



**5:45 Executive Session – Personnel, Litigation**

The Morrisville Borough Council met on Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at the Morrisville Municipal Building, 35 Union Street, Morrisville, PA for a Regular Council Meeting.

Ms. Hlahol stated, we were in executive session beforehand we were talking about well I let the solicitor tell you.

Mr. Flager stated all council members were present we discussed personnel, labor matters, police matters, litigation matters including those involving Chief McClay. Thank you.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

All those in attendance stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Hlahol stated just an announcement Mr. Vitarelli was here for executive session but he's on vacation therefore he will not be here for the regular council meeting.

**2. Roll Call**

The following Council members and Borough officials were in attendance:

Borough Council: Helen Hlahol, President  
Melissa Johnson  
Marie Kelso  
Andrew Lubin  
Luke McKee  
Kathryn Price Engelhard  
Scott Robinson

Borough Officials: Judith Danko, Borough Manager  
Gary Wallace, Mayor  
Randy Flager, Solicitor  
Virginia Cyphers, Assist. Borough Secretary

Not in Attendance: John Vitarelli, Vice President (present for executive session via zoom)

Ms. Hlahol stated some changes to the agenda that we've made we're going to have two sets of public comment. The first one is for items that are on the agenda and then later in the meeting will be public comment for all other non-agenda items.



### 3. Public Comment on Agenda Items

#### 1. Peggy Walsh – 444 Stockham Ave

She stated good evening my name is Peggy Walsh and I've lived on Stockham Avenue with my family for over 40 years. I'd like to comment on item 9C of your agenda to approve hiring a consulting firm to search for a new police chief. As a taxpayer who has seen my taxes rise deeply each year I'm appalled at the amount of taxpayer dollars that have been wasted in litigation over the firing of our former police chief. Laying aside the fact that I disagree that Chief McClay did anything so egregious as to earn a dismissal the total disregard of the money implication is shocking. I know that new member's one current member and the new Mayor have nothing to do with this counterproductive and divisive campaign, abuse of taxpayer trust and waste of taxpayer dollars in a financially strapped Borough. I've done my best to look at public records to add up the total cost on litigation and investigation since February of 2023 to January of 2024 and I come up with a total of a bit over \$130,000.00 this does not count the \$120.00 per hour salary we are paying the Interim Chief. Now you will need to spend money to search for another police chief by hiring a consulting firm and we have no idea how much the settlement will be to the former Chief because of his wrongful termination. I'm a former English teacher not a math person so I stand corrected if my calculations are off but even giving or taking a few thousand dollars in the end you will have spent over \$200,000.00 on this fiasco and I think that's a generous estimate and that's not counting the settlement we'll have to pay Chief McClay because he was wrongfully terminated. What could we have done with that money put in walking paths and some benches in Patriots Park finally, find a summer program for the library, upgrade the infrastructure at Williamson Park, and apply for matching grants. I know that there is \$50,000.00 in the budget for matching grants who is writing them? You could also investigate creating a municipal parking lot behind the Stockham Building to serve our downtown area which would create quite a bit of revenue and take care of a tremendous amount of traffic. Once again, I know that new members and at least one current council person have to clean up the mess created by current and past members but please move forward as quickly as possible to resolve the situation. New members please learn a lesson from financial disaster begin to take positive steps to make the Borough a better place. As always I ask please bring civility to your interactions you've not been elected to embark on an ego trip you've been elected to serve the taxpayers of Morrisville. It's not an easy job but it could be a rewarding one if you could all just put Borough residents first.

There being no further public comment, the President proceeded to the business portion of the agenda.

#### 4. Community Announcements and Presentations

- Debbie's Crafts – 78 E. Bridge Street (specialty items, t-shirts etc.)
- Twilight Kombucha – 101 Washington Street, Unit 8A (retail)

#### 5. Community Outreach

- a. **Library Board:** One 3-year appointment expires 3/1/27. Letter of interest from Theresa Rissman.  
Nomination of Theresa Rissman for the term expiring 3/1/27 made by Mr. Robinson.



**Vote to appoint Theresa Rissman** to the Library Board carried by voice vote 7-0.

- b. **Zoning Hearing Board:** One 3-year appointment (alternate) expires 1/4/27. Letter of interest from Michele McGowan.

Nomination of Michele McGowan for the term expiring 1/4/27 made by Mr. Robinson.

**Vote to appoint Michele McGowan** to the Zoning Hearing Board carried by voice vote 7-0.

- c. **MMA Board:** Remainder of a 5-year appointment, expires 1/4/27. Letter of interest from Daniel Murphy.

Nomination of Daniel Murphy for the term expiring 1/4/27 made by Ms. Kelso.

**Vote to appoint Daniel Murphy** to the MMA carried by voice vote 7-0.

- d. **Library Board:** One 3-year appointment expires 3/1/27. Letter of interest from Ben Strauss. Nomination of Ben Strauss for the term expiring 3/1/27 made by Ms. Johnson.

**Vote to appoint Ben Strauss** to the Library Board carried by voice vote 7-0.

## 6. Borough Manager's Report

Manager Danko stated good evening everyone thank you for coming out this evening. I had attended a zoom meeting with Senator Santarsiero's office it's something that they're researching right now it's called the Blue Zones it's creating a healthy atmosphere for children and also adults with good eating habits, exercising, working in the park areas with children and so forth so it's something that you'll hear about in the future. It was well attended by most municipal managers and Senator Santarsiero's office will be looking into grant funding for all the communities if possible so it's something new and exciting. Currently we are also working with the public works department and our engineer looking into storm water grants and some paving of the roads we'll be coming up with a roadway systems preliminary list to look at with council so we can move forward with doing some roadway systems in the very near future. We're also looking at several new ordinances handicap parking ordinance, we're looking at a possible noise ordinance. We're also looking at different types of things that could be helpful when we have nuisance areas so we're doing something of that nature. We were just also awarded an FMT grant for the back flow valve project at the levy we're not sure the amount of that grant at this time it started at around \$25,000.00 and we've asked for some more funds so we may be near the \$100,000.00 amount at this time. The other very exciting news that I have to report this evening is I've been able to secure an \$80,000.00 donation for a vehicle purchase for our truck traffic enforcement officer we'll be making more announcements shortly on that. I'm also working with council president Helen Hlahol regarding another donation for the scale that we have since we're having issues with that scale so we're working diligently together on that also. That's my report if anyone has any questions please let me know.

## 7. Police Chief's Report

Chief Gerald Simpson stated I'll be brief. First let me start off by apologizing for not having the activities report in the drop a little sooner but we'll work to fix that in April. It certainly was a busy week last week with the news I'm going to move on to now so thank you to the Civil Service Commission we have completed our end of the pre-employment check and we anticipate every one of the candidates to start this coming Monday, March 25<sup>th</sup> with all the other parts of the process being completed successfully we started out with a meeting with all the candidates to assess their knowledge,



skills and abilities to see where we can fast track to get these officers appropriately in the positions to police in the community in the most efficient manner so that'll start this coming Monday. Moving on another thing is happening this Monday it's actually a shared agreement with the co-responder program with Lower Makefield and Yardley. I sent out a policy draft I believe to Judith that was forwarded along to Chris Gerber for his review it's a model policy draft of this program that's already operating in Bucks County so that person will start in our three communities next week mostly through their orientation program in Lower Makefield but eventually will make their way over here to Morrisville Borough to effectively meet our organization understand what their role will play in the Borough of Morrisville and hopefully will help us mitigate some of the emotional mental health issues that we have that could use those kinds of services. Outside of that I don't have any other updates for council for April.

### 8. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of minutes from the 2/20/24 council meeting and the 3/7/24 special meeting.
- b. Approval of bill list from 2/1/24 to 2/29/24 in the amount of \$422,101.68.
- c. Authorize the Borough to participate in Bucks County Health Department annual West Nile Virus Program.
- d. Call for motion to approve payment in the amount of \$14,418.55 to Morrisville Fire Company as payment per the Fire Fund as of 12/31/23. (Based on final 2023 financials, third and final payment for 2023.)
- e. Call for motion to authorize payment to QPI Electrical in the amount of \$77,828.75, to be paid out of ARPA funds for emergency services at Borough Hall.
- f. Call for motion to approve QPI Electrical change order #1 in the amount of \$2,845.00, to be paid out of ARPA funds for emergency services at Borough Hall.
- g. Call for motion to approve QPI Electrical change order #2A in the amount of \$14,560.00, to be paid out of ARPA funds for emergency services at Borough Hall.
- h. Call for motion to approve QPI Electrical change order #3 in the amount of (-) \$5,922.00, to be credited back to ARPA funds for emergency services at Borough Hall.

Motion made by Mr. Lubin and seconded by Mr. McKee.

*Discussion took place regarding the motions.*

**Motion** carried by voice vote 7-0.

### 9. Action Items

- a. Motion to approve the Parks and Recreation Committee application for "Music and Food" on Saturday, 7/13/24, 2:00 pm to 8:30 pm at Williamson Park with a cap of a cost to the Borough of \$100.00.

Motion made by Ms. Price Engelhard and seconded by Mrs. Johnson.

*Discussion took place regarding the motions.*

**Motion** carried by voice vote 7-0.

- b. Motion to approve the Parks and Recreation Committee application for "Celebrate Irish" on Sunday, 9/15/24, 10:00 am to 8:30 pm at Williamson Park with a cap of \$1,000.00 expense to the residents.

Motion made by Mr. Lubin and seconded by Mr. McKee.



*No discussion took place regarding the motions.*

**Motion** carried by voice vote 7-0.

- c. Motion to approve hiring a consulting company Aspirant for the search and selection of a Morrisville Borough Police Chief.  
Motion made by Mr. Robinson and seconded by Mrs. Johnson.  
*No discussion took place regarding the motions.*  
**Motion** carried by voice vote 7-0.
- d. Motion to extend the independent contractor agreement with Police Chief Gerald Simpson as the Interim Chief of Police per the 3/19/24 contract extending the contract to 5/21/24.  
Motion made by Mr. McKee and seconded by Ms. Kelso.  
*No discussion took place regarding the motions.*  
**Motion** carried by voice vote 7-0.
- e. Call for motion to consider and approve the Civil Service Commission conducting its own testing in order to develop and certify the Eligibility List expeditiously.  
Motion made by Mr. Robinson and seconded by Mrs. Johnson.  
*Discussion took place regarding the motions.*  
**Motion** carried by voice vote 7-0.

## 10. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

### 1. Kathryn Panzitta – *Hillcrest Ave*

She stated it's different it's unique and I love the words on your first couple of action items ARPA near and dear to my heart. So a couple questions do you have a balance of how much more ARPA you could spend? Just a question for the general public they did question where the ARPA money was spent and it was on there. I noticed and I guess the viewing audience notices it too when certain events come up there's a lot more critiquing and questions so I hope it stays consistent on everybody else's projects for whatever they have. People in the community know in your budget you had events and lines and it's not specific to the taxpayers money you get money from other sources too within the realms of your budget so if putting tag words like the residents are paying \$1,000.00 well there's a bunch of residents we like to use our parks we like to hear money anybody that did an event knows usually your bands are hired and signed up way before March for a summer event so nobody's playing -- let's just make sure they're consistent on anything that the Borough sponsors because the public will be watching. Thank you.

### 2. Peggy Walsh – *444 Stockham Ave*

She stated I'd like to second what Kathy Panzitta said is so funny that everything on this council sailed through tonight except when we came to trying to give some money to have events in our park. We are so willing to spend money to waste taxpayer money on interim police Chief's, on legal bills like the lawyers must love us because I think we're supporting them but boy when it comes to having two festivals in our park which most Borough's that have any insight as to what creates a family friendly Borough that people want to move into want to have in their parks, this is where we



MEETING MINUTES  
MORRISVILLE BOROUGH COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024  
7:00 P.M.  
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have constant questioning and criticism and you're going to cap it at \$100.00 you can't even come up with more than \$100.00 when I think there's \$10,000.00 in the budget for the parks and this is the one thing tonight that you have balked at and that's what I'm trying to get across your priorities are off. The other thing you won't finance is a summer program for children for the library \$3,000.00 you wouldn't come up with \$3,000.00 last year to provide that summer program for young children. Do you expect people to move into a Borough that doesn't value its library, doesn't value its park, and doesn't value its children's programs? I've got four new toddlers on my back alone on Stockham Avenue I hope they stay but we need some enlightened leadership that cares more about the people and the children of this district and what families want and need than spending money on lawyers, interim police chief's and going out and firing perfectly good police chief's and spending tons of money on hiring a consulting firm, no balking at that.

Ms. Hlahol stated can I remind the public that non-agenda items are non-agenda items.

Ms. Walsh stated, that's another thing the way you set this up it's impossible to know what you can comment to and that's because you're cutting down free speech you don't want anybody to question what's going on here so you know clarify what kind of comments we can make and when we can make them because this is the stupidest thing I've ever seen in my life. What other Borough does this? Where did you come up with this idea?

Ms. Hlahol stated if you look at other Boroughs other Boroughs are doing this.

There being no further public comment, the President proceeded to the business portion of the agenda.

Ms. Danko stated so everyone understands since the inception of the ARPA funds we have had everything that we have spent any monies on from the ARPA funds on the council agendas. We put a new roof on the Borough building with the ARPA funds that was on the agenda it was voted on it was in the budget also. We just worked on a brand new electrical system for the Borough building that was on the agenda. We put in new sewer lines at the Borough building that was on the agenda also approved. We put a new gas boy system in for the police department, for the fire company, for the ambulance system, for the public works department with ARPA funds that was on the agenda and also in the budget. We put in a new HVAC system in the ambulance building that was on the budget and also on the agenda. I'm trying to think if there was anything else because I'm doing this off the top of my head so I apologize but every single amount of monies that we have spent regarding the ARPA funds have been on the agendas they've been voted on and we've clearly discussed this for at least over a year as to where these funds are going and where they've been spent and what we plan to do in the future so please understand that if you follow the agendas, my manager's reports, the budget, it's even on the budget what we're doing so if there's any questions whatsoever about ARPA funds please don't hesitate to ask because it's been clearly posted, it's been in writing, it's been provided to the public, it's been provided to council, it's been provided on all areas not just at the meeting but also on the budget paperwork. The other area that was mentioned was the library the summer program I had worked with the library employees and they had gotten donations last year well over \$3,000.00 for that summer program and the summer program was phenomenal. This year they've also been working on donations and we also added monies to the library budget for the summer program so that has happened the monies have been added and there's been donations that have been gotten and we'll also have



another wonderful summer program. We also hired I interviewed along with Diane I interviewed and hired a new summer program employee she had been doing a phenomenal job at the library not just with the summer program but with lots of new and different things she had a Barbie Day. We've been posting a lot of that information the library has been posting that information so the Borough has been working with the library systems with all of these items that are needed. I will leave the rest of that regarding Parks and Recreation to council because that's not within my realm but those items having to do with ARPA and the library we've been funding those so I just wanted to let everybody know. Thank you.

### 11. Council Discussion Items

- a. T-Mobile community grant.
- b. Alcohol policy for Special events outside Williamson Park.
- c. Council Spending.

### 12. Mayor Comments

Mayor Wallace stated good evening everyone. I would like to start by sending my thoughts and prayers to the victims of the selfless act that was done on Saturday we truly stand with them and so sorry for their loss. Thanks to Chief Simpson I was in contact with him earlier that morning to understand where the Morrisville Police Department stood and what we needed to do so he was right on top of it so I truly appreciate that thank you all.

### 13. Council Member Comments

- Mr. Robinson stated I have two comments you could call them. Number one is a bit of sad news if everyone could keep the Cutchineal family in their prayers Mr. Cutchineal Jerry whose nickname is Bear, whose namesake is the garage over here on Bridge Street passed away last week. He's a lifelong resident of Morrisville, graduated from Morrisville High, and lived up on West Maple Avenue and his wife Pam and his daughters Amy and Cara keep them in your prayers. The other is a question I guess for Judith or maybe for Helen the ribbon cutting on Bridge Street for the path there was a couple different dates in April did we get a firm date on that or not?
- Ms. Danko stated Scott thank you very much for bringing that back up because I was having a hard time speaking during my report. I apologize I had something in my throat and I just couldn't get the words out. The very first thing that I really want to say that was that we do now have a tentative date of April 24<sup>th</sup> around 2:00 pm. I'm still waiting for the confirmation on that because the secretary from DCNR would like to attend and speak so that's really what we've been waiting for. I've sent around four or five different dates, they proposed back April they proposed another date back and then that fell through and now we're back on April 24<sup>th</sup> so I will be letting everyone know as soon as I have a confirmed steady date but so far we're at April 24<sup>th</sup> around 2:00 pm that's a tentative date for the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Bridge Street area this is very exciting to have the secretary of the DCNR to be present so I'm hoping that we get as many residents, as many council people that we can, the Mayor, Council President, everyone, anyone that's interested, Chief Simpson any of the Police Officers, any of the audience member, anyone who is interested in attending it's really a very special moment. That project had been on the books for a long time it started and it was stagnant for a long time and we resurrected it and



finished it I've been down at the area so many people are utilizing it, the lights that are out there at Bridge Street they are solar and they're amazing. Scott I'm sorry I went a little too far but it's a very exciting time. So April 24<sup>th</sup> tentative date around 2:00 pm.

- Ms. Hlahol stated I just want to make an announcement there are some community events I just want to put a reminder out there March 30<sup>th</sup> the Morrisville Rotary has an Easter Egg Hunt at 9:00 am at Williamson Park, April 6<sup>th</sup> is the Little League Opening Day Parade it starts at 10:00 am and also on April 6<sup>th</sup> the Bucks County Community College will be collecting hazardous waste such as paint, batteries, propane, etc. and that's from 8:30 to 2:00 pm.
- Ms. Danko stated if I may all these items are on the Borough calendar, they're all on the Borough website they are also on the Facebook page and the TV channel.
- Mr. McKee stated our thoughts and prayers go out to the gentleman's family who lost his life in the apartment fire on Plaza Boulevard.
- Ms. Hlahol stated based on all those comments maybe we can stand for a moment of silence for the gentleman on Plaza Boulevard and the people over the weekend and also for Bear, Mr. Cutchineal.

#### 14. Committee Updates

Mayor Wallace stated I have something from a committee for the MEAC. I just want to thank everyone for coming out to the Riverfront Preserve Cleanup it was a great success. Thanks to Spearhead Project Earth for coming out as well they came to assist it was a great event there was a ton of people there we took out a lot of trash so thank you so much I appreciate it. Congrats to Nicole thank you for putting it together and having everything ready set to go. Sorry John you had to clean that up.

Ms. Price Engelhard stated, Madame President can I do a report on Parks and Recreation? We had a meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup> and most was talked about some of our upcoming calendar of events the tree planting, the cleanup. We had open discussion Don Kronnagel would like to see if we could do a mural at the baseball clubhouse he's provided us with pictures of two Morrisville residents and athletes Dick Hart played in the 55 Little League World Series and Danny Napoleon played in the National Baseball League and it was mentioned that Solid Rock who did our other murals would probably be interested in helping so that's something that we're going to look at and bring a proposal to the council to see if we'd like to continue that thought process so that was just about it the meeting was adjourned at 8:35.

Mr. Lubin stated, Madame President could you take a second and tell us who's on what committee there seems to be some confusion as to the status of committees and their membership for this year.

Ms. Hlahol stated, Kathryn had made some recommendations I don't know that the committees were fully funded I'm going to sit down over this week and look at the committees and see what we need





and what we don't need and maybe create some new ones. So you'll get an email this week sometime.

## 15. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Hlahol.

**Motion** carried by voice vote 7-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

<https://www.morrisvillepagov.com/meeting-videos/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIOOU1ZG6yY>