Fifth Public Joint Meeting Minutes

Date and Time: October 1, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.
Location: Adams Township Municipal Building, 690 Valencia Road, Pennsylvania 16046
Participating Bodies: Adams Township Board of Supervisors, Mars Borough Council and Mars Borough Council and Mayor.

Adams Township: Supervisors Russell R. Ford, Ronald J. Shemela, David M. Goodworth, Darryl M. Brandon, and Ronald G. Nacey; Township Manager Michael Tylka.
Mars Borough: Mike Fleming, John McWilliams, Jana Snavely, Jim Garrity, William Lambert, Eric Pomeroy, Bradford Price, Mayor Gregg Hartung, and Solicitor Chris Reese.
Mars Borough Councilman John McWilliams and Chairman Ford jointly called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Township Manager Michael Tylka introduced the members of the Mars Borough Council, Mayor and the Adams Township Board of Supervisors.

Meeting Purpose and Merger Overview

Mr. Ford presented the agenda and stated that conceptual images of the proposed library would be shown. Mr. Fleming thanked those in attendance and noted the substantial work undertaken to make the proposed merger possible. He stated that time would be provided for questions and that all information would be made available on the website.

Mr. Ford displayed a sample ballot and explained that the public meetings were intended to ensure that residents understood the process. He stated that the Board and Council would answer questions and provide information transparently so that voters could make an informed decision.

Mr. Ford also reviewed the proposed merger's tax and budget implications in detail. He stated that approximately $250,000 in Mars Borough expenses would be eliminated if the merger were approved because duplicative costs would no longer be incurred.

Proposed Library

Angela Baehr of Fritz Baehr Architects discussed the proposed library and stated that the current Mars library had outgrown its building. She outlined the proposed uses of the new building:
- First floor: NexTier Bank and Community Room
- Second and third floors: Library
- Fourth floor: Additional space for future programming
- Basement: Community recreation and programming

Ms. Baehr presented three design options to date. Library Director Janae Callihan and Library Board members Jennifer Bainbridge and Staci Nelson expressed support for the merger, explaining that community growth had brought the existing facility to capacity.

Public Comment

Richard Rosen expressed concern about millage and possible financial strain on Adams Township, characterizing the proposed merger as a bailout. Mr. Ford and Mr. Fleming responded that the merger would not create a financial burden for the Township. In response to another Adams Township resident's question about possible negative effects, Mr. Ford stated that he did not anticipate any negative impact on Adams Township.

Dave Smolensky, owner of Mars Family Chiropractic in Mars Borough and an Adams Township resident, stated that his practice had operated in the Borough for 39 years. He supported the merger, saying that improvements to streets, sidewalks, and the proposed library would benefit existing businesses and encourage new businesses to locate in the Borough.

John Watson asked what percentage of the Breakneck Sewer Authority was owned by Mars Borough. Mr. Fleming responded that the Borough owned 35 percent and confirmed that the interest would transfer directly to the new Mars Township. Asked whether the Township intended to sell the interest, Mr. Fleming stated that there was no truth to that assertion, and Mr. Ford stated that the current Board would not do so.

Anastacia Nelson, a Mars Borough resident, noted that the Borough would host Apple Fest on October 3, 2026, and asked how event policies would differ if the merger were approved. Mr. Ford stated that Adams Township had a Parks and Recreation Director and commended Brian Perry's work in that role.

Cathy Groce asked why the Adams Township budget was not being presented. Mr. Ford stated that the Township was preparing its 2027 budget and that the 2026 budget was available on the Adams Township website.

Bob Michalewicz stated that Mars Borough's tax base was too limited and expressed concern that Adams Township would bear the cost of improvements needed to bring the Borough into compliance with current codes. Councilman McWilliams explained how infrastructure costs are allocated. Mr. Ford stated that infrastructure-related costs are assigned to the developer. Another speaker discussed how assessments and taxes are calculated.

A Mars Borough resident asked whether the library would still be considered if the merger were not approved. Mr. Ford responded that it would not in Mars Borough, stating that Adams Township could not be asked to fund a library outside its jurisdiction.

Leslie Brooks referred to a recent homeowners' association meeting and questioned why merger-support signs had been promoted without providing opposition signs or neutral voting reminders. She also noted that Mr. Ford had appeared in the newspaper holding a sign supporting the merger. Mr. Ford responded that more than seven businesses had inquired about locating in the Borough and stated that the merger would benefit the community. He mentioned that he sought to have HOA's allow merger related signage due to the significance of the vote. Mr. Fleming asked what was wrong with Mars Borough and Adams Township pursuing the best financial outcome. Mr. Ford added that expanding the Borough could take 15 years.

Kelly Cheponis asked whether Adams Township was still considering the previously discussed four-phase community center and pool. Mr. Ford stated that the matter had not been discussed recently and would involve a major expense.

Mr. Smolensky reiterated that the Borough needed attractions to draw and retain businesses. Mr. Ford then displayed all three potential library designs and asked attendees for a show of hands, stating that the design process would restart if none of the options was supported.

Next Meeting: Mr. Ford announced that the next merger meeting would be held Thursday, October 29, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., and would include time for public questions.

Suzanne Hanovicke