

# **Mercersburg Borough Council Meeting**

**Borough Hall, 113 S. Main St., Mercersburg, PA**

**June 30, 2025**

## **MINUTES**

**Attending:** President Dusty Stoner, Vice President Anthony Frisby, Member Tom Heefner, Member Paul Sipes, Member Joe Burkot, Mayor Michael Pedersen, Solicitor Rachel Hepp, Borough Manager Dawn Scheller, Administrative Professional Pete Stotelmyer.

**Absent:** Member Jacob Morgan.

**Guest(s)/Press:** Don Palesky, Herb and Kendra Thompson, Judy Bonciu, Lisa McCullough (Mercersburg Journal), Nancy Robinson, Sahand Miraminy, Tauna Cole, Tim Stanton, Tom Suddeth.

Council president started the meeting at 7:00 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Don Palesky spoke about reminding civic leaders that their words have impact and consequences and to use them wisely, and to thank Dawn Scheller for her service, and to thank the public works employees.

Kendra Thompson spoke to Anthony Frisby's comments being harassment and asked for his reassignment or removal from committee assignments.

Tim Stanton reminds Council that he asked it to reorganize during their May meeting and due to this 66% of office staff has decided to resign. He feels Council should have a zero tolerance policy towards harassment or threats. He reminds the borough about needing to be transparent and cites the decision to move the borough hall away from the current building as an example. Tim noted that this loss of staff is affecting sewer [and water] construction projects since office staff recently brought accounting in house and is no longer going to be able to keep up with tracking project expenses or grants.

Sahand Miraminy praises Dawn Scheller's professionalism, and criticizes council for not standing up for her as this situation has unfolded. He also cites the situation at HARB where residents know they may show up at a Council meeting to get a favorable decision, negating the work of experienced members of the committee and causing half of them to consider resigning. He asks Council to issue an apology to Dawn and to pass an enforceable Code of Conduct for members, and urge those responsible to step down.

### **MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Michael Pedersen listed his activities for the recent weeks: he spoke at Lions Club park dedication, awarded the Harriet Lane Award to Joan McCullough, attended the Waynesboro mayor's funeral, spoke at the James Buchanan Middle School about public service positions, met with a student at the Mercersburg Academy, attended the Memorial Day Parade, wrote letters about water infrastructure issues, attended authority and committee meetings, installed a new Rotary president, officiated a wedding, issued a proclamation for a member of the Mercersburg Community Band, and attended the last Mercersburg 275th planning meeting. He also thanks Dawn Scheller for her professionalism and integrity.

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**MANAGER'S REPORT**

Manager Dawn Scheller announced Pete Stotelmyer's resignation and last day of July 11. A Right-to-Know request was received as well as a letter about a project involving Lions Club Park regarding an access road, and land use permits for it. She said that there are no permits for this which have been received and she will provide Council with this letter. She provided a grant update: Green Light Go grant (\$44,098) from 2022 to update traffic lights in the borough. She said that nothing had been done with this project before she arrived and she handled the paperwork to get it going and to be reimbursed for work completed earlier this year. The Sewer Authority received an Impact grant in 2022 (\$33,000) which also had not been accessed, and she handled getting these reimbursements underway. The Water Authority also received a grant for \$113,279 for their upgrades and this is in process.

Manager Scheller addresses her salary since it has been brought up in the media. Her salary went from \$75,000 in 2024 which increased to \$77,500 in 2025, with no medical coverage taken (value: \$24,000 annually). She compared this to her compensation in 2017 and to previous managers' compensation packages. She also addressed the allegation that she was using public money to purchase office furniture and read a statement from her employment agreement detailing which items would be paid by the borough and which would be considered as employee property.

On federal funding, she details the compliance report that allows the borough to keep the ARPA money (\$160,860) that was given to it during the pandemic. She adds that this will need to be finalized. Last year, the borough's finances went through a long and expensive audit for fiscal year 2023, but is expected to be completed on a normal schedule this year. The accounts payable and receivable functions have been brought in house and is saving the entities \$2000 per month. The borough still contracts payroll out to Cohick Associates though. Scheller wraps this up with a summary of how her pay has been justified by all of the savings that she has created for the borough. She asks about how to handle the posting of positions for re-filling vacant jobs.

Dusty Stoner made an impassioned statement about the misinformation and harassment on social media and how it was fueled by statements by people in the room.

Kelani Craig made a statement to Scheller about how the Council did not have her back, and how its public statement didn't help anything for her. She blames Council for losing her, and the town for running with misinformation. She believes this situation makes it hard for other employees to want to work for the borough. She also feels that most of the plans that were developed in Streets and Property committees are now in doubt since we won't have her support now.

Joe Burkot demands that Frisby resign. And barring that, Council should reorganize and remove him from Vice President. This leads to a motion to reorganize.

**MOTION: to reorganize Council made by Burkot, seconded by Sipes, all ayes, motion carried.**

President Stoner opened the floor for nominations.

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**MOTION: to nominate Dusty Stoner for President made by Burkot, seconded by Heefner, all ayes, motion carried.**

**MOTION: to nominate Kelani Craig for Vice President made by Burkot, seconded by Heefner, all ayes, motion carried.**

**MOTION: to nominate Tom Heefner for Pro Tem made by Sipes, seconded by Craig, all ayes, motion carried.**

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- A) Troy Hoover Resignation:** Scheller explained that Hoover just celebrated one year in service. After many off hour calls for late night water and sewer service calls, he decided it was not workable for his home life.

**MOTION: to accept the resignation of Troy Hoover made by Heefner, seconded by Craig, all ayes, motion carried.**

- B) Dawn Scheller Resignation:** Craig asks if there is any way to reverse this and Scheller says no. Dawn states that she had decided previously when she started working here last year that she would not tolerate shenanigans as she did before in her previous employment.

**MOTION: to accept the resignation of Dawn Scheller made by Burkot, seconded with regret by Heefner, motion carried (with a symbolic nay by Stoner).**

- C) MOTION: To authorize Borough Office to advertise for vacant positions and allow the Personnel Committee to conduct interviews to fill the vacancies made by Heefner, seconded by Burkot, all ayes, motion carried.**

- D) Approving Repair Payments for Borough Vehicles.**

**MOTION: to retroactively approve estimates from Keystone Ford for vehicle repairs in the amounts of \$2,255.74 & \$3,664.51 made by Craig, seconded by Burkot, all ayes, motion carried.**

- E) Mercersburg Water Authority Articles of Incorporation Extension.** Scheller explained that this was necessary due to PennVest long term financing which would overrun the length of the Water Authority's incorporation term, said that the incorporation needed to extend beyond that.

**MOTION: to approve Ordinance 8-14 authorizing and adopting an amendment to the Mercersburg Water Authority Articles of Incorporation to extend the term of its existence made by Heefner, seconded by Craig, all ayes, motion carried.**

- F) To review and approve the proposed timeline from Rockwell Construction for the band building demo.** Scheller explained that this is an update on a previously approved project, details plans to setup fencing around the building, need for borough vehicles to be parked elsewhere. **MOTION: to review and approve the proposed timeline from Rockwell Construction for the band building demo made by Heefner, seconded by Burkot, all ayes, motion carried.**

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G) Council Reorganization (handled under Manager's Report section).

The discussion then shifted to the posting of open positions. Scheller asked about salary ranges. She reminded Council that health care will cost around \$24,000 per year per employee. Burkot suggested \$75k plus benefits. A question was asked about pay levels in comparable boroughs - Scheller answered that Antrim Township pays \$80k, that it is larger, but that Mercersburg is unique since the manager also handles the water and sewer authorities and has to conduct all other zoning and code compliance responsibilities. She adds that Council has been saving by not paying her and Stotelmyer for health benefits (saving around \$48,000 annually). She reminded Council that it will need to involve Cohick Associates to pick up the bookkeeping and accounting work until the positions are replaced. Craig asks about how the Oregon Street repaving project will be handled and Scheller explains the process for what work will need to be done later in the year. Scheller says that she has been trying to re-create an office manual which captures knowledge, but there is little time for finishing this and for having multiple individual meetings with council and authority members to divulge all knowledge.

Burkot suggested to start the next manager at \$77k. Scheller recommended going back to a borough manager and an assistant manager position, and the assistant should be paid close to \$60k. Council agreed non-officially to go with this manager - assistant manager format going forward. Council members discussed possibilities for using volunteers to help during the transition. When asked if she would still provide support, Scheller said that she would be available in ways to be determined, and that she doesn't want to see her hard work eroded.

Council reviewed and set upcoming committee meeting dates.

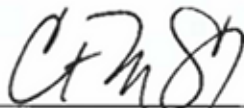
Anthony Frisby was asked if he would continue with the summer playground program and he said he would. He was asked if he had anything to say for himself. He explained that he apologized at the water authority meeting and that he had no idea that his frustrations resulting from his water bill would result in Dawn leaving and this contentious situation.

**MOTION: to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 PM made by Heefner, seconded by Burkot, all ayes, motion carried.**

*These meeting minutes were transcribed from audio recording and have been respectfully submitted for approval.*

Approved:

Date: 4-13-26 Motion: Palesky      Seconded: Heefner



Borough Manager / Secretary / Treasurer

