

**BENSALEM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday
July 11th, 2022**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joseph Knowles, Council President
Edward Kisselback, Council Vice President
Joseph Pilieri, Council Secretary
Michelle Benitez, Council Member
Stacey Champion, Council Member

SUPPORTING STAFF PRESENT:

Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo
Debora McBreen, Council Clerk/Recording Secretary
Quinton Nearon, Senior Municipal Inspection Manager
Joseph Pizzo, Township Solicitor
Phil Wursta, Township Engineer/Traffic Engineer

PLEASE NOTE:

The minutes are not verbatim but rather a synopsis of what transpired during the meeting, and while I do my best to attribute remarks and questions to the correct individual, there may be mistakes or omissions because of the “back and forth” dialogue and the lack of the use of their microphone.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Council President Knowles opened the meeting with a moment of silence and/or prayer which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated Council met in an Executive Session immediately prior to this evenings meeting for approximately 45 minutes. Present for the Executive Session were the five members of Council, the Mayor, the Township Engineer, Mr. Wursta and the Township Solicitor, Mr. Pizzo. Discussed were two matters of potential litigation. No official action was taken during the Executive Session in regards to either action and no official action will be required this evening as a result of the Executive Session.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Council President Knowles indicated the Public Comment will be heard at the time the agenda item is heard. Seeing no one come forward, the first of two Public Comments was closed.

Council President Knowles asked **Solicitor Pizzo** if there were any changes to this evening's agenda.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated changes in a sense that there are two items on this evening's agenda that Council will not be proceeding with. The first is agenda item number 9 which is a Minor Preliminary Subdivision for Robert Siuta, 1313 Park Avenue. Mr. Siuta was before Council previously for this hearing and at that time tabled to a date certain of this evening. In the intervening period of time the Township received correspondence from the Engineer for Mr. Siuta indicating they need additional time to make further revisions to the plan consistent with the comments from the Township Engineer, and they have asked the matter be tabled to the next Council meeting. Based on the amount of time they will need, **Solicitor Pizzo** recommended the first meeting in August.

Council Secretary Pilieri motioned to table agenda item number 9 to a date certain of August 8th, **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated the application for the Preliminary Land Development regarding Johnson's Development is a matter that was on a prior agenda and tabled to a date certain of this evening. At the request of the applicant they are asking the matter be further continued to Council's first meeting in August.

Council Secretary Pilieri motioned to table agenda item 10 to a date certain of August 8th, **Councilwoman Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

3. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to approve the June 13th, 2022 Council Minutes along with the change as indicated, **Councilwoman Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

4. **COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATION OF MAYORS RECOMMENDATION TO THE DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADVISORY BOARD:**

The Mayor presented Mary Ann Griffin for his recommendation to the Drug and Alcohol Advisory Board.

Council Secretary Pilieri motioned to accept the recommendation from the Mayor for the Drug and Alcohol Advisory Board, **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

5. **CONSIDERATION TO REAPPROVE THE 2020 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM:**

John Chaykowski, Finance Manager, indicated at the previous council meeting, the advertisement requirements had not expired, but since that time the requirements have expired and will need to be reapproved. This is the same amendment proposed at last month's meeting.

Councilwoman Champion motioned to reapprove as presented, **Councilwoman Benitez** seconded, and the motion carried 5-0.

6. **CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING THE SUBMISSION AND FILING OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE PENNSYLVANIA COMMONWEALTH FINANCING AUTHORITY TO BE USED FOR THE PLANNING, ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION OF FIRST RESPONDERS FIELD:**

Mr. Chaykowski indicated there was a May 31st deadline to submit to Greenways Trails for a Grant of up to \$250,000 which the Township is allocating towards the First Responders Field. The Township is looking to make upgrades to the field and possibly add in a turf field if the Township can receive enough of the Grant awards. This would be the final step the state requires as a resolution allowing the Township to sign-off the appropriate signers for the grant itself.

Councilwoman Champion motioned to approve as presented, Councilwoman Benitez seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

7. **CONSIDERATION AND PUBLIC HEARING OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND MODIFYING THE DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION PLAN AND TRUST FOR THE NON-UNIFORMED OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BENSLEM:**

Mr. Chaykowski indicated there are two changes being modified in the non-uniform plan. The first change is to clear up confusing language within the plan document itself in regards to a spousal death benefit. Currently there are two sections that counter talk one another. Ultimately the updated change will be, if an existing employee passes away prior to them actually retiring then the spouse would be entitled to a spousal benefit, which is allowed within the pension ordinance upon the point at which the member would have turned 60 years old. Currently there is contradicting language indicating, if an employee passed away the spouse would be entitled to a refund of the member's contribution. With this change, it still allows a benefit for the spouse upon an untimely death of an employee that is still working for the Township prior to retirement.

The second change is within the management section of the pension plan indicating there is a reduction of the retirement age from age 60 to age 55 for department heads and managers of the Township.

Council Vice President Kisselback Motioned to approve as presented, Councilwoman Benitez seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

8. **CONSIDERATION AND PUBLIC HEARING OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 232 "ZONING" AT ARTICLE VI "OVERLAYS" AND "MONUMNET DISPLAY OVERLAY":**

Solicitor Pizzo indicated the Township, a number of years ago, created within the Township's sign ordinance, a category of a sign called "monument displays" and adopted an overlay that allowed them at certain locations with the Township. That was driven largely by a company that was in the advertising business, at the time, who was not only pitching to Bensalem but other communities an idea of these new generation billboards. Instead of looking like the standard sign on a post plopped next to the road, these would have a variety of architectural designs, they would be incorporated into architectural structures, things of that nature. The Township, at their behest, made changes to the zoning ordinance that would allow for these kinds of monument designs.

At one point in time, the company that was looking to do this had come into the Township pitching a dog park on Street Road, in the Trevoise neighborhood of the Township that would incorporate not only the dog park but the monument signs as well. Regrettably that has all gone by the wayside in terms of the proposed advertising company and it would seem the proposal they came in with as well. At this junction, having looked at the way things have evolved, the Administration is recommending to Council the “monument sign experiment” has not been a success, so the Administration is recommending to Council the “monument display” signs provisions that were added to the sign ordinance several years ago, to be taken out of the sign ordinance, and the ordinance before Council this evening does just that.

The ordinance has been properly advertised and is in an appropriate form for Council’s consideration.

Council President Knowles invited public comment. Seeing no one come forward the Public Comment portion was closed.

Councilwoman Benitez motioned to approve, **Council Secretary Pilieri** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

9. CONSIDERATION OF A MINOR PRELIMINARY SUBDIVISION:

Applicant: Robert Suita
Location: 1313 Park Avenue
Proposed Use: Residential
Zoning Classification: R-A – Rural District
Tax Parcel: 2-70-5

This matter was tabled by a prior motion to a date certain of August 8th, 2022

10. CONSIDERATION OF A PRELIMINARY LAND DEVELOPMENT FOR:

Applicant: Johnson Development Associates, Inc.
Location: 2600 State Road
Proposed Use: Warehouse/Distribution
Zoning Classification: R-55 - Riverfront Revitalization District
Tax Parcel: 2-65-21

This matter was tabled by a prior motion to a date certain of August 8th, 2022.

11. **AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 232 “ZONING” OF THE TOWNSHIP CODE AT DIVISION 12, R-55 RIVERFRONT REVITALIZATION DISTRICT, SECTION 232-271, USE REGULATIONS, TO ELIMINATE AND AMEND CERTAIN USE REGULATIONS WITHIN THE R-55 RIVERFRONT REVITALIZATION DISTRICT, AND TO REPEAL ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PORTIONS OF ORDINANCES INCONSISTENT HEREWITH:**

Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to approve to advertise the possibility of considering the ordinance, **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

12. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Dennis McGuire, Ogden Avenue, indicated it is nice and quiet now that school is out but wanted to make Council aware of the school busses that fly up and down his street along with the other vehicles. There are no signs on his street indicating speed limit or “Watch Children.” Mr. McGuire asked if someone would please look into placing speed limit signs and “Watch Children” signs on Ogden Avenue.

Joe Connelly, 568 Bristol Pike, inquired about the dirt pile. Engineer Wursta indicated Quinton Nearon, the Township Senior Municipal Inspection Manager, is still diligently trying to find people to take the dirt. No one is taking any fill within the region so they are expanding their search.

Mike from Oakford, indicated one of the Township employees found his friends equipment and wanted to thank everyone.

Seeing no one else come forward, the second Public Comment portion was closed.

13. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

The Mayor indicated the concert season is doing well and wished everyone a good evening.

Councilwoman Benítez indicated she hoped everyone had a great 4th of July and they were enjoying their summer and to come out to our beautiful amphitheater and enjoy a concert.

Councilwoman Champion thanked everyone for coming out and indicated her daughter was in the audience earning one of her scout badges. And is enjoying the Summer Concert Series.

Council President Knowles indicated he went to the Elton John Tribute Band concert which was very good. It is nice to see families enjoying the concerts.

14. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

The Bensalem Township Council Meeting of July 25th, 2022 can be viewed in its entirety at the following websites:

www.bensalempa.gov

or

www.youtube.com

Respectfully Submitted,

**Debora F. McBreen
Recording Secretary**