

MINUTES
NORTH EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL

Monthly Meeting
February 17, 2025

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Amber Belson, President
Ryan McGregor, Vice President
Todd Luke, President Pro Tem
Nancy Anderson
Heather Jones
Bill Beardsley

OTHERS PRESENT:

Bobbi Jo Morey, Mayor
Patrick Gehrlein, Borough Manager
Dan Miller, Solicitor
Rebecca Bliss, Administrative Assistant
Ray Schaff
David Hirtzel
Paul Crowe
Nate Walters
Jane Blystone
Dave Herman
Jennifer Ritter
Katie Gallagher
Carolyn Brown
Jennifer Seigworth
Cheryl Burgess
Erin Beckes-Reese
Carolyn Brown
Jeff Buchholz
Jen Kilgas
James Weinheimer
Christina Guertin
Others present, not signed in

The second monthly meeting of North East Borough Council will be held Monday, February 17, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

CALL TO ORDER:

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

INVOCATION:

B. Morey offered the invocation.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:**Frank Mehler, Lions Club: Community Service**

B. Morey stated that F. Mehler was not able to attend.

Nate Walters, North East Rec Commission

N. Walters joined the North East Recreation Commission in 2018 and has been the president of the commission for three years. He stated that the Rec Commission is restructuring and asked that the process go smoothly and in their favor. He stated that the new goals of the Rec Commission include non-profit status, offering more programs, and expanding outside of the North East area. He stated that the Rec Commission would like to partner with the Little Pickers organization to offer programs to the area. He asked that once the Rec Commission is dissolved, that Borough Council, along with the North East Township and School District, consider donating their one-third portion of the funds back to the program, specifically for the purchase of helmets for the Little Pickers. He stated that the group will not be asking for additional funding in the future.

C. Guertin stated that the Little Pickers have 501c3 status and carry insurance for their programs, which include wrestling, football, plyometrics, basketball, and senior aquatics. She stated that their programs use the Mellon Center and hope to expand in their offerings to the community. N. Walters stated that a partnership together would hopefully allow for more affordable and free programs in the future.

J. Weinheimer, 73 Catawba Drive, stated that he was previously part of the Rec Commission for twenty-five years and supports their programs and goals. He asked Council to give their portion of the funds back to the program moving forward.

REPORTS FROM ELECTED OFFICERS:

There were no Reports from Elected Officers.

REPORTS FROM APPOINTED OFFICERS:

There were no Reports from Appointed Officers.

REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES:

There were no Reports from Standing Committees.

REPORTS FROM SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

There were no Reports from Special Committees.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There was no Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS:**Resolution 02172025-1: Application for PA Small Water and Sewer Grant**

P. Gehrlein stated that the proposed resolution will allow the Borough to apply to the DCED for grant funding to pay for improvements to the alleyway behind the building on West Main and South Lake Streets. Projects will include slip lining of older sewer lines, full storm sewer mitigation, and resurfacing. H. Jones motioned to

approve Resolution 02172025-1: Application for PA Small Water and Sewer Grant as presented. N. Anderson seconded. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. The vote was as follows:

Nancy Anderson	<u>Yes</u>	Todd Luke	<u>Yes</u>
Amber Belson	<u>Yes</u>	Heather Jones	<u>Yes</u>
Ryan McGregor	<u>Yes</u>	Bill Beardsley	<u>Yes</u>

Resolution 02172025-2: Termination of Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement – NE Rec Commission

A. Belson stated that the proposed resolution is the first step in the process of dissolving the North East Recreation Commission. B. Morey asked how the lifeguards will be handled at Freeport Beach, what the plans are for Summer Rec programming, and if the high school coaches are aware that the sports programs are ending. P. Gehrlein stated that the Borough took over the hiring/staffing of the lifeguards at Freeport Beach in 2024 (half reimbursed by the North East Township), and that the same process will continue moving forward. N. Walters stated that Summer Rec did not take place during 2020 due to COVID-19, but that summer programming has since been absorbed by the NE School District through their Summer Learning Lap programs. He also stated that the high school coaches they've worked with are aware of the changing sports programs at the elementary levels. N. Anderson asked about outstanding balances and invoices. P. Gehrlein stated that balances will need to be finalized before a payout is decided. A. Belson asked if background checks and clearances were being maintained. N. Walters stated that a board member is responsible for clearances. H. Jones motioned to approve Resolution 02172025-2: Termination of Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement – NE Rec Commission as presented. T. Luke seconded. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. The vote was as follows:

Nancy Anderson	<u>Yes</u>	Todd Luke	<u>Yes</u>
Amber Belson	<u>Yes</u>	Heather Jones	<u>Yes</u>
Ryan McGregor	<u>Yes</u>	Bill Beardsley	<u>Yes</u>

Discussion of College Woods Park/Trail Project

P. Gehrlein stated that the College Woods Park/Trail Project has been in development over the past year and has grown and changed many times. He stated that there have been several team meetings and public meetings seeking community input, which have enlarged the scope of the project to possibly include Borough property owned by the Borough Sewer Authority near Site 2. He stated that there are also discussions about property maintenance expectations between the Borough and Township. H. Jones stated her concern with the possibility of people crossing Sunset Drive and using Borough property that might be needed in the future for wastewater plant expansion. N. Anderson agreed that the trail should focus on the original Mellon property area before expanding to include Borough property.

Discussion of Gateway Arch Project

P. Gehrlein stated that the Borough was approached by the North East School District to construct an archway, similar to those in Gibson and Heard Parks, for their school campus. After verbal confirmation, the steel was purchased and fabrication began. The Borough then learned that the North East School Board had rejected the project and denied the costs associated with it, so the fabrication was stopped. The Borough Council will decide to either use the steel for another project or return it to the manufacturer.

Discussion of Fire Company Donation Audit proposal

A. Belson stated that the fire companies asks the Borough for donations every year, and that an audit is being proposed in order to release those funds. P. Gehrlein stated that a standardization of accounting requirements will be established by the Borough's auditing firm. The information collected during the accounting audit will

allow for informed decision-making based on the data presented. The proposal was reviewed at the most recent Public Safety Advisory Commission meeting, at which time a discussion was held with representatives from both fire companies. H. Jones stated that both departments were in agreement, and that a similar audit would be required in the future if a fire tax were to be implemented. B. Morey stated that this would provide a standardized accounting procedure for donation requests.

Gibson Park: Enjoy North East – Taste of Summer (May 31 – June 1)

R. McGregor motioned to approve the request for Gibson Park: Enjoy North East – Taste of Summer (May 31— June 1) as presented. T. Luke seconded. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. The vote was as follows:

Nancy Anderson	<u>Yes</u>	Todd Luke	<u>Yes</u>
Amber Belson	<u>Yes</u>	Heather Jones	<u>Yes</u>
Ryan McGregor	<u>Yes</u>	Bill Beardsley	<u>Yes</u>

Gibson Park: Enjoy North East – 725 Celebrate North East Day (July 25)

H. Jones motioned to approve the request for Gibson Park: Enjoy North East – 725 Celebrate North East Day (July 25) as presented. B. Beardsley seconded. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. The vote was as follows:

Nancy Anderson	<u>Yes</u>	Todd Luke	<u>Yes</u>
Amber Belson	<u>Yes</u>	Heather Jones	<u>Yes</u>
Ryan McGregor	<u>Yes</u>	Bill Beardsley	<u>Yes</u>

CORRESPONDENCE:

There was no Correspondence.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

There were no Announcements.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

E. Beckes-Reese, 4306 Creekside Drive, stated Council was downplaying a clear violation of the Sunshine Law regarding the Gateway Arch project. She asked who paid for the planning of the project and who gave approval. A. Belson stated that there was no Sunshine Law violation by the Borough Council, but if she feels that the North East School District is in violation that she should approach them. H. Jones stated that P. Gehrlein has the authority to make purchases without each individual item being approved by Council, as he is in charge of day-to-day operations of the Borough, it's departments, and community partnerships. E. Beckes-Reese asked if it was Dr. Hartzell and Jeff Fox who gave approval for the arch project. P. Gehrlein said yes, but that the Borough is not aware of or responsible for the purchasing approval procedures of the school district. A. Belson stated that unfortunately this process has made the Borough wary of partnering with the other organizations.

J. Buchholz, 1723 Gristmill Drive, asked if the Borough received written approval before purchasing the supplies for the arch project. He also asked if the Borough sent the school district a bill. P. Gehrlein stated that the steel was ordered following the planning meeting, and he told them of the purchase.

C. Burgess, 9205 Station Road, asked if there was any new information regarding GECAC and the Senior Center.
A. Belson stated that the next scheduled meeting with the CEO of GECAC is on February 20, 2025.

J .Buchholz stated that there is a lot of concern, but that he is glad that the Borough works with other organizations and that the community works together.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 7:00 p.m. H. Jones motioned to adjourn. B. Beardsley seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Rebecca Bliss (February 18, 2025)

Patrick Gehrlein, Borough Manager