

**BOROUGH OF GETTYSBURG  
TROXELL COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
59 EAST HIGH STREET, GETTYSBURG, PA 17325  
COUNCIL BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 11, 2023**

**President Wesley Heyser** called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with the following **Councilors present:** Vice-President Matthew Moon, Mr. John Lawver, Mr. Christopher Berger, and Mr. Chad Carr. Ms. Patricia Lawson attended via telecommunications. Mrs. Judith Butterfield was absent. **Staff present included:** Mayor Rita Frealing; Borough Manager Charles Gable; Assistant Borough Manager/Secretary Sara Stull; Borough Solicitor Harold Eastman, Barley Snyder; Police Chief Robert Glenney; Director of Historic and Environmental Preservation Debra English; Planning Assistant Karen Mesher; Parking Manager Rebecca Fissel; Public Works Director Robert Harbaugh; and Borough Engineer Chad Clabaugh, C.S. Davidson, Inc.

**Others present included:** Jill Sellers, President of Main Street Gettysburg; Brian Hodges, 137 Ridge Avenue and owner of The Brafferton Inn, 44 York Street; Scott English, owner of The Gettysburg Academy, 66-68 W. High Street; Linda Atiyeh, owner of The Upper Crust, 26 York Street; Shelley Knouse, owner of Fresh Boutique, 28 Chambersburg Street; Nancie Gudmestad, owner of Shriver House, 309 Baltimore Street; David Petters, KADEL LLC, owner of the Blue and Gray Restaurant, 2 Lincoln Square; Paul Witt, owner of the Quality Inn and Best Western, 380 Steinwehr Avenue; Karl Pietrzak, President of Destination Gettysburg, 1560 Fairfield Road; Jennie Dillon and Marci Bievenour both representing the Gettysburg Area Retail Merchants Association (GARMA); Carrie Stuart, President of The Chamber of Commerce of Gettysburg, 1382 Biglerville Road; Gary Shaffer, Chairman of the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB); Scott Wallace, Owner of Oh Man! Gifts, 1 Baltimore Street; Timbrel Wallace, owner of Lark Gifts, 17 Lincoln Square; Wade Leedy, Tommy's Pizza, 105 Steinwehr Avenue; Andrea Proulx and Chris May both representing the Gettysburg Hotel, One Lincoln Square; Emily Warren, owner of Trip to the Cottage, 9 Chambersburg Street; Tory Warren, owner of A Lit'le Irish Too, 30 York Street; Alisha Sanders, 812 Sunset Avenue; Susan Cipperly, 314 North Stratton Street; Susan and Gary Casteel, 131 South Washington Street; Darlene Brown, 355 West High Street; Sharon Monahan, 114 West Broadway; Sherry Meyers, 55 Chambersburg Street; Rogers James, 941 Fairfield Road; and Lois Starkey, former business owner, 13950 Green Ridge Road, Orrtanna. Representing the press was Jim Hale with the *Gettysburg Times*; and filming by *Community Media-ACCTV*.

**President Wesley Heyser** announced an executive session of the Borough Council of the Borough of Gettysburg was conducted immediately following the adjournment of the November 28, 2023 monthly work session of the Borough Council consistent with sections 708(a)(1), 708(a)(3) and 708(a)(5) of the Sunshine Act.

## **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Carr to approve the December 11, 2023 agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Berger to approve minutes of the Borough Council Meeting of November 13, 2023; Public Hearing of November 28, 2023, and the Borough Council Work Session of November 28, 2023 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **Public Comment (Restricted to Items on the Agenda)**

**Brian Hodges, 137 Ridge Avenue and owner of The Brafferton Inn, 44 York Street** thanked Councilman Heyser for his eight years of service on Council and Councilman Lawver for his decades long service to the Borough. He expressed his concerns regarding the proposed Sign Ordinance and said that the Council needs to work with the businesses, and asked that they postpone voting to allow more time to resolve the issues.

**Shelley Knouse, owner of Fresh Boutique, 28 Chambersburg Street** thanked both Councilman Heyser and Councilman Lawver for their years of service to the Borough. She expressed her concerns regarding the proposed Sign Ordinance and stated that a 50-square-foot limit for each building is too small especially when more than one business is located at that building. She said that there was not enough time given to people to review the proposed ordinance and asked Council to not vote tonight in order to allow more time for review.

**Paul Witt, owner of the Quality Inn and Best Western, 380 Steinwehr Avenue** said that he is in favor of the Sign Ordinance and noted that 42-square-feet has been adequate for his businesses. He said that there were problems with gigantic signs throughout town that existed before the Borough adopted a Sign Ordinance. Mr. Witt pointed out that people have gotten away with illegal signs due to the lack of enforcement.

**Gary Shaffer, Chairman of the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB)** said that, speaking as a resident of the Borough, the proposed Sign Ordinance is a good one and clarifies it better. He pointed out that the 50-square-foot-limit has been in the ordinance for many years.

**Andrea Proulx, the Gettysburg Hotel, One Lincoln Square** said that the 50-square-foot limit is not adequate for everyone and that exceptions should be allowed.

**Jennie Dillon, Gettysburg Area Retail Merchants Association (GARMA)** said that she was a former business owner on York Street, and said that the Sign Ordinance is not business friendly. She said that business owners were not made aware of the changes

to the Sign Ordinance nor were they informed about the meeting, and should be allowed more time to review.

**Susan Casteel, 131 South Washington Street** said that businesses are the backbone of the community and feels that there are too many restrictions in the Sign Ordinance. She said that there was not enough information shared with the public regarding the ordinance.

**Carrie Stuart, President of The Chamber of Commerce of Gettysburg, 1382 Biglerville Road** said that they have not received complaints from the public about the signs, but several of the business owners have expressed concerns about the proposed Sign Ordinance. She asked that the Council table the motion tonight to allow more time to review, and suggested that business owners be included in the discussion.

**Karl Pietrzak, President of Destination Gettysburg, 1560 Fairfield Road** asked the Council to table the proposed Sign Ordinance motion tonight to allow people time to discuss the issues further with Borough Council.

**Tory Warren, owner of A Lit'le Irish Too, 30 York Street** asked the Council to table the proposed Sign Ordinance motion tonight to allow the public to meet with Council and discuss the issues. She said that she drove around town and thought that the signs looked fine except for some that looked like it was Halloween.

**Nancie Gudmestad, owner of Shriver House, 309 Baltimore Street** asked the Council to table the proposed Sign Ordinance motion tonight to allow time to review the business owners' concerns.

**Susan Cipperly, 314 North Stratton Street** asked the Council to table the proposed Sign Ordinance motion tonight to allow people time to discuss the issues further with Borough Council. She said that it is important to include business owners and sign creators in the process of developing a Sign Ordinance.

**Emily Warren, owner of Trip to the Cottage, 9 Chambersburg Street** said that she will be opening a new business in the near future and said that the Sign Ordinance needs to be more lenient and not to give exceptions to the historical buildings.

**Jill Sellers, President of Main Street Gettysburg** said that Main Street Gettysburg has been around since 1984, and said that she can see both points of view from the public and from Council. The Sign Ordinance has been around for a long time and there are some issues to be resolved, and asked that Council table the motion and continue discussions in 2024.

**Sherry Meyers, 55 Chambersburg Street** said that she likes signs and that they help her find places to eat and shop, but recommended that the signs should be made tastefully.

## **Current and Old Business**

### **Department of Planning /Zoning/Code /Code Enforcement**

**Borough Manager Gable** announced that the new Planning Director, John Whitmore, will begin work on Tuesday, January 2, 2024. He is currently the Director of Economic Development for Clarksville, W. Va., and he noted that he was also a senior planner for Morgantown, W. Va., a city planner for Parkersburg, WV, and has also held other planning positions.

**President Wesley Heyser** said that there was a public hearing held regarding the proposed Sign Ordinance that was properly advertised, and noted that Council had discussed the ordinance during many public meetings which began in 2017; and said that since it has been several years, it is best to have another public look at it. The current ordinance was adopted in 2010, and he warned that the ordinance remains out of compliance with a U.S. Supreme Court free-speech ruling concerning controls on the content of signs. He pointed out that many of the regulations cited by business owners tonight have long been in effect under the current ordinance, and noted that there has been a lack of strict enforcement.

**A motion to enact an updated and modified sign ordinance for the purpose of superseding, supplanting and replacing the current Gettysburg Borough Sign Ordinance, which is codified at Chapter 19, Part 1, Subpart A. of the Borough Code of Ordinances.**

After Council discussion, it was determined that more time was needed for the public to review and discuss issues with Borough Council.

**Moved Mr. Lawver, seconded Ms. Lawson to table the final vote on the Sign Ordinance to allow people time to review and discuss the issues with Council at the Council Work Session on April 22, 2024. Motion carried unanimously.**

### **Department of Historic & Environmental Preservation**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Carr to accept the recommendations of the Borough of Gettysburg Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) following its review on November 15, 2023 and grant a Certificates of Appropriateness for the following applications as presented: COA-230062, MAJOR PROJECT: 141 S. Stratton Street – Trinity UCC for the proposed replacement of the four front façade windows as presented in the application dated October 19, 2023; COA-230081, MAJOR PROJECT: 205 S. Stratton Street for the proposed siding replacement to include new gutters, soffits, and downspouts as presented in the application dated October 15, 2023; COA-230086, MAJOR PROJECT: 43 W. Middle Street – Katrina Luedtke for the proposed replacement of 14 windows excluding the front façade per the application dated October 25, 2023; COA-230080, MAJOR PROJECT: 503 York**

**Street – Piper Team LLC for the replacement of the mix-matched aluminum and vinyl siding with vinyl siding with a smooth texture as presented in the application dated October 10, 2023. Motion carried unanimously.**

### **Parking Department**

**Parking Manager Fissel** gave the following report: there were 41 Local Privilege Parking (LPP) Permits issued for the month of November; 18 reserved parking spaces in the parking garage issued for the month of November; and included in her monthly report was the 2018 to 2023 Christmas Festival Revenue comparisons.

### **Public Works Department**

**Public Works Director Harbaugh** gave the following report: leaf collection continues, and the Christmas tree collection will begin on January 2, 2024 and continue throughout the month.

### **Borough Engineer**

**Borough Engineer Clabaugh** asked Council to place the Gettysburg Inner Loop on the January Work Session agenda to update and discuss the grants for the project.

**Moved Mr. Carr, seconded Mr. Lawver to approve Application for Payment #2/Final to JDI Site Solutions, LLC., in the amount of \$4,955.05, associated with the 2023 Gettysburg Borough Bridge Maintenance Project, as recommended by the Borough Engineer. Motion carried unanimously.**

### **Police Department**

**Chief Glenny** gave the following report: the police located one stolen vehicle out of York by using their new license plate reader.

**Chief Glenny** introduced Alec Lardarello who graduated from the police academy and is now progressing through the Field Training Officer Program with Officer Holden. Joshua Chilcote is expected to graduate from the police academy in the near future and will be placed on the police schedule.

**Officer Lardarello** said that he is looking forward to serving the community.

### **Office of the Manager/Treasurer/Secretary**

**Manager Gable** gave the following report: there is 3.4 million dollars in the General Fund, and approximately \$257,000 surplus in the General Fund.

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Lawver to approve all bills and payrolls for the month as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Lawver, seconded Mr. Berger to approve the distribution of the Eichelberger-Stahle Funds to Borough residents as required and recommended. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Carr to make a budget modification to transfer the amount of \$250,000 from the General Fund Account #01 to the Capital Project Fund #18. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Berger, seconded Mr. Lawver to appoint Chad M. Clabaugh, P.E., as interim Zoning Officer. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Carr to adopt a resolution appointing Susan Cipperly as a member of the Gettysburg Municipal Authority for a five (5) year term, commencing in January 2024 and expiring in January 2029. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Berger, seconded Mr. Moon to adopt a resolution appointing Darlene Brown as a member of the Zoning Hearing Board of the Borough of Gettysburg for a five (5) year term, commencing in January 2024 and expiring in January 2029. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Carr, seconded Mr. Moon to appoint Martin Jolin as a member of the Gettysburg Borough Planning Commission for a four (4) year term, commencing in January 2024 and expiring in January 2028. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Lawver to approve the new and updated Borough of Gettysburg Employee Handbook and Policy Manual. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Carr to adopt a resolution for the purposes of setting, updating and confirming the Borough's fees and charges for the issuance of licenses, permits and the provision of municipal services in fiscal year 2024. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Berger to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues and receipts for the General Fund in the amount of \$6,965,219 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$6,965,219. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Carr, seconded Mr. Moon to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues and receipts for**



**the Fire Protection Services Fund in the amount of \$249,500 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$249,500. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Carr to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues and receipts for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Fund in the amount of \$261,599 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$261,584. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Carr, seconded Mr. Moon to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues and receipts for the Capital Projects Fund in the amount of \$1,490,638 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$1,568,388. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Berger, seconded Mr. Lawver to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues and receipts for the Debt Service Fund in the amount of \$641,559 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$641,559. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Lawver, seconded Mr. Moon to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues and receipts for the Capital Reserve Fund in the amount of \$348,437 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$1,288,693. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Lawver, seconded Mr. Carr to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues and receipts for the Liquid Fuels Fund in the amount of \$177,730 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$70,550. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Berger, seconded Mr. Carr to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues and receipts for the Revolving Loan Fund in the amount of \$116,730 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$0. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Carr to adopt the Borough of Gettysburg budget for fiscal year 2024 containing an estimate of annual revenues for the ARPA Fund in the amount of \$1560 and an estimate of annual expenditures in the amount of \$1,034,415. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Carr, seconded Mr. Moon to enact an ordinance fixing the tax rates of the Borough of Gettysburg for fiscal year 2024 at 4.1770 mills on each dollar of real estate assessed valuation for general Borough purposes, 30 mills on each dollar of occupational assessed valuation for general Borough purposes, and at .5000 mills on each dollar of real estate assessed valuation for fire protection services appropriations tax purposes. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Carr to set the organization meeting of the Borough Council to be held on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 5:00 p.m., pursuant to section 1001(a) of the Borough Code and to authorize the provision of public notice for the organization meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Moved Mr. Moon, seconded Mr. Berger to set the first monthly general business meeting of the Borough Council on Monday, January 8, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. and to authorize the provision of public notice for the business meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **Liaison Reports**

### **Main Street Gettysburg**

**Jill Sellers, President of Main Street Gettysburg presented their 2023 Annual Report (see attached).**

### **Gettysburg Area Recreation Authority (GARA)**

**Councilman Carr** had nothing to report.

### **Gettysburg Municipal Authority (GMA)**

**Councilman Berger** read the following summary report regarding the GMA rate structure for 2024: Starting January 1, 2024, Gettysburg Municipal Authority will be implementing a new water billing structure. This new billing structure will also include a rate increase. Currently, customers pay a minimum fee which includes a usage allowance, along with charges for usage above that minimum allowance. This new structure will consist of a fixed service charge. This fixed service charge will be based on meter size using American Water Works Association (AWWA) meter ratio and/ or housing units. This AWWA meter ratio schedule can be found on our website [www.GettysburgMA.com](http://www.GettysburgMA.com). Additionally, a usage fee will be applied for all water used. Average customers will see about \$20 increase in their quarterly bill.

### **Steinwehr Avenue Heart of Gettysburg Battlefield (SAHGB)**

**Councilwoman Butterfield** was absent tonight so there was no report.

### **Adams County Boroughs Association (ACBA)**

**Mayor Frealing** had nothing to report.

### **Adams County Council of Governments (ACCOG)**

**Councilwoman Butterfield** was absent tonight so there was no report.



### **Health Adams Bicycle Pedestrian, Inc. (HABPI)**

**Councilwoman Lawson** had nothing to report.

### **Adams County Transportation Planning Association (ACTPO)**

**Councilwoman Butterfield** was absent tonight so there was no report.

### **Overdose Awareness and Recovery**

**Councilman Moon** had nothing to report.

### **Trail Feasibility Study**

**Councilman Berger** had nothing to report.

### **Other Reports**

#### **Recycling**

**Councilwoman Butterfield** was absent tonight so there was no report.

### **Elected Officials' Comments**

**Mayor Frealing** thanked Councilman Lawver and Councilman Heyser for their years of service and said that they will be greatly missed.

**Councilman Carr** announced the upcoming New Years Eve celebration will have lots of vendors and special activities for attendees on the square, but noted that there will be no fireworks due to the safety.

**Councilman Carr** acknowledged Sergeant Larry Weikert on his thirty-fifth anniversary serving the Borough.

**Councilman Moon** said that he attended a celebration earlier today at Gettysburg College in recognition of Jeffrey Gabel's many years of service at the Majestic Theater; and he will be missed by all who knew him.

**Councilman Moon** thanked both Councilman Heyser for his exceptional leadership and Councilman Lawver for his dedication and institutional knowledge over the many years he served the Borough; and said that they both will be missed.

**Councilman Berger** said that he was fortunate to have worked with both Councilman Lawver and Councilman Heyser and said that he has learned a lot from their knowledge. He said that they both worked very hard for the community.

## **Public Comment**

**Brian Hodges, 137 Ridge Avenue and owner of The Brafferton Inn, 44 York Street** thanked Council for tabling the Sign Ordinance to allow more time for people to review and discuss with Council at the work sessions.

**Scott English, owner of The Gettysburg Academy, 66-68 W. High Street** thanked Council members for their service to the community.

**Rogers James, 941 Fairfield Road** asked if he could schedule a meeting with Chief Glenn.

**Chief Glenn** will meet with him after the meeting to schedule an appointment.

**Council President Heyser** read the attached statement regarding his tenure on Council.

**Moved Mr. Berger, seconded Mr. Moon to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 PM. Motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,



Sara L. Stull  
Borough Secretary



## MAIN STREET GETTYSBURG

59 EAST HIGH STREET, SUITE 3

GETTYSBURG, PA 17325

717-337-3491

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

## MAIN STREET AMERICA™



Main Street Gettysburg worked with Main Street America™ and Pennsylvania Downtown Center to help rural business owners address their biggest challenges. The program engaged five small businesses and a specific challenge. On-site focus groups were conducted to determine patterns and commonalities. Findings will be published and available to share recommendations for process and technical solutions focused on rural business needs.

## GROW WITH GOOGLE

Main Street Gettysburg hosted a series of free workshops for businesses, in conjunction with Google, Main Street America, and Pennsylvania Downtown Center. Businesses learned to manage their online profiles, including photos, videos, mapping, as well as e-Commerce tools. Other workshops are scheduled in the fall. Businesses are encouraged to take advantage of this free training. The workshops were open to all businesses in Adams County and helped with questions regarding business profiles online, marketing, images, maps, directions, and more. We hope this program will continue in 2024.

## STEINWEHR BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



Main Street Gettysburg continued administrative support to the BID Board of Directors, managing meetings and maintaining records. The BID added new board members, welcomed new businesses, and continues to bring visitors for events and parades, including the vintage base ball tournament, bike week, and more. The Christmas Festival brought entertainment, street performers, bounce houses, carriage rides, and live reindeer to Steinwehr Avenue. We look forward to more events in 2024!

## GETTYSBURG WELCOME CENTER

Main Street Gettysburg continues our partnership with the Borough of Gettysburg to develop the Gettysburg Welcome Center. The project remains under consideration in the FY24 federal budget, supported by both Senator Robert Casey and Representative John Joyce.

The demolition stage of the project was approved by the Historic Architectural Review Board in June 2023, contingent upon construction funding. Other preliminary steps include asbestos testing and mitigation if needed, utility preparation, and coordination with neighboring properties.

We achieved a \$20,000 challenge award this year! After raising \$28,378 in new contributions, Adams County Community Foundation matched us with an additional \$20,000! Adams County Community Foundation Forward Fund awarded the project \$20,000! We continue to seek public grants and private funds for this vital project. Local match funds total over \$376,746 thus far.

## ADAMS COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GIVING SPREE

Main Street Gettysburg was honored to participate in the Giving Spree to benefit the Gettysburg Welcome Center project. On December 15, 2023, the Big Reveal **announced our donation total of \$..., including \$... toward our endowment!**

## HIGHLIGHTS

### GETTYSBURG WELCOME CENTER

- HARB approval
- \$20,000 Forward Fund award!
- \$20,000 challenge grant achieved!
- \$28,378 in contributions!

### BRICK LEGACY PATHWAY

- 30th Anniversary
- Installed 177 bricks in 2023
- Over 8,000 bricks downtown!

### DOWNTOWN PROJECTS

- From the Ground Up
- David Wills House
- Façade Improvement Program

### CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

- Multiple partners and locations
- Movie premiere
- High economic return!



[www.mainstreetgettysburg.org](http://www.mainstreetgettysburg.org)



## FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Main Street Gettysburg administered a \$50,000 Keystone Communities Grant by facilitating a local Façade Improvement Program. In 2023, we provided grants to eight downtown businesses to help with paint, signs, windows, and other street-facing projects. Total investment exceeded \$480,000. Remaining projects will be completed in spring 2024 and eligible for reimbursement. Requirements include a 1:1 match on projects, limited to \$5,000 per business, and must comply with state guidelines under Department of Community and Economic Development.



## VOLUNTEERS

In April, we held a luncheon at the Adams County Arts Council to honor our volunteers. We hosted approximately 25 people and recognized Susan Naugle as our 2022 Volunteer of the Year. We look forward to celebrating again in 2023!

## DAVID WILLS HOUSE

Main Street Gettysburg continues our partnership with the National Park Service to open the David Wills House from April through November. They also generously opened for the weekend of the Christmas Festival. Our amazing volunteers helped host thousands of visitors this year.



## LEGACY BRICK PATHWAY

Main Street Gettysburg's Historic Pathway Legacy Brick Program celebrated its 30th anniversary this year. We installed 177 engraved bricks on the Southeast quadrant of Lincoln Square.

## AMERICA250PA

Main Street Gettysburg remains active with the Adams County 250 Commission. We are working to develop exciting plans to celebrate the nation's 250th birthday in 2026. Our committees include County Heritage, Marketing, Civic Engagement, and Events.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

Main Street Gettysburg volunteers are amazing! Our From The Ground Up group has grown to over a dozen hard-working volunteers; they cleaned up the downtown streets every Monday from April to November, after special events, and organized an amazing trash & cleanup program for the Christmas Festival. More than 388 volunteer hours were logged throughout 2023, totaling \$12,338.40 in donated services!

## ELM STREET PROGRAM

Main Street Gettysburg coordinated a committee to reapply for an Elm Street Program. Thanks to volunteers, the required match funds of \$25,000 were collected within two weeks! The application to Department of Community and Economic Development was submitted for consideration and award in 2024. This program will serve the Elm Street district.

## 30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY MOVIE CELEBRATION

Main Street Gettysburg partnered with Journey Through Hallowed Ground, American Battlefield Trust, Adams County Historical Society, and Seminary Ridge Museum to produce the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the movie *Gettysburg* in October. Activities included screenings, presentations, bus tours, autograph sessions, memorabilia exhibits, and appearances by the Director and Cast. The event weekend was filled with camaraderie and reflection of this epic film!



## A GETTYSBURG CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

Main Street Gettysburg and a host of sponsors, participants, and volunteers, orchestrated a multi-location festival. Our partners delivered events, activities, and experiences throughout our historic downtown. We provided free attractions and activities to draw residents and visitors to downtown Gettysburg for a unique holiday experience for families and people of all ages. Thanks to partnerships, free parking and shuttle services were provided that allowed visitors to access and patronize activities and our local businesses. The purpose of the festival is to stimulate the local economy: the Christmas Festival showcases Gettysburg during the holiday season, encourages commerce and repeat visitation.

## A GETTYSBURG CHRISTMAS MOVIE

Main Street Gettysburg coordinated with movie director Bo Brinkman and producer Kris Webb, on their film: *A Gettysburg Christmas*. Their crew filmed b-roll footage during the Christmas Festival and Tuba Carol Fest in 2022. Main Street Gettysburg coordinated with businesses and other groups that appeared in the film. The local premiere was held at the Majestic Theater on November 27th to a packed crowd. Main Street Gettysburg also worked with Director Brinkman and Seminary Ridge Museum to screen the film during the Christmas Festival. A limited audience was fortunate to secure free tickets for this special event. Watch for announcements for theater and streaming releases in 2024.



OUR SUCCESS IS ATTRIBUTED TO OUR PARTNERS, SPONSORS, DONORS, AND VOLUNTEERS!

*We look forward to an amazing 2024!*

*Thank you!*

Remarks to be delivered at the conclusion of the Gettysburg Borough Council on December 11, 2023.

As this is my last meeting leading this team, I prepared a few remarks as I reflected on my eight years serving the people of Gettysburg. It has been my duty and honor serve the people of, as Mayor Bill Troxell termed it, the greatest small town in the world. During my time I served with three mayors and fourteen different members of council. While the faces have changed, our charge from the commonwealth to look out for the health, safety and welfare of our people, within the limited parameters of the borough code, has remained the same.

Before I joined this council, I attended meetings here for several years. I did not want to be involved until I really had a lay of the land. I assisted in the effort to alter the council from nine seats to seven, which I believe has led to an organization where it is easier for the members to understand each others' positions and make the best use of everyone's time. We are a working group, and time has always been the finite resource that presents our greatest challenge.

Like many public servants, my greatest regrets are the tasks and policies left unresolved; the ideas and concepts left on the cutting room floor. From dozens of ideas, there would emerge a handful of detailed proposals, and perhaps one or two of those reached fruition. I leave with projects that have are incomplete—the redevelopment of Baltimore Street, the welcome center, the future of Gettysburg Station, and a sign ordinance that we know sits in violation of a supreme court ruling.

In 2015 I did not really understand how my predecessors, Michael Birkner and Rebecca Brown likely felt. I was excited. I had the spark that you need to be good at this. I combined that spark with my skills, and over the years we developed a team. We used our time wisely, and we accomplished much. Eight years later, I certainly understand now, how I believe my predecessors probably felt as their time here came to a close. In the words of a constituent, concerned citizen Ben Kennedy, I leave here “a little wiser, and a little sadder”.

There were warning signs. When I was elected, my uncle Steve, who lived in the borough for many years, commented that I better wear a flak jacket. Unfortunately, that expression applied more literally than it should. Right from the beginning, there was difficulty and controversy. Simply put, in a variety of ways I saw some of the worst that our community has to offer. The verbal and written tirades that the public is aware of pale to the anonymous threats and attempts to intimidate. As a fireman I knew death and destruction from accidents and catastrophes, but here I got a masters class on how some people actively choose to harm others. While my former colleague Graham Weaver believed in finding your replacement, this sort of behavior made it difficult for me to ask anyone that I cared about to seek this seat.

There were moments that you could only laugh at because they were so sad. The best was probably when a fellow council member at that time mistakenly texted me after hanging up the phone, with the message “Wes sucks and is no conservative”. That was obviously intended for someone else. I simply replied to her that, “Well, I guess that’s a matter of opinion, including how you define conservative”.

The sad reality is that some people could not define what it means to be a conservative in a built environment within the confines of the laws of this commonwealth. Nor could they successfully serve in a municipality that is undeniably blue. In undergrad I concentrated on political theory, and I loved it. Here in the wilds of even local politics, I have grown to hate the results of political based intentions. Too



many people fail to understand that the community has to come before any faction, as George Washington would have termed it.

I will never regret being told by people that do not serve anyone but themselves that I am “not a good republican”. Since it would seem that I have to choose, I would rather be a good public servant. The past few decades would espouse the notion that so called “good members” of either major political party spend their time grandstanding, stonewalling, and ignoring their duty the people.

I chose the people. No one asked me to do that. No one had to. I have answered to the people and not to just a select group who are the loudest and most dramatic. If that makes me unwelcome in some circles, so be it; because when you focus on the people, and listen to the people, you can accomplish feats. I will always appreciate the citizens that did not want anything special, just a little appropriate help with some relief from their government. An accessible parking space near their home that a woman had needed for decades; a zoning change that was necessary because of an obvious previous error that had made a building unusable. Today it's a beloved and booming enterprise. Some input into the design of their street, understanding there would be input and opinions from many people. Cutting red tape, even when I was initially told no by council leadership or staff, always felt right.

Instead of trying to control development in real time, we worked to create a landscape of regulation and incentives that would allow a private interest to act on private property to the benefit of the community. I did everything that could be done to make the Gettysburg Station site buildable. The outcome of that project remains to be seen.

As a government, we took steps to protect our housing stock. We balanced the budgets, and dealt with the economic collapse that accompanied the pandemic.

We made the hard decisions. Very early on, I remember telling a constituent one evening here that “I did not choose to do this (meaning serve on this council) because it was easy, I did it because it was hard”.

We dealt with personnel situations that could only be described as horrible. There was a painful amount of information that I can never disclose. I made the decisions that any responsible person with the same information would have made.

We borrowed four million dollars and undertook a capital improvement plan that resurfaced the borough streets comprehensively for the first time in thirty years. We purchased the land under the parking deck to protect the taxpayers from losing that investment. We did all of these things by borrowing money at the lowest interest rates in decades. There was criticism. We made decisions based on the information we had at the time. Little did we know that today's inflation and interest rates would make our decision now seem like the obvious choice.

I worked hard for four years, holding town halls and pushing steadily during budget time to increase the authorized police staffing from ten uniformed personnel to twelve.

Then the pandemic collapsed the borough's economy. I had to support the decision to furlough an officer in late 2020. At that time there was no end to the pandemic in sight, and we had to either eliminate positions or massively raise taxes on an entire community already being financially broken by the effects of the shut downs. The three public works positions were retirements, but the cop was not.



Had we known then that the federal government would narrowly pass the American Rescue Plan some seven months later, that could have been avoided. Unfortunately, counting on Washington D.C. for anything is not a reasonable plan, and we did not have the option to wait until the dust settled to make a decision.

The pandemic changed the operation of our government to maintenance and crisis mode for the better part of a year or more.

Still, as we emerged, the council that I have served with for the last four of my eight years accomplished a great deal. We made changes that made the government more effective. We had more efficient discussions due to the use of policy briefing summaries so that the critical items could be identified and the time utilized for discussion could be maximized.

We now use a comprehensive list of authorities, boards and commissions with term dates to facilitate smooth fulfillment of these seats. After a thoughtful discussion, at the request of the people we added a human relations commission to that list of ABCs.

The council now receives consistent briefings on all complaints against employees. For years I heard about how many problems members of our community had with employees—but now we know about every complaint that is filed.

We have adopted policies that have led to increased transparency and curbed runaway overtime costs.

We effectively held Waste Management accountable for their hauling contract, and gained compliance rather than re-bidding for a new hauler.

We conducted and concluded the first comprehensive revision of the employee manual in perhaps fifteen years.

We increased the authorized sworn force in the police department, which was ten personnel when I joined the council, back to twelve and in 2023 to fourteen. That includes the chief, two sergeants, two detectives and nine patrol officers, the last of which is completing the academy and will be on duty in the new year.

During my tenure here, the tax rate increased from a 2016 millage of 4.0203 mills to a 2024 millage of 4.6770 mills. That is an increase of 0.6467 mills over those years, or an average increase of .0719 mills, or \$7 per \$100,000 of value per year.

That means that the owner occupant of a median house valued at \$241,500 is paying \$156.18 more than they were in 2016. Of that increase, \$60.38 is going to help support the volunteer fire department. In exchange for the rest, less than \$100 over those years, they have four more police officers than they did in 2016, while maintain all other services at the same level.

Tonight being the end of my service was my own design. I announced when I agreed to helm this council as president in January of 2022 that this term. The community deserves fresh ideas, fresh energy, and someone who can examine our challenges with a different point of view.

I was raised in a home where public service was valued. My faith in the concept and the principles that surround that calling have compelled me to enter into many endeavors where I believe I have helped others, even when it was to my own detriment.

To be effective, this council must be a working council, not people who dictate to staff and wait for a work product. They have write up their proposals and gather a coalition. They have to be willing to do what it takes to hold a waste hauler accountable for their contract, even if that means photographing the same eight trash cans every day for six weeks to have the necessary evidence. They have to dedicate several hours each weekend preceding the meetings to read all of the dozens of pages of provided materials. They have to be responsive to their constituents, including those they do not agree with.

The people need a tireless worker, and I am tired. The spark has grown too dim to last another term. This role has been taxing on the mind and on taxing on the spirit. The people simply deserve more than I have to offer over the next four years. I do not know how to serve without being fully committed, and I refuse to short them. During these eight years I have given all that I can, and I do not want to reach a day when I am unable to continue to do so.

Many have asked me why I am leaving, and what I will do. The daily practice of serving others has become such an ingrained part of who I am that I do not know if I could continue on without fulfilling that calling. In many ways I have built my life around the need to scratch that itch.

When I assumed office in 2016, my intention was to take a step back at the fire department—run fewer calls, and not accept many responsibilities outside of that. However, even while concurrently raising two young children, I have never been able to do that. I'm on the fire trucks quite a bit, and I'm spending a number of evenings at the station in meetings or drills.

Being a teacher, a volunteer firefighter, the council president, the secretary of the stormwater authority, the secretary of the civil service commission, amongst a few other roles, makes it challenging to be the fully involved father I believe that I need to be.

I cannot tell you exactly what I am going to do with the days and hours I will gain from ending my service here, but whether it be more involvement at the fire department or some other pursuit, rest assured you will see me out there, serving the people. Best of luck to my valued colleagues that remain; it has been a privilege to serve with you; you made me feel valued, and at many times, besides the desire to serve the people, that has been what has kept me going during these years.

Best wishes for 2024 and beyond.

*Wally K. Heyer*