

BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES – REORGANIZATION SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2026 – 6:00 P.M.

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A Special Meeting of the Punxsutawney Borough Council for the purpose of reorganization was held on Monday, January 5, 2026 at 6:00 P.M., in the Council Chambers of the Mahoning East Civic Center, 301 East Mahoning Street, Punxsutawney, PA.

The following council members were in attendance: Jen Blose, David Burkett, Josh McAfoos, Sharon Murray, Jessica Smith, and Eric Story. Joe Ferrara joined via telephone.

Others present included: Mayor Richard Alexander; Borough Manager Dr. William Spencer; Solicitor Nicholas Gianvito, Chief of Police Matt Conrad, Media Representative Larry McGuire, Spirit Publishing Company; and Recording Secretary, Jessica Yoder.

MAYOR RICHARD ALEXANDER PRESIDING

The meeting was opened with an invocation given by Mayor Richard Alexander and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

PETITIONS AND COMMENTS

Katie Laska, Chamber of Commerce 814-590-6868

Ms. Laska came before borough council asking for permission for the public works department to take the snow off the strette if we get any for Groundhog Day to clear it off so there's not piles on the street. And if they could put it in the park on a pile. I talked to Dr. Spencer today and he has a space for it if they'd clear it and put it there because we're going to do a snow sculpture for our festival in the park. And then another thing I wanted to ask, do we have borough's approval to allow Public Works to pick up the trash during that weekend of Groundhog Day? I know the Chamber of Volunteers will do some of it if we have to, but we're like in the park and last year we had the trash cans overflowing for the businesses and they were not picked up. So, I just want to know if they could help us in some way that weekend. Councilman Story stated I have a question, if I can, for our manager. February 2nd is on Monday this year. So, in order to have the snow removed before that, we'd probably have to call up the guys on Sunday to get it done. Ms. Laska stated it would have to be before that because visitors start coming in Saturday, and/or Friday. That is if we get a storm. I'm not saying if there's like two inches, but if we get the piles piled up like it is now downtown. Councilman Story stated When I'm getting that, I don't think it's in your contract. Can we switch days for you? To have it done at the end of the weekend? Police Chief Conrad stated ou can schedule them for the weekend, but you're going to be paying them at a different rate. Because their regular work schedule is Monday through Friday. So, you can schedule them to work, but it would be at a double time rate depending on what they work that week. Councilman Story asked what would be the rate? Time and a half? Police Chief Conrad stated depending if they work six or seven days in a row, it could be time and a half or double time. I believe that's how the contracts are. We need to get the roads cleaned if we're out to do something. They were out last year putting up barricades and doing other things as well. We're going to have to utilize them anyway. Borough Manager stated so, it could just be an additional duty while they're... Unless something else happened on you. Yeah, we budgeted into that last year as well. So, this was in particular with the trash. That wasn't a duty as a sign per se last year. And what really happened was the downtown area, which was a good

PETITIONS AND COMMENTS CONTINUED:

thing. Police Chief Conrad stated he can put up barriers for the snow sculptures but I need to know what the size of the spot is going to be. Ms. Laska stated she will get the details and let Chief Conrad know. Ms. Laska stated she will also see if the business owners will help with trash also and provide them with trash bags.

NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Mayor Alexander opened nominations for Council President.

Councilman McAfoos nominated Jessica Smith as President of Council.

There being no other nominations the nominations were closed with Councilman Story making the motion.

With six votes in favor, none against, nomination carried.

PRESIDENT SMITH PRESIDING

CALL OF THE MEETING

Ms. Yoder announced the Call of the Meeting was published in the Punxsutawney Spirit on Saturday, January 3, 2026. The Call of the Meeting stood approved as presented.

Council President Smith stated there was one executive meeting held on Monday, January 5, 2026 just before the reorganizational meeting for legal and personal matters.

NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF COUNCIL VICE-PRESIDENT

Council President Smith opened nominations for Vice-President of Borough Council.

Councilman Story nominated Josh McAfoos as Vice-President.

There being no other nominations the nominations were closed.

Six votes in favor, none against, nomination carried.

NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO-TEM

Council President Smith opened nominations for President Pro-Tem of Borough Council.

Councilman McAfoos nominated Eric Story as President Pro-Tem.

There being no other nominations the nominations were closed.

With six votes in favor, none against, nomination carried.

ADDENDUM TO THE AGENDA

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos and seconded by Councilman Story, Borough Council unanimously approved to the addendum to the agenda adding approval for the bids on Carter Avenue properties, the appointment of the code officer, approval of the library board, and approval of the Elk Run Fire Department letter.

NEW BUSINESS

ESTABLISHMENT OF COUNCIL MEETING DATES AND TIME

President Smith stated so for a little clarity on this coming up, we are changing the council meetings to two times a month. We don't feel that every 30 days is a good amount to keep things rolling, so we are going to two meetings a month to try to keep things in a timelier manner and also to avoid tabling things for months so that nobody remembers that they did two. We have discussed going to the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 6 pm. Are we still open for that?

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilwoman Murray, Borough Council unanimously approved the second and fourth Tuesdays at 6 pm of each month for council meeting dates and time.

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE MEETING DATES AND TIME

Council President Smith stated that council was going to hold off on the establishment of committee meeting dates and times due to having to re-establish the committees with new council.

STATE OF THE BOROUGH ADDRESS

Borough Manager Dr. William Spencer stated that council though it would be a good idea to put up a state of the borough address. Basically, nearly two years ago, I began my tenure as borough manager of Punxsutawney. And I appreciate council's trust and commitment of the borough employees in supporting a deliberate shift in how we operate in the government. As council recall, I interviewed on a philosophical change that challenged a governing model in place for nearly 75 years. The vision was straightforward. Stop running government like government. The shift was driven by the borough's fiscal reality. In 2021, the Pennsylvania Economic League conducted a study with the Department of Economic Development, which projected annual deficits of \$100,000 to \$200,000 a year beginning in FY24, driven by population decline, reduced tax revenue, and rising expenses. The study also emphasized the need to diversify revenue sources and reduce reliance on tax dollars. In FY24, I assumed the role with a diminishing funding stream, a general fund balance of approximately \$57,000, and no clear path forward for revenue growth. Thus, in response, I established four guiding principles to anchor our budgeting and operational strategy. These four points. No tax increases or service cuts. Raising taxes while reducing services will provide only short-term relief, if any, and undermine long-term growth. Fiscal diversification is essential. Second, investing ourselves. Strategic investments in our workforce, equipment, and community are necessary to reverse what I call governmental atrophy and signal confidence in the borough's future. Third point, powerful stewardship of funds, purposeful stewardship of funds. Responsible stewardship means reinvesting public dollars with discipline and intent to support

STATE OF THE BOROUGH ADDRESS CONTINUED:

infrastructure, economic development, and sustainability, not stockpiling resources or spending indiscriminately. And then the fourth one is strategic leverage of assets. We challenge traditional government models by using borough assets to generate revenue while ensuring full compliance through coordination with DCED and PSAP, Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs. As we enter FY26, fiscal data reflects positive trends. The general fund has increased from approximately \$57,000 at the start of FY24 to approximately \$160,000 at the end of FY25 to more than \$590,000 today. This growth occurred while purchasing new equipment, acquiring property, investing in employees, creating additional revenue streams, and earning a very favorable rating with Moody credit. To close, it has been an imperfect but yet positive two years of growth for the town. There is a feeling in the air that is reflective in that change. I urge you to not stop now, but rather to continue growing. And while at this time no major equipment purchases or capital improvements are forecasted, if an opportunity aligns with the borough's strategic and fiscal objectives arise, it should not be dismissed. Lastly, the current fiscal trends continue. A tax decrease is projected in FY27. And I just want to thank you for the last two years of service growth.

APPOINTMENT OF BOROUGH MANAGER

Upon motion by Councilman Story, and seconded by Councilman McAfoos, Borough Council unanimously reappointed Dr. William Spencer as Borough Manager.

APPOINTMENT OF BOROUGH AUDITOR

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilman Story, Borough Council unanimously reappointed the firm of Sharkey, Piccirillo, Keen and Hanzely as Borough Auditor.

APPOINTMENT OF SOLICITOR

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilwoman Blose, Borough Council reappointed Nicholas Gianvito as Borough Solicitor.

APPOINTMENT OF LABOR COUNCIL

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilman Story, Borough Council unanimously reappointed Campbell Durrant as labor council.

APPOINTMENT OF TREASURER

Upon motion by Councilman Story, and seconded by Councilman McAfoos, Borough Council unanimously reappointed Andrew Markle as Treasurer.

APPOINTMENT OF BOROUGH ENGINEER

Upon motion by Councilman Story, and seconded by Councilman McAfoos, Borough Council unanimously reappointed The EADS Group and Gwin, Dobson, Foreman as the Borough Engineers.

APPOINTMENT OF BOROUGH AND CORPORATE SECRETARY

Upon motion by Councilwoman Murray, and seconded by Councilman McAfoos, Borough Council unanimously reappointed Jessica Yoder as Borough and Corporate Secretary.

RESOLUTION 2026-1, JEFFERSON COUNTY TAX COLLECTION COMMITTEE DELEGATE AND ALTERNATE DELEGATE

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilman Story, Borough Council unanimously approved Resolution 2026-1, appointing Andy Markle as the delegate and Dr. Spencer as the alternate delegate to the Jefferson County Tax Collection Committee.

REAPPOINTMENT OF CHARLIE HOEH AS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR

Upon motion by Councilman Stroy, and seconded by Councilman McAfoos, Borough Council unanimously reappointed Charlie Hoeh as Emergency Management Coordinator.

BANK DEPOSITORIES AND SIGNERS NAMED

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilwoman Blose, Borough Council approved to keep the bank depositories and signers as they are currently since there were no changes in the roles.

CHANGE NAME ON CREDIT CARD

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilwoman Blose, Borough Council approved to have the name changed on the credit card from Chuck Hess to Bill Neal.

RESOLUTION 2026-2, JEFFERSON COUNTY TAX COLLECTION COMMITTEE OPERATING BUDGET

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilman Burkett, Borough Council unanimously approved Resolution 2026-2, the Jefferson County Tax Collection Committee 2026 Operating Budget.

REAPPOINTMENT OF MARY MCHENRY AS THE CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

Upon motion by Councilman Story, and seconded by Councilman McAfoos, Borough Council unanimously reappointed Mary McHenry as the code enforcement officer.

APPOINTMENT OF RICHARD ALEXANDER TO POLICE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Upon motion by Councilman Story, and seconded by Councilman McAfoos, Borough Council unanimously appoint Richard Alexander to the Police Civil Service Commission for a term to expire December 31, 2032.

APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Joe Ferrara resigned from the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Upon motion by Councilman Story, and seconded by Councilwoman Blose, Borough Council unanimously appoint Richard Alexander to the Planning & Zoning Commission for a term to expire on December 2030.

APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION CONTINUED:

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilman Story, Borough Council unanimously appoint Bob Piscuzzo to the Planning & Zoning Commission for a term to expire December 31, 2027.

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY

Upon motion by Councilman Story, and seconded by Councilman Burkett, Borough Council unanimously appointed Kim Wittenburg, Patty Penman, and Melissa McAfoos to the Municipal Authority for terms to expire January 1, 2031. Councilman McAfoos abstained.

APPROVAL OF THE PUNXSUTAWNEY MEMORIAL LIBRARY BOARD

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilman Story, Borough Council unanimously approved Punxsutawney Memorial Library Board.

APPOINTMENT OF JOE FERRARA TO THE ZONING HEARING BOARD

Upon motion by Councilman Story, and seconded by Councilwoman Blose, Borough Council unanimously appoint Joe Ferrara to the Zoning Hearing Board for a term to expire December 31, 2030.

REAPPOINTMENT OF DOUG MANKOVICH TO AIRPORT AUTHORITY BOARD

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilman Story, Borough Council unanimously reappointed Doug Mankovich to the Airport Authority Board for a term to expire January 1, 2029.

Council President Smith stated there is one vacancy open on the Airport Authority Board and we will wait to see who they appoint for that vacancy.

APPROVAL OF ADDITION TO ELK RUN FIRE DEPARTMENT

Upon motion by Councilman Story and Seconded by Councilwoman Blose, Borough Council unanimously approved Storm Beer to the active role.

OLD BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF BID FOR DEMOLITION

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos and Seconded by Councilwoman Blose, Borough Council unanimously approved the bid by Silas Development, Inc. for the amount of \$26,890.00

APPROVAL TO AMMEND ENGINEER CONTRACT

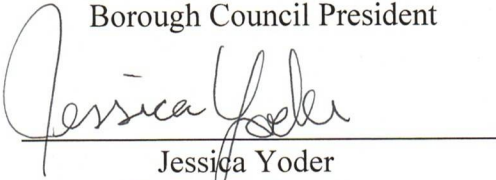
Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos and Seconded by Councilman Burkett, Borough Council unanimously approved to change in amending paragraph 24 of the engineer contract.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before Borough Council, the meeting was declared adjourned at 6:51P.M. upon motion by Councilman McAfoos, and seconded by Councilwoman Blose.



Jessica Smith
Borough Council President



Jessica Yoder
Recording Secretary



Dr. William Spencer
Borough Manager