
MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order: Mr. Porco

Pledge of Allegiance: Mayor O'Malley

Roll Call: Absent: Devon Wood, Steve Karas (Wood may come later)

Mr. Belmonte	Yes	Mr. Porco	Yes
Mr. Burleigh	Yes	Mayor O'Malley	Yes
Mr. Erbeldinger	Yes	Janet Sullivan, Tax Collector	Yes
Mr. Karas	No	Blaine Lucas, Solicitor	Yes
Mr. Tomasic	Yes	Paul Gaus, Engineer	Yes
Ms. Wood	No	Steven Morus, Manager	Yes

President's Report: Mr. Porco

Mr. Porco noted several items including:

He noted the passing of Millie Devich, Braddock Councilwoman, a colleague and friend.

He discussed a meeting held with the Fire Department and Mr. Tomasic, Mr. Erbeldinger and Mr. Porco on the proposed municipal service fee and its impact on the VFD subscription drive for a new fire truck. Council is concerned about how it may impact the Fire Department's own fundraising drive that they conduct every year, which is essentially a mailer that goes out to every single business and residence in the borough.

He noted that the police declared an impasse in bargaining and submitted for arbitration. This in no way indicates or means that we cannot continue to negotiate over the contract, but they have to declare an impasse as part of the process in case we end up having to go to an independent arbiter.

He noted that an executive session was held following committee meetings on Sept. 2 to discuss bargaining issues.

Finally, he noted that a picnic for volunteers was held a couple of weeks ago and he thanked the volunteers again for all their help.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor O'Malley

Mayor O'Malley reported on a number of activities he attended.

- On August 19th, he attended Pittsburgh's 50 Finest Event at the William Penn Hotel.
- On August 20th he attended the Forest Hills Musical Event at the Westinghouse Lodge.
- On August 20th he attended the Hosannah House fundraiser at Sherwood Facility – the Jazz Night Music.
- On August 21st, he represented Forest Hills at the Homeless Veterans Stand at Mercy Hospital, providing social services to homeless veterans.
- On August 22nd, he attended the Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Picnic in South Park.
- On August 26th, he attended the League of Women Voters Rally at Mellon Square, which was commemorating the women's right to vote legislation.
- On August 27th, he represented Forest Hills at the regular meeting of the Southeast Allegheny County Tax Consortium. This is the group of about 30 municipalities and school districts that will have a unified system for collecting taxes based on income.
- On August 27th he attended the Borough Volunteer Picnic, and later that day he attended a movie at Frick Park called Gas Land which described in detail the legal, health and medical problems that are already happening in PA and other states that are involved with the Marcellus Shale drilling programs.
- On August 28th, he welcomed the Historical Society where they commemorated the roadside marker of the Westinghouse Atom Smasher on Avenue A. Later that day, he attended the Edgewood Acres Block Party.
- On September 4th, he was one of the guests at the 40th Wedding Anniversary of Richard and Delia Esper (long-time residents), parents of 3 medical doctors.
- On September 6th, he attended the Dog Swim at Forest Hills Park at the close of the regular swimming season.
- On September 8th, he attended the Volunteer's Party for the Run Around the Square in Regent Square.
- On September 10th, he attended the Irish Festival at Sand Castle.
- On September 11th, he attended the Bryn Mawr Corn Roast.
- On September 12th, he attended the Ovarian Cancer Walk fundraiser, and he noted that there were very many Forest Hills residents attending that event.

Tax Collector's Report:

Ms. Sullivan

Ms. Sullivan presented her report on collections for the month. Our real estate tax collections for the month of August 2010 totaled \$21,310. Real estate penalties collected were \$671.00. Our monthly total collected was \$21,981.

Chief of Police Report: Chief Williams

Chief Williams presented his monthly report and noted activities of the officers.

Fire Chief's Report: Chief Theilacker

No report.

Woodland Hills EMS Report: Adam Knight

No report.

Solicitor's Report: Blaine Lucas

Mr. Lucas noted the following:

The hearing on Rite Aid variances is scheduled for final disposition before the Zoning and Hearing Board for Monday, Sept. 27th.

The Bacchus Building meeting was held with representatives from the proposed developer of the property today (September 15th). On September 29th, The Planning Commission will review, if the developer submits information soon. We will be on the agenda for potential action by you at your meeting on October 20th.

Wilkesburg Penn Joint Water Authority Report: Ms. Broz

Ms. Broz presented her monthly report.

Public Comment – Agenda Items

At this time, citizens may address council on any issue appearing on today's agenda. Comments on non-agenda items will be taken at the end of tonight's meeting. Citizens are asked to use the microphone at the speaker's stand, clearly state their name and address for the record and keep comments brief and to the point (5 minutes or less). It would be helpful to spell the last name for the record.

Jim Busa, 471 Atlantic Avenue – He wanted to know how many years the borough has been paying for the fire truck to date (3) and how many are remaining (12). He also wanted clarification as to whether the proposed fee would go up over the course of the 12 years. Mr. Busa also stated that it needs to be made clear that the \$23 is going to the fire truck, and if it's going to be \$46 it should be made clear what the money is going to be used for.

Mildred Bobick, 427 Avenue D – She complained about 431 Avenue D and the number of dogs in the home and how loud and constant the barking is. The owners had 5 dogs when they moved in. She was under the impression that the limit was 2 dogs. She also stated she had rats and that our arborist took care of them. Also, the fence the neighbors put up had been put up backwards.

Council spoke about the ordinance – the number of dogs isn't limited, but there is a noise ordinance. Also, if the fence was put up without a permit or it was put up incorrectly, Mr. McChesney will let them know it has to be done correctly. Mr. Morus told Ms. Bobick to call 911 if the dogs keep barking into the night so the police can come out.

Merlyn Trilli, 290 Barclay Avenue – She brought a copy of the police report from the recent shoot out on the Northside. She mentioned the police found an assault machine gun and one semi-automatic handgun at the scene. She wanted to circulate the report among the audience and council so that these issues could be taken into account in relation to our police department.

Celeste Liscio, 108 Avenue L – She talked about the municipal fee that they want to impose for the Fire Department. She stated that if it's a fee instead of a tax, we can't write it off on our taxes. She wanted council to consider making the fee a tax so that it can be written off.

Mr. Porco said they were going to discuss with the Solicitor raising the tax a percentage of a mill rather than having it be a fee.

Diane Chessman, 201 Bevington Road – She stated that every month we have a fee or check to write to the borough. By raising the taxes by a ½ mill rather than making it a municipal services fee would make it easier. She asked the Mayor about looking into planning Light Up Night and stated that the residents miss it, and it left a void in residents' holiday celebrations.

Larry Sachs, 253 Sharon Drive – He spoke regarding council wanting to sell or auction the Police Department's Chevy Yukon. He suggested that when council is considering getting rid of a vehicle that the Police Department requested, they should be qualified to make these micro decisions on what vehicles are most appropriate for the police force. He suggested that these tactical decisions are best left to the people who are trained to make them.

Committee Reports:

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Mr. Belmonte

Motion: Move to authorize the manager to send a letter to Allegheny County Public Works indicating the borough's interest in continuing the snow and ice agreement for treatment of Yost Blvd. and Braddock Road for three years at a total cost of \$9,638.15.

Moved: Mr. Belmonte
Second: Mr. Tomasic

Roll Call Vote:	Mr. Belmonte	YES
	Mr. Burleigh	YES
	Mr. Erbeldinger	YES
	Mr. Tomasic	YES
	Mr. Porco	YES

Motion: Move to ask the public works foreman to prioritize work as follows this fall following completion of the Avenue L Parklet and Bright Park projects: asphalt patching, installation and repair work, grant work at rec center, and Barclay sidewalks.

Moved: Mr. Belmonte
Second: Mr. Tomasic

Roll Call Vote:	Mr. Belmonte	YES
	Mr. Burleigh	YES
	Mr. Erbeldinger	YES
	Mr. Tomasic	YES
	Mr. Porco	NO

General Report:

1. Members of the committee asked that council endorse a policy for curb replacement in the borough establishing that when such work is needed, the borough will attempt to install asphalt replacement curbs first. Should the Public Works Department question the propriety of using asphalt in a particular location, the public works foreman will consult with the borough manager who will discuss the concern with the public works chairperson and council president for a final determination. This policy will be in effect immediately without objection.
2. The engineer reported on a letter sent to the health department in response to their concern re: flooding at several homes along the Filmore/Atlantic line.
3. Members asked that council pay particular attention to the 2011 corrective action budget's line items related to personnel to establish the procedure for paying for personnel costs for any type of sewer work from this budget and take into consideration the criteria established in Ordinance 985.
4. Committee members for this committee and all regular council committees reviewed assorted budget preparation items with the borough manager.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr. Erbeldinger

Motion: Move to approve payment of bills for the month of August in the following amounts:

General Fund Budget:	\$191,137.89
Capital Improvements Plan:	\$ 2,735.83
Corrective Action Budget:	\$ 68,216.37
Liquid Fuels:	\$ 922.29
Road Improvement:	\$ 6,308.97

Moved: Mr. Erbeldinger
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Roll Call Vote:	Mr. Belmonte	YES
	Mr. Burleigh	YES
	Mr. Erbeldinger	YES
	Mr. Tomasic	YES
	Mr. Porco	YES

Detail of Non-General Fund Items:

Capital Improvements Plan:	Engineering costs – sidewalk contract & other curb and sidewalk work
Corrective Action Budget:	Sanitary Sewer consent decree work
Liquid Fuels:	Traffic lights
Road Improvement:	Curb work & pavement preparation work for paving program

Motion: Move to approve the Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) calculation received from Mockenhaupt Benefits Group specifying that the borough's obligation to the police pension fund is estimated to be \$183,690 in 2011 and to the non-uniform fund estimated to be \$62,383 in 2011.

Moved: Mr. Erbeldinger
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Note: The total MMO for both plans is \$246,073 and the estimated state aid for 2011 is \$102,000.

Bill Tomasic - He stated we'll get approximately \$100,000 back from the state and that we put aside some money last year, so that leaves us with a difference of approximately \$146,000. Mr. Morus stated that we put aside a little over \$141,000. Mr. Tomasic stated that the amount that's anticipated for the following year for the pension plan is going to grow significantly. He also stated we're going to have to come up with \$160,000-\$170,000 in order to balance the pension fund out of the taxes, and Mr. Morus confirmed that.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Belmonte YES
 Mr. Burleigh YES
 Mr. Erbeldinger YES
 Mr. Tomasic YES
 Mr. Porco YES

Motion: Move to authorize the solicitor to prepare and advertise an ordinance appointing Keystone Collections Group as the Borough's Earned Income Tax Collector in tax year 2011 as selected and endorsed by the Allegheny County Southeast Tax Collection Committee and authorize the manager to write a letter by September 30, 2010 informing PAMS that, effective January 1, 2011, the Borough is terminating the Earned Income Tax Collection Agreement dated January 1, 1995 in accordance with Section 8 of said Agreement.

Moved: Mr. Erbeldinger
Second: Mr. Tomasic

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Belmonte YES
 Mr. Burleigh YES
 Mr. Erbeldinger YES
 Mr. Tomasic YES
 Mr. Porco YES

General Report:

1. The committee reviewed various budget preparation items with the manager including charts outlining revenues and expenditures per capita and the effect of adjusting the millage rate on various properties, among other information.
2. The committee continues to review various scenarios for the implementation of a municipal services fee that would assist the borough in paying the lease for the new fire truck. Scenarios were developed that placed the fee at around \$23 for most residential properties but would require landlords to pay less per apartment and commercial establishments to pay more. The fee could rise to approximately \$46 per property with the same adjusted payment method should council include a fee for the volunteer fire department to offset potential lost revenues from their annual subscription drive. It would be billed similar to the trash fee in this scenario and may permit the option of paying quarterly if it is feasible. Further information from the solicitor is required before proceeding, although council may consider a motion this evening under new business.

BOROUGH PROPERTY

Mr. Tomasic

Motion: Motion to approve the changes to fees for rental properties for 2011 as recommended by Marketing and Events Director Cindy Simm and to incorporate them in the next fee resolution.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Roll Call Vote:	Mr. Belmonte	YES
	Mr. Burleigh	YES
	Mr. Erbelinger	YES
	Mr. Tomasic	YES
	Mr. Porco	YES

General Report:

1. The borough is awaiting further information from a lighting company concerning potential upgrades to the borough's light sources that may result in energy and cost savings, as well as a rebate under Duquesne Light's energy saving program Watt Choices.
2. The committee reviewed several areas of concern with Cindy Simm and Lynn Cassidy including a grant for a potential dog park, the location of a potential dog park at the Forest Hills/Westinghouse Recreation Center, security issues at the Center and the changes in fees mentioned in the motion above.
3. Under Committee of the Whole, council determined that the mosaic designed by students from Woodland Hills would be placed on the Yost Wall near the point where banners are often placed.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Tomasic

Motion: Motion to open a discussion with council members on the potential sale of assets like the police department's Yukon or its use as a trade in on a new police department vehicle and to determine its value as such.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Mr. Tomasic – He said that nobody made any motion to sell the car or buy another car – this was all part of the discussions. He believes that if we have to come down between having the money available for the police department for overtime versus the car, he would come down the side of making a motion to move to sell the vehicle if we needed it to cover the overtime.

Mr. Erbedinger – He thought we just wanted to determine the value of the car and how we can sell it in an official manner.

Mr. Tomasic - The value at the last meeting to be about \$7,500 to \$10,500 some as high as \$12,000 according to Kelly's Blue Book. The other item that came up was about a critique of the value of the car in terms of a trade in, which would have to be discussed at the time of the sale if we would want to do something like that.

Mr. Porco – He stated that we could always trade it in. If we're interested in selling it, given the value of the vehicle, it would have to be publicly bid. Normal protocol for disposal of items like this or on other contracts is to authorize the bid of the contract and then on a subsequent date, actually decide whether you want to proceed with that contract –in this case a sale of a vehicle being the contract. He stated you would have to build in a minimum of a 3-4 week period if we want to pursue this.

Mr. Tomasic – He withdrew the motion with the topic to be put on the next Public Safety Meeting to determine a timeframe in order to get the monies if necessary for the overtime.

Motion: Motion to approve ordinance no. 1004 adding a stop sign on Braddock Road at Ridge in the northbound direction.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Erbedinger

Ordinance Title Reads as Follows:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF FOREST HILLS,
ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING
CHAPTER 15, PART 2 OF THE FOREST HILLS BOROUGH
CODE OF ORDINANCES, MOTOR VEHICLES AND
TRAFFIC, TO ESTABLISH A STOP INTERSECTION ON
BRADDOCK ROAD AT THE INTERSECTION OF RIDGE
ROAD.

Mr. Belmonte – He asked what the reason for the stop sign is.

Mr. Tomasic - He said the committee said they thought that it would slow down that traffic going up around that corner. It was suggested as a motion in order to slow those people down going up Braddock Road.

Mr. Erbedinger – He said he thought it was poor visibility.

Chief Williams - He said it was a two-way stop already, and they thought that making it a three-way stop would make it safer.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Belmonte YES
 Mr. Burleigh YES
 Mr. Erbeldinger YES
 Mr. Tomasic YES
 Mr. Porco YES

Motion: Motion to approve an intergovernmental cooperation ordinance no 1005 to establish new mutual aid agreements with the following municipalities: Braddock Hills, Churchill, East Pittsburgh, Edgewood, North Braddock, Wilkins, and Wilkinsburg.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Erbeldinger

Ordinance Title Reads as Follows:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF FOREST HILLS, ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, AUTHORIZING THE BOROUGH TO ENTER INTO MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS FOR POLICE SERVICES WITH BRADDOCK HILLS BOROUGH, CHURCHILL BOROUGH, EAST PITTSBURGH BOROUGH, EDGEWOOD BOROUGH, NORTH BRADDOCK BOROUGH, WILKINSBURG BOROUGH AND WILKINS TOWNSHIP.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Belmonte YES
 Mr. Burleigh YES
 Mr. Erbeldinger YES
 Mr. Tomasic YES
 Mr. Porco YES

General Report:

1. The committee noted the article in the recent edition of the Tree City Times in which volunteers or paid contractors are requested who may be available to seniors or others in need of help during the winter to remove snow from sidewalks. The borough will not directly involve itself in pairing volunteers/contractors with those in need but would have a list available at the borough building for those interested in contacting them directly to solicit help.
2. Members noted that the Chief and Mayor are reviewing police scheduling procedures for 2011 to streamline the process.

OPERATIONS & POLICY

Mr. Tomasic

Motion: Move to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2010 council meeting.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Voice Vote – all in favor

Motion: Move to accept the 2011 fifth and final option year for trash and recycling collection with Waste Management in the amount of \$15.12 per household per month.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Note: the current rate is \$14.51 per household per month. The 2011 trash fee would increase by an estimated \$8 - \$10 per household annually pending council review and approval of the final fee resolution in December.

Roll Call Vote:	Mr. Belmonte	YES
	Mr. Burleigh	YES
	Mr. Erbeldinger	YES
	Mr. Tomasic	YES
	Mr. Porco	YES

Motion: Motion to approve resolution number 1101 opposing forced mergers and consolidations of local governments in Pennsylvania as outlined in the attached resolution.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Voice Vote – all in favor

Motion: Motion to authorize the manager to advertise a strategic planning meeting to be held on Monday, October 25, 2010 from 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM at the Forest Hills/Westinghouse Recreation Center lodge.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Erbeldinger

Voice Vote – all in favor

Motion: Motion to approve ordinance number 1006 amending the borough's code of ordinances regarding recycling requirements as specified in the ordinance title below.

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Ordinance Title Reads as Follows:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF FOREST HILLS, ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING CHAPTER 20, PART 2 OF THE FOREST HILLS BOROUGH CODE OF ORDINANCES, SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING, TO PERMIT THE BOROUGH TO SEEK PENALITIES FOLLOWING A SECOND OFFENSE OR THE FAILURE OF A PERSON, FIRM OR CORPORATION TO COMPLY WITH THE TERMS OF AN OFFICIAL WRITTEN WARNING LETTER.

Roll Call Vote:	Mr. Belmonte	YES
	Mr. Burleigh	YES
	Mr. Erbedinger	YES
	Mr. Tomasic	YES
	Mr. Porco	YES

General Report:

1. The committee asked the Public Works and Public Safety Committees of council consider the need to establish policies on overtime for public works and police respectively.
2. The committee requests that regular monthly reports are submitted to council by the building inspector/zoning officer similar to those reports provided by the code enforcement officer during the planning & zoning committee meeting.

PLANNING & ZONING

Mr. Burleigh

Motion: Motion to authorize the manager to send a letter to the Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments (COG) confirming the borough's commitment as a coalition partner in a joint proposal to the United States Department of Environmental Protection to apply for a Brownfield Assessment Coalition Grant and authorizing the COG to serve as the lead coalition member as the grant writer and recipient if awarded the funds.

Moved: Mr. Burleigh
Second: Mr. Tomasic

Voice Vote – all in favor

General Report:

1. Members reviewed items related to this committee as part of the budget preparation process.
2. Code Officer Ron Willard presented a monthly report to the committee.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

None

Public Comment – Other Items

At this time citizens may address council on any issue. Citizens are asked to use the microphone at the speaker's stand, clearly state their name and address for the record and keep comments brief and to the point (5 minutes or less). It would be helpful to spell the last name for the record.

Joshua Zorich, 532 Atlantic Ave – Citizen's Against Litter. He brought up a company called Recycle Bank. They offer a point system for the amount of recycling you have. We would earn company partnerships which would include promotions and discounts with retailers such as Target, Amazon, etc. Initially, the borough has to pay for the program out of pocket, but they're reimbursed by the state based on tonnage collected. He offered to volunteer any services.

Council invited Mr. Zorich to the Operations & Policy Meeting on October 5th; Mr. Zorich said he'll try to get more info on Recycle Bank and will try to attend meeting. Mr. Morus asked him to call closer to the meeting date so he can let him know what time Ops & Policy will be on the agenda.

Diana Dewey Emanuele, 508 Cascade Road - She asked about the potential sale of the Yukon and whether it's an issue that council decides on their own or if there is input from the Police Department. Mr. Tomasic indicated that there's input from anyone who wants to comment.

Faith Katchmar, 210 Kornhak Lane – She commented on her concern about selling the Yukon and wanted to know if we have clarification from the DA's office that selling the vehicle is something they encourage us to do. What is your opinion, as the Chief, as far as the disposition of the car?

Question was deferred to Chief Williams – He said it's mainly used for surveillance, for traffic, and we use it to transport people to training classes. He had to actually use it the other day because we didn't have any cars – one had a bad brake system and was in the body shop. The DA said to keep the car for 2 years, and we can basically opt to do what we want with it afterwards as long as it's used for some police type cost. His opinion was that if we could keep it, he would rather do that. Next year, we don't know what our budget is going to be, and we may need to trade that in on a new vehicle. His opinion is to not do it right now.

Pat Aeillo, 402 Cascade Road – She discussed the police vehicle, and how the Chief mentioned that he uses the vehicle. Her concern was that if the vehicle is sold, the Chief would be without the vehicle he needs, and the money will end up in the General Fund. She feels the Chief is first consideration.

Howard McFarland, 300 Barclay Avenue – Made comment on October 25th meeting and as to how meetings are advertised. Mr. Porco indicated that we advertise in the Tribune Review, and that it's also on the Bulletin Board outside of the Borough Building.

David Begler, 292 Barclay Ave. – Asked about what plans may be available in case the Borough needed money to cover Police overtime and asked about vehicle sale. He also mentioned that he thought we weren't going to have the Hay Ride.

Mr. Porco indicated there were no plans for the Hay Ride, and he wasn't sure why. He indicated that we're working hard to try and get it back on track. He said that if the hay ride doesn't happen the only disservice is to the community and the children.

Joseph Ladik, 115 Ashley Court – He talked about the problem with not having 2 policemen on a shift. He said if our taxes were raised 1 mill, it would generate over \$300,000 over the tax year. If someone had a home assessed at \$100,000 would mean they would have to pay an extra \$100 a year. He also found out the average cost of maintaining a patrol man for one year is \$100,000. So instead of assessing a mill in tax increase, we could get by with maybe a third of a mill, so a house assessed at \$100,000 would pay \$33 a year to have good police protection.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn or adjourn by acclamation

Moved: Mr. Tomasic
Second: Mr. Burleigh

Voice Vote – all in favor

- Next Scheduled Council Meeting: October 20, 2010

- Next Scheduled Committee Meetings (order to be determined): Tuesday, October 5, 2010 (Public Safety, Public Works, Borough Property, Operations & Policy) and Thursday, October 7, 2010 (Planning & Zoning, Finance, Committee of the Whole).

Language of the proposed resolution under operations and policy committee:

RESOLUTION NO. 1101
OPPOSITION TO FORCED LOCAL GOVERNMENT MERGERS AND
CONSOLIDATIONS

A RESOLUTION of the Borough of Forest Hills, County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in opposition to forced mergers and consolidations of local governments in Pennsylvania.

Whereas, the municipalities are excellent fiscal stewards that have been doing more with less ever since the days of William Penn and are run by elected officials that live and work in the communities they represent, and are more committed to working together and the responsible and efficient use of tax dollars than any other level of government; and

Whereas, various special interests suggest that there are too many local governments in Pennsylvania and that by reducing this figure through forced boundary change will somehow lead to greater economic conditions and better delivery of services in the Commonwealth; and

Whereas, no one has ever proven that bigger, centralized government is better or even more cost effective than local municipal government; and

Whereas, governments that rely on consolidated county-based governments generally have higher tax burdens than smaller governments; and

Whereas, recent reports of financially distressed municipalities in Pennsylvania are largely contained to the commonwealth's larger cities and urban areas; and

Whereas, HB 2431 (Session of 2010), if adopted, would change the Pennsylvania constitution and establish the county as the basic level of local government in Pennsylvania, with municipalities existing only under the jurisdiction of the county and having only those duties and responsibilities as determined by the county; and

Whereas, SB 1357 (Session of 2010), if adopted, would establish an unelected, statewide boundary commission to review and make conclusions to the General Assembly for the merger, consolidation, or annexation of municipalities; and

Whereas, the municipality supports voluntary merger or consolidation of local governments if the process is initiated at the local level and it has the support of the majority of the residents of all affected municipalities; and, therefore,

it is RESOLVED that the Borough of Forest Hills, County of Allegheny, opposes any measure, initiative, or plan that mandates the forced merger or consolidation of local governments; and be it further RESOLVED, that the General Assembly be urged to oppose HB 2431, SB 1357, and any other legislation that has been, or may be introduced in the future to weaken the responsiveness and effectiveness of local government.