

Myerstown Borough Council Committee Meeting
Wednesday, September 22, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

A meeting of the Myerstown Borough Council Committees was held on Wednesday, September 22, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Room at the Myerstown Community Center, President Bryan L. Rittle being in the Chair and the Secretary being present.

Present were: President Bryan L. Rittle, Vice-President Park W. Haverstick, II, President Pro Tem Dana Reich Councilmembers Ronald L. Ream, Stacey A. Hackman, Dane W. Bicher, and Jeffrey L. Thomas, Assistant Manager Barry A. Ludwig, and Manager Michael R. McKenna. Absent was: Mayor Gloria R. Ebling.

The President opened the meeting at 6:36 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Park W. Haverstick, II moved, and Stacey A. Hackman seconded, to approve the minutes of the meetings held on August 25, 2021. Motion unanimously carried.

Public Safety

President Bryan L. Rittle opened the floor for public comment on the residential rental licensing ordinance.

Josh Zimmerman – 10 E Main Avenue – Raised concern about the residential rental license being stripped if the rules of the ordinance aren't followed. He also raised concern about the inspection. He stated it is not fair that homeowners would not have the same requirements as rental property owners.

John Kline – 200 Krall Road, Myerstown & On-Fire Ministries – Stated he is harshly opposed to the proposed ordinance. Asked Council to consider tabling the ordinance. He believes Council has good intentions, but there should be a committee formed to find a better solution.

Barry Hurley – 76 W Maple Avenue – Stated he is opposed to the ordinance and the inspection requirements and believes it is unfair to rental property owners.

Gary Laucks – 26 & 30 W. Main Avenue – Stated he is opposed to the ordinance and doesn't believe at this time we need more government programs. He stated that landowners want to improve their properties, but many cannot afford it. Expressed concern over streets and alleys.

Priscilla Kahl – 209 W Main Avenue – Opposed to the proposed ordinance and agrees with the concerns others are raising.

Troy Herzer – 240 E. Main Avenue – 324 S. College Street – Stated that he is the "little man" and feels like a government agency is trying to knock him down. His tenants are concerned about the inspection and having an inspector enter the property. Recommends a self-reporting inspection form.

Debbie Schumaker – 47/49 W Main Avenue – Opposed to the proposed ordinance and agrees with the concerns others are raising.

Bruce Eckenrode – 21 S College Street – Believes the revisions to the checklist are going in the right direction because they are less restrictive. Stated that all properties should be required to be brought up to code, not just rental properties.

Dave Yiengst – 111 S Cherry Street – Stated that the current checklist is ridiculous and unrealistic because of the age of the homes. Doesn't like the idea of providing the names of tenants. Suggested a "landlord board" to help with the checklist.

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Simone Grill - 213 W. Grant Avenue, Myerstown – Stated that the Borough should be ready to go to court to defend this ordinance. He is opposed to the ordinance and does not think it is necessary to address property maintenance concerns. Expressed concerns about several parts of the proposed ordinance.

Eric Herb – 830 S Railroad St – Stated he is opposed to the ordinance because he takes care of his property and doesn't believe it is necessary. Stated rents will go up because of this ordinance. Stated that the borough should spend more time going after the bad property owners.

Terry Lerch– 365 Long Road – Stated that he owns over 100 rental properties, and a couple in Myerstown. Stated he takes care of his properties and the ordinance is not necessary. Stated that bringing old houses up to code is very expensive. Asked Council to consider ways to hold the tenants accountable for property maintenance issues.

Jeff Schumaker – 47/49 W Main Avenue – Stated the Borough is not currently applying its ordinances. Said 99% of the time the problem is the tenant. Agrees with Mr. Lerch that tenants should be held accountable.

Roy Gettle – Stricklerstown – Opposes the ordinance. Asked if “rent-to-own” properties are exempt under the ordinance. Believes the borough should not go after property owners that are fixing properties and putting money into them. Believes the ordinance is discriminatory. Expressed concern about the timing of the ordinance because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Stated that the Borough is picking on the poorest of the poor by enacting this ordinance. Recommended a “landlord board” to advise Council on the matter.

President Rittle thanked everyone in attendance for their comments. Said there were a lot of good ideas and Council would consider all of them before moving forward.

President Rittle ended this portion of the meeting and thanked those in attendance for coming.

Council discussed a request from the Goodwill Fire Company to be dispatched as automatic aid responder on all fire department responses in the Borough. Ronald L. Ream stated he spoke with the President of the Keystone Hook & Ladder Co., and they would like a meeting with the Goodwill Fire Company and members of Council to discuss the request before Council takes action. Council agreed and directed Manager McKenna to set up a meeting between all three parties.

Finance & Administration

Council received 2021 Budget v. Actual documents from Manager McKenna in preparation of FY2022 budget planning efforts. Manager McKenna instructed Council that a budget meeting would be held on October 26th to review the draft FY2022 budget.

Public Works & Utilities

Assistant Manager Ludwig gave an update on matters related to public works & utilities. He reported on an automobile accident that damaged the curb ramp project on Locust Street. He reviewed quotes for finishing construction on the Public Works Maintenance Building. This will be brought to the October meeting for approval.

Community & Economic Development

Council discussed passing a Resolution conveying gratitude and appreciation to the owner of 2 East Main Avenue on the extensive renovation of the historic property and opening of a new restaurant in town. Manager McKenna stated he would draft a Resolution for consideration at the October meeting.

Council recessed the regular meeting and entered into Executive Session at 8:27 p.m. to discuss personnel matters.

Council exited Executive Session at 8:37 p.m. and reconvened the regular session.

The Chair asked if there were any additional comments for the good of the Borough. Council discussed the upcoming block party on Saturday, September 25th. Council also discussed issues with solid waste pickup in the Borough.

Dana Reich motioned, and Jeffrey L. Thomas seconded, to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael R. McKenna, MPA
Manager/Secretary