

MINUTES

NORTH EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL

Monthly Meeting April 3, 2023

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Beardsley, Vice President
Todd Luke, President Pro Tem
Heather Jones
Ryan McGregor
Amber Belson
Denise McCumber, via phone

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jon Triana, Mayor
Patrick Gehrlein, Borough Manager
Dan Miller, Solicitor
Rebecca Bliss, Administrative Assistant
Sean Lam, Police Chief
Julio Pazmino, Waste Water Supervisor
Wayne Yokom, Streets Supervisor
Mark Hamman, Streets Asst. Supervisor
Leah Griffin, Water Asst. Supervisor
Denise Pekelnicky
Peter Pekelnicky
Tom Savidge
Doris Savidge
Pat Ring
Maryann Frontino
Jake Jones
Colin Jones
Dawson Jones
Lori Helffrich
Adam Ballew
Jeff Stritzinger
Jim Campbell
Wesley Weinheimer
Rita Weinheimer
Ken Snyder
Lori Snyder
Betty Truby
David Hirtzel
Joe Schneider
Nancy Schneider
Nancy Anderson
Allen Dalrymple

Dan Shank
Angela Sanfilippo
Eric Luke
Steve Gregory
Robert Behrens
Robert Hoyt
Robert Belson
Bobbi Jo Morey
Carol Rouse
Chris Skrekla
Kayla Skrekla
Mike Hamman
Ed Prather
Hazel Prather
Kara Haas
Diana Hanes
Kira Newara
Mason Bennett
DeeDee Sheward
Michael Yori
Diane Diroll
Paul Diroll
Bill Hewitt
Mary Hewitt
Joan Bubna
Gary Straneva
Katherine Straneva
James Weinheimer
Melissa Galbraith
Betsy Sceiford
Others present, not signed in

The regular monthly meeting of North East Borough Council was held Monday, April 3, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

CALL TO ORDER:

Borough Council Vice President B. Beardsley called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., at which time the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PROCEDURAL MOTION:

B. Beardsley welcomed community members and suggested a procedural motion to structure the period of public comment regarding the Granite Ridge discussion. By a unanimous vote of Council, a procedure was established in which interested members of the public would state their name and address, then be given up to five (5) minutes in which to make their comments.

MINUTES:

A. Belson motioned to approve the March 6, 2023, minutes as presented. H. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE:

H. Jones motioned to approve the Expense Approval Report as presented. R. McGregor seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

R. Behrens, 97 Wall Street, asked if the Borough has a tornado alarm. C. Skrekla stated that the alarm on Welch's will signal for five (5) minutes to notify the community in the event of an emergency. He stated that the alarm is tested quarterly.

D. Hanes, 11 East Main Street, stated that she was upset to receive a Code Enforcement letter regarding ice on the sidewalks when others are not similarly notified.

D. Pkelnicky, 36 West Main Street, stated that she often encounters ice and snow on sidewalks in front of the Police Station, Crescent Hose, and Gibson Park. She stated that local businesses should not be receiving Code Enforcement letters if the same standards are not being upheld by the town.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion: Granite Ridge

P. Gehrlein stated that Jonathan Ehrenfeld, owner of Granite Ridge, reached out to the Borough office to schedule a virtual public meeting the week of May 2-4, 2023, to discuss the property and the concerns of the community. H. Jones asked if the town hall meeting could be held at the school or in a larger facility to accommodate more people at the same time.

R. Hoyt, 9310 West Main Road, stated that Bill Unger, operations manager of Granite Ridge, is in North East on a daily basis and should be available to discuss concerns. He stated that the community should not have to wait until a later time to have their questions answered.

W. Weinheimer, 38 North Pearl Street, asked if any decisions would be made by the company before the proposed May meeting. He also asked if anyone knew any facts about what is happening as opposed to the rumors that have been circulating.

J. Bubna, 11074 South Shore Avenue, asked if the children would be immunized. She stated her concern for the health of the senior citizens who live nearby. She stated that she called the PA Department of Education to ask about the process of opening the proposed facility.

B. Beardsley stated that all comments and questions from this meeting will be collected and forwarded to the company who owns Granite Ridge.

K. Haas, 10 Pershing Avenue, asked why the company should be given thirty (30) days to prepare statements and finalize plans before the proposed May meeting. She also asked the Council's feelings about working with the company who has not been interacting with the community.

R. McGregor stated that nothing has formally been offered to the Borough to be able to confirm or refute. He stated his hope for a long-term working relationship with the company.

M. Frontino, 77 Isabella Street, asked what zoning power the Borough has regarding the property. R. McGregor stated that the Borough cannot specifically exclude someone. P. Gehrlein described the zoning process. He stated that the Zoning Hearing Board consists of community members appointed by Council.

L. Helffrich, 64 Robinson Street, asked how no one knew what was happening. She stated that the community is being lied to and that the company is acting secretly.

J. Weinheimer, 73 Catawba Drive, asked what the procedure was. R. McGregor stated that it will depend on the location of the plans the company presents, as the property is located in both the Borough and Township. P. Gehrlein stated that the company would have to present a plan that would be evaluated based on zoning, and possibly appear before the Zoning Hearing Board, if required, before any work could begin.

M. Yori, 5844 South Washington Street Ext, stated that he knew about the possibility of the proposed use of the campus in July or August, but that it was hearsay. He stated that the company is not being truthful with the community about their intentions. M. Yori stated that he informed the Township but that no action was taken because the information was hearsay.

D. Diroll, 11730 East Main Road, asked if the company held a license for the care of children, and of what ages. She stated her concerns regarding the schools, tax money, and language barriers. She stated that the company is not concerned with humanitarianism.

B. Sceiford, 2 Gibson Street, stated that her daughter emailed Bill Unger in order to volunteer, at which time he set up a meeting with her. She stated that it seems to be rumor-based as nothing is set in stone. She asked what the six to seven other options were being considered for the campus.

D. Pkelnicky, 36 West Main Street, asked about the "mixed use district" proposed by Erie County Planning. P. Gehrlein stated that zoning changes were proposed through the Comprehensive Plan but that they have not yet been defined or decided upon. D. Pkelnicky asked for honesty. She stated her concern for the impact on the community and for the delayed response time of the PA State Police. H. Jones stated that the Comprehensive Plan should have been tabled based on the zoning updates.

R. Behrens, 97 Wall Street, asked if the Borough Manager or Council can force a meeting with the company. He also stated that the campus can house up to 1480 residents.

G. Craig, 34 East Division Street, asked what would happen to property values. He stated that the lack of answers was unacceptable. He stated that the school district is currently having trouble with teaching staff, so how would the company be able to maintain staff.

J. Triana stated that the Council cares deeply for the community and wants more information as well.

S. Gregory, 7 Eagle Street, stated that Ehrenfeld Company is not being cooperative, as their main objective is to make money. He stated that community members should not attack the integrity of Council members as they serve the community.

J. Strigzinger, 55 South Washington Street, asked if the Borough had a good working relationship with the Township for cooperation in this matter. H. Jones stated that the Borough and Township have a good relationship.

J. Banta, 8 South Lake Street, asked for a show of hands from those opposed to Granite Ridge’s plans, taking a photo of those in attendance.

R. Hoyt, 9310 West Main Road, asked if they could open a school based on the existing zoning of the property. P. Gehrlein stated that the zoning does not change based on ordinance and that the company would have to go through the Zoning process and possibly request a special exception. R. Hoyt asked if the involvement of Border Patrol and the use of federal funding would limit the police officers’ ability to respond to an emergency, regardless of where the problem occurs. Chief Lam stated that the Borough Police could respond to anything happening on the Borough streets, but that specific plans are still unknown. R. Hoyt stated his concern for neighborhood safety with Border Patrol being far away.

J. Lican-Perry, 10641 Ackerman Lane, asked who would be policing the detained children, especially located so close to the school district. She asked who knew about the plans and who had been in contact with the company. She stated that information is being withheld from the community. She asked why the company was no longer considering a sports park.

Discussion: Draft Ordinance No. 925 – International Property Maintenance Code – To be presented

Discussion: Draft Ordinance No. 926 – International Fire Code – To be presented

P. Gehrlein stated that Draft Ordinance Nos. 925 and 926 were proposed as potential solutions which would offer codified inspections of residential and commercial properties. He stated that the drafts are not yet completed and the presentation of Draft Ordinance Nos. 925 and 926 will be tabled until May 2023. J. Triana stated that the codes are extensive and stated his support for tabling the discussion until complete. M. Hamman, 154 South Lake Street, asked if Granite Ridge would be inspected. P. Gehrlein stated that the proposed ordinances would provide the tools to complete inspections. H. Jones motioned to table Draft Ordinance No. 925 – International Property Maintenance Code and Draft Ordinance No. 926 – International Fire Code. T. Luke seconded. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. The vote was as follows:

Heather Jones	<u>Yes</u>	Ryan McGregor	<u>Yes</u>
Todd Luke	<u>Yes</u>	Bill Beardsley	<u>Yes</u>
Amber Belson	<u>Yes</u>	Denise McCumber	<u>Yes, via phone</u>

Heard Park: Crescent Hose Co #2 – Open House and Equipment Demonstration (May 20, 2023)

T. Luke motioned to approve the request for Heard Park: Crescent Hose Co #2 – Open House and Equipment Demonstration on May 20, 2023. R. McGregor seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Gibson Park: American Legion Post 105 – Memorial Day Ceremony (May 29, 2023)

T. Luke motioned to approve the request for Gibson Park: American Legion Post 105 – Memorial Day Ceremony on May 29, 2023. R. McGregor seconded. The motion carried unanimously. A. Belson encouraged community members to attend the ceremony in Gibson Park and participate in the parade.

Gibson Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Gibson Open Market (Saturdays, June 17—September 2, 2023)

A. Belson motioned to approve the request for Gibson Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Gibson Open Market on Saturdays, June 17—September 2, 2023. H. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Gibson Park/Heard Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Farm Heritage Days (August 11-14, 2023)

H. Jones motioned to approve the request for Gibson Park/Heard Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Farm Heritage Days on August 11-14, 2023. T. Luke seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Eaton Reservoir: Boy Scout Troop 82 – 5K, 10K, Half Marathon (September 3, 2023)

R. McGregor motioned to approve the request for Eaton Reservoir: Boy Scout Troop 82 – 5K, 10K, Half Marathon on September 3, 2023. T. Luke seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Gibson Park/Heard Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Wine Fest (September 19-25, 2023)

H. Jones motioned to approve the request for Gibson Park/Heard Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Wine Fest on September 19-25, 2023. A. Belson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Gibson Park/Heard Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Tremendous Night of Lights (November 25, 2023)

A. Belson motioned to approve the request for Gibson Park/Heard Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Tremendous Night of Lights on November 25, 2023. H. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Gibson Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Sugar Plum Saturday (December 2, 2023)

T. Luke motioned to approve the request for Gibson Park: NE Chamber/Enjoy North East – Sugar Plum Saturday on December 2, 2023. R. McGregor seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Arbor Day Proclamation: April 28, 2023 – Mayor Triana

Mayor Triana read the Arbor Day Proclamation.

Second Monthly Meeting – April 17, 2023, if needed

P. Gehrlein stated that a second monthly meeting is not needed at this time.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Police Chief Report

Code Enforcement Report

Commissions and Authorities

McCord Memorial Library 2022 Annual Report

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A. Belson asked Eric Luke to speak about the Medal of Honor Ride. E. Luke, 38 North Mill Street, stated that the American Legion Post 105 will be holding a Medal of Honor Ride on June 17, 2023 to raise money for scholarships. The ride will be along Route 20 across Pennsylvania, from the Ohio state line to the New York state line. The ride will begin at the Ohio state line on Route 20 at 11:00 a.m. on June 17.

R. Behrens, 97 Wall Street, asked why the rental inspection program isn't just eliminated and start over. H. Jones stated that the proposed updates will resolve the issues and focus on safety.

R. Behrens, 97 Wall Street, asked when the Zoning Hearing Board meetings are held. P. Gehrlein stated that the meetings are advertised and occur as needed.

R. Belson, 12200 Cole Road, stated that more members of Council should attend the Zoning Hearing Board meetings. D. Miller, Solicitor, stated that the meetings are open to the public. He stated that the Zoning Hearing

Board is separate from Borough Council: members of Council cannot sit on the board and a different solicitor is required.

M. Hamman, 154 South Lake Street, asked if members of Council can join the Planning Commission. P. Gehrlein stated that there is not a required number of council attendees for Planning Commission meetings. Erie County makes recommendations through the Planning Commission which then Council can approve or deny.

D. Pkelnicky, 36 West Main Street, asked if Council was obligated to approve zoning changes recommended by Erie County. P. Gehrlein stated that recommendations are voted on through the public meeting process.

S. Gregory, 7 Eagle Street, asked if Granite Ridge could file an appeal if the Zoning Hearing Board denied a variance request. D. Miller said yes, they can appeal.

B. Morey, 137 East Main Street, asked for an update on the railroad crossing at Loomis Street. P. Gehrlein stated that the Borough and Township have made modifications and improvements to sight lines, but that the railroad still needs to complete their work. He stated that there will be a transportation/safety study conducted through the Erie County Metropolitan Planning Organization.

J. Triana stated his appreciation for the public attendance and participation in the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 7:23 p.m. R. McGregor motioned to adjourn. H. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Rebecca Bliss (April 4, 2023)

Patrick Gehrlein, Borough Manager