BOROUGH OF LEHIGHTON

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Lehighton Borough Council Meeting Minutes from October 5, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: 6:30PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION: Mayor Ryan Saunders

ROLL CALL

The regular meeting of Lehighton Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Monday, October 5, 2026.

Councilmembers in attendance were:

- President Dave Zimmerman
- Vice President Rebecca Worthy
- Dave Arndt
- Joe Flickinger
- Steve Hawk
- Grant Hunsicker
- Dr. Jordyn Miller

Councilmembers absent were:

Officials in attendance were:

- Mayor Ryan Saunders
- Assistant Borough Manager, Brooke Lichtenwalter
- Police Chief, Troy Abelovsky
- Fire Chief, Pat Mriss
- Light & Power Superintendent, Barry Fisher
- Public Works Superintendent, Kris Kunkle
- Public Works Assistant Superintendent, Jeff Smith
- Borough Solicitor, James Nanovic
- Borough Engineer, Vanessa Nedrick
- Junior Council Member Raegan Abelovsky

Officials absent were:

- Recreation Director, Tom Evans

HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT

Council President Dave Zimmerman reminded speakers of the three-minute time limit.

First speaker was Ms. Tara Lee Crow, she addressed Council regarding a conditional use application for a short-term rental at 228 North 7th Street. She and her husband currently live in Nashville, Tennessee. She provided a brief history of the property which has been owned by her family for five (5) generations and she spent childhood summers at this home. She & her husband recently purchased the property and significant investments have been made to restore the home. Their goal is to utilize the restored unit as a short-term rental while continuing renovations and eventually move permanently to 226 North 7th Street in the next 3-5 years. Council and Borough Solicitor discussed procedural matters related to the conditional use hearing and determined the hearing would be addressed later on the agenda.

Mr. Wilmer Everett spoke in support of Nino Caruso and his family, noting their long-standing business presence within the community and expressing concerns regarding ongoing code enforcement matters affecting their business property.

Mrs. Darcy Caruso spoke regarding their recent purchase and renovation of the former Boulevard Restaurant located at 59 Blakeslee Boulevard Drive East, Lehighton, and provided written documentation supporting her concerns. Her family has operated restaurant businesses for more than 50 years with multiple locations. The family has made significant investments to restore the former Boulevard Restaurant location. They have used licensed professionals, including structural engineers and contractors to ensure the building's safety but have concerns about the current zoning and code enforcement process. A business tenant experienced a temporary closure resulting in lost income. Additional investment opportunities, including potential senior housing projects, may be negatively impacted by current enforcement practices. She is publicly requesting the Borough to review the current zoning & code enforcement system.

Ms. Nancy Gombert, resident of South 9th Street for the past 8 ½ years. She is requesting additional Police patrols on the street due to speeding, running through traffic lights and stop signs, and numerous accidents.

Mr. Nick Catania , resident of South 1st Street, spoke on the amount owed by Weissport regarding the money reportedly owed to Lehighton Borough by Weissport Borough and requesting information regarding available collection or other options.

Mr. Mishan Keller, former resident of Bankway St, raised several concerns involving writ executed at this residence, court proceedings, access to personal property, a towed vehicle, banking issues, alleged habitability concerns, and prior contacts with Borough code enforcement and police. Council and the Solicitor explained that many of the matters described involved the courts, the Carbon County Sheriff Office, a landlord , and a private financial institution were outside Borough Council's authority. Council stated that concerns involving Borough code enforcement could be reviewed with the appropriate staff. Mr. Keller was advised that legal issues concerning the writ or court process should be addressed through the courts and legal counsel.

Mr. William Hartley, independent contractor, spoke in support of the Caruso's and addressed the disputes involving development projects and code enforcement. He recommended that when the property owner's engineer and Borough-related inspectors disagree, the parties consider an independent professional or other

neutral review. He encouraged a collaborative approach intended to protect public safety, the business, and the Borough while avoiding unnecessary escalation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by **Joe Flickinger**, 2nd by **Dave Arndt** to approve the amended Council Meeting Minutes of September 14, 2026; all were in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

ZONING CONDITIONAL UISE HEARINGS

Application of Blakeslee Plaza, Inc requesting conditional use approval to convert existing 42 Blakeslee Boulevard Drive East into carwash. Attorney Matthew Goodrich appeared for the applicant and requested that the conditional use matter and decision be tabled. He referenced correspondence dated October 1, 2026, and requested an extension through December 31, 2026 to allow additional work on the plan and further Planning Commission review. A motion was made by **Steve Hawk**, 2nd by **Joe Flickinger** to table the conditional use application of Blakeslee Plaza, Inc and grant the extension as requested; all were in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

Application of Tara Lee Crow and Robert L. Crow requesting conditional use approval to use 226-228 North 7th Street as a short-term rental. The applicant and witness were sworn in. They are requesting to use 228 North 7th Street as a short-term rental. They intend to restore 226 North 7th Street and then move permanently to that address upon their retirement. She anticipated a maximum occupancy of approximately six persons in the three- bedroom unit and stated that house rules would prohibit parties and pets. Council discussed parking, number of vehicles, occupancy, neighborhood impacts, and the need for written rental rules and regulations. Council suggested that he applcants return to the Planning Commission, including by representative if necessary, and provide additional information regarding parking and operating rules. A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Steve Hawk**, to continue the conditional use hearing for Tara and Robert Crowe until the November Council meeting; al were in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chief Abelovsky reported that a revised proposal had been prepared and submitted to the Solicitor for review. The work includes revisions to multiple ordinance sections relating to bicycles, sidewalks/skateboarding, and related public safety regulations.

Interim Borough Manager Brooke Lichtenwalter reported that there has been any further dialogue on the top of snow emergency routes and odd-even parking.

NEW BUSINESS

Lichtenwalter reported that Mr. Yenser, on behalf of the Class of 1964, has requested changes at the monument/sign at the Clyde Houser Building, the former high school, on North Third Street. The fence at the monument has a gate and the location of the gate will soon be moved to improve access. They Class of 1964 would also like to change the sign overlay, with the costs to be paid by the Class of 1964. Council indicated support for the changes.

Presentations given by two (2) Borough Administration Consultants. Jeffrey Stonehill, Stonehill Ratliff, LLC, described a team-based consulting model with expertise in municipal management, finance, utilities, human resources, recruitment support, strategic planning, capital planning, economic development, and municipal

electric systems. He cited current and prior municipal projects. Jeff Smith, Sumter Local Government Consulting, described executive recruitment, interim staffing, project management, strategic planning, municipal budgeting, finance, and modernization services. He cited prior borough management and economic development experience. Council asked both presenters about executive recruitment, experience with boroughs of similar size, and examples of completed projects. No consultant was selected during the public portion of the meeting.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2nd by **Rebecca Worthy** to approve the deletion and reassignment of inactive 2025 electric, sewer, and garbage accounts, totaling $13,932.48. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Dave Arndt** to approve the deletion and reassignment of inactive 2025 water accounts, totaling $1,548.52. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2nd by **Steve Hawk** to donate $500 to the Halloween Parade Committee to support band expenses. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2nd by **Dave Arndt** to approve Sts. Peter and Paul Live Nativity on December 19, 2026 3:00pm-7:00pm in the Amphitheatre and Upper Park. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2nd by **Rebecca Worthy** to approve Dylan and Gavin's Rainbow Snowflake 5K and 1-mile run/walk within borough limits on December 12, 2026. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Steve Hawk**, 2nd by **Rebecca Worthy** to approve Green's Communications Proposal for 3 Motorola Two-Way Radios for Fire Department and 8 Motorola Two-Way Radios for Police Department. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Steve Hawk** to approve Resolution R17-2026 LSA Grant $137,262.96 to purchase Motorola Portable Radios to Operate with Carbon County P25 Radio System. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2nd by **Steve Hawk** to appoint Attorney Nanovic as the Arbitrator for the Police Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2nd by **Rebecca Worthy** to approve and advertise the 2027 Borough meeting dates schedule. The Solicitor noted that the January 4th meeting had been identified as a reorganization meeting, but reorganization is not required in an odd-numbered year. The Secretary noted the correction. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Steve Hawk** to accept the resignation of Planning Commission Chairman. The Planning Commission will appoint a Chairman at the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

Discussion on advertising for the permanent Borough Manager position occurred. Because the matter concerns personnel, Councill will discuss in Executive Session. No public action on advertising was taken at that time.

A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Dave Arndt** to dissolve the current Police Department Civil Service eligibility list and direct the Civil Service Commission to create new eligibility lists. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

Chief Abelovsky discussed concerns about visibility of school-sone signage on Mahoning Street near Ninth Street, Beaver Run Road, Eleventh St, Twelfth Street, Indian Lane and the Elementary Center. PennDOT advised that additional or relocated signage would require Borough approval and submission of an update layout for PennDOT review. The Chief estimated approximately $800 for the Borough sign installation and proposed improved signage to increase visibility and safety for pedestrians and motorists. A motion was made by **Steve Hawk**, 2nd by **Dave Arndt** to change the School Zone Signage Change on Mahoning St. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Joe Flickinger**, 2nd by **Dave Arndt** to reallocate Funds totaling $30,000 from budget line #410-131 (Sgt. Salary) to budget line #410.740 (Major Equipment Purchase). Chief Abelovsky requested reallocation of available salary funds to major equipment for a license plate reader and a more secure evidence locker system. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Joe Flickinger**, 2nd by **Rebecca Worthy** to advertise for two (2) lineman positions, with certifications/experience preferred and training available for qualified candidates. Councilman Joe Flickinger discussed the continuing lineman vacancy and the difficulty of recruiting experienced candidates. Discussion occurred to also be aware to advertise in all potential areas, local newspaper, Borough website and social media. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

Discussion on replacing the Z-turn Mower, quotes received from local vendor/company included in agenda packet. Jeff Smith explained the current mower is old and more frequent service is needed as a result. No public action taken at this time.

Discussion on replacement of Fuel Tank System occurred. Jeff Smith explained current tank located at the Public Works building and Light & Power building is over 30 years old and needs to be replaced. The quote included in agenda packet is $82,000 and can be divided among the different departments. It was recommended to include this item in the Capital Fund budget discussion. Also reminded to question whether the procurement can be made through COSTARS. No public action taken at this time.

A motion was made by **Joe Flickinger**, 2nd by **Rebecca Worthy** to advertise the proposed budget meeting dates and times. A recommendation to have separate meeting dates for general fund and other funds. Proposed meeting dates are Tuesday, October 20, 2026; Wednesday, October 28, 2026; Tuesday, November 17, 2026; and Tuesday, November 24, 2026, each at 6:30pm. Reminder made to advertise the meeting dates and times. All in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

Council discussed the 2027 Street Projects list and the financial condition of the Liquid Fuels Fund and General Fund. Concern was expressed that available Liquid Fuels resources must cover winter wages, salt, truck payments, storm & sewer work, hauling, and other eligible costs through the next allocation period. A recommendation was made to avoid 2027 street paving from Liquid Fuels and to limit General Fund paving, if any, while preserving reserves and addressing the Borough's broader structural budget pressures. No project list was adopted at this meeting.

Discussion on Parcel #70A8-28-V1.02 owned by PennDOT occurred. Staff reported that the parcel is not useful for Borough purposes and that neighboring property owner has expressed interest in acquiring it. No action taken.

A motion was made by **Joe Flickinger**, 2nd by **Rebecca Worthy** appointing Barry Isett & Associates to administer the Borough's floodplain management services going forward. Council discussed the need to ensure annual floodplain reporting and related Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) requirements are completed.

Discussion on converting the flashing traffic signal to a four-way stop at the intersection of South 2nd Street and Iron Street. Vanessa Nedrick, Engineer, advised that, because both streets are local roads, the stop control can be established by the Borough, with PennDOT notified when the signal permit is cancelled. Council discussed temporarily placing the existing signal in all-red flash, installing stop signs, and considering enhanced flashing stop signs for visibility. The Solicitor advised coordinating the physical change closely with adoption of the ordinance. The ordinance is expected to be considered at the November meeting, with implementation coordinated at approximately the same time. Public Works Department will research the expense of flashing stop signs.

OFFICIALS REPORTS

Interim Borough Manager report was included with agenda packet. She reported on a busy September, thanked office staff for their work, and noted participation in PA One Call and Pennsylvania Municipal Electric Association conferences.

Borough Engineer report was included with the agenda packet, nothing additional to add.

Solicitor - nothing to report.

Treasurer's Report was provided with the bill list.

Mayor Saunders reported meeting with the Police Chief on several matters, an interview of the final candidate on the existing civil service list, and officiated a wedding in September. Also addressed the earlier public comments concerning the Boulevard property, stating that code officials and the property owners had worked together and that the tenant had remained open during the process.

Police Chief Abelovsky provided his monthly report, but highlighted items: LSA grant applications were submitted for the Taser program and one new vehicle; National Night Out scheduled for Thursday; Public Works Department staff repaired storm-related damage at the rear of the Polce Department building and to a bay door. Chief reported that Mr. Keller's prior contacts with the Police Department had been documented and addressed.

Fire Chief Pat Mriss provided his written report. He provided an updated on the County's digital radio transition and the Fire Department's continuing mobile and portable radio needs; additional state and federal grant applications are planned. He also reported that Fire Prevention Week activities are underway, including public education. The Fire Department was awarded approximately $300,000 through the AFG program for replacement of 28 air packs.

Barry Fisher provided the Light & Power report. He discussed recruitment standards for lineman candidates. He also reported on the replacement of aging utility poles; the need to modernize electric metering toward an AMI

system; work to establish a generator maintenance agreement for Borough generators; positive collaboration with staff on 2027 budget preparation, and concerns regarding the aging poles and lighting at Baer Memorial Park and the need to address to continue the safety of nighttime events. He reminded the Light and Power Open House on Wednesday, October 7, 20267 from 11am-1pm at 675 Bridge Street.

Kris Kunkle provided the Public Works report. He reported that the paving equipment had been put away for the year. He emphasized the importance of continuing sanitary sewer lining and infrastructure maintenance.

The Recreation Director was absent, no report presented.

Raegan Abelovsky presented Junior Council Member report. There has been no additional discussion regarding the Ninth &^ Bridge Street traffic signal. Homecoming dance on October 24th coincides with the approved Witches Midnight Market and expressed some concerns with the traffic & parking arrangements and the safety of young, less-experienced drivers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance & Administration Committee has nothing to report.

Economic Development, Buildings, Code Committee has nothing to report.

Police, Fire & Safety Committee – Joe Flickinger reports that Lehighton Ambulance began a blood administration capability effective 10/01/26, placing it among a limited number of area EMS providers with that service. A hazard mitigation meeting was held with the next meeting scheduled for October 13th. Project items include the Bridge Street culvert and the emergency generator at the Light and Power facility.

Light & Power Committee - The committee reiterated the October 7th Light and Power Open House.

Sewer Committee has nothing to report.

Street, Public Works & Recreation has nothing to report.

Library Board has nothing to report.

Parks & Recreation Board – Rebecca Worthy reports that there are 2 events scheduled to purchase trees for Trees in the Park; October 15th and October 27th, 5-8pm, both at the Recreation Center.

Canal Commission – Mayor Saunders reports a site visit concerning erosion/maintenance near a parking lot and pavilion. Also, another memorial bench is expected to be installed in October.

Council of Governments – Joe Flickinger reported possible distribution of recreation-related funds at a future meeting.

Civil Service Commission – Rebecca Worthy reported a new eligibility list will be created consistent with Council's action earlier in the meeting.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2nd by **Rebecca Worthy** to accept the Officials Report. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2nd by **Steve Hawk** for approval of Payable Accounts to pay the bills. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Dave Arndt** to go into Executive Session at 8:47pm for personnel & legal matters. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Steve Hawk** to go back into Regular Session at 9:03pm. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Steve Hawk** to hire Stonehill Ratliff as consultants for Borough Administration. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by **Rebecca Worthy**, 2nd by **Dave Arndt** to adjourn the meeting at 9:05pm and all were in favor with no objections, motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martina Hill

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Recording Secretary

Borough of Lehighton