

February 5, 2020

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

The February 5, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President Weand in the Council Meeting Room, Pottstown Borough Hall, 100 East High Street, Pottstown, PA.

ATTENDANCE

Councilors present were Ryan Procsal, Lisa Vanni, Trenita Lindsay, Dan Weand, Michael Paules and Joseph Kirkland. Also present were Borough Manager Justin Keller, Solicitor Charles Garner, Mayor Stephanie Henrick and Borough Secretary Virginia Takach. Councilor Lebedynsky was absent.

INVOCATION

President Weand requested a moment of silence.

PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

PRESENTATION – Joseph M. Groff, Fire Chief (Retired)

President Weand read and presented a Resolution to retiring Fire Chief Joseph Groff in the presence of Chief Hand and fellow fire fighters.

RESOLUTION NO. 2020 – 3

RECOGNIZING JOSEPH M. GROFF FOR 40 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN AND THE POTTSTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT

WHEREAS, Joseph M. Groff has served the Borough of Pottstown as a dedicated Volunteer Fire Fighter with the Philadelphia Steam Fire Engine Company No. 1 for 40 years; and

WHEREAS, during his career with the Borough he served in the capacity as Fire Chief for the Philadelphia Steam Fire Engine Company for 28 years; and

WHEREAS, Joe has served the Borough of Pottstown and its residents and has been called to duty at various hours of the day and night in all types of emergency response situations, in order for the community to receive the best level of fire safety while saving lives and saving properties; and

WHEREAS, Joe unselfishly continues to serve this Borough and the Pottstown Fire Department as a volunteer with the Philadelphia Steam Fire Engine Company No. 1, sharing his expertise, qualifications and professionalism.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY the Mayor and Town Council that Joseph M. Groff is officially recognized for the outstanding service he has provided the Borough of Pottstown through 40 years of service to the Borough of Pottstown and its residents.

Adopted at Pottstown Borough Hall, 100 East High Street, this 5th day of February 2020.

Chief Groff thanked all present for this honor.

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SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Infrastructure – There was no report.
- b. Economic Development – Ms. Lee-Clark reported on the 2020 Census project as a Subcommittee Chair for the County and Census Day, April 1st. She highlighted the importance of an accurate census for various funding and urged all to participate on line, by mail, telephone or person. She added that Pottstown has historically been under reported. Ms. Lee-Clark noted that PAID is highlighting four office spaces available and provided pamphlets.
- c. Transportation – Mr. Keller reviewed the grant funded projects at the Airport. He added that the T-hangar and taxiway paving projects are almost complete. The PART system new routes and schedules are out and considering an electronica fare box for 2020.
- d. Ordinance Review Committee – Councilor Procsal advised that a final review will be provided to Council in the near future.
- e. Efficient Methods Committee – There was no report.

BOARDS & COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Emergency Services Reports – Chief Hand reported that the Fire Department also honored Joe Groff at a recent dinner. He added that there were 94 fire calls of no significance and 314 Emergency Services calls.
- b. Human Relations Commission – Marcia Levengood advised that February is Black History Month. She added that Representative Ciresi and Senator Mensch will host an Interfaith Forum on February 11th , 6:-7:30 p.m. at the Carousel. The next meeting is scheduled for February 20th.
- c. Land Bank – Ms. Penrod advised that several members attended the recent Housing Coalition meeting. The task force in the Coalition considers items for the Land Bank. She also noted that the Land Bank is awaiting confirmation for funding to acquire properties for the Land Bank. There will be a public meeting at the end of March regarding the Land Bank.
- d. Library – Ms. Penrod reviewed the Community Leaders Breakfast held at the Library on this date and thanked the Borough for its continued support. She also announced upcoming fundraising events and the capital project grants to address parking lot, pipes, sewer and toilet repairs.
- e. Ricketts Community Center – Ms. Lydia Messinger provided an update of programs and progress at the Center. She advised that the Center opened on January 21st and the hours are Monday – Friday, 1100 a.m. -8:00 a.m. and will have Saturday hours beginning in March. She also reported that the Pottstown Ministerium will be hosting an open house at the Center on February 13th, 2:00 p.m. -6:00 p.m. Ms. Messinger reported that the Martin Luther King collection netted \$3,100 to go towards cleaning and safety repairs at the Center and summer plans are being finalized.

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f. Pottstown School District – Councilor Lindsay advised that she was not able to attend the recent meeting but reported that they had Pottstown High School teachers had 100% growth for the highest levels in the state in math, reading and biology scores.

MAYOR’S REPORT

Mayor Henrick also reviewed the importance of responding to the 2020 Census. The Mayor also referred to the recent *Philadelphia Magazine*, in which she was featured with young millennium Mayors. She acknowledged Ms. Lee-Clark and Alex Thigpen for having Santa arrive in a dragon boat.

Mayor Henrick provided an update on upcoming events, included the March 28 clean up event and the fundraiser at the Carousel to benefit Ryerss Farm on March 14th. The Mayor also asked for thoughts and prayers for Bishop Debnam.

MANAGER’S REPORT

Mr. Keller announced the appointment of Ann Maletsky as the new Finance Director, adding that she will begin on February 12th and provided her background and credentials. Mr. Keller also announced that Captain Robert Thomas will be retiring from the Pottstown Police Department effective April 17, 2020. He also advised that there will be a Joint Borough Council and School Board meeting on February 27th, 6:30 p.m. at the School Administration Building.

Mr. Keller reported that Staff has been following up on last month’s animal complaints regarding the property at 441 Johnson Street. The property owner has addressed the situation and is improving the property and cooperating with the Borough. Licensing & Inspections is coordinating efforts with the SPCA and will conduct unscheduled visits. Mr. Keller commented on efforts to change the ordinance to restrict the number of animals in a residence and noted that it was unsuccessfully tried several years ago.

Mr. Keller reported that a stormwater issue on Warren and Washington Streets is being addressed through the Public Works Department. Mr. Keller also provided information on the development of the Hess Lot, with the intention of the best impact on the tax revenue base and will have a recommendation in the upcoming months.

Presentation, Paula Bickelman, 67 Walnut Street

Paula and Robert Bickelman, owners of 67 Walnut Street and Find Solutions Properties, were present and provided their credentials and background information, along with results of their rehabilitated properties within the Borough. Ms. Bickelman advised that their intention is to convert a 4,800 sq. ft warehouse into four two-bedroom apartments and is seeking relief from the Conditional Use requirements as each level would be 2,400 square feet and not the required \$2,500 square feet. She also noted that Goose Run waterway runs under the building and is hoping to rename the home to the Carriage House at Goose Run. The Bickelman’s asked for a letter of support from Council to be sent to the Zoning Hearing Board.

President Weand advised that this would be listed for consideration on Monday’s agenda.

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Cable Franchise Agreement

Mr. Keller advised that the agreement is still in draft form and requested this item be postponed until March.

HARB/Planning Commission Update

Mr. Keller referred to the Solicitor's memorandum outlining the process and benefits of having the meetings on the same evening and having several of the same members serving on both boards.

Miscellaneous Zoning, Master Traffic and Regulation Ordinance

Mr. Keller requested authorization to advertise a public hearing and advertise the ordinance amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Master Traffic Ordinance. He explained the elimination of the downtown off-street parking and regulations under the Plumbing Code, allowing homeowners to make repairs in owner-occupied homes without the use of a Master Plumber or plumbing permit. In addition, the committee is recommending amendments to the Minor Land Development process and provisions of the grading and stormwater requirements. Mr. Keller added that recommendations are also being made to address storable and above ground swimming pools and flood plains. Also to be addressed are parking regulations on South Hanover Street, the parking kiosks, parking permits and the elimination of PDIDA in the downtown.

Solicitor Garner added that hot tubs are regulated under state law.

President Weand noted that these items will be listed for authorization to advertise on the regular agenda.

Fee Schedule Amendment

Mr. Keller explained the request to update the fee schedule addressing fees under the Right to Know process as recommended by the Office of Open Records.

Destruction of Records

Mr. Keller referred to the draft resolution authorizing the destruction of certain records in accordance with the Municipal Records Manual.

These resolutions will be listed for adoption on Monday's agenda.

Auditing Services

Mr. Keller referred to the proposal of Maillie LLC for auditing services for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Montco 2040

Mr. Keller commented on the request of the Colebrookdale Railroad for a resolution authorizing submission to the Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program for upgrades to the Pottstown Station, Memorial Park and a pedestrian crossing to the Pottsgrove Manor.

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Board Vacancies

President Weand reviewed the open positions on HARB, KEEP and the Planning Commission. He noted that Thomas Hylton submitted a letter of request to serve on HARB and to be reappointed to the Planning Commission and was the only interested party at this time.

Hill School

Red Horse Motoring Club – Car/Bike Show

Red Horse Motoring Club – 2020 Car Shows

Red Horse Motoring Club – Beer Garden request

Mr. Keller reviewed the various requests for street closures for events and beer gardens during the car shows and requested these be listed for approval on the regular agenda.

Discussion – Council Meeting Rules of Order and Sunshine Act

Solicitor Garner reviewed the Rules of Order for the benefit of the Council members. He noted that the Rules adopted by Council in January 2020 consist of the procedures to be followed during public meetings, with the purpose of an organized and efficient meeting. Solicitor Garner explained that Rule #10 allows public comment to be limited to three minutes with no discussion from Council. This Rule can be suspended, with a vote of five Councilors, to allow for further discussion. Solicitor Garner also advised that there is a process to amend the Rules if Council so desires. Solicitor Garner also noted that Councilors can address a situation at the end of the meeting under Councilors' General Comments.

Solicitor Garner also provided a brief synopsis of the Sunshine Act. If any official action is to be voted upon, it must be done in a public meeting, which is a prearranged happening, with a quorum of members. He also explained that several topics are exempt from public discussion, which are personnel matters, selling or leasing real estate, litigation and collective bargaining and at times when Council is the judicial body over a Conditional Use matter.

Solicitor Garner advised that if four Councilors meet for dinner or a social event, that is not a violation of the Sunshine Law.

The Mayor commented on the perception of a gathering before and after meetings in front of the building.

Introduction

Chief Hand introduced Elias Scipio as a member of the TriCounty Young Leadership award program.

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS PRESENT

a. Tracy Ann Daywalt, 231 North Charlotte Street – thanked the residents of Pottstown and surrounding areas for their contributions of food, blankets and cleaning supplies to the kennels.

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b. Jim Lutz, 19 West 7th Street – thanked Staff and Council for addressing the animal problem at 441 Johnson Street. He did note that since the last hearing, the number of dogs has changed from 9 to 10 and suggested changing the ordinance to limit the number of dogs in a private residence.

COUNCILORS' GENERAL DISCUSSION

Councilor Vanni thanked the Solicitor for his explanations on the Rules and the Sunshine Act.

Councilor Procsal commended all involved with the Martin Luther King service at The Hill School.

Councilor Lindsay urged all to comply with the Census process. She also noted the Princess event at the Carousel and the Ricketts Center is progressing well. There is an NAACP event at the Carousel on February 11th. She added that Monique Johnson was also nominated for the young leadership awards.

Councilor Paules thanked Mr. Keller for assistance with issues in his ward. He also recommended the Citizens' Leadership Academy to all, which he attended 6 times.

Councilor Kirkland reminded all that February is Black History Month.

Mayor Henrick also announced that jobs are available through the Census program at \$27 per hour. She added that STRIVE is looking for mentors at the Middle School.

ADJOURNMENT

President Weand adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Attested,

Justin M. Keller
Borough Manager