to hold a block party on October 23, 2021 from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. She explained that the street would be closed. She added that Borough Administration is in support of the request. Ms. Barton voiced a concern about egress for the residents of Parkview. Ms. Cecco replied that the Parkview HOA has been asked to open the fire escape gate on Freedley Square to divert traffic on the day of the event.

Ms. Barton made a motion to approve a block party request for the 300 block of West 7th Avenue contingent upon the opening of the fire escape gate on Freedley Square, seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion carried 6-0. (Tutino absent)

- f.) **Consider approving Resolution 2021-27 designating an authorized signer to execute contracts related to the Law Enforcement Assistance Grant Program**

Ms. Cecco shared that the Borough of Conshohocken has applied for the Law Enforcement Assistance Grant Program to help offset the costs associated with Police overtime in response to protests that occurred throughout the Borough in 2020. She stated that the Borough is eligible to receive \$10,389.84 and requested that Council designate a signer of the grant contract with PEMA.

Ms. Sokolowski made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-27 designating the Borough Manager as an authorized signer to execute contracts related to the Law Enforcement Assistance Grant Program, seconded by Ms. Kingsley. The motion carried 6-0. (Tutino absent)

DEPARTMENT MATTERS

There were no department matters.

LEGAL MATTERS

a.) Discussion on Animal Control Ordinance

Ms. Cecco addressed issues related to the proposed animal control ordinance based on feedback received from Borough Council, Administration, and residents. She confirmed that, per the proposed ordinance, all animals would be prohibited from running off-leash and that feral cats would be caught by the Animal Control Officer and dropped off at the SPCA. She also confirmed that individuals who have roosters prior to the adoption of ordinance would be grandfathered. She added that a process will be put into place to regulate this clause. Ms. Cecco confirmed that the Animal Control Officer would be a contracted consultant position with an annual cost of \$20,000.00 - \$25,000.00. She stated that a timeline would be established as it relates to violations and penalties. She recommended that most of the regulations related to the keeping of chickens be removed. Council agreed and Ms. Cecco stated that Administration and the Borough Solicitor would revise the ordinance for Council to review in the near future.

Ms. Leonard inquired about the role of the Animal Control Officer. Ms. Cecco explained that the Animal Control Officer would be engaged only when a nuisance is reported.

Ms. Cecco confirmed that the ordinance does not prohibit residents from participating in Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) programs on their own.

Ms. Sokolowski asked about how to differentiate between a feral cat and an outdoor cat. Ms. Leonard responded that pet owners are responsible for ensuring pets are properly identified.

Ms. Kingsley discussed programs that combine TNR with adoption of socialized cats to reduce the cat colony population.

Ms. Cecco explained next steps in the process which included a revision of the ordinance that would be reviewed and discussed by Council at a later date and then considered for readvertisement.

COUNCIL MEMBER AND MAYOR MATTERS

a.) Discussion on East 8th Ave Residential Parking Permit Request (Council Member Kingsley)

Ms. Kingsley shared that she received a request for restricted parking regulations and/or residential parking for the 100 block of East 8th Avenue. She identified several curb cuts which limit the number of on street parking spaces. Ms. Cecco responded that Borough Administration and the Parking Task Force would evaluate the area and make a recommendation to Council.

Mayor Aronson shared that many local restaurants participated in AMBUCS Restaurant Rally to benefit programming and ADA compliant bicycles for children with special needs. He recognized the St Mary & St Mercurius Coptic Orthodox Church for hosting a successful Egyptian Festival. He announced that the Conshohocken Halloween Parade is on Saturday, October 23, 2021 and provided event details.

Ms. Barton encouraged the constituents of Ward 4 to reach out to her with any questions, concerns, or comments.

Ms. Leonard thanked everyone for attending and participating in the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Diane Del Buono, 216 East 4th Avenue, thanked Ms. Cecco for reviewing the proposed regulations of the animal control ordinance and for listening to the residents' concerns about the proposed regulations specific to the keeping of chickens.

Alix Catania, 137 West 7th Avenue, voiced her support of the keeping of chickens. She shared that she is opposed to the regulation prohibiting cats to roam freely and questioned how that regulation would be enforced.

Jayne Suchora, 237 West 11th Avenue, voiced concerns related to identifying feral cats and domestic outdoor cats.

Liz Lowry, 230 Moir Avenue in West Conshohocken, shared that she works with an organization that partners with the SPCA to provide TNR programs. She stated that cats are checked for a microchip and recommended that cats wear collars for identification. She inquired about the regulation prohibiting the feeding of feral cats. Ms. Cecco responded that the feeding of feral cats is prohibited when such feedings cause a nuisance to neighbors. Ms. Catania, 137 West 11th Avenue, responded that her cat was properly identified with a chip and collar, and was trapped and not returned through a TNR program.

Sean Purcell, 226 East 5th Avenue, voiced concerns related to TNR programs and stressed the importance of residents adhering to the animal control regulations as it pertains to animals at-large.

Brittany Rogers, Executive Assistant to the Borough Manager, stated that eight (8) individuals submitted written public comment. Ms. Rogers read the written public comment.

Sam Nagle, 350 West Elm Street, voiced his support of the proposed animal control ordinance.

Erik Stalford, 350 West Elm Street, shared that he has witnessed residents feeding approximately twenty (20) stray cats at Haines and Salvati Park. He stated that he is in support of an animal control ordinance.

Tim Donahue, 623 East Hector Street, voiced his support of the animal control ordinance. He explained that the proposed regulations are necessary to minimize health hazards created by feral cats and would put Conshohocken in line with municipalities in the surrounding area.

Seth Piechowski, 335 Spring Mill Ave, stressed the importance of adopting regulations to control the feral cat population. He stated that the adoption of an animal control ordinance would put Conshohocken in line with municipalities in the surrounding area and prevent the spread of disease caused by feral cats. He explained that the proposed ordinance provides humane policies and procedures for addressing the Borough's feral cat problem.

Amy Kroll, 335 Spring Mill Ave, voiced her support of the proposed animal control ordinance. She shared that the feral cat population in Conshohocken is growing and discussed actions that she has taken to date to control the feral cat population. She stated that an animal control ordinance would put Conshohocken in line with municipalities in the surrounding area.

Katie Kirlin, 331 Spring Mill Ave, discussed the potential health related issues associated with feral cats. She asked Council for their support to regulate the feeding of stray cats.

Mike and Trish Denolfi, 114 West 10th Avenue, voiced their support of the proposed animal control ordinance. They shared that they hired a professional to address issues related to feral cats. They discussed how feral cats are a nuisance.

Evan O'Connor and Henisha Patel, 125 East 4th Avenue, Apt. 2, shared their objection to several regulations proposed in the animal control ordinance. They discussed issues related to prohibiting dogs from being off leash. They stated that the Borough's definition of "stray cat" is incorrect and disagreed that feeding stray/feral cats causes a nuisance. They discussed issues related to proposed restrictions and regulations regarding the keeping of chickens. They explained how the enforcement provisions of the proposed ordinance are vague and ill-advised.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Cecco,
Borough Secretary