

**BENSALEM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday
July 14th, 2025**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

SUPPORTING STAFF PRESENT:

Joseph DiGirolamo, Mayor
Debora McBreen, Council Clerk/Recording Secretary
Ken Ferris, Township Solicitor
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 Mayor, Council Members and Supporting Staff.

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 June 23rd, 2025 as presented. **Council Vice President Kisselback** seconded and the motion carried 4-0-1.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that there was an amendment to the agenda. The Director of Administration, John Chaykowski, has a Resolution that is going to require Council's attention prior to the next scheduled Council meeting. It is not on this evenings printed agenda, but in light of the circumstances, it would be appropriate for it to be added. This will require a motion of Council to amend the agenda to add item 4A; which would be a Resolution of the Township authorizing the Administration to submit a Grant application for a Multimodal Transportation Grant from the Commonwealth Financing Authority.

Councilwoman Champion motioned to amend the agenda and add agenda item 4A. **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

Council President Knowles indicated that it has been requested to move agenda item 11 to 6A. The consideration of a Resolution authorizing certain individuals to execute and deliver documents necessary to discharge the Township's obligation to the appointment of Penn Advisors' Financial Resources, as Agent of certain Financial Assets.

Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to move agenda item 11 to 6A. **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

4A. **CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE REQUEST OF A MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION FUND (MTF) GRANT \$500,000 FROM THE COMMONWEALTH FINANCING AUTHORITY TO STRUCTURALLY REPAIR THE EXISTING NEWPORT MEWS BRIDGE:**

Director Chaykowski, Director of Administration, indicated that the Township is going to be submitting a Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant to the Commonwealth Financing Authority for a replacement of a bridge covert for Newport Mews Drive. Newport Mews Drive is a one-way in, one-way out, and it does have an unnamed tributary that runs underneath the main drag. The covert has been deteriorating over a number of years and the Township has been doing repairs to it. The Township is at a point now where they need to reline the inside of the covert. The concrete is still satisfactory. However, the pipe inside of it is deteriorating.

The submission for the Resolution is needed for the Grant submission by July 31st, 2025. The estimated expense indicated in the Resolution is up to \$500,000. The Township is still finalizing the cost proposal and will have that together when the Township submits the Grant. This is a 2026 project as well as a 2026 award. If the Resolution is awarded, Director Chaykowski will be back adopting the Grant application as well. The Grant request does require a 20% match from the Township and will make sure that it is funded accordingly in the 2026 Budget.

Councilwoman Champion indicated with this stabilization will it help in terms of Stormwater Management too, at which Director Chaykowski replied, correct! Councilwoman Champion has learned in the last four years, especially by the work that was done at the Country Club; with the armoring of the creek side, that this will help in terms of that behind it where it's coming down in.

Director Chaykowski indicated the armoring that the Township will be placing is rock in front of the covert, as well to stabilize the stream bank itself. Obviously throughout the years that has deteriorated as well and will be done as part of the process.

Council Vice President Kisselback asked if the project exceeds \$500,000 will Director Chaykowski have to come back in front of Council for the extra money beyond 30%?

Director Chaykowski indicated that he will have a cost estimate submitted that the Township will base their Budget number on for the next year. To the point, yes, he will be back in front of Council if it exceeds the \$300,000.

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

5. **CONSIDERATION AND PUBLIC HEARING OF AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AMENDMENTS TO THE BENSALEM TOWNSHIP POLICE PENSION PLAN TO ALLOW OFFICERS TO PURCHASE SERVICE CREDIT FOR PRIOR POLICE SERVICE UNDER ACT 49 OF 2024:**

Mr. Chaykowski, Director of Administration, indicated that in July of 2024 Governor Shapiro signed into Law an Act that allows Police Officers to buyback prior years police service credit, as they can as if they were in the military. Currently the Military Buyback Program is available to Police Officers who served in the military, and they may buy back up to five years.

The Police Service credits basically mimics that Law. The same regulations as far as the calculation as to how much the employee has contributed into the Pension Plan, as well as the maximum allowance of years of service that they can buyback, are all very similar between the two Laws.

The only difference between that and the Police Service Credit is that the Police Service Credit states two things. One, if a Police Officer was previously employed by a Police Department and they are entitled to receive a pension from that Police Department, they are unable to purchase their prior Police Service with Bensalem Township. Number two, they have to wait until they are vested. Vested here with Bensalem is twelve years, and an Officer has to be employed 12 years with Bensalem before they would be eligible to purchase up to five years of Service Credits.

The Township and the PBA have spoken about this Law on a number of occasions and have come to a mutual agreement that is beneficial to both parties. As such, that an Officer will have to decide once they have become vested whether they want to purchase the credit or not. At that point, that allows the Township the appropriate time frame to plan accordingly for our personnel. The Township will now know the exact time in which an Officer should be leaving. It will allow the Township to do it that way, as opposed to other municipalities which may implement this Law and say they can decide at any point that they want an Officer to come in; and at the end of their year and say that they want to buyback a year of service and out the door they go, leaving the Township undermanned.

The Township was able to negotiate and come to an agreement that an Officer will have to decide when they reach their twelve years of service, whether they want to participate in this program. There is an employee contribution that is paid directly into the Pension Plan. It is calculated by an Actuarialist based on their initial three years of wages.

Council President Knowles indicated that in general it is 25 years of service or 52 years of age. If someone came from Philadelphia and had three years or a certain amount and they don't have a pension there, for you can't do it if you have a pension from another place. They would have an opportunity to buy through those three years that they had in Philadelphia towards the pension, and then they would be able to retire at 22 years of service? Director Chaykowski indicated that was correct!

Director Chaykowski indicated that **Director William McVey**, and the Police Chiefs Association are a big proponent of this program. It helps with a number of things such as Police mental health. Obviously, you can't buyback age, so if you do get an older Officer coming from the city of Philadelphia it allows them to retire sooner as opposed to having to wait until 60 or something to that extent as well.

Council President Knowles indicated that to him if someone puts in 20 years of service, they would have to be at the Township for 12 years to do it. Director Chaykowski indicated that is correct. If they want to put the money out to buyout early then they should be able to do it because it is a tough job, and if the stresses of the job or personal circumstances are that they prefer to retire at that point, then the Township should let them do it. Director Chaykowski agreed. It will also help with recruitment because then the Township would know when they are going for the best candidate. Then the candidate will know that they can buyback their three years, and know that they were not three wasted years. There is a part time element to it too.

Director Chaykowski indicated that the Law does allow parttime hours to be purchased as well. Obviously in a calendar year 2,080 hours equates to a year worth of time of service. The Township does have a few Officers that have part time credit in other places but would be able to purchase that time as well.

Councilwoman Champion commented that this is a wonderful thing for the Township's Officers. They put their lives on the line for their community, those that work in our community and those that visit our community. The Council and Administration are here to address those needs.

Council Secretary Benitez agreed with Councilwoman Champion and indicated that there is a shared cost aspect of that. It is something that the Township has to make sure that they are paying attention to, but this is a win-win for everybody. It is appreciated by all what the Officers do for their community and want to make sure that Bensalem is setting the tone for others to follow. The Township does that frequently and is very proud to be a part of the Police Service Credit.

Council President Knowles indicated that not only is the Township recruiting the best, but these officers have to make split second decisions; and have to be trained properly, and know that Council and the Administration is here to support them.

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

Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve as presented. **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

William McVey, Director of Public Safety, indicated that Chris Terinoni, PBA President, did a fantastic job along with Neil Tropiano representing the men and women of the PBA. When the Mayor and Director Chaykowski were first approached, coming in as no one had done this before, and set the tone for the entire state of Pennsylvania; and to have a leader like the Mayor, Director Chaykowski and Council to listen to them and approve the Ordinance means the world to these Officers. They put their lives on the line for Bensalem residents and business owners every single day. To give them this back and let them retire before they get injured at an older age, but before it takes a mental toll on them, they are very grateful and thankful.

Council Vice President Kisselback thanked the Officers for their service to Bensalem Township.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that Council did meet in an Executive Session for the purpose of reviewing the proposed amendment to the Police contract and the negotiations that were involved. The Executive Session took place on Thursday, July 10th, 2025. Present for it were the Mayor, Councilwoman Champion, Council President Knowles and Council Secretary Benitez. Councilman Pilieri and Council Vice President Kisselback had a conflict and were not available for that session. Director McVey, Director Chaykowski, Solicitor Ferris and Solicitor Pizzo were all present for that session. No official action was taken during that Executive Session in regards to the ordinance that was just adopted. Official action was taken this evening to adopt the ordinance and amend the Police contract that was publicly discussed.

During the Executive Session a matter of pending litigation was discussed. No official action was taken on that matter and no official action will be required this evening in regard to that matter.

6. **CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE PURCHASE OFFER OF THE ACQUISITION OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY ON PARCELS 02-052-225, CAROLYN COURT, 02-052-287 CRICKET LANE, AND 02-097-028 CRICKET LANE:**

Director Chaykowski, the Pennsylvania Turnpike as part of the I-95 C Program which is the Turnpike Extension Program is currently underway. The Township has three parcels of land that the Turnpike currently drains onto as part of the Expansion Project. The Turnpike is looking to upgrade the existing drainage, as well as in some cases provide a basin and rock armoring where the outfalls are occurring. They spoke to a number of residents on Cricket Lane and throughout the Township that back-up to the Turnpike.

The three proposals are right-of-way access as well as temporary construction easements. There are three funding amounts that are being proposed that the Township will receive from the Turnpike.

Council President Knowles indicated that he backs up to the Turnpike in Barnsleigh East and we were told that we were getting a sound wall for a long time. Some of his neighbor's back-up closer than he does and had received letters similar to the Township. They recently received a letter and there is a zone they are in, and they are able to vote if they want a wall and they can pick the style and color of the wall. They received a letter of the engineering company that is handling it and they are able to call them and meet with them to discuss the wall. Check the Township website for the information.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that the Resolution authorizes the Grant of the easements as Mr. Chaykowski described. The acceptance of the offer of the amount being offered by the Turnpike Commission for those property interests; and it authorizes the Administration to execute the necessary documents to effectuate the grants of those easements, which will likely include deeds of easement at some time in the future. By authorizing this Resolution those deeds won't have to come back to Council later.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that what was in front of Council this evening is simply property that is already owned by the Township. This is Township property that is adjacent to the Turnpike.

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

Councilwoman Champion indicated that at the end of her street there is a wall and at times there is graffiti on that wall and TAG (Towns Against Graffiti) would come out and remove the graffiti.

Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve the Resolution approving the purchase of the offer of the acquisition of right-of-way on parcels 02-052-225 Carolyn Court, 02-052-287 Cricket Lane and 02-097-028 Cricket Lane. **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

6A. **CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS TO EXECUTE AND DELIVER DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO DISCHARGE THE TOWNSHIP'S OBLIGATION TO THE APPOINTMENT OF PENN ADVISOR'S FINANCIAL RESOURCES AS AGENT OF CERTAIN FINANCIAL ASSETS:**

Director Chaykowski indicated that Penn Advisor's is already an Investment Manager for the Township's Trust Fund. With the retirement of Bill Cmorey at the end of 2024 he was a signer on the account. Mr. Cmorey is being removed from the account and Mr. Chaykowski is replacing Mr. Cmorey. It is an annual requirement to process an updated Resolution which will allow the Mayor and Mr. Chaykowski to sign documents for Penn Advisor's only after Council approves any type of withdraw from the fund.

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

7. **CONSIDERATION AND PUBLIC HEARING ON AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING AND CREATING CHAPTER 173 "MOBILE FOOD VENDING" AND AMENDING CHAPTER 232 "ZONING" TO ADD SECTION 600 "MOBILE FOOD VENDORS":**

Solicitor Pizzo indicated this ordinance was originally presented to Council some time ago and tabled to essentially go back to the drawing board on certain issues. The ordinance was represented to Council and was on the agenda for June 23rd, 2025. It was tabled at that time to afford the County Planning Commission additional time to review and make recommendations, if any, regarding the ordinance. Since the June 23rd Council meeting, the response back from the County Planning Commission was wholly in the support of the ordinance. The ordinance was duly advertised in the Bucks County Courier Times for consideration at the June 23rd Council meeting and again was properly tabled to a date certain of this evening, July 14th, 2025 for consideration.

The ordinance remains in the same form as was previously presented. One change that was made was to Sections 173-3. D.2.b. and 173-6. E.1. and 2. In those cases, the permit fee amounts that were stated in the ordinance as set fees were removed and replaced with language saying that the fees would be set forth in the Township Fee Schedule as is adopted from time to time. This will allow the Township to not have to amend the ordinance; if at any point in the future Council were to revise the permit fees, which are set at \$300 for the Mobile Food Permit fee and \$500 for the Mobile Food Permit reinstatement fee.

The ordinance is otherwise in the same form and has been discussed and presented previously. It is in a form acceptable for Council's consideration and approval.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated there was no need for Public Comment as there was no public present at this evening's meeting.

Council Vice President Kisselback stated consideration of a public hearing on this ordinance which is establishing Chapter 173 Mobile Food vending and amending chapter 232 Zoning and add Section 600 Mobile Food vendors and motioned to approve. **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

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

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

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that the Trevoise Senior Residence property located at 4695 Somerton Road are requesting that the agreement be extended for an additional year out to September 30th, 2026. The Administration has no objection to the request. If Council is of a mind to grant the request and approve the Land Development Extension Agreement as presented; it would be the Administration's recommendation that Council make that approval subject to an audit by the Township Finance Department and the Township Engineer of the escrows that are in place for the project, to make sure that sufficient monies remain in place to see the project through to completion.

Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve the Land Development Extension Agreement for Trevoise Senior Residence, LLC, 4695 Somerton Road, tax parcel 02-003-006-003 to September 30th, 2026 subject to an audit by the Finance Department. **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

9. **REQUEST FO A WAIVER OF CURBS AND SIDEWALKS INSTALLATION SUBJECT TO PAYMENT OF A FEE IN LIEU OF REQUEST:**

Applicant: Simple Homes, Inc.
Site Information: 4159 Linden Avenue
Tax Parcel: 02-017-071

Engineer Wursta indicated that his office had inspected the area and found there to be no curbs or sidewalks in the vicinity. His recommendation is that it be approved for a fee in lieu of in the amount of \$2,335.18.

Councilwoman Champion motioned to approve the waiver of curbs and sidewalks for a payment in lieu of for Tax Parcel 02-017-071. **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

10. **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 2866 WINE AVENUE:**

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that this is for a minor subdivision that Council previously approved on Wine Avenue and previously approved the Sewage Planning Module Amendment back in April. Since that time DEP requested some minor revisions to the Planning Module that was submitted, and therefore, a new approval date is required on the Township's Resolution and Transmittal letter.

The Resolution and Transmittal letter are in a form required by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and the Resolution and Transmittal letter are in a form acceptable for Council's consideration and approval.

Council Vice President Kisselback motioned to approve the Act 537 Plan for 2866 Wine Avenue. **Council Secretary Benitez** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

11. **CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS TO EXECUTE AND DELIVER DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO DISCHARGE THE TOWNSHIP'S OBLIGATION TO THE APPOINTMENT OF PENN ADVISOR'S FINANCIAL RESOURCES AS AGENT OF CERTAIN FINANCIAL ASSETS:**

This item was approved to be moved to #6A.

12. **CONSIDERATION OF AN ESCROW RELEASE FOR:**

Developers Request:	Federation Housing – Release #7
Location:	4695 Somerton Road
Tax Parcel:	02-003-006-003
Amount:	\$334,484.81

Engineer Wursta indicated that he directed Mr. Nearon to meet with the property owners ahead of time, so that there are no communication issues associated with the amount of Escrow that is being requested. The developer will now understand what they are receiving in regards to the release amount from the Township. The amount that is requested to be released is \$334,484.81.

Council Secretary Benitez motioned to approve the Escrow Release #7 for Federation Housing, 4695 Somerton Road, Tax parcel 02-003-006-003 in the amount of \$334,484.81 subject to an audit by the Finance Department. **Councilwoman Champion** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

13. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There being no one in the audience the second Public Comment was closed.

14. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Engineer Wursta indicated he would yield his time to Mrs. McBreen as she had a Special Announcement.

Clerk McBreen wished Solicitor Pizzo a Happy Birthday!

Solicitor Pizzo thanked everyone for their Birthday Wishes! To Blaze and Ryan Ferris who happen to share a Birthday, Happy Birthday to them!

Mayor indicated that Solicitor Pizzo has been with the Mayor through the good the bad and the indifference, and thanked him for his legal guidance. The concerts on Wednesday nights have been subjected to the weather lately. The concert this Wednesday is the Dustbowl Rival. August 5th is National Night Out which is a National Event to promote the Police. The rain is coming down pretty good right now and would like to see everyone get home safely.

Council Secretary Benítez thanked everyone for their leadership and expressed how well they work together. What the Township did this evening for the Police is definitely going to set the tone, and indicated that Bensalem is often setting the tone when it comes to being innovative and moving things forward. Happy summer and stay safe!

Councilwoman Champion indicated ditto to what Council Secretary just said. Also, glad to see that the Bridge Clinic had an amazing fund raising after they had some damage last week. Within 12 hours Bensalem and the surrounding area raised a lot of money and will be able to do more than they had anticipated. Wished Solicitor Pizzo a Happy Birthday and indicated that he also shares a birthday with her sister. Happy summer and enjoy the concerts!

Council President Knowles reiterated that Council does work great as a team. It seems like a softball thing to give the police that opportunity to buy into their pensions who have served other communities; who were recruited here, but Bensalem is the first ones to do it! Bensalem always does whatever it takes to give the Police Officers what they need to protect and serve the Bensalem community.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:**

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

The Bensalem Township Council Meeting of July 14th, 2025 can be viewed in its entirety at the following websites:

www.bensalenpa.gov

or

www.youtube.com

Respectfully Submitted,

Debora F. McBreen
Recording Secretary