

**EPHRATA BOROUGH COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 2, 2026**

The Ephrata Borough Council Work Session was called to order by President Zimmerman at 7:00 PM on Monday, February 2, 2026, in the Council Chambers of the Borough Office, 124 South State Street.

Attendance:

Present:

- President Greg Zimmerman
- Council Members: Alan Armstrong, Nancy Aronson, Timothy Barr, Alan Buohl, Kory Musser, Chad Ochs, Victor Richard

Absent:

- Mayor Thomas Reinhold

Also Present:

- Borough Manager Karen Gerhart
- Police Chief Christopher McKim
- Solicitor Isaac Wakefield (Salzmann Hughes)

Visitors:

- Larry Alexander, *The Ephrata Review*
- Tim Auker, 542 N. State St., Ephrata
- Gina Burkholder, 113 Washington Ave., Ephrata
- Michael Usner, 227 Church Ave., Ephrata
- Bradley Vater, 229 Church Ave., Ephrata
- Susan Vater, 229 Church Ave., Ephrata
- Adrin Vargas, 223 Church Ave., Ephrata
- Hillary Vargas, 223 Church Ave., Ephrata

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance: The meeting commenced with a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda: Borough Manager Karen Gerhart confirmed:

1. The agenda was posted on the Borough's website and at Borough Hall no later than 24 hours before the meeting.
2. The agenda included all matters of Borough business subject to deliberation or official action.
3. No changes were made to the agenda after posting.
4. The agenda was available to meeting attendees.

President Zimmerman asked for a motion to accept the agenda as posted.

Motion: Mr. Barr moved; Vice President Richard seconded.

- **Result:** Motion carried unanimously.
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Opportunity for Citizens to Be Heard: President Zimmerman invited public comments.

- Gina Burkholder, 113 Washington Avenue, Ephrata, expressed appreciation for Borough crews' efforts in clearing streets following approximately 12 inches of snow and repairing a water main break. She noted that Locust Street is a main thoroughfare with limited on-street parking and recommended it be designated as an emergency route. Ms. Burkholder expressed concern that current Codes enforcement lacks sufficient incentive for property maintenance, particularly among rental properties, and emphasized the importance of maintaining Ephrata as a desirable place to live requesting Council's consideration of her proposed changes.
- Susan Vater, 229 Church Avenue, Ephrata, spoke regarding the importance of unity between Council and residents. She expressed concern that the Borough appears to prioritize financial considerations over people and noted that she lives near the proposed WERT extension area. Ms. Vater stated that the Borough appears more inclined toward litigation rather than negotiation and emphasized the importance of community, stewardship, and protecting the Borough's reputation. She encouraged Council to consider the impacts on residents living in the affected area and to pursue negotiations on their behalf.

With no one wishing to speak, President Zimmerman closed the public comment section until the end of the agenda.

Discussion of Committee Actions:

Budget and Finance Committee

- Resolution No. 2026-07 Disposition of Records
- Resolution No. 2026-08 Exonerating the Borough from Paying 2026 Real Estate Taxes on Parcels Owned by the Borough
- Appointment of Successor to Fill a Vacancy on Planning Commission

Development Activities Committee

- 355 East Fulton Street – Time Extension to Record Plan
- 100 East Pine Street – Subdivision and Land Development Agreement
- 100 East Pine Street – Stormwater Operation and Maintenance Agreement
- 839 South State Street – Final Subdivision and Land Development Plan Review
- Overlook Estates – Final Lot Consolidation Plan Review
- Ordinance No. 1603 Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Smoke Shops and Short-Term Rentals
 - Mr. Musser moved, and Mr. Ochs seconded, to refer the Ordinance Text Amendment back to Committee for further review and inclusion of missing information.
 - **Result:** Motion carried unanimously.
- 409 North State Street – Conditional Use Application for Winter Shelter

Public Safety Committee

- K9 Program Agreement

Highway Committee

- PennDOT Application for Traffic Signal Approval – Planned SR 0272/Dutchland Avenue/Weis Markets Shopping Center Intersection Upgrade
- ParkMobile Service Agreement

Municipal Enterprises Committee

- Dedication of Stormwater Facilities
- Bid #25-7 Award Recommendation of Electric Line Maintenance

Community Services Committee

- WellSpan Health “Get Outdoors” Program Request at Grater Park
- Ephrata Reformed Presbyterian Church Request to use Whistle Stop Plaza

Personnel Committee

- Employee Handbook Amendments
- Memorandum of Agreement Between the Borough and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 1600 Regarding a Water Department Apprentice Position
- Borough of Ephrata 457 Plan Amendment

Committees – No Meetings Held in January 2026

- Special Projects Committee
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Opportunity for Citizens to Be Heard: President Zimmerman invited public comments.

- Gina Burkholder, 113 Washington Avenue, Ephrata, asked about on-street snow removal, noting difficulties accessing her parking space and alley. She further stated that Locust Street has been reduced to one lane creating a safety concern.
- Michael Usner, 227 Church Avenue, Ephrata, provided comments regarding the WERT Trail Expansion and raised questions concerning ownership of the property through which the trail is proposed to be expanded.
- Bradley Vater, 229 Church Avenue, Ephrata, commented on the WERT Trail Expansion, expressing concern over insufficient notice to residents and the timing of communications, including the Quick Claim Deed. He stated support for the project but suggested the Borough improve communication with affected residents in the future.
- Susan Vater, 229 Church Avenue, Ephrata, spoke about the WERT Trail Expansion, noting concerns about parking and safety due to multiple vehicles in her duplex household in the coming years. She emphasized the importance of involving affected homeowners early in the process and improving communication. Ms. Vater expressed a desire to participate in decision-making affecting residents and encouraged collaborative solutions rather than litigation.
- Adrin Vargas, 223 Church Avenue, Ephrata, spoke regarding the WERT Trail Expansion, noting

that he and his wife received notice on January 9, 2026, with a January 31, 2026 deadline to agree to the Quit Claim Deed. He expressed concern that the timeline was too short compared to the Borough's process and emphasized the need for earlier communication. Mr. Vargas also raised concerns about the loss of off-street parking and suggested exploring additional on-street parking options to minimize impact on residents.

With no one else wishing to speak, President Zimmerman closed the public comment section.

Discussion/Announcements:

- Mr. Buohl commented that Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow indicating six more weeks of winter.
- Ms. Gerhart announced that Borough Council would hold an Executive Session immediately following adjournment to discuss potential litigation.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 PM.

Executive Session

- Entered at 8:17 PM; exited at 9:25 PM to discuss potential litigation.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen A. Gerhart
Secretary

SJF