

MINUTES
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
JULY 1, 2024

The Penn Township Public Safety Committee convened on Monday, July 1, 2024, at 7 p.m. Present were Chairman Heiland, Commissioners Baile, Berlingo, Brown, and Elksnis. Also present were Police Chief Hettinger, Fire Chief Clousher, Township Engineer Bortner, Zoning Officer Smith, and Township Secretary Sweeney. The following items were discussed:

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Commissioner Heiland announced that an executive session was held on June 17, 2024, following the Board of Commissioners meeting to consult with the solicitor to discuss personnel issues and other matters involving attorney client privilege. Additionally, he announced there will be an executive session held this evening following the Public Works Committee meeting to discuss personnel matters.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: The minutes of the June 3, 2024, Public Safety Committee meeting were approved as submitted.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS: Mary Beth Norton of 5 O'Neill Avenue, Hanover, PA, returned for a follow-up on the issue of a diesel truck idling on McAllister, O'Neill Avenue, which she previously raised two months ago. She sought updates on actions taken and the solicitor's opinion on the matter. Zoning Officer Smith reported no new information from the solicitor and mentioned no additional complaints had been received. Ms. Norton reiterated the need to address the ordinance's vagueness regarding the storage of commercial vehicles in residential areas, citing section 320, item D of the Zoning Ordinance. She expressed frustration that the ordinance had not yet been updated and pointed out that she had provided ample evidence previously. The council clarified that while the current ordinance review is ongoing, any changes to the ordinance would have to be formally processed through the Planning Commission, which is currently revamping the entire Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Norton was advised to attend the Planning Commission meeting to express her concerns. Zoning Officer Smith informed her that the ordinance amendment process involves several steps, including solicitor review, county review, and public comment.

James Kennedy, president of the Springbrook Condominium Association, representing 48 units primarily in Penn Township, raised concerns about the ingress-egress of the community onto Spring Avenue. He reported the narrow, non-standard width of the private road leading to safety issues, particularly with vehicles parked at the intersection, obstructing sight distance for residents, many of whom are older. He requested the Township consider measures like painting no-parking zones or adding signage to improve safety. The Committee acknowledged the issue and suggested a traffic study might be required to warrant any changes. Police Chief Hettinger mentioned prior complaints and targeted enforcement but noted the complexity due to the private road status. The Committee agreed to consult with the solicitor to determine responsibility for the traffic study and provide an update. Mr. Kennedy provided his contact information for follow-up.

Ms. Barbara Smith addressed the Committee on behalf of her mother, the owner of 120 Ruel Avenue, to raise ongoing concerns about the neighboring property at 122 Ruel Avenue. She reported despite multiple citations issued by Penn Township Property Maintenance staff, the issues remain unresolved, with severe neglect including overgrown weeds, a deteriorating shed, and significant amounts of trash. Ms. Smith expressed frustration that the citations have not led to meaningful action and questioned the allocation of the fine money. She stated that the negative impact on surrounding property values and potential safety hazards, including attracting rodents and posing risks to local children. Zoning Officer Smith explained the legal constraints and lengthy processes involved in property enforcement, noting that while citations have been issued and fines paid, progress is slow due to legal procedures and uncooperative property owners. The Committee acknowledged the difficulties and assured continued efforts to address the situation, though they emphasized the limitations imposed by current laws.

CANS FOR A CAUSE 5K EVENT: Ms. Trisha Newsom and Mr. Jack Warehime from Hanover Foods, Inc., attended the meeting to discuss their plans for an inaugural 5K event celebrating Hanover Foods' 100th anniversary. They aim to make this an annual event, starting with a goal of 150 participants and including community involvement with tents and possibly food trucks. A map of the route was provided, and Ms. Newsom mentioned the need for volunteers and safety measures, including reflective clothing and signs. The event is scheduled for October 19th at 9 a.m., with the start and finish at 501 Ridge Avenue. Concerns were raised about traffic, particularly on Wilson Avenue, and the need for sufficient personnel to manage the crossing. The Committee suggested contacting Flagger Force for additional support and emphasized the importance of safety. The issue of food truck permits was also discussed, requiring approval from the Zoning Hearing Board.

HANOVER HOMECOMING PARADE: Police Chief Hettinger reported a request dated June 5, 2024, requesting permission for the annual Hanover homecoming parade on October 4, 2024. It was noted that this parade is a yearly event, typically very short, lasting only 15 to 20 minutes, and has historically been free of issues. The Committee recommended approving the request.

SGT. BREIGHNER RETIREMENT: Police Chief Hettinger reported Sergeant Breighner has submitted his official retirement letter, and a copy was sent to the Board. The process to promote a new sergeant has begun, with sign-ups closing on July 26th. Candidates will have 90 days to study, with the written test tentatively scheduled for October 21st. Sergeant Breighner's last official working day is July 2nd, and there will be a farewell gathering at noon at the police department. The Committee and staff are invited to attend. The Committee expressed gratitude for Sergeant Breighner's years of service. Additionally, Probationary Officer Waltersdorff graduated on June 20th and is now actively on duty, performing well.

2018 FIRE CODE: Fire Chief Clouser reported that at the last meeting, a draft ordinance to adopt the 2018 Fire Code was presented. A similar ordinance will be submitted to the Hanover Borough's Public Safety meeting next month with some differences, such as the open burning

rules. The discussion included whether to implement operational permits for various activities and structures and construction permits for specific safety systems. There was also a proposal to include key boxes with gate key switches for improved emergency access. The draft aims to ensure new buildings within reach of the fire alarm system comply with the code. Feedback indicated that the ordinance covers crucial safety aspects, especially regarding events like carnivals and food trucks. The Committee discussed the need for a separate ordinance to designate permitted zones for food trucks while using the fire code to enforce safety standards. The draft received positive feedback for its comprehensiveness and alignment with the Borough of Hanover's codes, aiming for consistent fire inspection standards across jurisdictions. The Committee recommended adopting the ordinance.

REVIEW OF FIRE COMMISSION MEETING: Fire Chief Clouser reported the Fire Commission Board received the first report from Brown Plus, the Bureau of Financial Review, providing a comprehensible high-level view of the Commission's accounting practices. The Commission also discussed emergency repairs at the Wirt Park Fire Station due to a concrete hole caused by a rotted tree stump beneath the apron, which has now been rectified. Additionally, a new medic unit chase truck was put into service last month. The Hanover Volunteer Fire and Rescue's chicken barbecue is scheduled for August 17th. The Board considered appointing an EMS supervisor to oversee daily EMS operations, which are currently handled by overburdened Captains. A negotiating team for contract negotiations, including Chairman Newman, Commissioner Berlingo, and Councilor Tim Kress, was appointed. Oral interviews for firefighters were completed, and a list of eight candidates will be certified by both Civil Service Commissions. The goal is to have a new firefighter ready for the academy in September to fill a Township position.

EMA UPDATE: Emergency Management Coordinator Waltman submitted his report for June. He reported a meeting is scheduled for tomorrow at 3 PM with the Halloween Parade Planning Committee at the Fire Station on Clover Lane. The Committee will discuss the feasibility of holding the parade this year, considering volunteer shortages and past issues with rowdiness. Traditionally held on Thursday evenings, the possibility of a Saturday daylight parade will be explored. Chief Martin from Borough of Hanover's Police Department stated that permits for road closures will only be issued for the 31st or 24th, not for Saturdays, addressing manpower shortages with Southwest Security and G-Force. The Committee raised concerns about the rowdiness associated with candy distribution, suggesting the elimination of candy to improve safety.

OTHER MATTERS: Commissioner Elksnis reported that July 16th is the last meeting for National Night Out, scheduled for August 6th, which is a Tuesday. He reported that all four Committee meetings are scheduled for Monday at 6 p.m. The Committee was reminded to ensure public awareness of the meeting schedule and encouraged everyone to attend National Night Out, highlighting it as a fun event.

Fire Chief Clouser reported that with potential retirements on the horizon, there is a need to address the responsibilities of Ordinance 692, which pertains to residential rental inspections.

Currently, over 900 rental properties require inspection, and the workload exceeds the available time and resources of the Fire Department. He suggested that this task be assigned to the new staff member who will replace the Zoning Officer upon his retirement. The ordinance requires regular inspections of rental units, but the frequency is flexible. It was noted that the landlords in Penn Township are generally cooperative with safety improvements. The discussion emphasized the need to plan and budget for additional personnel to handle this task effectively, ensuring a smooth transition and maintaining compliance with the ordinance.

CITIZEN'S QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE REGARDING DISCUSSION ITEMS: There were none.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. Sweeney,
Township Secretary