



BOROUGH OF CHESTER HEIGHTS  
53 W Baltimore Pike 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
P. O. Box 658  
Chester Heights, PA 19017  
Regular Council Meeting Minutes  
February 3, 2025, at 7:00 pm

**Call to Order** President Marta Driscoll called the meeting to order at 7pm and led all those in attendance in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call** Marta Driscoll, President  
Natalie Young, Vice President  
Jeanne Montgomery, Pro Tem  
Drew Baum, Councilmember  
Timothy Hudak, Councilmember  
Anne Searl, Councilmember  
Ginamarie Ellis, Mayor

**Officials Present** Alex Baumler, Esq., Solicitor  
Mike Kissinger, Engineer

**Public Comment:** No Report

**Proclamation – Honoring Fredrick Christian Leiser III – 33 Years of Service on the Planning Commission**

Mayor Ginamarie Ellis read the Proclamation as follows and President Marta Driscoll presented an award of recognition.

**RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT OF FREDRICK CHRISTOPHER LEISER III**

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Chester Heights, Delaware County, Pennsylvania;

WHEREAS, Frederick Christopher Leiser III was appointed to the Borough of Chester Heights Planning Commission in 1991, and has served on the Planning Commission in various roles ever since;

WHEREAS, Mr. Leiser has retired from the Planning Commission after 33 years of distinguished and dedicated service to the Borough of Chester Heights;

WHEREAS, Mr. Leiser advanced the Planning Commission and the Borough of Chester Heights by providing knowledge of municipal codes and policies, procedures and operations, and demonstrated extensive executive, administrative, and communication skills;

WHEREAS, Mr. Leiser's interest and devotion to the community has had a valuable effect on the efficiency and morale of the Planning Commission and the residents he served, and we wish to extend our sincere appreciation for his performance of duty; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Leiser is being awarded this recognition as a testimonial of his loyal and dedicated service.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT PROCLAIMED, that the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Chester Heights extend their appreciation and gratitude to Frederick Christopher Leiser III for his 33 years of service.

THIS PROCLAMATION is presented this 3rd day of February 2025 by the Council of the Borough of Chester Heights, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, in lawful session duly assembled.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

#### **Regular Council Meeting Minutes from January 6, 2025**

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Hudak) voted and unanimously approved the January 6, 2025, Regular Council Meeting Minutes.

#### **General Meeting Minutes from January 21, 2025**

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Searl) voted and unanimously approved the January 21, 2025, General Meeting Minutes.

### **Approval of Cash Disbursements – January 2, 2025, through February 3, 2025:**

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Hudak) voted and unanimously approved the General Cash disbursements in the amount of \$64,481.68.

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Hudak) voted and unanimously approved the Liquid Fuels disbursements in the amount of \$8, 895.45.

Council reviewed the balance sheets for Fire Protection Fund in amount of \$2,092.14 and ARPA Funds

### **Secretary's Report:**

- The Borough received the renewal for Gallagher Insurance, and the deadline to complete the renewal application is March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Council will review the renewal application at the February 18<sup>th</sup> General Meeting.
- The Borough had a dead deer and Alan Strickland removed it.
- There was a tree down near Madison Apartments on Valleybrook Rd. Councilmember Hudak and Roadmaster Larry were notified. PennDOT removed the tree along with the debris.
- We did not receive any "Right to Know" requests this month.

- President Marta Driscoll and Darlene Kurten attended the Quiet Zone meeting with Middletown and Aston Townships.
- The office received a request that the Walnut Hill Blvd. speed bumps need to be painted. Roadmaster Larry Ward will work with Darlene Kurten to get a quote for painting the speed bumps

**Solicitors' Report:**

**Draft of the Zoning Ordinance**

- Council authorized the Solicitor to draft a zoning ordinance for the business district that would include outdoor seating as a special exception.
- The zoning ordinance is drafted and will be sent to the Planning Commission and County Planning Commission for their official reviews.
- Once both groups have reviewed the draft the public hearings can be scheduled.

**Ashley's Sewer Connection**

- Ashley's is moving forward with the sewer connection project.
- Council will need to sign off on the forms from PennDOT for the application to be processed.
- Ashley's solicitor has been contacted regarding the reimbursement for the application fees.

**Engineer's Report:**

**Ashley's Sewer Connection**

- It was discussed that the borough will own the sewer pipe, but Ashley's will maintain and operate it

**Consider Motion: Higgins – Supply & Install GPS Timeclock \$780.00 at Valleybrook Rd. & Rt.1**

- PennDOT is looking for the borough to supply and install a GPS time clock and fix a processor.
- The processor has been removed from the light so it can be repaired.

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Hudak) voted and unanimously approved \$780 for the installation of the GPS time clock at Rt.1 and Valleybrook Rd.

**Speed Limit Signs/Signage for Walnut Hill Blvd.**

- Engineer Mike Kissinger completed a walk with Higgins to confirm the locations where the signs will be installed.
- Engineer Mike Kissinger will follow up with Higgins to schedule an installment appointment.
- The signs for Walnut Hill Blvd. will be installed in the center median.

**Falling Wall on Rte. 1**

- Pieces of a wall are falling onto Rte.1, and the owner of the property has been contacted by mail twice.
- The office will research finding a phone number for the owners of the property.

**Escrow Release for 479 Valleybrook Rd.**

- We are expecting an escrow release for 479 Valleybrook Rd. next month.

**Roadmaster Report**

- All PA1 calls have been cleared.

- Roadmaster Larry Ward will attend the PA1 meeting at Kings Mill.

### **Fire Marshal's Report**

- There was a discussion on electrical fires at Madison.
- Inspection standards and liability issues were discussed.

### **2024 Fire Marshal's Report**

In accordance with Chester Heights Fire Code #153, section 106.1 the Fire Marshal shall render a report to Borough Council on or before the February meeting of each year. This report contains a record of all proceedings under the Fire Code during the preceding year.

#### Our Mission Statement

The Chester Heights Fire Marshal's Office is committed to protecting the safety of Chester Heights' residents and their property, through fire prevention, education, code enforcement, regulations, and law enforcement.

As the newly appointed Fire Marshal for 2024 the emphasis was on reviewing the current adopted 2003 International Fire Code (IFC), Ordinance 153 and Borough Fire Code chapter 97, along with the current inspection process of Rental Units and Commercial establishments.

Through the work of a sub-committee, it was recommended to adopt the 2018 IFC Code and make some minor changes to our Borough ordinance 153 and Chapter 97 of the Borough Fire Code.

A concerted effort was made to identify all rental and commercial properties within the Borough of Chester Heights, which by Ordinance are required to have a yearly Fire Inspection.

With the help of the office staff, we were able to identify and build a database of all rentals and commercial properties within the borough. This is evolving.

The office performed the following Inspections in 2024:

- 118 Residential inspections were done
- 244 commercial apartment building rentals completed
- 31 U/O (sale of home inspections)
- 39 Commercial properties with multiple tenants.

The goal of the inspection is not to fail properties but to ensure safety for the residents who reside, shop, or work in these facilities.

A concentrated effort this year was working with the Homeowner's association at Darlington Woods, Madison Apartments, Merrill Gardens Elder Care, living quarters, the Hollow at Fox Valley, and our commercial properties to improve fire safety.

The response of residents, communities and businesses mentioned above to install and upgrade fire protection devices, where recommended and practice Fire Safety in their daily lives was awesome.

I have worked with the Fire Chief coordinating drills and communicating potential hazards identified during fire inspections. This information allows the fire company to pre-plan responses to these potential hazards. Familiarization of properties becomes incalculable when incidents arise.

## CALLS IN CHESTER HEIGHTS

There were one hundred and fifty-seven (157) incidents this year in the Borough. This is up from one hundred and twenty-nine (129) last year. This was a 19 % increase in incidents. The two charts below breakdown the types of calls and time of day calls occurred.

As you will see from the charts below; the first chart breaks down the call types and the second chart show that roughly two-thirds (2/3) of the calls occur during daytime hours 7 am -7 pm.

Fire Damage far exceeds previous years.

This year the borough suffered its first civilian injury as a result of a fire in Darlington Woods. Fire losses to property and personal possessions expenses are estimated to exceed Two Million dollars (2,000,000.00). In addition, 4/5 families have been displaced for at least one (1) year why they rebuild the units damaged.

Madison Apartments experienced a number electrical and fireplace fires. Fireplace fires were due mainly to the flue not being opened which resulted in minimal smoke damage to the unit involved. The electrical fires were mostly caused by component failure.

The Village of Valleybrook had several fires causing minor damage.

Wawa Corporate experienced an activation of their data room fire suppression system. This is a specialized suppression system that uses a special agent to extinguish a fire but does not damage the equipment or leave a residue.

Budgetary guidelines were met this year. The main expenditure is due to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and reference books.

Review of Fiscal 2024 foresees some additional expenses or disbursements for the Fire Marshal's office. These expenses are earmarked for Fire Safety Public Awareness, office supplies, dues, and subscriptions. A total of \$1000.00 is requested for FY 2025.

## **Zoning Officer Report**

- Answering email correspondences regarding zoning inquiries for getting permits

## **Mayor's Report**

Mayor Ginamarie Ellis discussed the history of Chester Heights which included the following facts:

- Chester Heights consists of 1,505 acres
- Local Landmarks
- The origin of the name of Chester Heights
- The petition and founders of Chester Heights
- The history of Pathways Inc.
- The history of the Wawa dairy farm

The historical facts discussed are represented and captured in the Chester Heights logo.

## **Committee Reports:**

### **Finance and Administration**

**Consider Motion: Engagement letter for Barbacane Thornton & Company – Tax Collector Audit in the Amount of \$4,800.00 and Chester Heights Borough in the Amount of \$10,200.00.**

- There was an increase in the cost of the audits due to the labor market challenges and rising operating costs
- However, Barbacane Thornton & Company agreed to give the borough a flat renewal rate and keep our fees the same as last year.

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Hudak) voted and unanimously approved to accept the engagement letter from Barbacane Thornton & Company for the Tax Collector audit in the amount of \$4,800.00 and the Chester Heights Borough in the amount of \$10,200.00.

### **Consider Motion: Resolution 2025.02.A Tax Collector Compensation**

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Searl) voted and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 2025.02A to resolve the 5% pay rate for our Tax Collector.

**Consider to Ratify Motion – Animal Control Contract, Polled Vote 01.24.2025, Councilmembers Baum, Driscoll, Hudak, Montgomery, and Young voted Yes, Councilmembers Anderson and Searl Not Polled.**

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Hudak) voted unanimously to ratify the Animal Control Contract from Brandywine Valley SPCA for the annual fee in the amount of \$5,824.00.

### **Promissory Note – Powell Acquisition**

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Young | Searl) voted and unanimously to approve signing the promissory note on behalf of the borough for \$1.87 million dollars.

### **Community Engagement**

#### **Mobile Office Site Update**

- The Mobile Office will be held on the fourth Thursday of the month.
- A letter of understanding will need to be signed.
- The staff will be providing their own Wi-Fi.

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council (Montgomery | Baum) voted and unanimously approved to sign the letter of understanding to host a Mobile Office site for state and federal services.

### **Public Safety**

#### **Historical Resources Survey**

- The findings from the Historic Resources Survey will be included in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Beverly Barnes will conduct the Historical Resources Survey.

- The cost of the survey is \$4,000.00.

**MOTION:** Upon Motion, Council voted and approved \$4,000 for the Historical Resource Survey. The following Councilmembers voted “Aye” Marta Driscoll, Timothy Hudak, Jeanne Montgomery, Anne Searl, and Natalie Young. Councilmember Drew Baum voted “Nay.”

**Infrastructure and Public Works** No report

### **Old Business**

#### **Quiet Zone Update**

- President Marta Driscoll and Darlene Kurten met with representatives from Aston and Middletown Townships on Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup> to hear the preliminary report of Jacob’s Engineering regarding the Quiet Zone being installed at Lenni Road Crossing.
- If supplemental security measures are installed the crossing at Lenni Road will be eligible for the Quiet Zone implementation.

### **New Business**

#### **Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor**

- Councilmember Drew Baum revisited the motion to rescind the appointment of the Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor.

**Public Comment** No comment

#### **Adjournment**

Councilmember Timothy Hudak left the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Upon Motion, Council (Young | Baum) voted and unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Christiana Barbour

Upcoming Meetings:

General Meeting – Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>

Planning Commission Meeting – Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup>

Regular Council Meeting – Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>

General Meeting – Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup>