

Newtown Borough Council -- Work Session Minutes
April 8, 2026

Video time: 1:27

The regular monthly Work Session of Newtown Borough Council was called to order at 5:30 P.M. on Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at Borough Hall – 23 North State Street in Newtown Borough, PA. This [meeting was recorded](#).

President Heinz asked those in attendance to join her in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Councilors Heinz, Tognini, Bauman, Foley, Phillips, Woldorf; Mayor Grunde-McLaughlin; Chief Sabath; Solicitors Heleniak & Passero; Engineer Fountain; Manager Totaro

President Heinz addressed concerns about a PennDOT announcement regarding State Street closures. Manager Totaro shared that PECO will begin work in mid-May near the train tracks with potential full-time closures and detours to be discussed further; road restoration is to begin in mid-June and last two weeks.

Public to be Heard *Video time: 4:07*

Judith Carver, Resident, spoke of ongoing demolition and construction on either side of her home, noting the conscientiousness of the one contractor and lack thereof at 532 Penn Street. Her main concern was the lack of watering down the house before and during demolition to suppress dust and prevent hazardous materials from becoming airborne. Ms. Carver spoke to Manager Totaro who sent the Building Inspector out yesterday.

Jennifer Wolf, Resident, expressed concerns about the town prioritizing development over community preservation, emphasizing the need to maintain a vibrant and caring community.

Engineer's Report – Michele Fountain *Video time: 14:09*

Engineer Fountain provided updates on the Court & State LLC and 110 N. State Street subdivision and land development projects, the Frost Lane sidewalk and bicycle sharrow project, Liberty Centre review, and the 2026 Road Program to include Edgeboro Dr. and N. Congress St.

Zoning Overlay and Land Development Proposal - Liberty Centre *Video time: 16:25*

Engineer Fountain shared a comprehensive review letter of the Liberty Centre plans which included consideration of the proposed Greenway Redevelopment Overlay (GRO) Ordinance.

The discussion centered on whether the borough should modify their existing TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development) ordinance to accommodate this specific project, with Councilor Woldorf questioning the rationale for making ordinance changes rather than having the development meet existing requirements. The council discussed the 16-year-old TND ordinance's relevance in today's context and considered the potential benefits and implications of any modifications.

Councilor Woldorf discussed concerns about a proposed apartment development in downtown Newtown, focusing on two main issues: the lack of mixed-use buildings and the large size of the proposed apartment buildings. She explained that the current TND ordinance was designed to preserve the small-town character of downtown, allowing mixed-use buildings with commercial spaces on the first floor and apartments above.

Councilor Tognini expressed concern that approving solely residential buildings would result in revenue loss while increasing the town's population by about 10%. She noted that the TND ordinance already allows for contextual height variations. She discussed the benefits of mixed-use development for the borough, arguing that it would attract more people and improve State Street by providing reasons for residents to visit the area.

Councilor Phillips expressed concerns about the potential impact on existing businesses and questioned whether a strictly residential development might be more beneficial for established businesses on State Street; he suggested conducting further research to clarify the effects of mixed-use developments on local business corridors.

Councilor Woldorf highlighted that the developer must comply with requirements for a greenway along the creek and a public plaza, as outlined in the land acquisition agreement, or the land will revert to the borough. Councilor Woldorf also noted that the council has discretionary control over the zoning process and can make changes or choose not to advance the proposal if desired.

Councilor Woldorf discussed the history of this development project that had experienced multiple plan changes over several years, emphasizing that the council's role was to focus on how development would affect the town rather than addressing economic challenges. She discussed the potential for making Building 1 a hotel and suggested ways to achieve compliance with T&D requirements.

Jeff Menard and Dave Minno, Residents and Developers, explained that parking requirements drove the need for larger buildings, and while retail was considered, economic factors and vacant storefronts on State Street influenced their decisions.

The Council discussed options for advancing a draft plan to the Planning Commission, expressing a preference to provide feedback to the applicant requesting changes rather than rejecting it outright.

The council agreed to form a subcommittee consisting of Councilors Woldorf, Foley, and Bauman to explore potential middle-ground solutions with the developer, rather than moving the current plan to the Planning Commission for review. Councilor Woldorf clarified that the Planning Commission would not be able to review the current plan as it was not yet ready for public consideration.

Mayor's Report – Tara Grunde-McLaughlin *Video time: 1:08:17*

Mayor Grunde-McLaughlin announced that a special event request for a Native Plant Container Workshop, sponsored by the Environmental Advisory Council, will be voted on at next week's meeting. Councilor Woldorf added that a demonstration by a Master Gardener will take place at Patriots Park on Saturday May 16th. Since the cost for the program is \$700, it was proposed to charge a participation fee of \$20 per person and allow 25 participants. The Manager stated that Council needs to approve the fee which will be handled through Eventbrite.

Mayor Grunde-McLaughlin announced the following special event reminders:

- Arbor Day, sponsored by the Recreation Board, on Friday, April 17, 2026, 9:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M. at Brian S. Gregg Park. Rain date is April 24, 2026.
- Newtown Celebrates America's 250th - Saturday, August 8th
The Mayor stated that demonstrations, a reenactment of the skirmish at the Bird-in-Hand, and a visit by the Doan Gang will be some of the day's activities.

Solicitor's Report – Greg Heleniak *Video time: 1:15:30*

Solicitor Heleniak provided an update on the Fire Services Agreement with Newtown Township and noted that the 2026 Borough contribution is \$275,000.

- A motion was duly made by Councilor Phillips, seconded by Councilor Foley, and passed unanimously, to enter a Fire Services Agreement with Newtown Township for 2026.

Manager's Report – Craig Totaro *Video time: 1:18:49*

Manager Totaro received bids for landscaping and porter services which he will review with the Solicitor and prepare an action item to hire a new landscaper at next week's meeting.

Manager Totaro stated that the Council Rock School District is going to renovate the Chancellor Center and has approached Congressman Fitzpatrick for \$7 million in financial support from the federal government; a letter of agreement to apply for this grant will be ratified at next week's Council Meeting.

Manager Totaro announced that a \$10K PECO Green Region Grant was received and will apply towards expanding Newtown Common into the 110 North State Street easement.

Councilor Woldorf will incorporate legal and Council comments into the draft EV Charging Ordinance and continue to await responses from PennDOT and the Borough's insurance company regarding right-of-way EV charging. Councilor Woldorf estimated that this ordinance would apply to approximately 20 properties, 5-10 of which are on state roads. Councilor Foley shared information regarding retractable EV chargers on poles in rights-of-way, including existing utility poles. Further discussion will take place at next month's meeting.

President's Report – Emily Heinz *Video time: 1:32:57*

President Heinz tabled the discussion regarding external communications and a social media policy.

Review agenda items proposed for April 15, 2026 Council Meeting

President Heinz announced that the Mobile Food Vendor Ordinance Amendment has been advertised and will be on next week's agenda for Borough Council's approval.

Old Business - none

Announcements *Video time: 1:36:30*

Engineer Fountain stated that Newtown Township will be reviewing a preliminary plan for a land development project at the end of Penn Street. She provided details of the current proposal and suggested to the township that the plan be sent to the Borough for traffic impact review.

Councilor Woldorf stated that bid acceptance for the Newtown Creek Pedestrian Bridge was moved to April 10th.

Public to be Heard *Video time: 1:38:58*

Barbara Simmons, Resident, addressed Borough Council regarding the proposed Liberty Centre development and the potential impact on the community resulting from the increased number of apartment dwellings.

Chief Sabath announced that the next Drug Takeback Day is on Saturday, April 25th at the Newtown Fire Association.

President Heinz called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 P.M. Councilor Phillips so moved, Councilor Tognini seconded, and the motion was approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy S. Musto
Borough Secretary

Attendees

Chris Brill
Don Hayden
Warren Woldorf
Steve Nolan
Barbara Simmons
Jennifer Wolf
Jeff Menard
Jeanne Haeckel-Zoom
Nicole Rodowicz-Zoom
Karen White-Zoom

Jeff Werner
Warren Dallas
Judith Carver
Maryjane Leonard
David Minno
Jeff Marshall
Bob Musto-Zoom
Diane LeBas-Zoom
Lars Merk-Zoom