

**Penbrook Borough
Caucus Meeting Minutes
July 20, 2026
6:30 PM**

1. On July 20, 2026, Council President Nathan Newcomer called the public meeting to order at 6:28 p.m.
2. Present were Newcomer, Dry, Stokes, Lovejoy, Seaman, and Moore. Solicitor Kern, and Assistant Borough Manager Welch were in attendance. Shaw, Burdine, the Mayor, and the Borough Manager were not in attendance.
3. Citizen Comments on Agenda Items: N/A
4. Discussion and Action Items

- a. A discussion was held regarding the expectations of Council Members.

First, regarding Executive Sessions, Newcomer noted that what is discussed during executive sessions should stay within the executive sessions and should be maintained confidential. Newcomer referenced the Sunshine Act and how it outlines sensitive topics being covered in executive sessions. Newcomer noted a desire to be as transparent as possible with the public, but certain things are justified in not being open to the public. Newcomer discussed how sharing information from executive sessions could expose the Borough to financial risk, and potentially undermines the trust that Council has in one another or the trust that the Administrative Staff have in Council.

Second, Newcomer expressed concern regarding colorful language used during meetings. Newcomer encouraged more mindfulness when using expressive language and phrasing.

Third, Newcomer discussed concerns about attendance and meetings being cancelled due to not having a quorum. Newcomer encouraged folks to do their best to attend, while acknowledging that family, work, health, etc. can get in the way. Newcomer voiced that attendance of at least 80% of meetings should be standard. Newcomer expressed a desire to ensure that the public is adequately represented.

Discussion was held regarding interactions among council members.

- b. Dry initiated a discussion regarding the newsletter. Dry shared that the newsletter articles are due August 7, 2026. Dry requested information from the parks committee regarding an overview of the Little Valley Summer Program, and requested an article from the safety committee. Dry noted that Representative Justin Fleming had shared information about Little Valley Park Grand Re-Opening that she plans to include in the newsletter.

Dry discussed the possibility of including advertisements in the newsletters starting at \$50 per quarter page. Dry plans to start with local businesses in good standing (all taxes paid, business licenses up to date, etc.). Dry noted that this initiative will help offset the cost of the newsletter. Resident Joe Wenger inquired about whether it would only be open to commercial businesses or if anyone would be able to purchase. Solicitor Kern discussed potentially soliciting sponsors as a happy medium rather than having to regulate what is included in their ads. Discussion was had regarding potential conversations with businesses who are not in good standing and why they may not have been solicited.

Newcomer highlighted a communication survey going out in the newsletter inquiring about where folks want to receive information from the borough.

It was agreed that the discussion regarding advertising in the newsletters would be continued at the August Caucus meeting.

- c. A discussion regarding the lease agreement with American Tower was held. Newcomer outlined that in 2026, the Borough will receive \$18,695.61 in rent under the current lease, and each year, this rent is increased by 3%. American Tower proposed shifting to a lump sum payment for the lease that would result in less money received over time. Newcomer discussed possibilities of putting lump sum into a savings account, letting it earn interest and eventually breaking even with the amount that would be earned by the 3% increase year-over-year. Discussion was held regarding the offer and whether there was value or not. Council determined that it seemed to be best to leave the lease as is. A motion was made to direct borough staff to reply to decline the proposal by Stokes. Moore seconded. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.
- d. A discussion regarding the collection process and a Q2 status report for delinquent tax collection was provided. Solicitor Kern provided an overview of the tax collection process. Kern noted that when the amount becomes delinquent (at the start of a new calendar year), Dauphin County turns over a list

of delinquent taxes to CGA Law to start the steps necessary by law prior to putting a lien against the property. CGA Law confirms record of the owner and checks federal court documents to ensure that the current owner is not in a current bankruptcy. CGA Law then follows the process of notifying via mail and giving ample time for response prior to putting a lien on a property. A lien is on property until the borough takes the action to execute on the lien and take it to a sheriff sale (which is usually rare). Liens are typically viable/active for 20 years.

Kern noted that folks who are on the 2024 and 2025 lists are receiving one notification instead of two. This will result in these individuals paying less in collection fees.

Kern shared that approximately two thirds of delinquent accounts turned over for 2024 have been collected and many of the remaining liens are being filed. Newcomer questioned the timing of getting to the point of the lien. Solicitor Kern noted that if there is a lack of satisfaction with the timing/service, the Borough can make the decision to hand the process back over to the county if desired. Moore voiced appreciation for the additional time granted. Newcomer countered that folks have more than a year before the account is delinquent and that there is plenty of communication with folks regarding their taxes owed.

Discussion was held regarding the perceived lack of proactivity and lack of success with collections by the county. Curiosity was expressed as to whether prior years collection process can be taken back from the county. Solicitor Kern noted that she did not believe so.

Solicitor Kern overviewed that any time monies are collected and sent to the accountant, details are provided regarding which accounts to deposit the monies into and what properties have been paid. Lovejoy inquired about controls or checks and balances for the monies collected. Welch and Kern discussed CGA Law Firm collecting, sharing information with the Borough, and the accountant processing the money for the Borough accounts.

Stokes voiced support for the additional time provided for folks to pay. Newcomer expressed a desire to find a happy medium/level of protection regarding a timeline for putting a lien on the properties that are delinquent.

- e. A review of the goals and objectives set by the Council for each committee was provided by Newcomer. Newcomer discussed how establishing goals and objectives will help guide administrative/borough staff and provide direction.

Newcomer requested an update from Building Code Official, Jacob Bragunier, at an upcoming meeting regarding any lessons learned or applications from time spent with other municipalities (i.e. Hanover).

Newcomer shared a desire for better tracking and promotion for what the borough has accomplished (i.e. X number of potholes filled).

Newcomer expressed a vision for more investment for improving sidewalks and encouraged that the Codes Department enforce this more regularly.

Lovejoy brought up grant funding available, particularly the Main Street Matters program.

Newcomer noted that more feedback from community and measuring satisfaction will be solicited.

Newcomer brought up the idea of televising/recording meetings to reach more people and spread information more broadly.

Newcomer noted that Council should be completing NIMS training and wants to track this.

Newcomer expressed a desire to get these goals shared out on the website.

- f. A discussion regarding the development of a mission statement was held.

Newcomer expressed wanting to develop a more cohesive community and a sense of pride, make the borough a great place to live, increase property value, and help people feel safer.

Stokes noted wanting to shift the mindset from Penbrook Borough being a "pass through" community or "first home" community to more of a long-term community.

Moore and Seaman stepped out temporarily around 8:15 p.m. to assist with a resident concern regarding need for police support.

Discussion was held regarding property maintenance, the high number of rental properties, and lack of investment in folks caring for their properties.

Seaman returned around 8:20 p.m. Moore returned around 8:27 p.m.

Conversations regarding safety and walkability in the community were had.

- g. A discussion was held regarding commercial vehicle parking on residential streets within the Borough. Moore shared ideas from other communities for designated lots for large commercial vehicles to park in rather than parking on the street. Moore noted that the Borough should consider some flexibility (i.e. 24 hours to park on residential roads for instances like moving). Moore shared that parking these commercial vehicles on some streets causes blind spots for other drivers. Moore recommended limitations for these vehicles on Penbrook roads, and noted that consequences for trucks violating the guidelines should be explored.

Moore also expressed that Penbrook's roads are not great to drive on and need to be repaired.

Council discussed concerns regarding utility services such as UGI performing street cuts and not repairing the roads properly. Moore encouraged direct communication from council members to the utilities and entities to improve their work and service

Newcomer inquired about folks parking a truck overnight and leaving in the morning daily and asked how this proposed ordinance would resolve the concern.

Discussion was held regarding the number of parking spots that these commercial vehicles take up and the concern of trying to see around them at intersections.

- h. Discussion was held regarding Borough Building and property video retention. Solicitor Kern provided background regarding individuals asking the Borough for video footage from accidents or concerns occurring outside of the Borough

building. Chief of Police/Borough Manager Joseph Hogarth will sometimes receive requests months after accidents occur from insurance companies to secure this footage. Hogarth discussed how some of the video cameras rewrite the footage every so often. Solicitor Kern recommended a security camera use policy with the rewrite clause included to avoid running into concerns in the future. Solicitor Kern offered to provide example policies. Solicitor Kern recommended tabling the discussion further until the August Caucus due to the time of evening. Seaman expressed concern regarding additional cameras being added around the Borough in the future and voiced disagreement with that. Solicitor Kern clarified that the cameras are just covering public areas at the Borough properties (i.e. the municipal building and parks). Conversation will be brought back up in a future meeting when Hogarth can add to the discussion.

- i. The back-to-school backpacks initiative was discussed. Dry shared that a letter with a list of necessities will be going out to businesses and that monetary donations can also be made. Dry stated that Target will also be a donor. Dry has 23 bookbags to fill with basic school supplies (notebooks, folders, paper, pens, etc.). Seaman inquired about whether the local churches would be reached out to and offered to help however he could. Council was in favor of the letter. Dry noted she would work with folks at Southside to identify students who need support. Moore discussed previous efforts in connecting with the kids who attended Little Valley Summer Program and pushing out the sign up in the newsletter, sharing on Facebook, etc. Moore offered to share previous outreach efforts and connection lists with Dry to assist. Welch will share a sign-up sheet on Facebook for the program.

5. Citizen Comments:

- a. Joe Wenger (2324 Hoffer St.) - Offered support for backpack program. Wenger shared thoughts regarding Council's goals and mission statements. Wenger encouraged Council to consider what they want people to say about Penbrook and what they want to be true about Penbrook. Wenger encouraged reflection about what the Council would want the next generation to say about Penbrook.

Wenger noted that many of the older/former policies and codes were designed to exclude certain groups/populations.

Wenger voiced that rather than punishing people for not doing things, the Council should consider how they can celebrate people doing the right things.

6. Council Comments

- a. Seaman shared that his organization will be holding a "Walk for Life" which highlights their work of rescuing women from sex trafficking. Seaman wants it to be more of a community event and is hoping Penbrook will partner. The event will be held at Community Park and the Greenbelt.
- b. Moore apologized for missing some meetings/attendance. Moore expressed that she believes in the group and their ability to think about the bigger picture and being cohesive.
- c. Dry encouraged folks to let things go.
- d. Newcomer noted that he will sometimes have to shut down conversations that are not relevant to the Council's discussions, and the intention is not to disrespect anyone or dismiss anyone. Moore suggested that it would be beneficial to hold a workshop for cultural competency training and team building in a future meeting/executive session. Newcomer agreed.

7. At 9:57 p.m. Moore made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dry seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Bailey Welch
Assistant Borough Manager and Borough Secretary