

**BENSALEM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday
March 10th, 2025**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joseph Knowles, Council President
Edward Kisselback, Council Vice President
Michelle Benitez, Council Secretary
Stacey Champion, Council Member
Joseph Pilieri, Council Member

SUPPORTING STAFF PRESENT:

Debora McBreen, Council Clerk/Recording Secretary
Joseph Pizzo, Township Solicitor
Philip Wursta, Township Engineer

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 their microphone.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING:

Council President Knowles opened the meeting with a moment of silence and/or prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. INTRODUCTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS, MAYOR AND STAFF:

Council President Knowles introduced the Supporting Staff and Council Members.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Council President Knowles indicated the Public Comment will be heard at the time the agenda item is heard. Seeing no one come forward the first of two Public Comments was closed.

4. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve the Council Meeting Minutes from February 10th, 2025 as presented. **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the motion carried 4-0-1.

5. **CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION FOR ACT NO. 537, PA SEWAGE FACILITIES ACT, PLAN REVISION FOR NEW LAND DEVELOPMENT OF A PARCEL OF LAND IDENTIFIED AS 700 BRISTOL PIKE:**

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that Council previously approved this Act 537 Resolution. There was apparently a hiccup in the timing when the Township approved it as compared to when Bucks County Water and Sewer approved it, so the DEP has requested that Council reapprove it so that things are happening in the right sequence.

Councilwoman Champion motioned to approve the Act 537 Processing Form Adjustment for Tax Parcel 02-023-00, 700 Bristol Pike. **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

6. **CONSIDERATION AND SIGNING OF AGREEMENTS FOR:**

Applicant:	Ashtavinayaka Hotels, LLC
Location:	4700 East Street Road
Proposed Use:	Hotel
Zoning Classification:	G-C General Commercial
Tax Parcel:	02-003-007-004

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that this is a Land Development that Council approved in 2021 that involves the former hotel located at East 4700 Street Road. The site is going to be redeveloped as a hotel. The Land Development Agreements for the project as well as the Storm Water Agreements which have been signed by the developer, the necessary monies have been posted.

Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve Ashtavinayaka Hotels, LLC located at 4700 East Street Road, Tax Parcel 02-003-007-004 items A. Land Development Agreement and B. Stormwater Best Management Practices Operations and Maintenance Agreement as presented. **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

7. **CONSIDERATION OF A LAND DEVELOPMENT EXTENSION AGREEMENT FOR:**

Applicant:	Trevoise Senior Residence, LLC
Site Information:	4695 Somerton Road
Tax Parcel:	02-003-006-003

Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to approve the Land Development Extension Agreement. **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

8. REQUEST FOR A WAIVER OF SIDEWALK INSTALLATION SUBJECT TO PAYMENT OF A FEE IN LIEU OF REQUEST:

Applicant: Frank Sadusky
Site Information: Ogden Avenue
Tax Parcel: 02-062-076

Township Engineer Wursta indicated the request is for Council to consider waiving the requirements for sidewalk installation for this address along Ogden Avenue frontage of 50 linear feet and paying a fee in lieu of in the amount of \$1100 for the sidewalk waiver.

Council Secretary Benitez motioned to amend agenda item 8 to request a waiver of sidewalk installation subject to a payment of the fee in lieu of \$1100. **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

9. REQUEST FOR A WIAVER OF CURBS AND SIDEWALKS INSTALLATION SUBJECT TO PAYMENT OF A FEE IN LIEU OF REQUEST:

Applicant: Robert Schneider
Site Information: 1030 Buttonwood Avenue
Tax Parcel: 02-029-099

Township Engineer Wursta indicated the request is for Council to consider waiving the requirements for curbs and sidewalk installation for this address along the Buttonwood Avenue frontage of 108.40 linear feet, and paying a fee in lieu of in the amount of \$3,685.60 for the curb and sidewalk waiver.

Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to approve. **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

10. CONSIDERATION OF 2 ESCROW RELEASES:

A. Developers Request: TIC Associates Phase 1 – Release #2
Location: 4626 Somerton Road
Tax Parcel: 02-003-002
Amount: \$97,094.00

B. Developers Request: TIC Associates Phase 2 – Release #2
Location: 4626 Somerton Road
Tax Parcel: 02-003-002
Amount: \$1,252,120.75

Township Engineer Wursta indicated this is the Bertucci warehouse that is built on Somerton Road and recommended Council release the funds. All requested items have been satisfactorily completed except as noted on the attached tabulation.

Councilwoman Champion motioned to approve the Escrow Release for Phase 1 in the amount of \$97,094.00 subject to an audit by the Finance Department, also Phase 2 in the amount of \$1,252,120.75. **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Council President Knowles asked if there was anyone in the audience who would like to speak. The following constituents came forward:

Robert Foley, Gibson Road, indicated that he is aware that Toll Brothers is developing the land behind his property. His development has 122 units which 30 of them face the empty property, which is attached to Resurrection Cemetery. The management company, Continental Management, and their HOA have been contacted by Toll Brothers and have requested to use their property to enter with Toll Brothers heavy equipment. The HOA did not agree with this request and Toll Brothers was denied their entrance onto their property.

Mr. Foley is representing the residents of the over 55 Development to find out what Toll Brothers has in-store for that property.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that there have not been any formal submissions to the Township. The Township is aware that Toll Brothers is negotiating with Resurrection Cemetery and the Archdiocese to buy that corner property. To Mr. Pizzo's knowledge there has not been any documents signed or approved. Toll Brothers is doing their due diligence to figure out if that site is viable and assumes that one of the things, they have done in that capacity is to have talked to the HOA of the 55 and over development to see if they can make something work there. They have let the Township know that they are in the process of attempting to buy the site. They are a ways away from anything formal coming to the Township.

Mr. Foley indicated that there have been surveyors at the site.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated again, that it is all part of the due diligence that Toll Brothers is doing. When a developer is going to buy a piece of ground that size for the potential of building something on it, first thing they are going to do is sign an agreement and then they are going to see if they can use the land the way they are proposed. It is not uncommon to have Engineers go out, it is not uncommon for them to talk to the Township; and it is not uncommon to talk to neighboring property owners such as the HOA. All of that is a process for Toll Brothers to figure out if it can do something on that site.

Mr. Foley asked if that would include putting up a property line.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that it could be Toll Brothers or it is not uncommon for the Archdiocese who may possibly be selling a portion of a piece of land that they own to have surveyors go out and determine the meets and bounds for the portion of the property that they might be selling. It could be the archdiocese doing that as part of their efforts to market the property.

Mr. Foley asked if Bensalem Township would have anything to do with determining how the traffic patten would be if they do develop that land?

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that ultimately the Township and PennDOT would be the determining factors since the roads that boarder the property are both State highways. Both the Township and PennDOT would have a say in where the entrances for anything that might be built on there or if anything ever is built on there and that would be true of any other piece of property in the Township. When the Township and PennDOT are involved you would have to get what is called a Highway Occupancy Permit; and there's a review process by PennDOT and by the Township to determine how what the egress and exits from a piece of property might be depending on what the proposed use is.

Council Vice President Kisselback assured Mr. Foley that his, along with his neighbor's, input will be very important when the developer comes before Council.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated to Mr. Foley that it is no secret that the Archdiocese is marketing that property. As is true of any property owner in the Township, if somebody owns a piece of property or is thinking of buying a piece of property they come to the Township and say if the Township wanted to try and do this the Township works with them to say here's what works and here's what doesn't work, here's what the zoning allows or doesn't allow and direct them to the Zoning Hearing Board. It is all part of a lengthy process. Again, the Archdiocese is marketing that corner and at this point it would appear that Toll Brothers is at the moment the potential suitor.

Ralph Bianco, 1792 Gibson Road, indicated that the traffic was horrendous in that area and asked if Toll Brothers is going to be able to access Hulmeville Road or Gibson Road for their development.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated, hypothetically, if somebody buys that piece of land from the archdiocese to build something on it they have a right to enter and exit the property onto the State highways. The State will make the determination in concert with the Township where driveways would be or roads would be located. If you own a piece of land the State cannot tell you that you cannot access it off of either Gibson or Hulmeville Roads.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated to Mr. Bianco that maybe he didn't hear what he had explained to Mr. Foley. Solicitor Pizzo indicated that if he owned a piece of land anywhere in Bensalem and needs to get access to it he would be allowed to have access to it. The State can tell him where, but the cannot tell him that he cannot have a driveway at all. That is the question from Mr. Bianco that Solicitor Pizzo is answering. If someone were to buy that corner property for any reason they would be allowed to come in and out off of the roads somewhere but PennDOT will decide where.

Mr. Bianco is hearing all kinds of rumors that the Township would not let them access Gibson Road.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that Mr. Bianco was hearing rumors and rumors are very bad to trade in and the Solicitor is trying to stop rumors by telling Mr. Bianco that at the moment there are no applications to the Township to do anything on that property. The Township is aware that the Archdiocese has that property for sale. The Township is aware that Toll Brothers is interested in buying it. And has been talking to the HOA of his development apparently, to the Township and

I assume others to see what it is that they would be able to build but didn't know that any formal decisions have been made and does not believe the property has actually been sold. No formal paperwork has been submitted to the Township to build anything.

Solicitor Pizzo suggested Mr. Bianco go back to his HOA and find out exactly what Toll Brothers said to them and what the status of things are between the Archdiocese, Toll Brothers and the HOA.

Paul Barnes, 4948 Hillside indicated that he has an extremely low frequency sound in his home.

Council President Knowles indicated that he did submit an email to the Mayor who in turn had spoke to the Building and Planning Department and Public Safety people to look into Mr. Barnes situation, and asked if anyone had contacted him to resolve his situation.

Mr. Barnes indicated that someone did contact him but he wanted to tell the whole story to the rest of Council.

Council President Knowles indicated that Administration said that our Public Safety Director and the Zoning Planning Board determined that the extremely low frequency sound in his house was coming from an outside source.

Mr. Barnes indicated that two guys from the Township came to his house. Three other people from the Township showed up with technical equipment and went about their business trying to detect what Mr. Barnes was hearing.

Mr. Barnes also indicated his frustration due to Council cancelling their meetings. And how Council has wasted a tremendous amount of his time because he has twice prepared, practiced, refined what he wanted to say at the council meeting and twice the council meetings were cancelled.

Mr. Barnes indicated that the two guys who came to his house had no idea what Mr. Barnes was talking about. Mr. Barnes said that the low frequency noise is being heard all over the United States and making people crazy.

Councilman Pilieri asked Mr. Barnes what did he want Council to do about it...this is an Administration issue not a Council issue.

Council President Knowles indicated that he sent Mr. Barnes' complaint into the Mayor's office and they responded to it. The Mayor sent people to try and help Mr. Barnes. Mr. Barnes said it was a community problem but none of his neighbors have put in complaints regarding the extremely low frequency noise.

Mr. Barnes said that the reason none of his neighbors have put in complaints is because only 2% of the population can hear this noise.

Councilman Pilieri explained to Mr. Barnes that his situation is an Administration problem that he needs to contact Administration about his problem, not Council.

Council President Knowles indicated that he would contact the Mayor to let him know that Mr. Barnes was not happy with the quality of the people that went out to try and help Mr. Barnes and detect this extremely low frequency sound and see if something else can be done. The Mayor's Administration will see if anything else can be done. Perhaps they can contact Bucks County Health, or perhaps there's Federal Agencies that could help.

Seeing no one else come forward, the second Public Comment was closed.

12. OTHER BUSINESS:

Solicitor Pizzo – Wished everyone a **Happy St. Patrick's Day**. The Bucks County St. Patrick's Day Parade is Saturday, March 15th.

Council Secretary Benítez wished President Knowles a belated Happy Birthday. Wished everyone a **Happy St. Patrick's Day**. Looking forward to Spring and longer days.

Councilwoman Champion – Winter sports are ending. Bensalem kids had a pretty good year in some aspects. Bensalem HS Boys Basketball Team won their second straight outright SOL Patriot Championship against Neshaminy in a double-overtime win. Holy Ghost Prep wins APAC Championship, first in school's history. **Happy St. Patrick's Day** get out and see some Irish dancing. The Philadelphia's St. Patrick's Day Parade is on Sunday, March 16th and will be walking in the parade for her daughter.

Council Vice President Kisselback wished everyone a **Happy St. Patrick's Day**.

Council President Knowles indicated Julia Horger who attends Conwell Egan Catholic High School cemented her place in PIAA history when she became the first-ever 106-pound PIAA Girls Wrestling Champion.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

The Bensalem Township Council Meeting of March 10th, 2025 can be viewed in its entirety at the following websites:

www.bensalempa.gov

or

www.youtube.com

Respectfully Submitted,

Debora F. McBreen
Recording Secretary