

AVONDALE BOROUGH
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2026
7:00 P.M.

Call to Order: Vice President Stephanie Reichert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were Council members Mike Essmaker, Janet Watts and Lucas Ortiz. Mayor Susan Rzucidlo, Solicitor Kim Venzie, Fire Marshall Harvey Hall, Treasurer Joan McVaugh and Administrator Sharon Norris were also present. Council President Morgan participated by telephone.

Fire Marshal / Fire Code Discussion

Fire Marshal Hall attended the meeting to discuss adoption of portions of the International Fire Code, including implementation of a Knox Box ordinance for businesses. Mr. Harvey explained that many surrounding municipalities have adopted Knox Box requirements, which allow emergency responders access to business keys during emergencies and can help prevent property damage during fire or police incidents. Discussion included the need for Knox Boxes at businesses containing hazardous materials, including railroad-related properties and mushroom facilities and the cost of Knox Boxes.

Mr. Hall reported that during a recent inspection of the Fuel Stop property, he observed that fire extinguishers were not installed at each pump as required. He identified himself to the business owner and advised them of the requirement. Mr. Harvey later verified that extinguishers had been installed at each pump.

Council discussed obtaining a Knox Box for Borough use and agreed to obtain pricing information for consideration at the next meeting. Solicitor Kim Venzie noted that a simple ordinance could be adopted requiring businesses to comply within a specified time. Mayor Susan Rzucidlo stated she would the County regarding assisting businesses with compliance efforts.

Mr. Harvey also advised that he intends to continue conducting business inspections to ensure compliance with applicable fire and safety requirements.

Finance / Audit Update

The January 2026 Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved with disbursements and transfers as follows:

General Fund	\$ 63,010.08
Sewer Service	\$ 25,481.10
Liquid Fuels	\$ 10,000.00
Sewer & Water	\$ <u>331.23</u>
Leaving a balance in all funds of	\$207,212.43

Treasurer Joan McVaugh reported that the Borough auditors would be arriving Monday to begin the annual audit process.

Resolutions

Council considered the following resolutions:

- **Resolution 2026-17** – Adopting guidelines for Southern Chester County Regional Police officers when making authorized warrantless summary arrests. Motion made by Mr. Essmaker, seconded by Ms. Watts. Motion carried 5-0.
- **Resolution 2026-18 – Disposition of Records** – erasure of the April 21, 2026 meeting recording. Motion made by Mr. Essmaker, seconded by Ms. Watts. Motion carried 5-0.

Fire / EMS Regionalization Discussion

Solicitor Kim Venzie provided an update regarding ongoing regional Fire/EMS discussions among participating municipalities and fire companies. Ms. Venzie stated that discussions appear to be moving toward either a commission model or an authority model for regional emergency services. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Council discussed concerns regarding costs, governance structure, and fairness of funding formulas under a potential authority model. Discussion included assessed property value, population, EMS calls, and fire runs as possible factors in determining municipal contributions. Council members expressed concern regarding future costs associated with full-time staffing and long-term sustainability.

Mr. Essmaker expressed concern that smaller municipalities may have limited influence in the decision-making process and emphasized the importance of maintaining equitable service levels despite differing tax bases. Ms. Venzie explained that under an authority model, fees could potentially be billed directly to households.

Discussion also included:

- Potential advantages of beginning with a commission model;
- Concerns regarding municipal oversight under an authority structure;

- Comparisons to other regional EMS authorities operating in Pennsylvania; and
- The role of consultants participating in the regional study process.

Property owner Jay Pusey of 250 South Bank Road asked questions regarding whether municipalities could later withdraw from an authority structure. Ms. Venzie advised that withdrawal may be possible but would require negotiation under the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Act.

Following discussion, Council members generally expressed support for continuing to explore the commission model option.

Information Technology / Email System

Mayor Rzucidlo expressed concerns regarding the Borough's current email filtering system, stating that important emails had been missed due to messages being diverted into filtering folders. Discussion occurred regarding the possibility of transitioning to Microsoft-based email services and adjusting email filtering settings.

Mayor's Report / Grants

Mayor Rzucidlo discussed future grant opportunities, including:

- Additional paving projects;
- Broadband and wireless connectivity improvements for the reservoir and Borough parks;
- Main Street, urban planning and redevelopment assistance.

Council discussed the possibility of partnering with university planning programs, including the University of Pennsylvania and West Chester University, for future urban planning or design assistance. Solicitor Venzie stated she would reach out to West Chester University regarding possible assistance.

Water Loss / Infrastructure Discussion

Council discussed ongoing water loss issues and aging infrastructure concerns. Discussion included the Borough's estimated water loss percentage and possible strategies for identifying and addressing leaks. Mayor Rzucidlo reported that Congresswoman Houlihan's office will connect the Borough with state and DEP contacts regarding water infrastructure assistance and grant opportunities.

Council members Lucas Ortiz, Janet Watts, and Mayor Rzucidlo agreed to continue working together on water loss resources and potential solutions. Treasurer McVaugh also commented on the deteriorating condition of the Borough's water infrastructure.

Mr. Essmaker thanked the Mayor for ongoing grant efforts and stated he would like Council to continue discussions regarding construction projects, sidewalks, and rights-of-way at future meetings.

Wilkinson / Stormwater Discussion

Solicitor Venzie provided an update regarding the Wilkinson development matter. Ms. Venzie advised that Attorney Marc Kaplan believes the Borough Engineer may be interpreting the stormwater ordinance differently than outside consultants retained by the applicant. A meeting is scheduled to discuss the issue further, including participation by a Villanova University professor and the Borough Engineer.

Council discussed concerns regarding ordinance interpretation and waiver requests. Ms. Venzie stated that she intended to ensure the Borough Engineer and stormwater engineer attended the meeting to provide technical input.

Borough Vision / Long-Term Planning

Council discussed long-term planning goals and future visioning efforts for the Borough. Discussion included the desire to continue building upon completed projects while exploring future planning opportunities through grants and university partnerships.

Announcements

- a. The Veterans Memorial Dedication will take place on Saturday, May 16 at 10 AM
- b. The next Borough Council meeting will be held on **Monday**, May 18, 2026 at 7 pm
- c. Tuesday, May 19 is Primary Election Day. Avondale Borough residents vote at the Borough Hall. Polls are open from 7 am – 8 pm
- d. The Borough Office will be closed on Tuesday, May 19 due to the primary election

Public Comment: Mr. Pusey thanked Council and commented positively on the meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Norris

Sharon Norris, Secretary