

BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES

MARCH 24, 2026 6:00 P.M.

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A meeting of the Punxsutawney Borough Council was convened on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 6:00 P.M. in Borough Council Chambers, Civic Center, 301 East Mahoning Street, Punxsutawney, PA, with Council President Jessica Smith presiding.

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

Others present included Mayor William Clement, Recording Secretary Jessica Yoder, Solicitor Nicholas Gianvito, Fire Chief Chris Smith, and media representative Larry McGuire of The Punxsutawney Spirit. Borough Manager Dr. William Spencer, Police Chief Matt Conrad, and Junior Council Member Stevie Doverspike were absent.

APPROVAL OF BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES—REGULAR MEETING MARCH 10, 2026

Upon motion by Councilman McAfoos and seconded by Councilman Story, Borough Council unanimously approved the Borough Council minutes for the March 10, 2026, regular meeting.

Councilman Joe Ferrara stated I have a comment. We can discuss it now or under old business, and it pertains to the procedure that we approved the change in the, between the sewer department and who writes checks and who reconciles bank statements. There was some information that came to light that we may want to rethink that, at least until the auditors can refine their comments. Right now, they're busy with tax season, but there wasn't an audit exception, it was comments, recommendations, but we may want to revisit that. Apparently, the treasurer is signing the checks. So, what we approved then was he reconciles the accounts and he's signing all the checks. So, we may want to revisit that.

Council President Jessica Smith stated, In the path of things, he does not handle cash. So, he is a signer on the checks, yes, but the problem with the auditors was the fact that they were taking in the cash, handling the cash, counting the cash, inputting the cash, settling the cash, reconciling the cash. That is where the problem lies. It is not in the two signatures required on the checks. It's the steps from the very beginning to the reconciliation.

Councilman Joe Ferrara stated, the auditors are going to refine their comments. So, I mean, we can let it stand the way it is now and revisit it once the auditors weigh in with more details. I mean, if you want to leave it that way, fine.

Council President Jessica Smith stated, well, I'm not changing it. We voted on it last week. That will stay in place until we get further recommendation from the auditors, if there is any.

PETITIONS AND COMMENTS

Chanda Scott, 752 Shale Pit Rd, Reynoldsville, 814-541-3580

Ms. Scott came before council and stated she was awarded the title of Miss Punxsutawney to go compete at Miss Pennsylvania in June in York, PA. I have a community service initiative called the Heart to Paw Project, and it's centered around reducing shelter pet population while also bringing comfort and love to animals in need. One of my propositions is making a blessing box here in Punxsutawney. The blessing box in our community is a simple yet impactful way to support both pets and their owners in times of need. I do not have plans yet on where I would be putting

PETITIONS AND COMMENTS CONTINUED:

it; I just wanted council to know of my plans.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Petition to Vacate Alley

Upon motion by Councilman Ferrara and seconded by Councilwoman Murray, Borough Council unanimously approved ordinance # 1191 of vacating an unnamed alley located in the Borough of Punxsutawney along S.R. 36/N Main St. located between 220 N Main and 224 N Main St.

Solicitor Nick Genivto stated that the most recent deed just came back for the Wayne Young property in Young Township that was purchased by the borough and was filed. We are still getting tax bills, so I requested that the assessment office remove them. They're leaving it up to the county commissioners at this point.

Councilman Ferrara stated Just for the record, concerning that recent purchase, Councilman Burkett and I walked that property line yesterday, the common property line. There's no trespassing. There's 80- to 100-year-old oak trees on the property line. There's probably some littering from when the municipal dump was there 50, 60 years ago. There's a couple of tires that may have crossed the property line, but there is no disturbance at all, no earth disturbance on the property line. And the timber's been cut at least twice.

Councilman Burkett stated I know I personally voted on it, because I was told that it would cost more to clean it up. We've been over the line. It would cost more to clean it up than it would be to purchase the property. But I have no idea where that information's coming from, because I have pictures. We walked the whole property line. I mean, there's a little litter over there. It's enough that Joe and I could have picked it up, got it onto the line. I left things there, just in case anyone wanted to question and go look. But the two of us could have, in a half hour or so, cleaned up the vast majority of the litter, which is all it is. And it wasn't anything recent.

Councilman Ferrara stated No, everything's very recent, yeah. No, I mean, it's decades old.

Councilman Burkett stated I don't know. Did you walk this property line?

Councilman McAfoos stated Yeah.

Councilman Burkett asked and where is the litter?

Councilman McAfoos stated Right behind the compost area.

Council Burkett asked going to the right?

Council McAfoos answered we're dumping right over the hill. We're dumping cement, we're dumping trees, we're dumping land.

Councilman Ferrara stated no, no, there's nothing across that line.

Councilman Burkett stated that line is pretty clear.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT CONTINUED:

Councilman Ferrara stated It's surveyed. It's surveyed. There are ribbons, pins.

Councilman Burkett stated I mean, you can't miss it. I see no reason we purchased that. I mean, I guess I should question more. I assume that, you know, someone says, it's going to cost us more to clean up. It sounds like a hassle. But, I mean, I go above. There's nothing to clean up there. There's no reason we would have to purchase that. The property isn't good for much. It's just a ravine, you know. It's too steep to do anything with. The runoff, you said, you know more about this than I do. But the runoff wouldn't even go up there, most likely. It would go towards the front side of the property, other side. I don't understand. I don't know why we bought that. I heard rumors that we were trying to help out the owner who needed money. Like, that's ridiculous, if that was the case.

Council President Smith stated okay, one, that's not the case. And I would feel, as a person that sits on council, that you would avoid the rumors that are going around town. Because we have a lot that goes on.

Councilman Burkett stated that It's coming from within the borough. It's not like its town. That, you know, like, that Councilman McAfoos and Dr. Spencer have discussed in the past how we could buy the property, what we could, you know, what reason we could have for buying that property. Like, it seems like we decided we wanted to buy it and looked for a reason. Because I can't find a reason to go in there and look at it.

Councilman McAfoos stated So, if we're not over the boundaries and we're putting a solar farm in, where's the public dump going to be? Because if we're already pushing the boundaries right now, so you guys say, so where are we going to dump stuff this year?

Councilman Ferrara stated Well, we've never seen the plan for the solar farm. We don't know where it's going to be located.

Councilman McAfoos stated Its that whole area up there. It's a whole plateau.

Councilman Story stated It's on record. All you have to do is go to the office and find it. I'm not going to take it out for you.

Council President Smith stated Yeah, the main reason they were purchasing the property was because it's going to be part of the stormwater plan for the solar farm.

Councilman Story stated I have two things I want to ask for strength. Dave, you said somebody told you from the borough that the only reason you were going to purchase it.

Councilman Burkett stated Mary McHenry.

Councilman Story stated Let me finish the question.

Councilman Burektt stated Yes, sir.

Councilman Story stated You say that somebody from the borough, an employee here, told you

SOLICITOR'S REPORT CONTINUED:

that it was being purchased to help somebody out?

Councilman Burkett stated Well, it originally had been discussed.

Councilman Story asked Okay and Who was that person that told you that?

Councilman Burkett stated it was Mary McHenry I had talked to, and she had said how Bill Spencer had talked to her sooner.

Councilman Story stated Maybe somebody needs to ask....

Council President Smith interrupted and stated I am just going to say that Mary is an employee of the borough, correct? She works for us, so we are the authority over top to her. Unless one of us directly told her that, then that is something that was just made up and thrown out there.

Councilman Burkett stated Well, I mean she said that.

Council President Smith stated Yeah, she was an employee of the borough.
Councilman Burkett stated Okay.

Council President Smith asked, did you talk to any of us?

Councilman Burkett stated Well, here I am.

Council President Smith stated Okay, and I'm telling you, nobody went to her and said, oh, Mary, you're buying this property because we need to help somebody out. I don't know who the owner is.

Councilman Burektt stated Exactly.

Councilman Story stated Let me ask this. Didn't we already vote and approve this?

Council President Smith stated Yes.

Councilman Story asked then what are we discussing?

Councilman Burkett stated Well, I had voted. I thought it was pretty clear.

Councilman Story stated well, then you should have voted no.

Councilman Burkett stated well, okay, and so my point is that information...

Council President Smith stated Jessica, you put a measure that David is abstaining from his previous vote to buy the property. We already have a majority on that, so...

Councilman Burkett, I mean, the reason it's being discussed is we were given reasons for why we were buying this property that turned out to be false, directly falsifiable. You walk right up there

SOLICITOR'S REPORT CONTINUED:

and follow the line. It's just not true. So, if your claim is I should have voted no, sure. So, I should just not leave anything said then. I assume we are all working... I assume we're all honest people who are all on the same thing, which is what's best for the town. And that assumes that everybody is honest here and we're being honest with each other in our proposals and our discussions about purchases. If that's not the case, well, I mean, yeah, it's going to be a much bigger uphill battle than for every purchase because I'm going to have to triple-check everything, assume everything's a lie from the beginning. I mean, that's a way of doing it. Sure, this is politics. I can do that. But I just don't think it's right. I just wanted to understand where the information came from that we were dumping over top because we aren't. We just aren't.

Councilman McAfoos stated We are dumping over the line. Yes, we are.

Councilman Burkett stated I have pictures. I can show you the pictures. We can walk up there together. I'd love to go up there with you.

Councilman Ferrara stated there's two-foot diameter oak trees on the property. Nothing's been disturbed.

Councilman Burkett stated I mean, if you want to go walking, I'll go walking with you.

Councilman Story stated Well, what you're looking at is the flat map.

Councilman Ferrara stated No, we walked the property.

Councilman Burkett stated No, we walked it.

Councilman Ferrara stated It's surveyed. There are stakes. There are surveys.

Councilman Story asked Alright, who was it that did the survey?

Councilman Ferrara stated It was done recently because Allstate is on the tags. Councilman Story stated I have no idea.

Councilman Burkett stated Dr. Spencer had mentioned that we have a survey.

Councilman Ferrara stated Yeah, it's surveyed. We can all take a walk up there.

Borough Solicitor Nick Ginavito stated It's surveyed, actually.

Councilman Ferrara stated Yeah, I mean, I've never seen a survey like this where there are pinned rebar on line about every 200 feet. Normally, the surveyors put rebar on line in the entire property from the corner to corner.

Borough Solicitor Nick Genavito stated its Surveyed by Young & Associates, 12-22-2025.

Councilman Ferrara stated Yeah, well, it looks recent.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT CONTINUED:

Councilman Story asked where are they out of Nick?

Borough Solicitor Nick Ginavito stated Indiana. Carson Hauser.

Councilman Ferrara stated yeah, and another aspect of it is purchase of borrowed money. The bond money, which, you know, \$117,000 turns into \$235,000 in 30 years. It had to be surveyed. So, you know, I guess going forward, we need to be more deliberate, I think. More deliberate, especially when it comes to that kind of money. And, you know, make sure we're doing the right thing.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

No Report

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Clement stated that he is working on coordinating a visit with the Freedom 250 Mobile Museum to our community. It will take place on Monday, March 30th at the high school for students, faculty, and staff. On Tuesday, March 31st, and Wednesday, April 1st, to the public. It will be located on S. Jefferson St. between E. Mahoning St. and Union St. He will coordinate with Lieutenant Wittenburg about closing S. Jefferson St. on Monday afternoon to Wednesday afternoon.

Upon motion by Councilman Story and seconded by Councilman McAfoos, Borough Council unanimously approved the Freedom 250 Mobile Museum to be located on S. Jefferson St. on Monday, March 30th to Wednesday, April 1st.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT

No Report

OLD BUSINESS

Council President Smith stated that at the last meeting there were questions left unanswered about the expenses. I got the expenses from the treasurer for February to clear up the unanswered questions.

NEW BUSINESS

No Report

BOROUGH MANAGER REPORT

Council President Smith went over the Borough Manager Report in his absence.

DCED Blight Project

Council President Smith stated they needed a council member to be a representative for the DCED Blight Project. It would include having to attend the five (5) work sessions. Councilman Ferrara stated he will be the council representative.

Codification

Just an update that: the first phase of the codification process will be released at the end of April; we should be able to roll out to the public in the beginning of June.

BOROUGH MANAGER REPORT CONTINUED:

CDBG Roof Project

The update on the CDBG Roof Project will be rebid under the "new" specifications, repairing, not replacing.

DCED STMP Phase III

An update on the DCED STMP Phase III grant will be submitted for new accounting software and an accounting procedures manual. Borough Treasurer Andy Markle is finalizing the quotes.

DCED STMP

An update on the DCED STMP 5-year program review will happen in November.

Dinsmore Project

Update on the Dinsmore Project; a letter was submitted to DCED Rep. for the Commonwealth Finance Authority for the Dismore Project.

Probationary Status

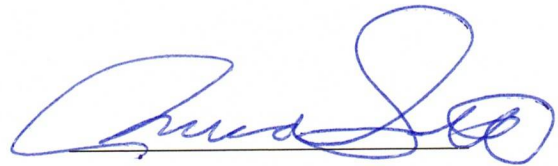
Upon motion by Councilman Story and seconded by Councilwoman Murray, Borough Council approved to removing Andy Markle from probationary status with a performance review to be done. Councilman Ferrara voted no due to the fact that the borough manager was not present to find out if a performance review was done.

ADJOURNMENT

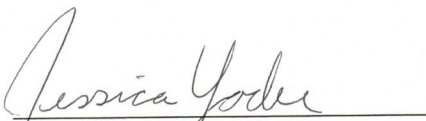
There being no further business to come before Borough Council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m. upon motion by Councilwoman Murray, seconded by Councilman Ferrara.



Dr. William Spencer
Borough Manager



Jessica Smith
Council President



Jessica Yoder
Recording Secretary

