

**BENSALEM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
REORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday  
January 6th, 2025**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Joseph Knowles  
Ed Kisselback  
Michelle Benitez  
Stacey Champion  
Joseph Pilieri

**SUPPORTING PERSONNEL:**

Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo  
Debora McBreen, Recording Secretary  
Joseph Pizzo, Township Solicitor  
Philip Wursta, Township Engineer  
Judge Joseph Falcone  
Judge Michael Gallagher

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**The minutes are not verbatim but rather a synopsis of what transpired during the meeting, and while I do my best to attribute remarks and questions to the correct individual, there may be mistakes or omissions because of the “back and forth” dialogue and the lack of the use of the microphone.**

**1. OPENING OF THE MEETING:**

**Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo** opened the meeting with a moment of silent meditation and/or prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**The Mayor** introduced Judge Falcone and Judge Gallagher who were on hand to swear in the newly elected and/or re-elected local officials.

**2. ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT:**

The **Mayor** called for nominations for **Council President**, **Councilman Kisselback** nominated **Joseph Knowles**, **Councilwoman Benitez** seconded. The Mayor asked if there were any other nominations, hearing none, the vote carried 5-0.

**Council President Knowles** thanked everyone who showed up, due to the weather conditions, for making an effort to attend the Reorganization meeting.

**3. ELECTION OF COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT:**

**Council President Knowles** called for nominations for **Council Vice President**, **Councilwoman Champion** nominated **Councilman Kisselback**. **Councilwoman Benitez** seconded. **Council President Knowles** asked if there were any other nominations, hearing none, the vote carried 5-0.

**4. ELECTION OF TOWNSHIP SECRETARY:**

**Council President Knowles** called for nominations for **Township Secretary**. **Councilwoman Champion** nominated **Michelle Benitez**, **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded. **Council President Knowles** asked if there were any other nominations, hearing none, the vote carried 5-0.

**5 ELECTION OF THE ASSISTANT TOWNSHIP SECRETARY:**

**Council President Knowles** indicated the **Mayor** recommended **Debbie McBreen** for the **Assistant Township Secretary**, **Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve, **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the vote carried 5-0.

**6. APPOINTMENT OF MUNICIPAL CLERK:**

**Council President Knowles** indicated the **Mayor** recommended **Debbie McBreen** for **Municipal Clerk** pursuant to Section 2-26 of the Code. **Councilwoman Champion** motioned to approve, **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the vote carried 5-0.

**7. APPOINTMENT OF TOWNSHIP SOLICITOR:**

**Council President Knowles** indicated the **Mayor** recommended **Joseph Pizzo** of Pizzo Rudolph, LLC as the Township Solicitor. **Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve, **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

**8. APPOINTMENT OF TOWNSHIP ENGINEER:**

**Council President Knowles** indicated the **Mayor** recommended **Philip Wursta** of WK2, LLC as the Township Engineer. **Councilwoman Champion** motioned to approve, **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

**9. APPOINTMENT OF DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR:**

**The Mayor** indicated that William Cmorey, the previous Director of Administration had retired. The new **Director of Administration** is **John Chaykowski** who has already been doing much of the work regarding that position. Mr. Chaykowski is handling both the Finance Manager position

and the Director of Administration. **Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve, **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the vote carried 5-0.

10. **APPOINTMENT OF A CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM TO EXAMINE ALL TOWNSHIP ACCOUNTS FOR 2025:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Maillie, LLP* as the accounting firm. **Council Secretary Benitez**, **Councilwoman Champion** motioned to approve, seconded and the vote carried 5-0.

11. **DESIGNATION OF AN OFFICIAL DEPOSITORY FOR TOWNSHIP FUNDS DURING 2025:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Penn Community Bank*, **Councilwoman Champion** motioned to approve, **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the vote carried 5-0.

12. **DESIGNATION OF BENSALEM TOWNSHIP'S NEWS MEDIA FOR LEGAL ADVERTISING DURING 2023:**

The **Mayor** recommended the *Bucks County Courier Times*. **Council Secretary Benitez** motioned to approve and **Councilwoman Champion** seconded, the vote carried 5-0.

13. **DESIGNATION OF MONTHLY MEETING DATES DURING 2025:**

**Council President Knowles** discussed the meeting dates. The second September meeting date was changed to September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and the second meeting date in December was changed to December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025. **Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve the meeting dates for 2025, **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the vote carried 5-0.

14. **CODE OF APPEALS BOARD:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Bruce Jones* for a 3-year term. **Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve and **Councilwoman Champion** seconded, the vote carried 5-0. The member was not in attendance.

15. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Steve Aldrich*, *Ernesto Veneziale* and *Marc Winokur* for a 1-year term. **Councilwoman Champion** motioned to approve and **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded, the vote carried 5-0. No members were in attendance.

16. **DISABLED ADVISORY BOARD:**

The Mayor recommended *Loreen Cimino, Matt Neiman, Joelle Pilieri, Nick Quattrone and James Wright* for a 1-year term. Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve and Councilwoman Champion seconded, the vote carried 5-0. Judge Falcone swore in 1 member.

17. **DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADVISORY BOARD:**

The Mayor recommended *Rosemarie Angle, Maura Champion, Francis Curran, Lisa Diasio, Mary Ann Griffin, Julianna Jim Kane, Bernadette Kisselback, Gary Kisselback, Art Mackley and Matthew Pienkowski* for a 1-year term. Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to approve, Councilwoman Champion seconded, and the vote carried 5-0. Judge Gallagher swore in 6 members.

18. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION:**

The Mayor recommended for a 3-year term *Brian Cummings, Steve Noll, Brian Caputo, Michael Cook, Ashley Thomas and Archana Sharma*. Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to approve and Councilwoman Champion seconded, the vote carried 5-0. Judge Falcone swore in 4 members.

19. **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD:**

The Mayor recommended *Don Anderson, Marc Antozzeski, Stacey Champion, John Chaykowski, Edward Cooper, Ken Farrall, Ron Harris, William McVey, David Marshall, Lance Morell, Robert Race, Robert Sponheimer, and Kurt Stolzenberger* for a 1-year term. Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve, Council Vice President Kisselback seconded and the vote carried 5-0. Judge Gallagher swore in 8 members.

20. **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD:**

The Mayor recommended *Ed Penszak, Mike Cimino and Thomas Colwell* for a 1-year term. Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to approve, Councilwoman Champion seconded and the vote carried 5-0. No members were in attendance.

21. **GAMING ADVISORY BOARD:**

The Mayor recommended *Sandra Rogers, Mary Ann Griffin, Nandish Patel, Sunny Patel, Donna Patti, David Johnson and Mike Gallagher* for a 1-year term. Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve, Councilwoman Champion seconded and the vote carried 5-0. Judge Falcone swore in 2 members.

22. **IMPACT FEE ADVISORY BOARD:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Mary Ellen Cook, Deepak Dhawan, Tom Nevrotski, and Ramesh Patel* for a 1-year term. **Councilwoman Champion** motioned to approve, **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the vote carried 5-0. No members were in attendance.

23. **PLANNING COMMISSION:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Ed Tokmajian, Sr. and Brian Hanratty* for a 4-year term. **Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve, **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the vote carried 5-0. **Judge Gallagher** swore in 1 member.

24. **SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Buzz Ebner, Robert Gale, Alice Gresko and Barbara Carter* for a 1-year term. **Council Secretary Benitez** motioned to approve, **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the vote carried 5-0. No members were in attendance.

25. **VACANT PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Jeffrey Darwak and Al Gougler* for a 1-year term. **Councilwoman Champion** motioned to approve, **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the vote carried 5-0. No members were in attendance.

26. **VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY BOARD:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Joe DeFranco, Patrick Jones, Lt. James McGinty, Gail Reilly, Bruce Siemers and Joe Slemmer* to serve a 1-year term. **Council Secretary Benitez** motioned to approve, **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the vote carried 5-0. **Judge Falcone** swore in 2 members.

27. **ZONING HEARING BOARD:**

The **Mayor** recommended *Joanne Fields* for a 5-year term. **Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve, **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the vote carried 5-0. The member was not in attendance.

42:43

A short recess was taken by Council.

50:36

Council resumed the meeting.

28. **APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT REGARDING THE LAND USE APPEAL OF BARBARA RYBAS:**

**Property:** 2600 State Road  
**Tax Map Parcel:** 02-065-021

**Solicitor Pizzo** requested this item to be on the agenda this evening because this matter is scheduled to be in front of the Commonwealth Court. And if Council was inclined to approve the Settlement Agreement, the lawyers would have to prepare it before going to court.

Council previously approved a warehouse at this property. Johnson Development was the applicant at the time. Council attached a number of conditions to that approval having to do with the construction and location of Renaissance Boulevard on the property. Renaissance Boulevard being one of the roads depicted in the Township's plans for the Riverfront Revitalization District. The property owner contested the conditions and the Township has been in court over that. The property owner has since acquiesced, and is in agreement with the location of Renaissance Boulevard across a portion of the property council originally approved for Johnson Development. The property owner has also agreed to construct, at their cost, the portion of Renaissance Boulevard that will cross their property. That being the case the Administration felt that approving the settlement and resolving the manner amicably, rather than continuing with the litigation, was the way to proceed.

The Land Development is essentially the same plan Council previously approved for Johnson Development. It now includes those conditions having to do with the construction of Renaissance Boulevard. The Agreement has been approved by the other side, and if Council is in agreement, Solicitor Pizzo will notify the court that the matter has been settled. The Commonwealth Court can relinquish jurisdiction back to the Common Pleas Court for the purpose of effectuating the Settlement Agreement.

**Council President Knowles** indicated that the property owner was responsible for building the portion of the road that is going to be on their property.

**Solicitor Pizzo** indicated that the property owner will build the portion of the road located on their property. They will do the berming and landscaping that the Township originally required of Johnson Development. They will do building elevations and the building will have the appearance similar to the building elevations that Johnson Development submitted and Council had previously approved.

**Council President Knowles** asked if there was anyone in the audience who would like to speak for or against this Settlement Agreement. Seeing no one come forward the Public Comment portion was closed.

**Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve the Land Use Appeal of Barbara Rybas, 2600 State Road, Tax Map Parcel 02-065-021, which is the Johnson Warehouse which will be built according to the Johnson Plan and the Renaissance Road on the property has been changed accordingly with the Agreement. **Councilman Pilieri** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

29. **APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT REGARDING THE ZONING APPEAL OF MAR MAR BUILDERS:**

**Property:** 1186 Byberry Road  
**Tax Map Parcel:** 02-074-110

**Solicitor Pizzo** indicated that this is a Land Use Appeal. The Township was in front of the Judge in December. Coming out of the Rule 27 Conference, the property owner, Mar Mar, came to the Township and acquiesced to that which was being asked of it by the Township, by the Zoning Hearing Board and by the neighbors over the course of this process; and that was to abandon their plan to put a Sober House on the property. Also, to abandon their desire to put twin homes on this property. This being the property located at 1186 Byberry Road. They agreed to construct eight (8) single family homes on the property consistent with the plan that had been submitted to and approved by the Township a number of years ago. At least in concept, the concept being eight (8) single family homes on the property.

**Solicitor Pizzo** indicated that he had hoped everyone viewed this as a win for the Township. Seeing that the Sober House and twins had been opposed at various times by the community and by the Township. Council will recall that earlier Council had directed Solicitor Pizzo to appear before the Zoning Hearing Board in support of a plan that would provide for the construction of the residences on the property, and the abandonment of the Sober House. This is consistent with that direction that had been relayed to the builder during the Zoning hearing on their plan.

What this Settlement Agreement will do, if Council approves it, is to grant to the builder the variances they need to construct the eight (8) single family homes as depicted on the plan that had been submitted for the zoning application. What it does not do is give them Land Development approval. It does not give them subdivision approval. It does not give them any approval of anything other than the zoning variances necessary to construct the eight (8) single family homes.

Under the terms of the Agreement the applicant will still have to submit to the Township an application for Subdivision Land Development approval. Those plans will have to be reviewed by the Engineers and by all the other governmental entities with jurisdiction over the plans and over the property. It will include a full review of the Stormwater Management facilities for the property and will include a traffic study for the site. All of the things that would be required such as: Developers Agreement, posting of Escrows to assure construction of the public improvements, all of those things will still be required to develop.

All that is being done here is granting the variances that the Zoning Hearing Board previously denied in order for the developer to construct the eight (8) single family homes on the cul-de-sac. The Solicitor for the Zoning Hearing Board has conveyed to Solicitor Pizzo that the Zoning Hearing Board is on board with the Settlement Agreement as well. All three (3) attorneys, Solicitor Pizzo, the attorney for the Zoning Hearing Board and the attorney for Mar Mar will be back in front of the Judge if Council approves this Settlement Agreement.

The agreement is to give them the variances. If in the process of engineering the plan it is determined that eight (8) house won't fit, then the developer will have to re-engineer.

**Council President Knowles** asked if there was anyone in the audience who would like to speak for or against this Settlement Agreement. Seeing no one come forward the Public Comment portion was closed.

**Council Vice President Kisselback** motioned to approve the Settlement Agreement regarding the Zoning Appeal of Mar Mar Builders as explained by Solicitor Pizzo; and placed in the record regarding the Subdivision Land Development, and all the applicant processes they will need to go through for 1186 Byberry Road, Tax Map Parcel 02-074-110. **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

30. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Council President Knowles** asked if there was anyone in the audience who would like to come forward. Seeing no one come forward, the second Public Comment Portion was closed.

31. **SUPPORT PERSONNEL:**

**Solicitor Pizzo:** Thanked everyone for their confidence. Wished everyone a Happy New Year. Indicated it was a pleasure to represent the community which he calls home.

**Mayor DiGirolamo:** The Mayor thanked all of the volunteers who came out this evening. Happy to announce that his sister is going to 100 years old on January 24<sup>th</sup>! Thanked Council for their help with all of the Boards.

**Council Secretary Benitez:** Wished everyone a Happy New Year. Thanked all the volunteers on the various Boards. January 19<sup>th</sup> is the kick-off for Unity Week. Congratulated her daughter Gianna on becoming a steamfitter. She passed her first exam and will be with Local 420, she will begin her new apprenticeship in February. She went to Bucks County Community College for the program. They nicknamed her "Golden Arm" because she is the best they have seen come through the program. Michelle is a very proud mom!

**Councilman Pilieri:** Wished everyone a Happy New Year.

**Councilwoman Champion:** Wished everyone a Happy New Year.

**Council Vice President Kisselback:** Wished everyone a Happy New Year! The Volunteers in Bensalem are wonderful! There are a lot of Volunteers working to make Bensalem a better place. B3T program that kick-off on January 19<sup>th</sup> will be a week of diversity and gives them an opportunity to see how many different cultures and religions there are in Bensalem.

**Council President Knowles:** Wished everyone a Happy New Year! Thanked everyone who volunteers for the Boards. We have the smallest big Town in America. A lot of people get involved and a lot of people care about each other. We live in a very diverse community.

32. **ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned.

The Bensalem Township Reorganization Council Meeting of January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025 can be viewed in its entirety at the following websites:

[www.bensalempa.gov](http://www.bensalempa.gov)

or

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Debora F. McBreen  
Recording Secretary**