

# Hawley Preps For Silk Mill Hearings

By Thomas Renn  
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Hawley, Pa. -

The Hawley Silk Mill partners and Borough Council discussed a schedule for the hearings that will be needed for approving the project.

Attorney Anthony Waldron had sought to set up the hearings between the Borough's September and October meetings. Borough Waldron and Council noted two hearings will be needed for the approvals — a Conditional Use hearing to approve the change of use of the former antique warehouse/store, and a hearing for an ordinance to close Welwood Ave. and a part of Belmont Ave. in front of the building.

Hawley Silk Mill, LLC is working to turn the former Silk Mill property into a mixed used building with retail and office space. To do that they will need to a lot of parking — 30 spaces currently to 160, the minimum allowed for a variance under the Borough's ordinance. Hawley Silk Mill also noted in past meetings that part of their plan is to include an educational institute in the building and most institutions would be concerned about the traffic which travels in front of the building on Welwood Ave., which is used by many people as a shortcut between Hudson St./Rte.590 and Route 6.

Waldron requested dates in September but Council Member Mary Sanders asked that Hawley Silkmill submit a request to close Welwood with a package of information about the plan so residents could review it before the hearing. Waldron noted the Conditional Use application included suggested conditions to cover PennDOT's permits, which he said would not be completed by October as well as Council's and PennDOT's approval of the closure of the streets.

Council decided to set the date of the hearings which will be held on separate nights from the Borough's regular meeting, at the September meeting, although both sides were tentatively looking at the beginning of October, possibly Oct. 1. The actual meeting time and date will be announced when it is finalized next month. The Borough and Waldron are expecting to hold the meeting at the Hawley Fire Department Hall to accommodate what they expect to be a large crowd. In the meantime, Waldron said traffic studies and other information gather by Hawley Silkmill will be put together for the Borough.

Two petitions, one for and one against the closure of Welwood, have been submitted to the Borough. One signed by 28 Hawley Borough resident supports the closure, but asked the Council to address concerns about increased traffic on other streets in that part of town. The petition states the alternatives are in poor condition and were not designed to handle heavy traffic. The petition also asks the Borough to ensure emergency access is available through Belmont and Welwood which are to be used as driveways for the Hawley Silkmill property.

The second petition urges to the Council to carefully consider the closure and seek an alternative to closing it. The petition states closing the shortcut would eliminate an alternative route around the Route 6 and the Rock Cut in the winter. It goes on to say that it would add more traffic to Church St. which is a Borough street and add a strain on Borough resources. (Editor's note: Welwood Ave. is a Borough street as well.) The second petition contains over 170 names, but many are from outside of Hawley Borough.

Waldron noted the interest of many people in the possible closure of Welwood, but was asking that the discussion be limited to people with a direct interest. Borough Solicitor Robert Bernathy said he would keep the discussion to people with "standing" or those people affected most by the changes. In the past, that has meant Borough residents only would be allowed to speak at the hearing.

Some residents took the time to offer their opinions on the closure. Ann Austin questioned why the Council would consider closing a well maintained street and suggested other businesses might have similar requests for closing roads. Others addressed concerns about the condition of the other streets in the area such as Cypress. Residents also brought up concerns over stormwater runoff if the area at the top of Welwood was to be turned into a parking lot.

Waldron said residents can contact the Wayne Conservation District which will have to review the erosion and sedimentation and stormwater plans before any construction will begin. He added Hawley Silk Mill could also have their engineers meet with residents to discuss those concerns. In the end though, Waldron noted Hawley Silk Mill will only be responsible by law for making sure the work they do does not increase the amount of runoff from the property. He added that if they could, Hawley Silk Mill will try to improve stormwater conditions. He noted he thought that cutting off Welwood from Route 6 with a planted area would help in some way since Welwood often conducts water from Route 6 down into the neighborhood below the Silk Mill.

Hawley Borough Council meets 7 pm the second Wednesday of each month in Borough Hall.