

BELLEFONTE BOROUGH COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
April 6, 2020 - 7:30 p.m.
236 West Lamb Street, Bellefonte, PA 16823
www.bellefonte.net

7:00 p.m. Zoom Practice Session – Council and staff participating. Unaired, for instructional/technical training.

7:30 p.m. Council Meeting

Council President Joanne Tosti-Vasey announced changes to the meeting due to the COVID-19 crisis and gave instruction on public comment and where to find the recording of the meeting. On March 16, 2020 a Council executive session was held and as a result, an Emergency Declaration was issued by Mayor Wilson on behalf of the Borough Council.

CALL TO ORDER:

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The April 6, 2020 meeting of the Bellefonte Borough Council was called to order by Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey at 7:30 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a moment of silence for the COVID-19 pandemic first responders and essential workers who are placing their lives in danger in order to protect and provide critical services to the Borough due to the pandemic.

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT (via Zoom):

Mr. Randall Brachbill
Ms. Debbie Cleeton
Mr. Jon Eaton
Ms. Melissa Hombosky
Mr. Michael Prendergast
Ms. Joanne Tosti-Vasey
Ms. Gina Thompson
Mayor Tom Wilson
Ms. Anne Walker
Mr. Douglas Johnson

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Mr. Ralph Stewart, Borough Manager
Mr. Donald Holderman, Ass't Borough Manager
Sean Weaver, Chief of Police
Walt Schneider, Fire Chief
Scott Rhoat, Director of Emergency Medical Services

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

**Eaton moved to approve the March 2, 2020 meeting minutes, as amended.
Brachbill seconded the motion.
Motion carried.**

Given the Declaration of Disaster Emergency in effect, the regular meeting agenda was suspended to allow for updates and discussion of the current situation as it related to Bellefonte Borough Government/Public Services.

Thomas Wilson, Mayor

Wilson reported that he checked on the status of the Children's Fair and the event will be cancelled for the first Saturday in June 2020. With everything going on in the region, state, and nation, he asked that everyone comply with everything that is being asked of the citizens of this Country. Wilson thanked first responders.

Tosti-Vasey interjected that due to the situation, the Borough Council meeting was permitted to be held virtually.

The Census drop-in locations are not available at this point. Residents are asked to continue filling out their forms. There has been an extension granted and the enumerators will not begin door-to-door inquiries until the end of June 2020. Wilson encouraged residents to complete the Census online at <https://mycensus2020.gov> or via phone. The Census Bureau phone number is 1-800-923-8282.

Sean Weaver, Chief of Police

Chief Weaver discussed the state of the Borough relative to public safety. Calls have decreased in the last two to three weeks. Most calls are service related with no major crime to report. He noted a lot of people are out walking with the streets being busy. Downtown there are a lot of people walking around. Police department is healthy and have all the PPE that they need at this time. Straley Vets donated masks, and some were purchased, with Lowe's providing hand sanitizer. The department is handling more calls via phone to keep down person-to-person contact. He discussed required face-to-face meetings and the precautions being taken.

Holderman discussed the DCED grant relative to the Census. The grant was submitted for \$2,000, and the Borough received the grant to cover Census marketing costs.

Joanne Tosti-Vasey, Council President

Tosti-Vasey discussed the 211 System. This service is run by the United Way and covers over 90% of the U.S. The service assists citizens with requests for help like shopping for groceries, etc.

Tosti-Vasey continued with a listing of events that have been cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis.

The Borough office is closed to the public, but staff can be reached via phone at 814-355-1501. Email boro@bellefonte.gov. 236 W. Lamb Street is the mailing address, and you can drop off payments and correspondence in the mailbox outside the main building.

Brush and grass collection is suspended as well as street sweeping.

Courtesy parking is available throughout the Borough.

HARB and Planning Commission meetings have been cancelled thru the month of April 2020.

Bellefonte Borough Authority on April 7 is cancelled as well as the IDA meeting on April 8.

The community Easter Egg Hunt on April 11 is cancelled. The PaDCED Blight Tour on April 17 is canceled.

Soap Box Derby on April 25 and 26 is cancelled.

The Library Novel Con event is cancelled for May 2.

Mt. Nittany Medical Open Streets event on May 30 is cancelled.

CATA has reduced services, CATA GO is still operating. Call 238-2282.

Centre County Solid Waste has suspended curbside recycling pick up. Extra bins have been added to the armory location at Zion Road, and there are bins located in the CVS parking lot.

Musser Lane Compost facility, contactless, no key or deposit required. The adjusted hours are in effect. M-Thursday 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

Park restrooms are closed. Portable toilets have been placed at Talleyrand and Governor's Park. They are regularly cleaned and stocked.

The April 15, 2020, Spring Creek Watershed Commission meeting is cancelled. There is an opening for a Communication Coordinator and Website Manager for this commission. If interested, go to www.springcreekwatershedcommission.org/position-wanted. Open until filled.

Walt Schneider, Chief of Fire Department

The fire department is up and fully functional and continues to be so. Measures have been taken to limit exposure. With everyone outside, he encouraged residents to keep the fire pit fires small and be aware of your neighbor's grills and fire pits to avoid unnecessary calls to the fire department. There may be a difference in response relative to personnel if response is needed. Steps are being taken to protect the fire fighters and staff.

Scott Rhoat, Director EMS

Staff is up 100% with the exception of two PSU students. Business office is open but not to public foot traffic. Residents are encouraged to call before coming in to arrange for a meeting. Call volume is down about 35% for the month of March. Last week down 50%. CDC guidelines are being followed a relative to any COVID 19 calls that they may receive. Van transport is down about 50% as well. Revenue is being monitored. PPE stockpile has been good, and things have been ordered, although some thing are backordered until May for delivery. Cost has gone up.

Ralph Stewart, Borough Manager

Stewart offered that the Borough offices are present to serve residents. The Borough has suspended sewer and trash late fees for late payments, along with a suspension of shut offs. Credit card fees will be credited to payor's accounts. Flexible payment plans are also available. The Borough has reduced non-life sustaining services, staggered staff in the offices to lessen the threat of spread of the virus, practicing social distancing in the office and the wastewater treatment plant. The Borough is doing as much as they can to assist residents. The sewer and streets departments are cut in half working basically a one week on, one week off schedule. The Borough staff is healthy with no diagnosis of the virus.

Stewart discussed the water leak at School and High Streets. Crews will still respond to these emergencies when these issues arise.

The YMCA does have a backpack program where they distribute food for the weekends for children. The Bellefonte Faith Centre also has donations for food that is available. Stewart emphasized that the Borough is working with people if they are having difficulty making payments for water or other services. Per Wilson, the Presbyterian Church is providing lunches.

The Centre County Borough's Association Spring meeting scheduled for April 7 has been cancelled.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health is a source of facts related to the Corona Virus. That website is health.pa.gov. Centre County information can be found there. The latest information is that all residents should wear masks if out and about, while maintaining social distancing. This would help with containment of the virus. The FDA website has information on how to make a homemade mask.

Brachbill added a thank you to the fire department for quick response to the fire at the Decker Building. He discussed the parking issues in the Borough. There was a request on Logan Street about opening the parking on the opposite side of the street that is closed. Stewart offered that the signage would not be enforced. April 15, 2020 opens both sides of the street per the sign but if people would park there now, they would not get a ticket. It was closed for snow piling during winter months. A simple fix prior to the April 15 open date would be for crews to cover the signs. Stewart will arrange to have this done on Tuesday.

Parking in front of the restaurants open for pick-up was discussed. Brachbill inquired about reserving some of the spots in front of these businesses for pick up only and perhaps residents making use of the municipal lots instead of some of the street spaces. Tickets have been suspended for parking for two weeks, thus far, per Chief Weaver. There was an administrative decision to give a two-hour courtesy parking at meters.

Johnson discussed the Bellefonte Climate Mitigation Survey. He was not aware of the survey and did not know how to answer questions regarding the survey. Tosti-Vasey offered that last fall the DCED had given the Borough a grant to review a climate change plan. Holderman gathered some information for the intern from Drexel University. A task force was set up and is currently made up of Tosti-Vasey, Holderman, Gay Dunne, Kevin Abbot, and Raymond Stolinias. Part of the program was to create a survey for the community for input. The Borough is not tallying the survey and is being done by Madeleine Pelchant.

A random selection of 75 persons was created and they were sent a paper version of the survey. There is also an online version and the survey results should be in next week. The task force will be reviewing the responses and then a focus group will be set up based on people that responded to get more input and information. Staff time was minimal with help from Holderman and one other staff member to help put the paper copies of the survey out.

Johnson would have liked the rest of Council to look at this survey as he did not know this was happening. He expressed that the timing could have been different given the Emergency Declaration. Holderman stated that the intern was only available through May so the timing was an issue and by May or June the project would be over.

Wilson interjected that he did not see a downtown parking problem at this time. He asked that either himself or Chief Weaver review posts on Facebook.

Walker discussed social distancing at Talleyrand Park. The bridges need to be considered before park visitors cross the bridges. She noticed quite a few dogs off leashes in the park. She offered that this may be hazardous for other dogs and individuals. Safety should be first as to not tie up emergency services. She also reported an increase in dog droppings in parks and sidewalks. Brachbill reminded residents about the leash law and the picking up after your dog. There are ordinances in place for these things. Wilson offered that if someone has violated this, and you want to make the police aware, take a picture and the police will attempt a fine. Eaton echoed Walker's bridge courtesy for social distancing.

There was no public comment. With the Zoom format, Stewart explained that the public can email the Borough by 3:30 p.m. the day of the meeting at boro@bellefonte.pa.gov. A letter can be dropped in the mail slot and drop box. If you wish to speak during the meeting, name, address, and phone need to be given to the Borough staff and a phone call can be made during the meeting to get the spoken comments via phone. Council meets first and third Monday of the month. Agenda is posted on Friday prior to the meeting no later than 4:30 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA:

(All items listed on the Consent Agenda are considered routine and will be acted upon by a single motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless members of Council request specific items to be removed for separate action).

Mayor	Police Report
Mayor	Police Exonerations
Finance	Stover Invoice
Finance	Voucher Summary February 2020 \$2,814,043.95
Finance	Budget v. Actual February 2020
Finance	Budget v. Actual Summary February 2020
Finance	Current v. Prior February 2020

**Walker moved to approve the Consent Agenda.
Prendergast seconded the motion.
Motion carried.**

COMMUNICATIONS:

Written

Letter Request from Good Sports re: Baseball Tournaments at Governor's Park

Stewart stated that Good Sports has requested use of the park for tournaments for Summer 2020. A fee may be charged for use of the fields.

Tosti-Vasey stated that she recalled this being tabled at a previous meeting as Council wanted Parks and Rec to review this. There is also an issue of a separate reservation fee. Parks and Rec has not met due to cancellations during the emergency. She recommended continuing the table and holding a virtual Parks and Rec meeting before the next Council meeting.

Letter Request from First Baptist Church

This request has already been cancelled by the requestor.

OLD BUSINESS:

Borough Associations Resolution/Healthcare Resolution for 2020 PSAB Legislative Action

This item was sent via email. The resolution needs to be in to the PSAB by Tuesday.

**Walker moved to approve sending the resolution to PSAB.
Brachbill seconded the motion.**

Brachbill discussed the resolution and policy committee. Tosti-Vasey stated that Council has until the first meeting in May to select the representatives.

Motion carried. (Roll call was unanimous)

Climate Action Survey online at www.bellefonte.net

Pedestrian Bridge Project Bidding Update

Holderman stated that this project was advertised last Friday for Phase II. Bids are due in a month. The outcome of the bids is unknown due to the current situation. Bid opening will be done in Council chambers the first Monday in May.

Historic District Certified Local Government status renewed by PHMC

Stewart stated that a letter was received by the PMHC, renewing the historical district Certified Local Government status. HARB is continuing as it was. Robert Lingenfelter is resigning from HARB and taking a new position and cannot maintain the HARB position. Something will be put on the website advertising the vacancy for the architect position.

NEW BUSINESS

PSAB Conference Information

Corona Virus precautions and changes to the way the Borough does business

Advice can be found at <http://health.pa.gov> for more information on staying healthy and mask wearing.

Lease Resolution Memo

Holderman reported that information was gathered from Bob Cooke. At the March Authority meeting, they did approve a lease on the truck which has been done in the past, per Stewart. There was an unknown crack in the frame of the existing truck, and it was something that was not known and not budgeted for. The lease program can move forward.

**Johnson moved to approve signing the lease agreement for the truck.
Walker seconded the motion.**

Johnson inquired about the budget relative to the lack of snow fall this winter. Stewart stated that the mild winter was fortunate. Some of the tax deadlines are being extended. Everything has changed in the last month regarding predictions of what may happen. Stewart administratively requested department heads to allow him to approve any expenditure over \$1,000, even if it was budget for prioritization purposes. The lease is part of the plant operations and without it, it may hinder future operations.

Eaton did not understand why the lease did not go through the Authority. Tosti-Vasey stated that Lori Walker informed Council via email that Council needed to approve the lease as part of the lessor regulations. Thompson's name was on the lease as Chair of the Finance Committee. It was also noted that the truck would be specifically used at the treatment plant only.

Brachbill inquired about the signature and asked if there needed to be a motion for Thompson to sign.

Motion carried. (Roll call was unanimous)

Nittany Valley Regional Fire Services Study

**Eaton moved to send the study to the Nittany Valley Planning Office as part of the application for a regional plan for fire services.
Cleaton seconded the motion.**

Brachbill stated that there is no cost for this study. They are looking at the fire stations in the Nittany Valley to see what the apparatus is at each station, so that stations are not doubling up on equipment and 911 knows who to call for additional assistance. Johnson offered that he thought this was a great idea and was happy about the study.

Motion carried, unanimously.

Meetings and Events to Consider for Cancellation:

Council committee meetings – Tosti-Vasey recommended holding a virtual meeting only if something needed to be discussed. Virtual finance committee meetings will be held virtually.

Borough Parks remain open; however, the playground equipment is not being disinfected. Safe hygiene and social distancing shall be followed. Use of the play equipment would be at the users own risk. Hombosky offered that the playground equipment may need to be roped off to use. She did not wish to leave it up to users to have a choice in this matter.

**Hombosky moved to rope off play equipment in all of the parks.
Johnson seconded the motion.**

Brachbill inquired if there should be a tentative date of opening the equipment.

Motion was amended.

**Brachbill moved to rope off all play equipment in all of the parks and put a date on the closure based on Gov. Wolf's timeline for the state's emergency social distancing and stay-at-home orders.
Prendergast seconded the motion.
Motion carried.**

Masullo Park Fishing Pier – Ribbon Cutting April 11, 2020. **Postponed.**

Bellefonte Complete Count Committee Meeting – April 22 3:30 p.m. **Virtual meeting will be held.**

Fire Executive Board – April 23 7 p.m. and May 28 at 8 p.m. **Brachbill will reach out to the Board to see if the meetings are still scheduled.**

ABC Meetings for May 2020 – **Stewart suggested getting through the month to see where the closings stand.**

Watershed Clean Up Day – May 2 – **Clearwater Conservancy would be meeting to make a decision.**

Borough wide yard sale May 15-16, 2020

Borough Bulk waste collection May 18-22, 2020 **With both, Stewart suggested waiting for two weeks to see where things stand.**

Brachbill inquired if anyone had any feedback from The Cruise. Stewart received text and he suggested waiting at least two more weeks and then see where everything stands. This is under discussion with The Cruise Committee.

The Outdoor Expo is being postponed, per Hombosky. She is also meeting with HBI to discuss Under the Lights event. The Chalk the Walk on May 3, 2020 with DBI and the Art Museum is cancelled and will not be rescheduled, per Thompson. The Friday in the Fonte for April is cancelled.

Holderman stated that there is an opening for a Wastewater Treatment Operator at the plant. Application closes April 7. The fire department chief position has been posted in each of the companies. That will stay up for the next thirty days. Chapter 35 will be followed for this appointment, per Holderman.

Stewart mentioned that the Fire Executive meeting would not need to be held from Chambers under the directive of the Declaration of Emergency and quorum may be waived.

Stewart thanked everyone for attending the meeting, including Chief Weaver, Chief Schneider, and Scott Rhoat. He thanked the front liners and the public works crews for keeping the Borough going.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business coming before Council,

Eaton moved to adjourn the Council meeting.

Prendergast seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.