MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION OF COUNCIL
August 26, 2026

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Regular session of Borough Council convened at 6:01 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Councilors Michael Matlos, Elizabeth Lape, Tim Sloss, David Sowa, Christopher Ponchak, Michael Zrenchak, Mayor Larry Sikorski, Engineer Lou Corrales, and Solicitor Racunas.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

CHRISTINE GIBSON 3102 H STREET: Ms. Gibson addressed Council regarding an incident that occurred near her residence on H Street during the previous month. She stated that the Liberty Borough Fire Department had rented its social hall for a 16th birthday party that became much larger than expected. According to Ms. Gibson, the gathering eventually extended into the surrounding streets and neighborhoods.

Ms. Gibson stated that she wanted to make Council aware of the impact the incident had on her and her neighbors. She explained that Police were reportedly called to the Fire Department several times due to noise and that, after dark, a large number of young people entered the surrounding neighborhood. She stated that individuals were in residents' yards and that the situation was frightening for the residents. Ms. Gibson expressed concern for the safety and security of the neighborhood, particularly noting that several widowed residents live in the area. She also stated that she had heard that individuals attending the party had attempted to enter residents' vehicles.

Ms. Gibson asked whether the Borough had a plan in place to address incidents of this nature. She stated that when she returned to Liberty Borough, she was told that Liberty was a safe community and expressed concern that the incident threatened her sense of safety and security. She complimented the Borough's Police Department, Fire Department, and other first responders, but stated that she believed residents were entitled to feel safe in their community.

Mr. Zrenchak informed Ms. Gibson that Council was made aware of the incident while it was occurring. He stated that the Police Chief kept Council informed and that police were actively patrolling the area and monitoring the situation. He further stated that the Fire Department was also aware of the circumstances.

Ms. Gibson stated that she had heard that the individual who rented the social hall had been seeking security for the event. Mr. Ponchak stated that this information was not accurate, and Ms. Gibson acknowledged that the information she had received was hearsay.

Mr. Ponchak explained that the Fire Department has rented the social hall for many years and that this was the first incident of this nature. He stated that many of the individuals involved were young and did not have their own transportation, resulting in some remaining in the area while waiting for rides home. Mr. Ponchak stated that police responded and dispersed the crowd and that the situation was handled as quickly and professionally as possible. He asked Ms. Gibson
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whether she had a specific plan or recommendation in mind. Ms. Gibson stated that she did not, as she relied on Council to handle such situations. Mr. Ponchak responded that Council and the Police Department had addressed the situation.

Ms. Gibson stated that she understood the Fire Department needed to generate revenue through social hall rentals but expressed hope that a similar incident could be prevented in the future. Fire Chief Derr explained that the social hall rentals provide important revenue to the volunteer Fire Department and that without this revenue, it would be difficult for the Fire Department to continue operating. Mrs. Wall inquired whether renters are required to sign a contract, and it was confirmed that a rental contract is required.

Halloween Discussion

Ms. Gibson also addressed Council regarding Halloween. She stated that she had discussed the matter with several neighbors and expressed concern about individuals from outside the Borough coming into the community for trick-or-treating.

Mr. Sowa asked Ms. Gibson to clarify her concerns. He explained that the Borough could not prevent people from entering the community or selectively exclude certain individuals from participating in community activities. Solicitor Racunas confirmed that the Borough could not legally prohibit nonresidents from entering the community in this manner.

Council members informed Ms. Gibson that residents are not required to participate in trick-or-treating and may turn off their porch lights and choose not to distribute candy. Ms. Gibson expressed concern that not participating could result in vandalism, such as egging or toilet papering of her home.

Ms. Gibson asked Council whether they would consider changing the date or hours of trick-or-treating. Council members stated that they did not support changing the established schedule. Mr. Zrenchak stated that Liberty Borough has traditionally observed Halloween during the same date and hours and that many residents and families plan for the event in advance. He stated that Council considers the event a community tradition and had no intention of changing it.

Mr. Zrenchak stated that even if the Borough held an alternative event, such as a trunk-or-treat, individuals from outside the community would still attend. He stated that most residents enjoy the traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating experience and that residents who choose not to participate may simply refrain from doing so. Mr. Zrenchak and Mr. Ponchak stated that many families enjoy participating in trick-or-treating and that Council did not intend to eliminate the tradition.

Ms. Gibson expressed concern about older teenagers participating in trick-or-treating and stated that the situation could be intimidating. Members of the public suggested that residents who are uncomfortable participating may choose not to do so.

Mr. Zrenchak stated that the Police Department provides additional patrols during community events, including Halloween. He encouraged residents to call 911 when they believe they are in

danger or observe suspicious activity rather than relying solely on social media. He stated that information posted on social media may not reach police until after an incident has occurred.

Mr. Zrenchak explained that increasing the level of police coverage would require additional staffing and could result in increased costs for taxpayers. He noted that Liberty Borough operates a part-time Police Department and does not have the same financial resources as larger communities.

Mayor Sikorski stated that residents who feel threatened should call 911. Mr. Zrenchak stated that, based on his experience, he has generally found trick-or-treating in the Borough to be respectful and orderly. Solicitor Racunas explained that surrounding communities generally attempt to maintain similar trick-or-treating dates and times so that families do not travel from one community to another. He stated that changing Liberty Borough's schedule could therefore be impractical.

Police Chief's Comments

Mr. Zrenchak asked Chief Marsico to provide additional comments regarding the incident at the Fire Department.

Chief Marsico stated that, once police were dispatched to the Fire Department during the incident, additional assistance was requested from Lincoln Borough and the City of McKeesport Police Department due to the challenges associated with staffing a part-time police department. He stated that the Fire Department was also present and available as needed.

Chief Marsico stated that an after-action review was conducted following the incident to identify ways to improve responses to similar situations in the future. He stated that it was his understanding that many of the individuals were ultimately gone from the area before Borough's curfew requirements.

A member of the public stated that individuals involved in the incident had attempted to enter his vehicle. Chief Marsico stated that the Police Department is committed to keeping the community safe and that officers continue to address issues as they arise. He stated that the Department is dedicated to maintaining Liberty Borough as a safe community.

Ms. Gibson stated that she had nothing but positive comments regarding Borough’s first responders.

Park Behind the Fire Department

Ms. Gibson also addressed the condition of the park located behind the Fire Department. She stated that she regularly walks her dog early in the morning and observes garbage throughout the park before the Public Works Department begins its workday. She expressed concern regarding litter and other damage to the property and stated that she observed the problem frequently.

Mr. Zrenchak stated that the condition of the park has already been discussed during a Council workshop meeting. He stated that the Public Works Department cleans the area each morning. Council has also discussed the possible installation of cameras; however, this would involve an additional expense and further consideration regarding how such a project would be implemented.

Mr. Zrenchak stated that the Police Department has been conducting additional patrols in the area. He explained that the Borough continues to experience challenges with recruiting and retaining police officers because other employers and larger departments are able to offer significantly higher wages. He noted that Liberty Borough's Police Department is part-time and that staffing limitations affect the amount of police coverage that can be provided.

Mr. Zrenchak stated that he considers the Borough's issues to be relatively minor and that he feels safe living in the community. He stated that Council would continue discussing the park concerns during future workshop meetings.

Mrs. Wall inquired whether Liberty Borough had hired a Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Zrenchak stated that the Borough had hired Nick Ruffner to fill the position. Mrs. Wall asked whether residents could contact Mr. Ruffner directly. Ms. Leber stated that residents could call him directly and that his phone number is now posted on the Borough's website. She also noted that residents may continue to contact the Borough Building if they prefer.

PROPERTY: Michael Zrenchak

Motion to accept the bid submitted by Escajeda in the amount of $6,250.00 for the restoration of the War Memorial located on Liberty Way.

Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mr. Ponchak
All in favor. Motion carries.

POLICE, FIRE and EMS: Chris Ponchak

Mr. Ponchak reported that the EMS report had not yet been received this month.

Chief Derr read the Fire report as follows:

Chief Derr presented the Fire Department Report for the month of July. He reported that the company responded to a total of thirty-two (32) calls, they are as follows:

4 – Residential Fire Alarms
3 – Service/Assist Fire
1 – Multi Family Fire
2 – Vehicle Accident Injuries
1 – Smoke Outside Seen/Smelled
4 – Commercial Fire Alarms
1 – Residential Fire
1 – Multi Family Alarm
2 – Hot Wires (Energized)
1 – Vehicle Accident Unknown Injuries

1 – Multi Family Fire Entrapment
1 – Vehicle Fire
1 – Gas Odor Commercial
1 – Vehicle Accident Hazards
1 – Gas Odor Outside
1 – Gas Odor Residential

Chief Marsico greeted everyone and presented the Liberty Borough Police Report for the month as follows:

6 – Administrative Lost Property Messages
3 – Assault Physical Sexual Weapon
12 – Disturbance Nuisances
1 – DUI
1 – EMS Cardiac Respiratory Arrest
1 – EMS Falls
2 – EMS Mental Health Suicide Attempt
1 – EMS Traumatic Injury
3 – Fire Alarms
2 – Harassment Stalking Threat
4 – Neighborhood Surveillance
5 – Public Service
2 – Traffic Collision Incident
4 – Traffic Violation Complaint Hazard
3 – Trespassing/Unwanted
5 – Animal Complaints
25 – Business Checks
8 – Domestic Disturbance Violence
1 – EMS Breathing Problems
1 – EMS Convulsions Seizures
1 – EMS Heart Problems
1 – EMS Sick Person
1 – EMS Unconscious Fainting
1 – Fire Structure Fire
6 – Miscellaneous
2 – PFA Info Service
5 – Suspicious Wanted Person Vehicle
47 – Traffic Stops
1 – Weapons/Firearms
2 – Weapons/Firearms

Chief Marsico reported a total of one hundred fifty-two (152) calls.

Chief Marsico provided an overview of recent department activity and highlighted several statistics. He discussed entries from the Police Department's July arrest blotter, including the following incidents:

- On July 3, 2026, while investigating a narcotics violation involving drug possession, an adult white male was arrested in the 3200 block of Overlook Drive. He was charged with Persons Not to Possess Firearms, Use of a Communication Facility, and other narcotics-related offenses.
- Also on July 3, 2026, an adult male was arrested in the 2900 block of H Street and charged with strangulation and simple assault in connection with a domestic incident.
- On July 7, 2026, while serving a warrant on the same adult male arrested on July 3, the individual was arrested for resisting arrest following a traffic stop after attempting to impede officers from taking him into custody.

Chief Marsico also provided an update on the school traffic zone. He stated that the Police Department has been working with Glenn Engineering and PennDOT to install new signs on Washington Boulevard, with the goal of placing the signs in front of the school. He noted that the existing signs are not currently up to standard. Chief Marsico expressed his appreciation for everyone's support.

Mr. Ponchak added that the Liberty Borough Fire Department will be holding its Fall Festival on September 11 and 12 from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. He stated that the Fire Department would appreciate everyone's support.

LEGISLATION: David Sowa

No Report.

PARKS & RECREATION: Dave Sowa

Mr. Sowa reported that Liberty Borough hosted it's Fun to Be a Kid Day the previous weekend. He stated that the event was a great success, with approximately 50 children in attendance. Activities included a petting zoo, face painting, a train, and bounce houses. Mr. Sowa noted that the Borough had excellent volunteers who remained on site throughout the event to supervise the bounce houses.

Mr. Sowa thanked U.S. Steel for its donation of the toys that were raffled off during the event. He noted that many toys were available for the raffle. He also expressed his appreciation to Ms. Underwood from PVUMC Preschool; representatives from Senator Pisciottano's and Representative Goughnour's offices; the WQED representative; and Pennsylvania American Water, which provided the water buffalo. He also thanked Jo-Lynn's for donating and discounting the pizzas, the Liberty Borough Fire Department for its participation, and the Liberty Borough Police Department for assisting with the event. Mr. Sowa noted that the children especially enjoyed participating in activities with the Fire Department, including putting out the fire house.

Mr. Sowa stated that he would like to continue working to make Fun to Be a Kid Day a great event. He noted that the children enjoy the event and that they are impressionable, and he would like them to grow up with positive memories of living in the community.

Mr. Sowa reminded everyone of several upcoming events. The Liberty Borough Fire Department will be holding its Fall Festival. The Borough's annual Fall Clean-Up Day will be held on September 19, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and will include electronic dumpsters. Trick-or-Treat will be held on October 31, 2026, and the Borough's Light Up Night will be held on December 5, 2026.

Mr. Sowa stated that volunteers will be needed for Light Up Night, as it is a large event requiring considerable assistance. He noted that the event has been a great success in past years and that it was held in front of the Borough Building, where it has been well attended and enjoyed by the community.

Mr. Sowa also discussed the park and playground located behind the Fire Department. He stated that Mr. Matlos had ordered mulch and that the Borough is awaiting its delivery. He noted that the Public Works Department is currently down one employee, which has made it somewhat difficult to keep up with garbage collection and maintenance. He stated that while he is in the area, he picks up garbage and has also observed residents doing the same. Mr. Sowa emphasized that Liberty Borough is a community and that everyone should do their part to help keep the community clean and attractive.

HEALTH & ORDINANCE: Linda Surgeon – Absent

No Report.

LIGHTS: Michael Matlos

No Report.

FINANCE: Elizabeth Lape

Motion to Pay: Bills for Ratification of **$90,105.05** and List of Bills to Pay **$112,819.24.**
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mr. Sloss
All in favor. Motion carries.

PERSONNEL: Tim Sloss.

Motion to rescind the employment offer to Matthew Moon effective immediately.
Motion: Mr. Ponchak Second: Mr. Matlos
All in favor. Motion carries.

Motion to advertise for part-time Borough Assistant Secretary.
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mrs. Lape
All in favor. Motion carries.

STREETS AND SEWERS: Tim Sloss.

Motion to authorize Borough Official to sign and execute documents on behalf of the Borough for the purchase of the new Public Works Vehicle.
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mr. Sowa
All in favor. Motion carries.

Mr. Zrenchak provided an update regarding streets and sewers. He reported that the debris basket has arrived and that he is working with Pumpman Pittsburgh and Hatcheck to schedule its

installation. He explained that bypass pumping will be required to complete the installation and that they are currently working on a plan for the project.

Mr. Zrenchak also informed everyone that Pennsylvania American Water issued its rate approval notice on August 14. He stated that the company had indicated that it was not raising the Borough's rates; however, the Borough subsequently received notice of a 5% increase. The sewage rate increased from $16.68 to $17.41 per thousand gallons. Mr. Zrenchak stated that Pennsylvania American Water advised that the increase was approved by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), despite the company not requesting the increase.

Mr. Zrenchak explained that he and Ms. Leber are scheduled to participate in a conference call with Pennsylvania American Water on September 2. He stated that he intends to explain that the Borough cannot immediately make changes to its rates, as any potential increase must first be discussed at a Council workshop to determine the amount necessary to maintain the Borough's sewer system. An ordinance would then need to be advertised and approved by Council.

Mr. Zrenchak expressed his concern that the PUC is approving rate increases for Pennsylvania American Water without sufficient oversight. He also stated that, to his understanding, Pennsylvania American Water has become a preferred purchaser for distressed water and sewer authorities. Mr. Zrenchak expressed concern that, as a for-profit company, Pennsylvania American Water's priority is to recover its investment and generate a profit.

Mr. Zrenchak stated that he would continue to keep Council and the public informed as additional information becomes available.

MAYOR'S REPORT: Larry Sikorski, Mayor

Mayor Sikorski stated that Chief Marsico covered all that needed to be reported.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT: Mr. Racunas

No Report.

ENGINEER'S REPORT: Lou Corrales

Mr. Corrales reported on the **CD 51 Memory Lane Paving Project**. He stated that the project was advertised for bids and that the pre-bid meeting was held on July 16, 2026, with six contractors in attendance. The project includes roadway milling, base repairs as needed, and asphalt resurfacing.

Mr. Corrales stated that the public bid opening was held on July 23, 2026, at the Steel Rivers Council of Governments Office, and that four bids were received. He reported that the recommendation is to award the project to the responsible low bidder in the amount of **$111,410.00**, subject to confirmation that all required bid documents have been received and that all funding requirements have been fulfilled.

Mr. Corrales continued his report with an update on the **Act 152 Demolition Project**. He reported that three of the four properties have been demolished, with the remaining property scheduled for demolition. Glenn Engineering will continue to monitor the project through completion.

Mr. Corrales provided an update on the two grants currently pending for Liberty Borough. He stated that the Borough expects to receive an update in November regarding the **2025 Streetscape Project** and the **2025 Borough Roof Replacement Project**.

Mr. Corrales also provided an update on the **2025 PA Small Water and Sewer Grant**, which is being used for the **Elizabeth Street Stormwater Project**. The project includes replacement of the existing stormwater vault, installation of approximately **603 linear feet of 48-inch storm sewer pipe**, and installation of one manhole. The total project cost is **$496,899.00**, with the Borough receiving a grant in the amount of **$396,898.00**.

Mr. Corrales stated that Glenn Engineering has finalized the project scope, bid sheets, and construction plans, and that the final specifications are being completed in preparation for advertising the project for bids. He explained that the Borough intentionally delayed advertising the project to allow the construction season to progress toward completion, with the expectation that receiving bids later in the season may result in more favorable construction pricing.

Motion to authorize the advertisement for bids for the Elizabeth Street Storm Sewer Project.
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mrs. Lape
All in favor. Motion carries.

Motion to accept the bid submitted by El Grande in the amount of $111,410.00 for the CD 51 Memory Lane Reconstruction Project.
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mr. Sowa
All in favor. Motion carries.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Zrenchak asked anyone interested in volunteering to serve on either of the boards to submit a letter of interest to the Borough.

Council is asking for letters of interest for the Zoning Board. (1 Seat)

Council is asking for letters of interest for the Planning Commission. (3 Seats)

NEW BUSINESS:

Motion to advertise the 2025 completed Audit.
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mr. Ponchak
All in favor. Motion carries.

Motion to approve the renewal of the Borough's Insurance coverage for the upcoming policy term 8/09/2026 – 08/09/2027.
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mrs. Lape
All in favor. Motion carries.

Motion to adopt an agreement with American Rock Salt Company LLC for 2026 – 2027, subject to review and acceptance of the final pricing, with authorization for the appropriate Officials to execute the agreement upon confirmation of the final price.
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mr. Sowa
All in favor. Motion carries.

Mr. Zrenchak explained that the Borough is working with Senator Pisciottano regarding the possibility of purchasing rock salt through Allegheny County. He stated that purchasing salt through the County would be significantly less expensive than the current salt contract with American Rock Salt. Mr. Zrenchak noted that Council will need to be prepared to vote on the agreement with American Rock Salt as a contingency in the event the purchase through Allegheny County does not move forward.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Motion to accept the typed minutes from the July 22, 2026, meeting.
Motion: Mr. Matlos Second: Mrs. Lape
All in favor. Motion carries.

Next meeting dates/times: Work Session Meeting – **Wednesday, September 9, 2026, at 6:00 pm** and the Regular Session Meeting -- **Wednesday, September 23, 2026, at 6:00 pm.**

Motion to adjourn at 6:43 p.m.
Motion: Mr. Sowa Second: Mr. Matlos
All in favor. Motion carries.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jamie Leber
Secretary