

**Mercersburg Borough Council**  
**Borough Hall, Mercersburg, PA**  
**July 10, 2017**  
**MINUTES**

**Attending:** President Tom Suddeth, Vice-President Jeff Main, Mayor Roger Defibaugh, Treasurer Catalin Bonciu, Donald Stoner, Jonathan Kittredge, Lisa McCoy, Amy Burkot, Borough Manager Dawn Scheller, and Solicitor Simon Gemerek

**Absent:** Assistant Borough Manager Derek Stoy and Engineer Lance Kegerreis

**Guests/Press:** Pete Lagiovane – 610 Wallace Ave., Chambersburg, PA; Pastor Ron Martin-Minnich – 12590 Dickey's Road, Mercersburg; Debra and James Taylor – 10516 Garnes Road, Mercersburg; Ed and Anna Belle Meyers – 12242 Johnstons Lane, Mercersburg; Nancy Robinson – 203 South Main Street, Mercersburg; Rachel Nichols – Mercersburg Journal

President Suddeth called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm with Mayor Defibaugh leading the Pledge of Allegiance after which the floor was opened for Public Comment.

Pete Lagiovane thanked Borough Council for letting him give a presentation and provided a summary what Fair Districts PA is all about regarding Gerrymandering. He asked Borough Council to consider supporting a Resolution that would publicly support two bills. Pete noted that two other local municipalities, Chambersburg and Greencastle, have both approved the Resolution while others are considering doing the same. Mr. Lagiovane provided information on the history of this process and asked that Borough Council review the information and asked that they revisit this at their next meeting. Borough Council members thanked him for presenting the information and asked Dawn Scheller to forward the presentation information to them for further review.

Pastor Ron Martin-Minnich made a statement to Borough Council Members that has been attached to the meeting notes for the record. Pastor Minnich thanked Borough Council for the work that they do to maintain Mercersburg. He noted that he has been connected to this community since 1974. He reviewed that the recent curb and sidewalk work that was mandated by the Borough was at the cost of \$28,594.00. He reviewed that the Presbyterian Church has a shrinking number of members some of which themselves were mandated to make improvements on their own properties leaving a hardship to cover the cost of the added expense. He asked that Borough Council Members be cautious in the future and research Grants and other funding options before placing additional burden on the taxpayers. He invited Borough Council to hold a Borough Town Meeting offering the church's sanctuary as a location in the fall.

Ed Meyers asked if Penn DOT had made the requirement that the curb and sidewalk be repaired. It was reviewed that the Borough had received several complaints which was reported and discussed at a Streets Committee Meeting prior to coming to Borough Council for action.

Catalin Bonciu said that he was sorry that the Churches are struggling and said that it is a tough situation. A discussion about paying taxes on the church parsonage began. Jeff Main stated that he would assist the church with filing a tax appeal to see if that building can be tax exempt.

No other Public Comments were made.

**MOTION:** to approve the June 12, 2017 Meeting Minutes as presented was made by Jonathan Kittredge, second by Donald Stoner, all ayes, motion carried.

**MOTION:** to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending June 30, 2017, the Bills Payable list for the month ending June 2017 and the updated Bills Payable / Final invoice lists as presented was made by Jonathan Kittredge, second by Donald Stoner, all ayes, motion carried.

Mayor Roger Defibaugh invited Borough Council Members to attend the swearing in ceremony of Officer Buterbaugh. He announced the receipt of a \$2,000 donation made by the Academy and asked that Borough Council approve the purchase of two Tasers which would be marked property of the Borough.

**MOTION: to approved the purchase of two TAZERS using the \$2,000 donation from the Academy was made by Jeff Main, second by Catalin Bonciu, all ayes, motion carried.**

Mayor Defibaugh reviewed that the Borough's Police Department has received 14 calls since January about issues at Rutter's which have been documented. He reported that the Police Department has not received 100% cooperation from Rutter's, but the Department was still working on the issues. Mayor Defibaugh reviewed that he would keep Council informed of any progress.

The Police Report was included in the packet for Borough Council Members review and any questions were to be directed to the Mayor.

Attorney Simon Gemerek reviewed correspondence from Steve Coccoresse in his absence regarding excessive vehicular noise. It was reviewed that the Borough would have difficulty enacting and enforcing any ordinances regulating the operation of motor vehicles specifically regulating vehicle exhaust systems or sound limits as the Commonwealth has already set a detailed standard. It was noted that the Borough could enforce the state laws/regulations already established.

Dawn Scheller reviewed the Borough Manager's report which included the balance on the Sidewalk Loan Program of \$28,167.68 with a remaining of \$46,832.32 available for residents' curb and/or sidewalk projects. She reviewed that the Trail Project Bid Documents were received and were forwarded to the Solicitor for review. Dawn Scheller announced that the Summer Playground had 55 children registered and between 40-45 children were attending the program. She stated that she would provide Borough Council with a review of all the expenses at the August Borough Council Meeting. She stated that she did not receive a call back or price quote from Century Link as requested even with providing them with additional time so her recommendation was to transfer phone service to Comcast as it was estimated that the Borough would save \$1100 per year on phone and internet costs. She reviewed that she was still trying to see if the Borough could switch the Non-Emergency number to Comcast as she needed to verify if that line was a fiber optic line. If it is not there would be additional savings. She asked Borough Council to approve having the Borough's phone service switched from Century Link to Comcast. Dawn Scheller reviewed that Steve was still working on getting the Townships the information they requested. She reviewed that the Auditor would be present for the Finance Committee Meeting and asked that any question be forwarded to her to send to the Auditor has time to prepare answers. She reviewed that the Solicitor was still in process of reviewing and updating the Health Insurance RFP, she anticipated that the advertisement would be placed at the end of July as previously approved. She noted that the TRASH RFP was been advertised and bids are due back no later than noon on 9/6/17. Dawn highlighted the support that the Borough has received from the Academy and the Tuscarora School District. She announced that the Academy had donated \$1,000 to the Summer Playground Program.

Dawn Scheller presented Derek Stoy's report in his absence which included an update on the curb work being completed at the property of 306 North Main Street. She reviewed that the PENN DOT paving project's new timeline was the end of July or beginning of August. Dawn reported that Derek Stoy issued one Land Use Permit in June.

The Committee Meeting information was reviewed.

The ACT 537 Meeting held on June 20, 2017 was a review of the status of the plan submission which is still in process. No recommendations were presented at this time as the Townships were awaiting additional information from our Solicitor.

Amy Burkot reviewed the Beautification Committee Meeting Notes. She noted that they were not able to hold a Christmas in July fundraising event this year as she did not receive any response back. She reviewed that the Committee would meet in late September early October to focus on fundraising.

Jeff Main reviewed the Fire Board update/information. He invited Borough Council Members to attend the workshop meeting scheduled for 7/11/17 at 6:00 pm. A report for the Fire Department Activity was included in the Council Members packets for review and questions were asked to be forwarded to a Fire Board Representative.

Jeff Main also reviewed the Personnel Committee Meeting information from the June 19, 2017 meeting. There were no recommendations from the Personnel Committee at this time.

**MOTION: to accept and acknowledge the 2016 Borough Audit as written by Boyer Ritter was made by Jonathan Kittredge, second by Donald Stoner, all ayes, motion carried.**

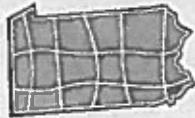
**MOTION: to approve the Borough to switch the phone service to Comcast to save money was made by Jonathan Kittredge, second by Donald Stoner, all ayes, motion carried.**

President Suddeth reviewed the correspondence included in the Borough Council Packets. There were no actions made on any of the information provided. A review of the upcoming calendar was completed with no other items brought before Council.

**MOTION: to adjourn at 8:33 pm was made by Jonathan Kittredge, second by Donald Stoner, all ayes, motion carried.**

*These meeting minutes have been transcribed and respectfully submitted to Borough Council for approval by Dawn Scheller, Borough Manager, with the use of her meeting notes and audio recording.*

Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ Second: \_\_\_\_\_



# FAIR DISTRICTS PA

## WINTER 2017

**AS AMERICANS, WE WANT OUR ELECTIONS TO BE FAIR,  
OUR VOTES TO COUNT & OUR VOICES TO BE HEARD.**

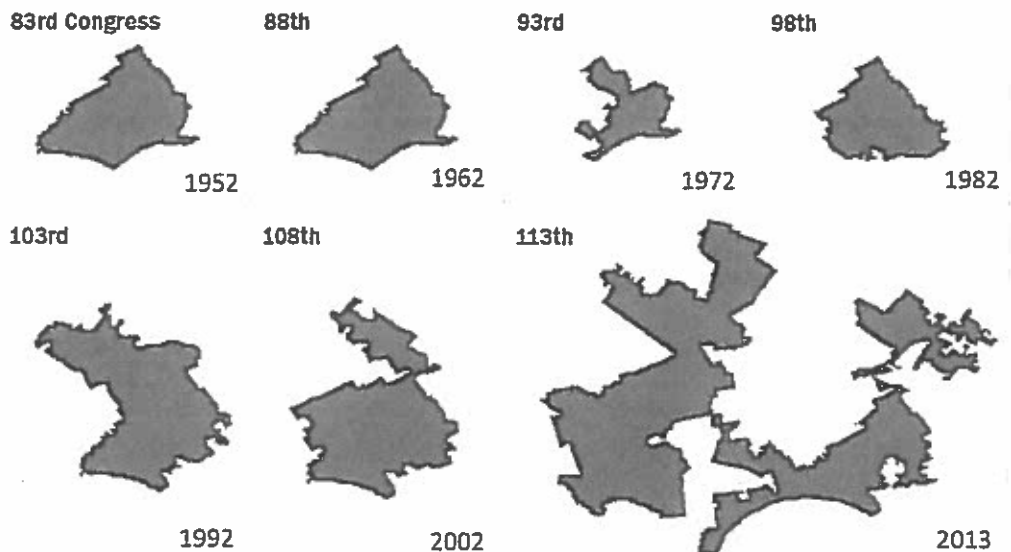
Congressional representatives, state legislators and many local officials are elected from districts. Once each decade the national census recounts populations and district lines are redrawn. In Pennsylvania, congressional and state legislative district boundaries are determined by the state legislature.

This is a conflict of interest, a little like allowing the fox to guard the henhouse. As a result, politicians are choosing their voters, rather than voters choosing their politicians.



**Gerrymandering,** manipulating district lines to benefit one party or group, has been around for centuries. Using new mapping and data-mining technologies, politicians can divide communities with increasing precision, creating more and more bizarrely shaped districts.

### THE EVOLUTION OF PENNSYLVANIA'S SEVENTH DISTRICT



SOURCE: Shapefiles maintained by Jeffrey B. Lewis, Brandon DeVine, Lincoln Pritcher and Kenneth C. Martus, UCLA. Drawn to scale.

GRAPHIC: The Washington Post. Published May 20, 2014

Electoral Integrity Project for Fair Districts PA 2010

When politicians oversee the process, lines are drawn to keep voters together or to separate them into different districts to give some groups a voice and to make sure others aren't heard.

Lines are drawn to create safe districts for incumbents, to punish politicians who don't play by party rules and to ensure that the party in power maintains control for the next ten years.

The way the lines are drawn determines who controls the governing body, shapes legislative priorities and behavior and defines which bills get passed into law and which never receive a vote.

Research shows partisan redistricting

- rewards extreme positions rather than collaborative solutions.
- leads to gridlock.
- shuts out new voices.
- makes accountable government almost impossible as many legislators run unopposed.

*The Electoral Integrity Project, an international research team, has described partisan redistricting as the greatest threat to the integrity of American elections.*

**ADDRESS TO THE MERCERSBURG BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**by The Rev. Ronald E. Martin-Minnich, Temporary Pastor**  
**of the Presbyterian Church of the Upper West Conococheague**  
**Monday, July 10, 2017**

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Mercersburg Town Council and my fellow citizens of the Borough of Mercersburg, I consider this an honor and a privilege to address you representing one of the oldest institutions in Mercersburg. The Presbyterian Church of the Upper West Conococheague existed inside the stockade across from the Church Hill Cemetery in 1738. Its first Pastor was Captain Steele, its commander. The church has existed at its present location on West Seminary Street since 1794.

First, I wish to thank you for how you work to maintain Mercersburg in these difficult economic times. There will always be those who criticize and complain about what you do, but that is what you will always have in a free and open society. I have been connected to this community since 1974, when I married the former Teresa Martin, granddaughter of H.B. Hege of Hege & Myers and who was a President of The Community Bank of Mercersburg. I even worked in the Lowengart & Co. Tannery in 1974.

Secondly, I need to state for the record what almost happened to the Presbyterian Church of the Upper West Conococheague. Yes, we were once the only church in the area, President Buchanan's parents were married in the church, the Buchanan children were all baptized in the church by Dr. Elliott, Harriet Lane Johnston's parents were married in the church and she was baptized in the church, and Dr. King is credited by the President himself with saving his career when he had his problems during college.

Unfortunately, we are no longer a congregation with large numbers, we do not have large cash reserves or endowments, and I am only their part-time Temporary Pastor. Therefore, the Borough's mandatory order to repair our sidewalk or be assessed and charged a ten percent collection fee almost closed down a congregation that has served this community for 279 years. I had to appeal to the Presbytery of Carlisle and its churches to raise the funds to pay for the \$28,594.00 expense. This expense would have exhausted the few savings we have, eliminated our ability to cover our quarterly deficit and caused the congregation to close its doors by the end of 2017.

My church continues to support the community through School Supplies and Backpacks in the Fall for the Tuscorora School district, the Giving Tree with clothes for Elementary Children at Christmas, Gift Cards at various times of the year to help the School Nurses, support and participation in Townfest and Springfest, and most recently the Tree Lighting in the Square at Christmas. As member of The Tuscorora Chamber of Commerce and the Mercersburg Area Churches, Inc., we have joined with other churches in the ministerium to begin the "Bountiful Blessings" located in St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. This program subsidizes low income families with cleaning and personal hygiene supplies twice a month. My congregation seeks to meet the needs of Mercersburg, while it struggles to meet its own needs.

Finally, I plead with this Council to move more cautiously when you decide to add to the expenses of the citizens and institutions of Mercersburg, to please seek ways to pay for expenses and improvements through Grants and State or Federal Funding. I pledge to you the

support of my congregation in this effort and I am more than willing to ask the permission of my church Session (Board of Elders) to hold a Borough Town Meeting in our sanctuary in the Fall. Mercersburg is not a town that is thriving, but a town that is striving to change this condition. I call for us to work together to make this happen to better serve the citizens of Mercersburg.