

# BOROUGH OF LEHIGHTON

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



## Lehigh Borough Council Meeting Minutes from September 14, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: 6:30PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION: Mayor Ryan Saunders

ROLL CALL

The regular meeting of Lehigh Borough Council was held in the municipal building on Monday, September 14, 2026.

Councilmembers in attendance were:

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

Councilmembers absent were:

- Vice President Rebecca Worthy

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
- Borough Solicitor, James Nanovic
- Borough Engineer, Vanessa Nedrick
- Junior Council Member Raegan Abelovsky

Officials absent were:

- Recreation Director, Tom Evans

Mayor Ryan Saunders presented Mrs. Frances Haas with a certificate of appreciation of her 59 years of service as a crossing guard. Mayor and council members thanked Mrs. Haas for her many years of service and

commitment to the safety of generations of students and residents. Mrs. Haas shared remarks regarding her time as a crossing guard and thanked the borough and community for their support throughout her service.

#### HEARING OF PERSONS PRESENT

No public comments were offered.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by **Dave Arndt**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to approve the amended Council Meeting Minutes of August 3, 2026, correcting that Steve Hawk was absent; all were in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to approve the Special Council Meeting Minutes of August 25, 2026, and all were in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Continued Discussion on Lehighon Cycling Ordinance. Dr. Jordyn Miller is working with Chief Abelovsky and Mayor to update the cycling ordinance. This continues to be a work in progress. The goal is to have a final draft by the end of September to send to the Solicitor for review.

Continued Discussion on the Hydro Excavator/Sewer Vac Truck Purchase. Joe Flickinger reported that he spoke with Lehighon Water Authority, they have already purchased the truck and it is on order. They are financing the whole thing. LWA is also creating a fee schedule for usage. Some other Departments already want to use it.

Continued Discussion on PMRS pensionable income. Brooke Lichtenwalter reviewed the previous discussion regarding pension calculations involving unused sick leave for four retired employees which was not following the agreement in place at that time. PMRS has since updated the verbiage in the contract. Guidance is now being requested to determine if action should be taken to bring back the funds. Attorney Nanovic advised that recovery of funds would likely be impractical and could create additional complications. Dave Zimmerman agreed with Atty. Nanovic. A motion was made by **Joe Flickinger**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to NOT seek the pensionable income that was paid to four employees earlier in the year. All were in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

Continued Discussion on Administrative Vacancies tabled until Executive Session.

#### NEW BUSINESS

A motion was made by **Steve Hawk**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Grant Hunsicker** to accept the letter of retirement from Frances Haas. All were in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by **Steve Hawk**, 2<sup>nd</sup> **Joe Flickinger** to accept Trick-or-Treat Night as per the Mayor of Saturday, October 31, 2026, from 6:00pm-8:00pm. All were in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to appoint Tina Hill, Borough Secretary, as Right to Know Officer. Joe Flickinger reminded to update the State with the current information. All in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Joe Flickinger, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Steve Hawk to table the motion regarding the Stormwater Ordinance until further information is presented. All in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Dave Arndt, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jordyn Miller to approve the Lehigh Area Lioness Club Pink Light Walk on Tuesday, October 6, 2026. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Grant Hunsicker, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Steve Hawk to approve the Borough's Uniform and Non-Uniform MMO payments in the amounts of \$416,216 and \$137,805 respectively. All in favor with no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Steve Hawk, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jordyn Miller to approve the Fire Department Boot Drive at Third and Iron Streets during the Witches Midnight Market event on October 24, 2026. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Steve Hawk, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Joe Flickinger to approve Resolution #R-15-2026 for LSA Monroe Grant Application to purchase tasers for the Police Department. This is a non-matching grant. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Steve Hawk, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Grant Hunsicker to approve Resolution #R-16-2026 for LSA Monroe Grant Application for Police Department vehicles. This is a non-matching grant. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Steve Hawk, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Grant Hunsicker to approve the Department of General Services Land Development Agreement at the recommendation of the Borough Solicitor and Borough Engineer. Nanovic stated this agreement is to approve the PennDOT projects, including addressing stormwater, trees, etc. Discussion occurred regarding the discussion of a traffic signal and safety concerns. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Dave Arndt, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Joe Flickinger to move the Police Pension reports from Foster and Foster to PSAB. This will streamline the reporting process and be more economical. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Joe Flickinger, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Steve Hawk to recommend the Civil Service Commission to amend the age requirement from 21 to 20 years old, and to remove the Act 120 requirement. This would allow the Council to agree to sponsor a police academy candidate. Chief Abelovsky explained that we have had difficulty finding qualified applicants during past hiring processes even with the sign-on bonus. There is some funding in the current budget and he and the Mayor have been looking at different grant opportunities that may help sponsor candidates. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

Discussion occurred on the potential of Police Regionalization involving neighboring municipalities. Remarks and comments provided by Joe Flickinger, Mahoning Township Supervisor McGowan, Mayor Saunders, Atty. Nanovic on this matter. Flickinger included information packets through DCED that outlines programs; this was provided for information only. This topic has occurred a number of times over the years. It was recommended to keep on the agenda to periodic and continued discussion. Council agreed additional information gathering and discussions should continue. No formal action taken.

## RETURN TO UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Engineer Vanessa Nedrick advised that correspondence received from PennDOT approving removal of the flashing traffic signal at Second and Iron Streets. Upon removing the flashing signal, the Borough must notify PennDOT.

## OFFICIALS REPORTS

Assistant Borough Manager's report was included with agenda packet.

Borough Engineer report was provided at the meeting. The report includes updates and status on multiple projects including the ADA improvements and elevator planning at Borough Hall; the installation of the four-way stop sign at South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Iron Street; the 2026 Sewer Replacement Project along other projects.

Solicitor provided written report which included the continued litigation matters. He discussed status of Lehigh Drive property acquisition, many challenges in resolving this matter.

Treasurer's Report was provided with the bill list.

Saunders provided his Mayor's report. He commended the 9/11 service, it was well attended and he expressed his appreciation for the community participation.

Police Chief Abelovsky provided his written report. He noted his call volume has increased. He highlighted the upcoming events: the Department's National Night Out on Thursday, October 8, 2026, from 5:30-8:30pm, at Baer Memorial Park. The Department will participate in the Give a Gobbler program by collecting food items for Valor Clinic. The presentation event will be November 18, 2026.

Fire Chief Pat Mriss provided his written report. He noted that the station roof sustained minor damage during the July storm; some repairs made. He thinks they can take care of the repairs in-house by working with other Borough Departments.

Barry Fisher provided the Light & Power report. Upon reviewing damage from the July 3<sup>rd</sup> storm, they found that many poles need repair or replacement due to the age of the poles. He identified 30-33 poles that require immediate attention. They have been trying to hire lineman, but have been unsuccessful. They have hired staff members but it takes about 5 years to become licensed lineman. Two years ago they were at 6 licensed lineman, but they are currently at only 2 licensed lineman. He reports that outside contractors can test the poles that their department is currently doing. Discussion occurred on using outside contractors to help address these issues with the aging infrastructure of the poles and also discussed low staffing numbers. He also reminded that the Department will have an Open House October 7<sup>th</sup> during Public Power Week where the shop will be open to the public; he strongly encouraged attendance.

Kris Kunkle provided the Public Works report. Their street paving is back on schedule. He advised the fuel tank replacement should be considered. He reminded that the yard waste collection is coming up and staffing concerns in the near future due to employee medical leaves. He also requested permission to drive to Whitehall to address the plow & truck matter in person, the Department has been waiting for 6-7 months.

The Recreation Director was absent, no report presented.

Raegan Abelovsky presented Junior Council Member report. She did attend the most recent School Board meeting but nothing to report relating to the Borough.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

Miller states the Finance & Administration Committee has nothing to report.

Hawk states the Economic Development, Buildings, Code Committee has nothing to report.

Flickinger provided the Police, Fire & Safety report. Lehighton Ambulance has obtained Pennsylvania EMS Institute status; they are now able to do their courses under their own name. He attended Hazard Mitigation meeting earlier this date and has one more meeting the end of this month, then the plan will be sent to the State & Federal level. This brought about the need for floodplain annual reports to be submitted to PEMA. This matter will be on the October agenda to review.

Hunsicker states the Light & Power Committee has nothing to report.

Hunsicker states the Sewer Committee has nothing to report.

Arndt states the Street, Public Works & Recreation has nothing to report.

Hawk states the Library Board has nothing to report.

In Rebecca Worthy's absence, Zimmerman states the Parks & Recreation Board met twice, the group discussed Trees in the Park, the bylaw revisions, and reviewed the Summer Concert series. They had a special meeting at the Annex to inventory & storage organization.

Saunders presented the report on the Canal Commission. At last month's meeting, he provided a copy of the Borough's camping ordinance to the Commission for each member to take back to their own municipalities to have a unified ordinance for each section of the D&L Trail. They also purchased some locking receptacle covers at the pavilion on the trail head to avoid the abuse of the power and paid for by the Commission. He urges anyone seeing motorized bikes on the trail, to call the Communication Center to report it.

Flickinger states the Council of Governments did not have a meeting; there is nothing to report.

Civil Service Commission - Worthy is absent.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to accept the Officials Report. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** for approval of Payable Accounts to pay the bills. Zimmerman abstained; all in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 5-0, 1 abstention.

A motion was made by **Steve Hawk**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Dave Arndt** to go into Executive Session at 7:53pm for personnel & legal matters. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by **Joe Flickinger**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to go back into Regular Session at 9:47pm. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by **Council President Dave Zimmerman**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to amend the agenda to address Employees #333 and #344 and to Appoint an Interim Borough Manager and corresponding compensation. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by **Council President Dave Zimmerman**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Joe Flickinger** to increase the base salaries of Employees #333 and #344 by 10% effective immediately. All in favor no questions or objections, motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by **Grant Hunsicker**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to appoint Brooke Lichtenwalter, Assistant Borough Manager, as Interim Borough Manager and provide a monthly stipend of \$1,850 above her regular Assistant Borough Manager salary. Roll Call Arndt, Miller, Hunsicker, Hawk, Zimmerman Yes, Flickinger No; Motion carries 5-1.

A motion was made by **Joe Flickinger**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by **Steve Hawk** to adjourn the meeting at 9:49pm and all were in favor with no objections, motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Martina Hill**

Recording Secretary

Borough of Lehighton