

**AVONDALE BOROUGH
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 3, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Vice President, Mike Essmaker, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. In attendance were members Stephanie Reichert, Janet Watts, and Lucas Ortiz. President Paul Morgan was attending remotely. Also in attendance were Mayor Susan Rzucidlo, Treasurer Joan McVaugh, and Administrator Sharon Norris. There were 5 members of the public including 2 members of the AFC and 2 members of the WGFC.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment.

BUSINESS:

- **Avondale Fire Company/West Grove Fire Company Merger Evaluation** – Dr. Robert Brady, whose company was hired to perform this evaluation, introduced himself and outlined the process for evaluating the benefit of merging these two fire companies. The Fire Chiefs from each Fire Company were in attendance along with a member from each individual company. The Fire Company Chiefs explained that this idea was born from a conversation that started with the two of them and the idea evolved from there. Fire Companies in this area cannot compete with fire companies in surrounding areas. The pay is higher elsewhere and most companies in other areas offer competitive compensation packages that include a pension. Locally and nationally, volunteer numbers are dropping and locally, these two fire companies are having difficulty filling full-time paid positions. Currently the fire companies are run by volunteers who are expected to do a multitude of things, all while working full-time jobs elsewhere. Since 2012, they have been relying on career staff with volunteers supplementing and the trend continues to head in that direction. They would like a partnership with both the fire companies and the 10 municipalities they serve. The goal of this merger is to continue to provide emergency services to the people when they need it and maintain and improve what they have. This exercise could take up to 2 years to iron out. Dr. Brady noted that this is the beginning stage. It could be 3 months to organize themselves and form subcommittees. Then it would be 5-6 months before they got into bigger decision making. He also noted that no matter what the size of the municipality all have a seat at the table and all voices will be heard. They are reviewing what other Pennsylvania fire companies are doing and using that as a tool to assist them with what works and what doesn't. They discussed the Octorara Fire School and the CC fire school. Dr. Brady noted that Chief Felker is the point of contact.
- **Chester County Planning Commission** – Members of the Planning Commission were in attendance to discuss any topics the Council had an interest in. They discussed various housing options available. Mayor Susan discussed auxiliary housing which was a topic of discussion at the TMACC meeting. The CCPC can help with that; they are doing that for Kennett and West Grove. When the topic of parking for these additional dwelling units came up, the solution is to have parking underneath the structure. They spoke about the VPP grant which could assist in helping to change the zoning to allow for accessory dwelling units. They talked about different ways to incentivize property owners to allow for mixed use development. They discussed a commercial use on the bottom and residential on the top which is a use permitted in the TC area of the Borough. They discussed having a Planning professional come out and look at the Borough to see what they would do. Susan will be setting up a meeting with the housing authority.

MAYOR'S REPORT

- PennDOT – PennDOT performed a traffic study, at the request of the Borough, near Church and Garner. A resident requested that a stop sign be installed in that area to slow traffic down that is approaching from New Garden. PennDOT should have the results at the beginning of the year.
- Tree Lighting – the Tree Lighting is December 7th. Cookies and hot cocoa will be provided.
- Mike Basciani approached the Mayor asking what the Council would like to see in the newly vacant Be Here Brewery location. Ideas were coffee shop, bakery, breakfast and lunch place, a breakfast lunch establishment with a brewery in the evening.

OTHER – Mr. Morgan expressed his dissatisfaction with the way the Hero’s Wall project was previously managed by the former Council and hopes that no Council ever takes donations from residents to complete a Borough project. Ms. McVaugh requested that someone lower the flag to half-staff on December 7th. Ms. Watts thanked Mr. Ortiz for translating notices about Santa traveling on the fire truck to post on Facebook.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Mr. Ortiz made a motion to approve the November 19, 2024, minutes as presented. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. The motion carried 5-0.

FINANCE COMMITTEE – Ms. McVaugh polled the Council to see if they were interested in using tablets instead of having hard copy meeting packets. The Council discussed the benefits of having tablets and requested that Ms. McVaugh move forward with securing quotes for tablets.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. The next Borough Council meeting will be Tuesday, December 17, 2024, at 7 pm
- b. The Annual Tree Lighting is on December 7, 2024, from 5-7 pm
- c. Don’t miss the Santa Train – December 14. Santa arrives in Kennett at approximately 10 AM and plans to arrive in Avondale at 11:20 AM with stops as follows: Toughkenamon, Avondale, West Grove, and Oxford
- d. Holiday Light Contest Runs from December 3 – December 15. Prizes will be awarded at the December 17 Borough Council Meeting

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting adjourned at approx. 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Norris
Sharon Norris, Secretary