

BOROUGH OF LEHIGHTON

PHONE 610-377-4002
FAX 610-377-6638

MUNICIPAL BUILDING, P.O. BOX 29, LEHIGHTON, PA 18235



August, 3rd, 2026

RE: Lehighton Borough Council Meeting Minutes from July 6th, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION: Mayor Ryan Saunders

ROLL CALL

The regular meeting of Lehighton Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Monday July 6, 2026.

Councilmembers in attendance were:

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

Officials in attendance were:

- Mayor Ryan Saunders
- Borough Manager, Dane DeWire
- Borough Secretary, Jessica Ahner
- Police Chief, Troy Abelovsky
- Assistant Fire Chief, Michael Mriss
- Borough Engineer, Vanessa Nedrick
- Light & Power Superintendent, Barry Fisher
- Public Works Superintendent, Kris Kunkle

Officials absent were:

- Assistant Borough Manager, Brooke Lichtenwalter
- Fire Chief, Patrick Mriss
- Recreation Director, Tom Evans
- Borough Solicitor, James Nanovic.

HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT

Jeff Kindler of North Third Street wishes to speak on Agenda items later in the Meeting.

Kelly Finny of Lentz Avenue is requesting a “No Outlet” or “Dead End” sign at the corner of Lentz Avenue and Third Avenue in the Heights. Manager Dane DeWire answered that the Borough has one sign that is designated to go to that area at Ms. Finny’s request and apologized for the delay.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

SH/GH motioned to approve the Council Meeting Minutes of June 8th, 2026 and all were in favor with no questions or objections. 7-0

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Continued Discussion on Renovations to Skyline Park. LDI provided drawings to move forward with improvements to the Park. DeWire did invite neighboring properties who had interest in this topic to attend tonight’s meeting. Mayor Saunders touched on the drawings for the first phase of the project, which includes fencing. LDI would also like to restore the existing swing set. President Zimmerman spoke on behalf of Third Street resident Chris Nothstein who could not make it in-person. Nothstein asked if plans included a turn-around at the end of Third Street and commented on LDI’s equipment, which he believed had encroached his private property. Councilman Stave Hawk asked what would happen if all the parking spaces were full. Mayor Saunders said that some of Mr. Nothstein’s concerns are being addressed, and that if more people would come to the park, there is parking on both sides of Third Street. Saunders said that our improvements will stay far away from Mr. Nothstein’s property as much as possible. SH/DA motioned to have DeWire move forward with permits for the fence at Skyline Park and all were in favor with no questions or objections. 7-0

Continued Discussion on Lehighon Cycling Ordinances. Police Chief Troy Abelovsky stated that the committee tasked with changes to the cycling ordinances have met multiple times prior to June, but a lot of decisions still need to be made before handing the amended ordinance off to the Borough Solicitor. Abelovsky is hoping to have changes made within a few weeks and handed off soon after. Resident Jeff Kindler thanked Abelovsky for his willingness to discuss this, commented on other municipalities’ efforts to accommodate bicycles, and asked about our current ordinances.

Continued Discussion on RVE Admin Building Drawings. DeWire discussed Remington Vernick Engineers (RVE)’s formerly awarded Administration Building construction drawing contract. He stated that RVE was in the early stages of development with the drawings. DeWire presented a rough sketch of the building’s future layout which abandons the South Street access, removes the current front office, and provides ballistic glass for the Secretary and Utilities offices. This layout provides the admin staff with the requested safety measures while allowing for the future installment of the elevator funded through the County’s CDBG funding. Hawk commented that he frequently visits other municipalities in his line of work, and that this proposed building layout is consistent with modern standards. DeWire went on to mention that the former Mayor’s office can be used as a meeting/break room, and the only concern would be public access to Council Chambers until the elevator is installed. Zimmerman asked whether the South Street entrance would still exist. DeWire replied that the door would still exist for emergency egress and allow key fob holders access, but the concrete walk-up would be removed to avoid inviting the public to a locked door. There was a general agreement to move forward with the drawings as discussed.

Continued discussion on Light & Power Cintas Contract. This was tabled until after executive session.

Continued discussion on LDI’s 250th Mosaic Tile Mural. Saunders, on behalf of LDI, spoke about the progress of the mural purchased in honor of America’s 250th. He requested permission to place the completed mural

alongside the D&L Trailhead and Caboose in a weatherproof shadowbox with the exact location noted on a landscaping plan provided to Council. JF/RW motioned to install LDI's mural as presented and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion on New and Amended Policy Implementation. Councilman Joe Flickinger stated that several policies have been implemented by the Borough Manager over the last two months and he made a motion to have all new and amended policies brought to Borough Council for a vote. DeWire asked Flickinger if he remembers commending our Linemen for providing help to Weatherly Borough at the last Council Meeting and asked what should have been done instead in the absence of a Light & Power mutual aid policy. Flickinger claimed that public utility providers are considered emergency mutual aid services, no additional policy is necessary, and Weatherly does not need to receive a bill for the services. DeWire followed up, asking Flickinger the difference between a decision and a policy. The question was unanswered, and DeWire told Council that the lines between a decision and a policy are so blurred, they would be "shooting themselves in the foot" by voting for such. Vice President Rebecca Worthy asked DeWire why seeking payment from Weatherly was so necessary. She referenced a previous Council Meeting when Flickinger asked for an update on Weissport's debt and asked DeWire why he could not provide an update. DeWire responded that Weissport's debt falls under "executive legal matters" which were not placed on the Agenda, and our legal Counsel has been absent for two meetings. Zimmerman stated that "policy" is a very broad term, and DeWire agreed, explaining to Council that Flickinger was asked twice to sit down to discuss his concerns collaboratively, and both invitations were turned down. Worthy said that staff come to Council with policy changes that which Council is unaware. DeWire asked for an example of such. No example was provided. Instead, Worthy referenced a new Department Head spending limit policy implemented by the Borough Manager. DeWire asked how limitations can be placed on his spending but not on other staff's spending, since he still be responsible for maintaining the annual Budget. Flickinger suggested that DeWire should bring policy recommendations to Borough Council and not implement them at the Manager's discretion. DeWire replied that is the definition of a manager, and Hawk agreed. DeWire referred to his job description, stating that he signed up to be a Manager, not a secretary. Saunders and Flickinger referenced policy implementation practiced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hawk voiced that the Borough Manager is here every day and is hired to make decisions for the Borough. Hawk agreed that the line between a decision and a policy is hard to define and suggested that we should be judging the Manager for his work after implementing it, not discussing it beforehand. Councilman Dave Arndt interjected, asking Hawk how many decisions of the Borough Manager Borough Council knows of. Hawk replied that we know of very few of them, and that's how things should be. Worthy said that signed policies should not be implemented without Council's knowledge, and Zimmerman agreed, suggesting that should be the motion Council is wishing to pass. Arndt asked if we need clearer descriptions of decisions and policies and said they are two different things. Worthy suggested that the Borough Manager could discuss new policy with Council President, and Zimmerman disagreed with that suggestion. Worthy went on to say that Council should be more informed. DeWire asked Worthy when she last stopped in to have a discussion on Borough business with the Borough Manager. The question was unanswered. Worthy again referenced the Manager's spending limit policy, asking how Council knows if the signed policy is even legal. DeWire asked Worthy if she read the policy, and she said that she hadn't. Worthy then went on to say that she did, in fact, read the document. DeWire asked Worthy what part of the policy she disagreed with or believed was illegal. The question was unanswered. There was continued discussion regarding the spending limit policy, and DeWire said that he shouldn't need to justify his role in a public forum after three years. JF/RW motioned to have all new and amended policies brought to Borough Council for a vote, and Zimmerman asked for a roll call. Dr. Jordyn Miller, Zimmerman, Hawk, and Councilman

Grant Hunsicker opposed. Worthy interjected, stating that Grant is a 'yes' vote, and Hunsicker amended his response. Motion carried on a 4-3 vote. DeWire requested Council to define decisions and policies so that he is held to the correct standard. Zimmerman assigned Flickinger, Hunsicker, and Worthy to a Policy Definition Committee.

Discussion on LDI Trailhead Beautification Project. Saunders referenced the landscape plan provided in reference to the America 250th Mural placement and stated that LDI would like to apply for grant funding to complete the additional improvements to the Trailhead and Caboose. RW/JF motioned to allow LDI to apply for grant funding for the Trailhead Beautification Project and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

Discussion on the Police Department Negotiation Committee. Zimmerman appointed DeWire, Borough Solicitor James Nanovic, and Arndt to the Police Contract Negotiation Committee.

RW/SH motioned to hire additional pool lifeguards as presented at the recommendation of the Recreation Director and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

RW/JF motioned to accept resignation letter from employee #348 and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

JF/SH motioned to accept resignation letter from Lisa Kisbaugh from Parks and Recreation as Secretary and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

SH/JF motion to appoint Jess Knappenberger to complete the open P&R term and serve as Secretary until 2030 at the recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Board and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

DeWire explained that MRM Trust, the Borough's Workers' Compensation provider, has placed Leighton on a 'provisional membership' status due to our recent history of claims. He went on to explain that the provisional membership provides full coverage but does not allow the Borough to collect annual dividends from the Trust while in a provisional state. DeWire relayed our policyholder's recommendation to not seek an alternative carrier, but to instead have greater Police Involvement in our Safety Committee meetings and possibly provide additional Police safety training. Hawk asked about the dividends, and DeWire stated that we have received between \$25,000 and \$60,000 annually, which makes our Workers' Comp policy appear cheaper. He went on to explain that, even without the annual dividends, our policy with the MRM Trust is cheaper and more beneficial than most alternatives. DeWire stated that our insurance broker recommends turning things around instead of shopping around because the Trust is the top-tier policy. Hawk asked if the provisional status was due to an incurrence of too many claims. DeWire responded that it is due to the severity of the claims, not the number claims. SH/DA motioned to adopt Resolution R9-2026, MRM Provisional Membership and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

Hawk asked about the County's request for support and Flickinger explained that the County Commissioners are requesting additional funding from the State to fund emergency response equipment upgrades. Saunders explained that municipalities have previously been fighting over the same pot of LSA Grant money to fund these upgrades at the local level. RW/JF motioned to adopt Resolution R10-2026, supporting an increase in County 911 Public Safety Emergency rates and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

SH/JF motioned to adopt Resolution R11-2026, approving the County's Community Development Plan and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

DeWire reminded Council of our budget discussions to raise electric rates by 2.6% to align with NextEra's wholesale rate contract, which is slated to raise 2.6% each year through 2032. DeWire went on to state that we should reevaluate the 2027 rate increase during this year's budget discussions to determine when that rate

increase should occur. SH/JF motioned to advertise Ordinance #2026-686, increasing the 2026 base electric rates by 2.6% and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

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DeWire reminded Council of their decision to follow the pension contract's guidelines for unused sick time set forth by PMRS, the Borough employees' pension-holder. He explained that PMRS is requesting an amendment to their contract, specifically requesting that unused accrued sick time become allowable pensionable income. There was discussion amongst Council regarding PMRS' request. DeWire went on to say that this will only benefit current and future employees of the Borough. SH/JM motioned to advertise Ordinance #2026-687, amending the Borough's pension plan and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

RW/SH motioned to grant final approval to Armin Feldman's lot consolidation at the recommendation of the Planning Commission and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

OFFICIALS REPORTS

Borough Engineer Vanessa Nedrick reported on RVE's current projects. She stated that RVE will begin to finalize the first draft of the Admin Building Construction Drawings and is working through PennDOT paperwork for the Second & Iron Traffic Study. Nedrick said that RVE is finalizing things for the I&I Complete Replacement project and went on to say that the project will be bid on August 3, 2026.

Saunders provided his Mayor's report, stating that it has been a busy June. He stated that he spoke at the Trailhead Event for the DLNHC at the Lehigh Outdoor Center with Representative Heffley and Senator Argall. He also reported that he attended both the Steampunk Event and PlantFest events, both events set up and run without issue. Saunders helped to set up the PA system for Judge Matika's recovery program and the Full Gospel Tabernacle Bread of Life Church's service. He administered two wedding ceremonies and interviewed patrolman candidates from the Civil Service list. Saunderson also attended the Fourth of July Block Party and commented that LDI's fireworks event was conducted safely that evening. He thanked the Fire Police and Police Department for their help with the events, thanked Borough employees for their storm damage cleanup efforts, and thanked emergency responders for navigating the aftermath of the storm.

Abelovsky commented on two grants that were in the works within the Police Department.

Assistant Fire Chief Michael Mriss commented on the severity of the Independence Day storm damage and reported 23 different calls for which the Department was called out to assist. Mriss thanked Borough staff for their help with the cleanup. He commented on previous discussions regarding the new radio equipment needed for the County's response system. Mriss stated that it would be ideal for each Department to have at least one digital frequency radio until a solution is found to outfit all units.

Public Works Superintendent Kris Kunkle commented on storm damage to the Public Works garage and reiterated the busyness of the Independence Day Storm weekend and the days thereafter.

Junior Council member Reagan Abelovsky reported that the Lehigh Area School District is still dealing with the aftermath of a data breach that occurred in May 2026. The District Attorney has been involved and encourages any

residents who have been affected by the breach to contact their office. The School District held high school graduation on June 9, 2026 for 152 graduating seniors. The LASD approved a \$51.5M budget, raising property taxes by 3.5% for Borough residents. The 2026-2027 school year calendar was approved with an August 24, 2026 start date. Miss Abelovsky also reported that she was selected as one of three seniors to represent Lehigh Area High School as a School Board Representative at their meetings.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Worthy spoke on behalf of the Finance & Administration Committee, suggesting that DeWire attend a new manager training program to be more comfortable in his role. DeWire claimed that it was an ignorant suggestion but thanked Worthy for her recommendation. Zimmerman asked if Worthy was looking for a motion. DeWire stated that if he was requested to attend new manager training, he would not attend. Arndt asked how Worthy's suggestion could be construed as ignorant, and DeWire said that he was welcome to listen to the public recording if he needed to hear it again. DeWire stated that he has taken these courses through PSAB and asked Worthy if she knows what training the staff has taken. No answer was given.

Flickinger spoke on behalf of the Economic Development, Buildings, and Code Committee, asking where is he to meet for the Façade Grant Walking Tour with Senator Argall. DeWire said that he will provide he and Zimmerman with that information.

During his Police, Fire, & Safety Committee report, Flickinger reminded residents to remove items from cooktops during power outages and thanked those who helped during the Independence Day Storm.

During his Sewer Committee Report, Hunsicker commented on an overload the wastewater treatment facility but stated that it has always been a problem. Kunkle and Nedrick discussed an overflow situation that occurred at a pump station along Lehigh Drive caused by a loss of power.

During his Library Board Report, Hawk reported on a Library Board meeting held the week prior and said that the primary focus is on the Christmas in July basket raffle, held July 25, 2026 in the Park. Hawk asked that if anyone had a basket to donate, to reach out to him.

During her Parks & Recreation Report, Worthy reported that P&R successfully held their Fourth of July Block Party, even with the storm, although the event was postponed by two hours. She thanked everyone for their help with the Fourth and advertised a September 12 clothing drive from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. She reminded the public of P&R's continuing outdoor concert series with the next event being held July 18 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Worthy stated that P&R covered the cost of lunch for Borough Staff and the Fire Department for their help. Worthy requested a motion to purchase a refrigerator for Parks & Recreation and place it in Borough Hall. Flickinger asked about the price threshold. Worthy stated it would be a typical refrigerator paid for with P&R funding. DeWire stated that a motion is not needed for P&R to spend their own money, and Worthy said it was the right thing to do. DeWire reminded Council this will require an amendment to the Agenda and suggested waiting until later in the meeting to stack it with other amendments. Hawk Agreed.

During his Canal Commission Report, Saunders commented on D&L Trail walking paths that suffered damage from the Independence Day Storm and reported that parts of the Trail were closed for a portion of time for safety concerns. He thanked Ty Poole for the use of his equipment to help volunteers reopen the trail.

During his Council of Governments Report, Flickinger reported that the COG presented their \$1000 donation to the Lehigh Public Library and thanked Hawk for relaying the message to his mother to attend the presentation.

During her Civil Service Commission Report, Worthy reported that the Commission has an active Civil Service List.

GH/JF motioned to accept the Officials Reports and all were in favor with no objection. 7-0

GH/SH motioned to approve the payable accounts and additional bills, and Zimmerman abstained. 6-0-1

ADJOURNMENT

RW/SH motioned to go into executive session for personnel and legal matters at 7:55 pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections. 7-0

SH/RW motioned to return into regular session at 8:59 pm and all were in favor with no questions or objections. 7-0

JF/RW motioned to extend a conditional offer of employment to applicant #1 from the CCC List and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

RW/SH motioned to amend the agenda to add discussion on the OOR's decision on Bowman v. Leighton and the purchase of a P&R refrigerator for Borough Hall and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

RW/SH motioned to appeal the decision of the OOR regarding Bowman v. Leighton Borough and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

RW/SH motioned to purchase a P&R Refrigerator using the P&R funds to be placed in Borough Hall. Flickinger asked for the motion to be tabled until P&R can bring more information to Council regarding the refrigerator. Arndt responded that it is being purchased using P&R funding. All were in favor with no objections. 7-0

RW/SH motioned to authorize the Borough Solicitor to act on Behalf of the Borough for the Cintas Contract and Hunsicker opposed. 6-1

RW/JF motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 pm and all were in favor with no objections. 7-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Dane DeWire

Borough Manager

Borough of Leighton