Borough of Sinking Spring

May 14, 2026

Council Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Sinking Spring was called to order on Thursday, May 14, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., by Council President Tracy Peterson. After the pledge to the flag, Elizabeth Eagelman called the roll reflecting the following Council Members present:

Tracy Peterson
H. David Miller
Denise Stine (absent)
Lisa Gantner
Brian Hoffa
Robert Metzgar
John Eagelman

Other officials present: Mayor Gary Cirulli; Charles Haws, Barley Snyder, Borough Solicitor; Lowell Leaman, ARRO Consulting; Michael Hart, Borough Manager; Police Chief James Oxenreider; and Elizabeth Eagelman, Borough Secretary, who recorded the minutes of the proceedings.

Approval to Amend Agenda to Include Hiring 3 Library Assistants

Mrs. Peterson requested a motion to amend the meeting agenda to include the hiring of three library assistants.

> Motion was made by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mrs. Gantner, to amend the agenda to include hiring three library assistants. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – 4-9-26 Council Meeting

> Motion to approve the meeting minutes was made by Mr. Eagelman and seconded by Mr. Hoffa. The motion passed unanimously.

Visitors/Public Comment

SRJ Real Estate – 4100 Penn Ave and 20 Woodrow Ave

Attorney Alex Elliker presented on behalf of SRJ Real Estate regarding their apartment development project. He provided a comprehensive recap of the project's evolution over the past year, explaining that they had originally proposed two apartment buildings but have significantly reduced the scope to address council concerns.

Mr. Elliker detailed that the project involves consolidating three properties - the post office location, a single-family dwelling on Woodrow Avenue, and a vacant lot - into one development with a single 13-unit apartment building. He acknowledged that the project still requires approximately 18 variances due to the unique split zoning between C1 and R5 districts.

The attorney emphasized that they have worked to address previous council objections by reducing the number of units and improving the overall site plan. He noted that the Planning Commission had remained neutral on the application rather than supporting or opposing it.

Mrs. Peterson acknowledged that while the project is moving in the right direction and council had received ARRO Engineering's variance review, she was not ready to provide full endorsement. However, she indicated that council's position would be to allow the zoning hearing to proceed without aggressive opposition from the borough solicitor, while still maintaining the ability to voice concerns during the hearing process.

Elliker confirmed this understanding and indicated they would request the zoning hearing board schedule a hearing within the next 30-60 days.

Correspondence

Berks DES Radio Fleet Informational Meeting – May 20 @ 6 p.m.

Mrs. Peterson announced the upcoming Berks County DES radio fleet informational meeting scheduled for May 20th at 6:00 PM. Fire Commissioner Jared Renshaw provided extensive background on the radio replacement issue, explaining that current APX 4000 portable radios from 2014 have become obsolete and cannot be repaired by Motorola. He detailed the significant cost implications, noting that new portable radios cost approximately $9,000 each, even with trade-in programs potentially reducing costs to around $4,500 per radio. He expressed frustration with the county's requirement to use only Motorola radios on their system, questioning why other manufacturers' compatible radios cannot be utilized when they cost approximately 50% less.

Mr. Miller shared historical context about the radio system's security-focused design to prevent unauthorized access, though this has resulted in the current monopolistic situation with Motorola.

Mr. Renshaw indicated he had applied for an LSA grant to replace radios and planned to attend the May 20th meeting to gather more information for the borough.

Western Berks Fire Department Report

Mr. Renshaw presented his April 2026 report and asked if there were any questions. Mrs. Peterson questioned the high number of rescue calls. Mr. Renshaw explained that this was due to the new NEARIS (National Emergency Reporting Incident System) which categorizes various call types differently than previous systems. The fire-centric reporting system includes accidents and other incidents under "rescue" classifications.

Approval of the Bills for April 2026

Mrs. Peterson called for approval of April 2026 bills.

> Motion to approve the bills was made by Mr. Hoffa and seconded by Mrs. Gantner. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the Treasurers Report for April 2026

Mrs. Peterson requested approval of the Treasurer's Report for April 2026.

> Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report was made by Mr. Hoffa and seconded by Mr. Miller. The motion passed unanimously.

Western Berks Ambulance Report

The ambulance report was noted as included in council packets with no specific discussion recorded.

Revitalization

Mr. Hoffa reported on his attendance with Mr. Hirsch at the county comprehensive plan meeting. He highlighted significant regional housing challenges, noting that Berks County has only 54 active real estate listings with a median home price of $308,000 locally and $290,000 county-wide.

Mr. Hoffa emphasized affordability concerns, using the example of a nurse-teacher couple earning $120,000 combined who would have only $500 monthly remaining in their housing budget after mortgage payments. He questioned whether current apartment developments charging $2,000+ monthly rent are addressing actual housing needs.

The county identified 61.3 potential developable acres in Sinking Spring, though council members expressed skepticism about this figure. Mr. Hoffa noted the borough's cooperation with county development efforts and mentioned the Industrial Development Authority as a potential funding resource, though their fund has been reduced to approximately $2,000,000.

Mr. Metzgar confirmed that current zoning changes and development planning align with county housing recommendations.

Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

New Business - Possible Action Items

a. Approve Sacks & Sons Inc. Invoice in the amount of $119,550.17 to be paid from Liquid Fuels for 2026 Pavement Resurfacing Project

Mrs. Peterson noted ARRO Engineering's recommendation to proceed with this payment for completed paving work.

> Motion was made by Mr. Eagelman, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve the Sacks & Sons Inc. invoice for $119,550.17 from Liquid Fuels for the 2026 Pavement Resurfacing Project. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approve Servpro Invoice in the amount of $62,776.37 for Freight House Reconstruction

Mr. Hart indicated this represents payment number four of the freight house reconstruction project, with approximately $84,000 remaining on the total project cost of $470,120.

> Motion by Mr. Metzgar, seconded by Mrs. Gantner, to approve the Servpro invoice for $62,776.37 for freight house reconstruction. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Approve Annual VIPR Invoice in the amount of $5,700.00 for License Plate Reader

Mrs. Peterson called for approval of the annual license plate reader service.

> Motion was made by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Eagelman, to approve the annual VIPR invoice for $5,700.00 for the License Plate Reader. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Approve Hiring Rebecca Fogerty, Elijah McArdle, and Melissa Rodriguez as Library Assistants at $12.00 per hour.

Mrs. Peterson called for ratification of the previously voted hiring of three library assistants.

Motion was made by Mrs. Gantner, seconded by Mr Hoffa, to ratify the hiring of Rebecca Fogerty, Elijah McArdle, and Melissa Rodriguez as Library Assistants at $12.00 per hour. The motion passed unanimously.

Environmental & Municipal Engineer's Report - Possible Action Items

Mr. Leaman presented two escrow release requests for ongoing construction projects.

a. Approve Sunrise Apts. – Escrow Release No. #3 for $59,770.31

The engineer explained that Sunrise Apartments is substantially complete with only fall landscaping and final closeout items remaining, leaving approximately $14,000 in escrow balance.

Motion was made by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Eagelman, to approve Sunrise Apartments Escrow Release No. 3 for $59,770.31. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approve Sinking Spring OP Holdings Construction Escrow Phase 1 – Release 1 in the amount of $64,055.00.

The engineer noted this first release for the Chase Bank construction project, with approximately $285,000 remaining in escrow for ongoing work.

Motion was made by Mrs. Gantner, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve Sinking Spring OP Holdings Construction Escrow Phase 1 Release 1 for $64,055.00. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Chief Oxenreider reported 191 calls for service in April 2026 compared to 149 in April 2025, along with 5 non-reportable accidents, 4 reportable accidents, 21 citations, 15 parking tickets, and 21 notices issued. He announced plans to apply for a Motorola grant to help offset radio replacement costs and confirmed the department's intention to replace only portable radios while retaining mobile and base station equipment.

Mr. Hart informed council about Pennsylvania American Water's upcoming line surveys throughout the borough to identify pipe materials under EPA lead elimination requirements. The utility will excavate small holes in front yards and sidewalk areas to determine service line composition, with 25 initial locations identified.

Mr. Hart also reported the freight house project nearing completion with punch list items expected to be completed next week, appliances have been installed, and bathrooms are nearly complete. He plans to install security and fire alarm systems plus video surveillance.

Mr. Miller raised concerns about potential alley closure at Sunrise Apartments affecting emergency access to the 8-unit building on Park Avenue. Mr. Hart agreed to investigate the situation with property owners.

Mrs. Peterson discussed municipal library status requirements with Solicitor, clarifying that libraries can maintain municipal status even when housed off-site, contrary to previous understanding. The library board has explored relocating due to space constraints, though affordability remains a significant concern. Current library rent payments of approximately $966 monthly may be inconsistent with true municipal library operations where the government entity typically handles facility costs.

Mr. Metzgar noted that yard waste payment system improvements are being researched and that Mr. Hart has submitted a grant application for a new waste hauling truck with 94% grant funding potential, necessitated by the closure of Zwicky's Robesonia facility requiring longer hauling distances.

Mrs. Gantner reported that there are 276 children registered for playground and that CPR training is scheduled for the leaders and plans to utilize the freight house for staff training and expanded programming including conservation district and scouting organization partnerships.

Mr. Eagelman reported significant success with the Ruth Street speed tables in reducing traffic speeds, particularly during high-usage periods when all five ball fields are active. Mayor Cirulli mentioned that there should be two on Reedy Road instead of just one. Chief Oxenreider confirmed speed enforcement showed maximum recorded speeds of 35 mph on Reedy Road with officers positioned strategically to monitor effectiveness.

Mr. Eagelman also updated on police officer hiring progress, reporting that two candidates successfully completed written, physical, and oral examinations and are now undergoing background checks, with final selection expected by the next council meeting.

Executive Session – Personnel Issue – Possible Action

Council entered executive session to discuss personnel matters at 8:05 p.m. Upon returning to public session at 8:28 p.m., the following actions were taken:

Motion was made by Mr. Eagelman, seconded by Mrs. Gantner, to demote Richard Paplosky and reduce his wages by $2.40 per hour effective immediately. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Mrs. Gantner, seconded by Mr. Miller, to promote Shawn Ernst to foreman on a 90-day trial period with a $2.40 per hour increase. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Hoffa to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth A. Eagelman

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Borough Secretary