

**AVONDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**  
**APRIL 15, 2025**  
**7:00 PM**

**Due to the number of people expected, this meeting took place at the Avondale Presbyterian Church, 416 Pennsylvania Avenue**

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** President, Paul Morgan, Vice President, Mike Essmaker, Janet Watts, and Lucas Ortiz were in attendance. Stephanie Reichert was absent. Mayor Susan Rzucidlo, Solicitor Kim Venzie, Engineer Tom Wilkes, Treasurer Joan McVaugh, and Administrator Sharon Norris were also in attendance. Additionally, Representative Christine Sappey and Steve Grabicki from Senator Kane's office, 8 members from PennDOT including District 6 Director, Tom Rogal, along with 50+ members of the public were in the audience.

**CALL TO ORDER** – Mr. Morgan called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – People making public comment were directed to sign in. Mr. Morgan announced that public comment is limited to three minutes and that commenters should state their name and address before speaking. He encouraged speakers to not repeat what others have just said but could just agree with what they said in an effort to keep the meeting moving. He also announced that everyone who wants to speak would get the opportunity to do so.

The meeting began with Mr. Morgan outlining the agenda for the PennDOT portion of the meeting and began with the Welcome & Overview of Meeting Process.

**Welcome & Overview of Meeting Process:** The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the deterioration of Pennsylvania Avenue, especially in the 400 block, and to hear from our elected officials and PennDOT on how this issue can be resolved. Residents are invited to share how the road conditions have impacted their daily lives, property, and well-being.

**Public Comment:** Mr. Vince Paolicelli, 410 Pennsylvania Avenue, welcomed all the attendees and commented on having all entities in the same room and gave a brief overview of what's going on. Ms. Marisa Paolicelli commented on the vibrations, the damage to her home, the discrepancies between stories she is hearing. Amy at 61 Gap Newport Pike commented on the negative impact all the speeding and heavy truck traffic is having on her life and property. Randy Boltz commented on the water line, the fact that trucks are getting bigger, the lack of safety on the road and helping to figure out the cause.

Mr. Morgan read a prepared statement:

*“Avondale Borough understands how frustrating the ongoing pothole problem on Pennsylvania Avenue is - especially in the 400 block. We want to be clear: we do not believe that this is caused by a leak in our water system. We say this because the same issue is happening at 95 Pennsylvania Avenue, and there are not any water lines there.*

*Pennsylvania Avenue is a state-owned road, which means it is PennDOT's job to maintain it. PennDOT has told both the Mayor and residents that they're “not coming back to Avondale. Frankly, that's just not acceptable. It is not the Borough's responsibility to figure out why PennDOT's road is failing – it is their burden. If it is investigated and documented by PennDOT that the road failing is related to the Borough's water lines, we will address that issue. But we do not believe that is the case.*

*We want our residents to know - we hear you loudly and clearly. The constant noise, the shaking, and the damage to your homes - it is real, and it is not okay. It is our position that this is PennDOT's road, and it is time for them to step up and take care of it.*

*Even though the Borough is not responsible for the road, we are advocating hard for repair and remedies. Our Mayor, our Staff and Borough Council have been reaching out to PennDOT and our elected officials for solutions on a constant basis. We hope that some answers are provided tonight.”*

**PennDOT Statement:** Mr. Tom Rogal, Senior Assistant District Executive of Maintenance for District 6 introduced himself and gave a brief history about maintenance on Pennsylvania Avenue, acknowledging he is aware of the problems. He stated a common theme of newly paved roads – the nicer they are, the faster the drivers go. He talked about PennDOT's schedules of maintenance and that their hands are tied as to when they can perform certain maintenance and paving projects. He explained the reasons for the potholes by the Sunoco where there are no water lines – this is due to heavy truck traffic having to stop and go at that intersection. Those sections of roads need a higher strength material and are always a challenge. They are looking at the speed issue and speed study. He does feel that there is some kind of water leak. He acknowledged that they are compacting the subgrade improperly and they will fix the patches and continue to maintain the road to the best of PennDOT's ability. Mr. Rogal said, according to state law, anything under the road is the Borough's. He agreed to a crew assisting the Borough in testing the water. There are 18,000 cars per day here and we gained 3,000 additional trucks from the Baltimore bridge collapse. The funding just isn't available to repave the road currently. Mr. Essmaker appreciated PennDOT's thorough explanation. Ms. Kate Maxwell, 401 Pennsylvania Avenue, commented on Mr. Rogal's explanation.

**Comments from State Representative Sappey** – Rep. Sappey thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She also lives in an old house on a very busy street and was empathetic to the residents' concerns. She talked about District 6 having more road miles than all New England and that the Pennsylvania legislature has let down their constituents by not funding infrastructure. We are more challenged here in Chester County than other areas of the state due to the high cost of living and crews cannot afford to live here leaving PennDOT understaffed and underfunded. She is on the transportation committee and working to increase transportation dollars in the state budget. She encouraged the Borough to start thinking about streetscaping, narrowing the street to calm the traffic. This is a 10-12 year process, but the end result would be beneficial. She is encouraged by tonight's discussion that something can be done to arrive at an agreement.

**Senator Kane's Office** - Steve Grabicki from Senator John Kane's office spoke about a speed study being a milestone that is necessary and working in steps to get things accomplished.

#### **Resident Comments:**

Al, formerly at 91 Pennsylvania Avenue, commented on cracking and mold in that house due to the heavy vibrations from traffic. He spoke about the Bridge at 41. Mr. Tim Stevens, Design Group from PennDOT spoke about the bridge as a contributing structure to Historic District as it is adjacent. The pylons were put in to keep traffic away from the weaker portion of the bridge. Jenn Samuel from the Daily Local News talked about the crack in the church and the cost of paving the road and what can be done to save the town. Rep. Sappey spoke about Transportation Dollars already being spoken for. Liz Lawrence at 100 Pomeroy Avenue suggested the possibility of eliminating tractor trailers by directing them to I-95 or the PA Turnpike. She encouraged elected officials to think that way. She also suggested being aggressive about fining offenders who are too heavy to cross the bridge or bypass the bridge and travel the backroads that are not made to handle the weight of the trucks. She thinks there was an old mill and mill race behind the Borough hall. There might be an old pipe from that under the road. Carolyn, 401 New Street, commented on the difficulties getting through the light at First and Pennsylvania Avenue and would like a change to the signaling to add a left and right turn signal. PennDOT said they are looking at that; when they add arrows they need justification and not sure it is warranted. They might have to rewire the lights. The Mayor noted this intersection is on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) list. John Langile – 300 and 302 Pennsylvania Avenue – he lives in a historical building. The walls are cracking. When they are in their living room, they hear the trailer wheels jumping up and down hard on asphalt. Put in a good base coat and then a good topcoat. Mr. Ken Cavanaugh, PennDOT, explained about the different layers of material that make up Pennsylvania Avenue.

Kate Maxwell, 401 Pennsylvania Avenue, introduced herself as the person with the pothole right in front of her house. She needs some logical explanations. She can't drink the water – she has ground water in her bathtub. Her home cannot withstand this. She expressed her frustration and dissatisfaction with past discussions and is calling for a satisfactory solution. Vince Paolicelli would like to set some outcome due dates. Mr. Rogal agreed to a June 1<sup>st</sup> date for getting resolution to the water testing. He stated that PennDOT would keep maintaining the potholes even if the water is found to be chlorinated.

Mr. Essmaker asked if, when they repaired the potholes properly, would they pave over the entire area.

Mr. Paolicelli commented on the financial viability of the Borough and what if grants are not awarded. The Mayor assured him that with the help of our elected officials, we are good candidates for grant awards.

Mr. Basciani, a property owner in Avondale Borough, said he has not witnessed a water leak in the Borough. What will PennDOT do if they find that the water is coming from an aquifer?

Mr. Rogal talked about the recent patch which was fixed in February and that it was cold when they did the patch and that's why it immediately started to lift. Mr. Cavanaugh opined it was from water under the blacktop.

Ms. Lauren Brown, 420 Chatham, had suggestions about adding turning arrows at the intersection at First and Pennsylvania Avenue. Heading from First onto PA Avenue she had to sit through at least 3 cycles of the light to get through the intersection; they cannot walk to the post office due to the heavy traffic and no one is willing to stop for

pedestrians. Ms. Susan McCue, owner of 218 and 200 Pennsylvania Avenue, and resident for 46 years commented that there was a stream underneath the road and one neighbor had to put in a system in their home to deal with that water. Her feeling is that she is hearing nothing but excuses and wants to know who is responsible.

Myra at 506 Chatham spoke about the dangerous conditions that make walking difficult and dangerous. Avondale is a community with residents whose only means of transportation is walking and we don't make it easy for them. They risk their lives when they try and walk. Unknown speaker – nobody pays attention to the pedestrian crossing.

Mr. Rogal talked about mid-block crosswalks and how unsafe they are. He recommended no one enter a crosswalk until making eye contact with the drivers going in either direction. Someone asked about adding flashing lights. Mr. Rogal will send grant opportunities to improve crosswalks.

Ms. Karen Huls, who works at the Avondale Post office, commented on the vibrations, noise of and speed from the heavy truck traffic. She also noted that many PO customers complain about the difficulty of crossing 41. She also noted that drivers cut through the post office parking lot to bypass the light.

Constance Hartwell at 401 E. Third has lived here for 58 years and has driven a bus in this area since 1992. She talked about the fast traffic on Church Street, the tractor trailers on Third Street, adding speed bumps on Church to slow things down. Directing truck traffic from the port of Wilmington to I-95. She thanked the Mayor for the playground improvements and Andy for fixing the potholes in her area.

Lucia Lutz at 408 Pennsylvania voiced her frustration at what is going on at her house with lots of cracking and the vibrations. She is relatively new to the area, and this is not how she expected her life in her new house to be, especially with two young children.

The Mayor recommended that residents contact their insurance companies to get a structural evaluation. Ms. Maxell has done that, and it is an expensive proposition. Mrs. Langile commented on the large numbers of cars and trucks that go by every day. She would like something to be done to get rid of all the trucks.

There was discussion about a streetscapes project, the challenge of trying to keep trucks off the road, the scale that the SCCRPD has purchased and will be monitoring, dropping the speed limit to 15 mph to deter truck traffic, and a traffic study. In discussions about the bridge the Council asked where would the traffic be diverted and the answer was at this time, they weren't sure how to manage the traffic control; however, it had been noted that the bridge would not be entirely closed – one lane of traffic would be able to get past.

A general timeline was put out for discussion: 2 weeks to produce what changes can be made to the intersection lights, Get the speed study going by June and have the water tested in June.

At 8:51 PM, this portion of the meeting ended, All in attendance agreed that it was worthwhile having everyone together in the same room. We may not have solved all the problems, but the dialogue has been started, and everyone is on the same page. Council, the Representatives, and PennDOT thanked all in attendance for coming. There was a brief intermission, and the meeting resumed with the regular agenda.

## **BUSINESS**

**Consideration of Resolution 2025-12 – application to the Department of Economic Development for a PA Small Water Grant** – Ms. Watts made a motion that Council approve Resolution 2025-12, application to DCED for a PA Small Water Grant to fix water mains, pipes on Poplar and Chatham and exploratory work and road restoration on a section of Pennsylvania Avenue in the amount of \$500,000 with a 15% match equaling \$75,000. Mr. Essmaker seconded the motion. Mr. Morgan called for a vote. The motion carried 4-0.

**Approval of Road Repair at 125 W. State Street, West Second and Pomeroy Intersection and pothole on Chatham** – The Council had discussed these repairs at the last BC meeting and agreed that these were projects that should be taken care of – Ms. Watts made a motion to approve the road work as outlined in RT Price's quote dated March 25, 2025 using General Fund monies for the repair project at 125 State Road and using Liquid Fuels monies to pay for the Chatham Street and W. Second & Pomeroy Intersection projects. Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0.

## **MAYORS REPORT**

The Mayor reported on the following:

- The Engineers are finishing with the CRP Grant application and are looking at other grant opportunities for the Borough.
- Little Food Pantry Update – The Mayor was contacted by KACS to inform her that the Little food pantry behind the Garage will not longer be stocked by them. The CC Food Bank has new guidelines to follow, and they must be able to track food more carefully which means these unmonitored pantries can no longer be sustained by them. The Mayor encouraged everyone to donate to the pantry as this was the most used in the area.

**ENGINEER'S REPORT** – Tom Wilkes, the Borough Engineer, commented on the PennDOT meeting and offered to take questions about his monthly report.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE** – Ms. Watts made a motion that Council approve the March Treasurer’s report with disbursements and transfers as follows:

General Fund	\$106,617.88
Sewer Service	\$ 37,681.28
Water Service	\$ 10,619.96
Parks & Recreation	\$ 290.61
Streetlights	\$ 4,746.05
Sewer & Water Payments	<u>\$ 89,537.52</u>
Leaving a balance in all Funds of	<b>\$330,410.63</b>

**OLD BUSINESS**

Vision 2030: Mapping Our Vision for tomorrow – Council will revisit this at the next meeting.

**OTHER**

- a. April 5 Borough-wide cleanup recap – The Borough had 13 enthusiastic volunteers working hard picking up trash and debris from behind the sewer plant and around town. Four especially hard working volunteers who picked up all the debris behind the sewer plant and filled up 2.5 dumpsters should be commended for saving the Borough a substantial amount of money on cleanup expenses.
- b. Memorial Dedication Planning – Mayor Susan recapped the progress on planning this event. Pastor Norton has agreed to lead the prayer and dedication; the Mayor has contacted the Scouts to read aloud the names of those veterans listed on the memorial walls. When asked, Mr. Ortiz suggested reaching out to the American Legion to provide an honor guard as the National Guard needs to be available for funerals and cannot commit to events in advance. Rep. Sappey and former Senator Casey have been invited to this event which takes place on May 31, 2025, at 10:00 AM. Mayor Susan asked that we contact our sign maker to make a plaque identifying that the flag flew over the Capitol.
- c. Park Surface Repair – this item was added on a motion by Mr. Essmaker, seconded by Ms. Watts. The Council discussed the issues with the new playground surface and authorized Kompan Playgrounds to come out to do the repair at a cost of \$5,700.00. The motion carried 4-0.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The next Borough Council meeting is Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 7 PM
- The Avondale Borough Veterans Memorial Park and new playground dedication is scheduled for May 31, 2025, at 10 AM
- On October 25<sup>th</sup>, Servpro will be holding a shredding event at the Avondale Fire Company. Shredding is free but donations will benefit the Avondale Fire Company.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mildred Spriggs commented on the lack of parking at the Third Street Park.  
An unknown commenter asked if there could be a bridge to connect Second Street Park to Third Street Park.

**ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sharon Norris*

Sharon Norris, Secretary

