

Myerstown, PA
Tuesday, August 25, 2015

President Bryan L. Rittle called the advertised special meeting of the Myerstown Borough Council to order at 6:30 p.m., on Tuesday, August 25, 2015. The meeting was held in Borough Council Chambers in the Myerstown Municipal Center, 101 East Washington Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, a roll call was taken. Present were: President Bryan L. Rittle, Vice President Michael D. Behm, Park W. Haverstick, II, Jeffrey L. Thomas, Dana Reich, Keith Fox, Mayor Gloria R. Ebling, Deputy Secretary Lisa A. Brubaker and Manager Christopher J. Moonis. Absent was: Councilmember Vince Podolski.

The Council President announced an executive session was held on Thursday, August 20, 2015 for personnel matters.

The Council President asked if there are any citizens or visitors comments. There were no comments.

The special meeting is being held to develop a strategic plan for the Borough. The Council President introduced Consultant Nancy Hess. She was the consultant for the E.I.P I Phase study and was here to lead the discussion.

Nancy Hess explained she was the consultant for the E.I.P. I study and wanted to come back as the facilitator for this discussion. This is a launch discussion for some strategic planning for the Borough. The idea is to take the work that the Council and Manager have done to this point with the mini-comprehensive plan, the E.I.P. studies and through various other means and try to bring all of that together. In bringing it all together, the goal is to produce more clarity and focus on the key projects that are in process and to try to fit them into the future of the Borough. Also how to respond, address and answer to the community when asked questions on these projects.

Some of the discussion will be on roles. From a Human Resource standpoint, she comes from an understanding of how the organization has to be aligned with the priorities of Council. You have a staff in place, so now what is the scope of work and what should the staff be focused on. How does Council want the jobs to be designed, that design is based on your goals and priorities. So the Council needs to be clear and define where the Borough is headed and what are the major goals in order to understand how we are going to set goals for the staff. How can we do a better job of measuring performance to motivate and manage the company staff. Expectations need to be clear from the Council to the Manager and from the Manager to staff.

Nancy Hess questioned the group as to how they see the Councils role differing from the management role in the process of setting goals. Councilmember Park W. Haverstick, II stated Council sets and relays the ideas and goals to the Manager for him to direct staff to accomplish the task. The Mayor stated the Manager carries out, implements, and executes the direction but also contributes ideas to the Council to help make the community better.

In the next topic of discussion, the consultant asked Council to write down their top three projects currently being worked on and then their dream projects.

Top current projects:

*Economic Development

- creating new businesses/sustaining and expanding existing businesses
- circuit rider
- business incubator – acquisition of school building/creating community core center
- downtown revitalization

*Pool/Playground/Parks

- master park plan – grant applications with DCNR for pool redevelopment and park plan

Top current projects: (continued)

- *Street Projects – Broad and Cherry Street
 - Public Works
 - Infrastructure – sewer line repairs
- *Property Maintenance Codes

Top dream projects:

- *Police services
 - regionalization
- *Thriving community
 - community involvement
 - civics
 - main street makeover
 - desirable place to live/viewed or known as a desirable place to live and work
- * Healthcare facilities
- * Diversity of businesses
- * Redevelopment of brownfield site (Quaker Alloy)
- * Create better inter-municipal relations (Jackson Township)
- * Total pool restoration
- * Borough being a destination point
- * Attract international companies
- * Create synergy

The consultant stated this is a great list to now build a community response to projects based on the concerns from residents. With that, what are the concerns or criticisms Councilmembers are hearing that impact their work right now. She again asked the Council to write down concerns they are receiving.

Concerns:

- *Affordability/costs - can we afford
- *Road projects - why aren't more roadways being done
- *Taxes – will my taxes be raised
- *Pool - who will manage it/will it be profitable
- *Organized business groups - why do we not have a business association
- *Code Enforcement - why aren't more properties being cleaned up
- *School building - why would we buy it/can we afford it/do we need it

The consultant asked is the purchasing of the school building a priority. The Council President stated it has to be a priority for us. If we don't, the Borough will lose their funding source. The consultant stated this is a good example for the Council as how important it is to find a way to articulate the mission to the residents. So a journey vision should be discussed.

What is the core purpose of the Borough, what is the core business. Think about the Borough as a system. The consultant drew a chart reviewing the structure of the Borough through staff, equipment, Public Works, Wastewater, customer service, codes, parks and recreation. These are all things happening inside your system. Then going into the system are taxes and other funding, which comes from various sources. The system has your assets and valuable resources, which are part of the core of customer services and then from the system a variety of services for those taxes, the output of the system. So for discussion, how does the Council see the Borough as a provider of services to the community. The Mayor stated she feels the Borough is run quite well and staff is taking care of the residents. Councilmember Park W. Haverstick, II stated he feels we provide good service, we make due with what we have, but feels they are trying to make those services even better. You should always be striving to make things better. Services should always be a permanent working project to strive towards.

Nancy Hess stated this is the direction we need to go, to think about that within the mission statement there is an intention to make good utilization of assets. The main objective is to preserve the core but at the same time you want to stimulate progress.

The consultant asked the group to think about the guiding principles and values, what do you most care about. The Council President stated we need to provide proper incentives and environment for business to thrive in this community, but also for families to buy homes so this will be a family community and not a rental community. The Manager stated we want a sense of community, a quality of life. We want people who work here at the local business to want to stay and be a part of the town.

The consultant asked again why is the purchasing of the school building so vital and can you afford this. She wants Council to respond with the language that conveys the values that the Council just expressed with respect to family values and quality of life. The Council President stated can we afford not to, because of the possibilities that building could hold. There is so much potential. There is a gymnasium for community events, rooms for local organization. Councilmember Keith Fox stated low cost rent for building businesses. Councilmember Park W. Haverstick, II stated we need to look towards the future and possibilities. This could be a community center and central hub to get more people involved. The consultant stated the strategy in how you want to respond to affordability is you want to connect it right to the values which is what you share with your community.

The Borough can produce the numbers that will be logical and correct, but we have to relate to the community on the values you share with them. Councilmember Keith Fox stated it will bring people together and recover a lost asset. The building has possibilities of rental income and the income should help the building sustain itself. Councilmember Michael D. Behm stated there are a lot of unknowns, the Council is trying to come up with ideas on how to utilize the building but there are uncertainties. However, if we don't try, where is that going to get the community. Councilmember Dana Reich stated this is the first step of community growth.

The Manager stated the building has a lot of diverse potential to bring that sense of community. The town is a very historic and prideful community, there is no place to show case that. The business incubator that will help with economic development and spur the new entrepreneur to grow that business and relocate in town. The Manager explained the Commonwealth gives money to municipalities for this type of opportunity, a Keystone Grant. The funds are earmarked to be given to someone, so why shouldn't the Borough utilize getting its share of funding.

Core competencies:

The consultant discussed the issue of core competencies as having the organization aligned, and staffed properly, to meet the existing levels of service and then to align the organization with the competencies (people with skills) with the future goals and objectives of the Borough and to sustain these going forward.

For example, having the right person in the positions, competent people to address the existing demands and ensuring that future growth, development opportunities, are enabled because the right people and systems are in place. The Council discussed competencies and where there might be gaps in the organization policy and staffing.

The consultant drove the issue of being "good at this" [core competencies]. Having those competencies already in place, starting the ball rolling in new directions, e.g. the Circuit Rider, or identifying gaps in competencies such a road infrastructure or curb appeal that need identified now and charted to fix in the next five years or ten years for example. In order to meet that future, we need to identify any structural issues within the organization of any kind that will need to be made to meet that future.

The consultant asked what are the critical issues for the Borough.

Critical Issues:

*Limited time and funding

- grants/required awarding timeframe – could affect future grant funding

Critical Issues: (continued)

- *Safety issues – Police services
 - state police do not have community contact/connection
 - state police cover most of the surrounding municipalities
 - are police an affordable item
 - state police are bias
- *Property Maintenance
 - tougher rules
 - curb appeal – attracts home buyers

The Manager explained the code enforcement policy has been complaint driven. If a different approach is wanted, the Council would need to make a policy change and direct staff to be proactive on code enforcement.

The last area on the chart is environment. This area will address any future challenges. The consultant stated environment means what is happening in communities around you or changes to laws, anything that is taking place in or around the Borough that could impact the way we operate.

The Council President stated maybe some steps for the group to learn about is how to approach our neighboring municipalities to provide them with the Boroughs vision, especially for economic development to try to create a stronger relationship.

Nancy Hess would like to meet with the group again in September to continue building the strategic plan. The next meeting she would like to discuss how the budgeting process should reflect the Borough priorities and we will develop some specific strategies and goals. The group will also work on exercises to frame a response and give Council a unified voice.

The consultant also expressed that she can see how much progress the Borough has made from the start of the E.I.P. I Study to now and thanked the Council for being so engaged in this process.

The Council President asked if there were any additional comments for the good of the borough. Seeing none, a motion was made by Park W. Haverstick, II, seconded by Michael D. Behm, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Without objection, meeting adjourned.

Lisa A. Brubaker
Deputy Secretary