

**BENSALEM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday
May 11th, 2026**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Tokmajian, Jr., Council President
Jesse Sloane, Council Vice President
Joe Wenzel, Jr., Council Secretary
Ed Kisselback, Council Member
Joseph Knowles, Council Member

SUPPORTING STAFF PRESENT:

Ken Ferris, Solicitor
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 Tokmajian 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 Tokmajian introduced the Mayor, Council Members and Supporting Staff.

NIGHT OF CHAMPIONS:

Council President Tokmajian introduced Grace McShane, 2026 Female Basketball Player of the Year, Patriot Division. Ms. McShane led the Lady Owls to one of the most successful seasons in program history finishing 20-9 – their best record since 1983 – earning a PIAA Class 6A state tournament berth, the program’s first in 43 years. bensalemweekly.com

Ms. McShane indicated that she will be continuing her academic and athletic career at Rowan University and will be studying to be a Teacher and would like to teach elementary school.

Council President Tokmajian presented a certificate to Grace McShane from the Mayor and Council acknowledging her accomplishment.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Council President Tokmajian 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 Vice President Sloane motioned to approve the Council Minutes from the meeting date of April 27th, 2026. **Council Secretary Wenzel** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

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

Christine Piazza-Reim, 744 Kleckner Road, indicated that there is a situation in her neighborhood whereas a business purchased a property on Dunston Road which is a floodplain. It has been flooded multiple times and there are only two houses left. The intention of the business owner is to open a Safe House. She is very concerned because it is a four-bedroom house that is going to house 15 women on a desolate road. Asked what the evacuation plan was to keep 15 women safe when it floods along that road. This is a business that should not be in a residential neighborhood.

Mrs. Piazza-Reim was under the impression that you could not run a business out of your home. Who is controlling it and who is enforcing State Regulations, and is sure it falls under ADA Compliance? There is one of those homes in the neighborhood and it houses five special needs individuals. Who is doing background checks on women who are compromised? Who is enforcing safety regulations?

The neighborhood is pitch black, there are no street lights, no sidewalks, kids walk around all night long. Where is the safety for the current residents with this type of housing in her neighborhood?

Council President Tokmajian indicated that this is the first time he is hearing about this and indicated that he could have the Township Solicitor look into some of Mrs. Piazza-Reim's questions.

Council President Tokmajian asked Solicitor Pizzo in terms of some of Mrs. Piazza-Reim's questions regarding zoning, safety, ADA, if he could look into it and report back to Council?

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that he would get together with the Director of Building and Planning. It appears that there is an application into the Township. He just heard this afternoon that some neighbors started to contact the Township with some concerns about this property. It is all

happening in real time as far as the Township Administration is concerned. Solicitor Pizzo will look into it and report back to Council with his findings.

Solicitor Pizzo would like to remind Council and the residents that the Township needs to be very careful as to what it says and doesn't say in regard to housing, particularly for persons who may fall within a protective class. Persons who are in recovery under Federal Law deem to be people with a disability and therefore are entitled to certain additional protections above those that we all enjoy, so far as fair housing is concerned. The Township does have various regulations in place as to different kinds of Communal Housing, Recovery Housing, as well as the Township Building and Occupancies Codes which dictate how many people can live in a house (x) number of square feet.

Solicitor Pizzo will look at it with Director Farrall and report back to Council. The Township is first and foremost to make sure they are not violating anyone's rights. Beyond that there are the rights of the folks who own the property; and potentially, would reside there and also all of the residents in the neighborhood as well.

Mrs. Piazza-Reim indicated that on the Zoning Certification they have the property owner as Ralph and Mary Vitale. Ralph Vitale passed away and Mary Vitale is in a Home with dementia. They are not the owners of the property. The owner of the property is Holistic Real Estate Holdings, LLC.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that in many cases when a property is under agreement of sale, you have the title owner, the peoples whose names are on the deed which may still be the Vitale's or their estate. Then, you have the equitable owners who are purchasing. The Township may issue based on the names that are still on the deed versus the names of the people who are buying. The property is still in their name until the estate sells it to whomever they are going to sell it.

Kim Speiser, 635 Ashton Road, asked if there are any regulations and indicated that she had talked to the women at the ordinance place, and they said that they don't have to have any regulations. She personally does not have a problem with recovery women being in her neighborhood, as long as there is some kind of structure in the house; but, a house that is only there for profit she has a big problem with.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that he is not speaking as to what is going on Dunston Road, generally speaking recovery homes are often operated by for-profit entities. That doesn't however, under housing law, make it a business. It does however, because of the nature of the way a recovery home functions versus a more traditional group home, like the one Mrs. Piazza-Reim had described in her neighborhood; which is probably operated by a business as well or a charitable organization. The way they are treated in some respects is the same and in some respects is different and there is no one size fits all. Which is again, what they really need to do as to the property Mrs. Piazza-Reim is speaking of, is to let the Solicitor get together with Director Farrall and see what has come into the Township so far and report back to Council.

Solicitor Pizzo suggested that depending on how much the neighborhood is interested, to maybe have a meeting with the neighborhood where everybody can be briefed. But doesn't know what his meeting with Director Farrall is going to show.

Both constituents left their contact information with Debora McBreen, Council Clerk.

John Lee, 2300 Byberry Road, Bensalem Woods, his concerns are that of the access ramps. One in the area of Knights Road towards the Kohl's Shopping Center and the other concern was that of a sidewalk that does not continue after Stefano's Pizzeria on Byberry Road. Also, a pothole on Knights Road.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that years ago the Township went through and upgraded a lot of those ramps to ADA compliant. Maybe another sweep needs to be done.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that it is an ongoing project that a certain number are done every year on a rotating basis; and asked Engineer Wursta if this project is ongoing.

Engineer Wursta indicated that they have the start of an existing curb, ramp replacement for ADA requirements. If this a location that they are doing this year it will be done and if not, they probably could get an allowance to allow it.

Council President Tokmajian asked if they could shuffle the priority list and asked if this is covered by State Grants?

Engineer Wursta indicated that they get State Grants for that and they also use their own money.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that he assumes there is some kind of list as far as to identify location and maybe prioritize those two locations.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that he believes a certain percentage of the Township's annual allotment from DCED goes to these kinds of projects and initiatives. Obviously, the intersections like Hulmeville and Byberry Roads, which is a State intersection, the State has a say in what goes there; and to what specifications, and that may be a factor in all of this as well.

Council Secretary Wenzel asked if it is something the Township can write a letter to the State and ask for forgiveness to do?

Engineer Wursta indicated that the State associated with that generally does not permit ramps at locations where there are no sidewalks or access to those points. That is when the Township steps in and will talk to PennDOT about that sort of thing and also will just go ahead and do it. The Township has to make sure they follow all of the ADA requirements.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated with Imagination Playground, there is restaurants and a bank, there is all kinds of amenities there that should be easy pedestrian access.

Frank Schilling, 6202 Hulmeville Road, asked what Council knew about any Pickleball courts going on in Bensalem?

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that the Council Minutes that were just approved document a discussion Council had at their last meeting about a Grant application. The Township is applying for a Grant application to rehab and approve the Pickleball Courts over on Gilbert Avenue and Neshaminy Boulevard.

Mr. Schilling asked if anything is going to be done over on Pintail, the original Pickleball Courts? Pintail was a fast put together with three nets. The courts were nice, but now they need some attention. Leaves are gathering in the corners, courts are staining, so just send out one of

the power washer guys and clean them up. The nets were temporary and are looking tiresome, they need to be changed.

Council President Tokmajian asked if they fall under Parks and Rec and told Mr. Schilling they would get a crew over there to clean it up.

6. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Debora McBreen, Council Clerk, indicated that the Police Memorial is Monday May 18th, 2026 at the Legacy Gardens here at the Township. The Township is closed on Monday May 25th for Memorial Day. The next Council meeting is May 26th, 2026, which is a Tuesday. Katie Sponheimer indicated that the Season Passes will most likely be sold out this week so now is the time to get them. Drive safely as the weather is getting warmer, children are out playing and walkers are walking.

Councilman Knowles reiterated the Police Memorial on May 18th, 2026 10:00am. The Memorial Day Parade is the day before the next Council meeting. Looking forward to the warm weather.

Council Secretary Wenzel thanked the two constituents for coming out today and bringing their issue to Council.

Council Vice President Sloane thanked the two constituents for coming out. There was some chatter among Council as to why have a meeting when there are so few things on the agenda. This is why, Council needs these meetings to afford the public with the opportunity to come in, voice their concerns to Council so that they can take action and get back to the constituents. Wished his son a Happy Birthday!

Council President Tokmajian echoed Council Vice President Sloane's comments on the reason why Council is here. Wished all Moms a belated Happy Mother's Day! Reiterated the Police Memorial and the Memorial Day Parade. Since Monday May 25th is a holiday and the Township building is closed, the next Council meeting is Tuesday May 26th, 2026.

7. **ADJOURNMENT:**

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

The Bensalem Township Council Meeting of May 11th, 2026 can be viewed in its entirety at the following websites:

www.bensalempa.gov

or

www.youtube.com

Respectfully Submitted,

Debora F. McBreen
Recording Secretary