

WRIGHTSTOWN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

WORK SESSION MEETING OCTOBER 14, 2024

The Wrightstown Township Board of Supervisors met on Monday, October 14, 2024, in the Meeting Room of the Wrightstown Township Municipal Building, 2203 Second Street Pike, Wrightstown, PA. Chair Chester S. Pogonowski called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Present were Vice Chair Jane B. Magne, Treasurer Robert S. Lloyd, Solicitor Vicki Kushto, Township Engineer Cindy VanHise, and Interim Township Manager Gregg Schuster.

1. BUSINESS

- A. **Sketch Plan, 1181 and 1193 Swamp Road.** Evan Sowers, project engineer from The H & K Group, presented a sketch plan for a lot line change between the properties at 1181 and 1193 Swamp Road. Jay Baldwin, owner of 1193 Swamp Road, and Kristen Stretz, co-owner of 1181 Swamp Road were in attendance. Mr. Baldwin would like to transfer 1.55 acres of his 3.788 acre property to the Stretz family, enlarging their property from 9.927 acres to 11.477 acres. This transfer was designed to simplify maintenance for Mr. Baldwin, while allowing the Stretzs to expand their property. This would potentially facilitate connectivity to another family property without any changes to the existing landscape or infrastructure. The property owners sought the Board's informal feedback before proceeding to a formal plan submission. The proposal included a potential waiver from preparing an ERSAP, given the nature of the project as a minor lot line adjustment with no earth disturbance planned. The consensus was for the applicants to proceed with a preliminary/final plan, provided the necessary notes and conditions were appended to clarify the lack of proposed earthmoving activities.
- B. **LSA Grant for Thompson Mill Road Culvert.** The Board discussed applying for a LSA grant to fund the replacement of the Thompson Mill Road culvert. Although receiving grant confirmation could postpone the project's schedule for approximately 18 months, the Board decided to delay the project and pursue the grant, as the potential funding was significant.
- C. **2025 Budget.** Interim Township Manager Schuster presented an overview of the proposed 2025 budget. He emphasized that the Township had been budgeting for deficits since 2020, with the largest contributing factor being the rising expense of various Township operations. The most notable expense has been the police contract, which has seen increases of nearly \$50,000 annually. This situation has been compounded by the relatively flat revenue growth from property and earned income taxes, which have not matched the pace of rising expenses.

Interim Manager Schuster outlined multiple proposals to tackle the deficit issue. He recommended the formation of a comprehensive financial plan aimed at mitigating the deficits over time, suggesting a gradual rather than immediate approach. One option discussed was the potential for a tax increase to generate additional revenue, with his proposal to consider periodic, incremental tax mill rate increases, as opposed to larger hikes at longer intervals.

The discussion also touched on the Township's general fund balance, which has been decreasing year by year due to these ongoing deficits. Interim Manager Schuster expressed concern over the decreasing fund balance and recommended adopting a fund balance policy that would stipulate a minimum acceptable level for the Township's reserves. He suggested putting in place both a short-term and long-term strategy to address these financial challenges, including exploring ways to shift certain expenditures to other funds with healthier balances. One thought was to utilize possible excess pension funds to offset annual increases, particularly for the police contract.

Furthermore, his presentation included analyses using budget charts depicting trends from prior years, showing planned versus actual expenditures and revenues, which underscored the need for adjustments in budgeting practices to prevent deficits from escalating. The Board agreed on the importance of balancing operational needs with fiscal responsibility, highlighting the ongoing commitment to maintaining and improving Township infrastructure and resources while managing budgetary constraints effectively.

2. SOLICITOR'S REPORT

A. JMZO Amendment, Correcting Notice Provision for Zoning Hearing Board Hearings.

Solicitor Kushto proposed an amendment to correct an inconsistency in the JMZO pertaining to public hearing notices. The amendment would align with MPC requirements for notice publication. The removal of outdated notification obligations was also discussed. The Board requested that the Solicitor forward the proposal to the Jointure for consideration.

B. Open Burning Ban. The Board was concerned about the absence of clear ordinance provisions for implementing burn bans, particularly given the current dry conditions and increased fire risk. The discussion highlighted the recent frequency of incidents, including several field fires, which necessitates a need for heightened awareness and possible preemptive measures to prevent potential fire hazards. There was a consensus that the ordinance provisions should be expanded or reevaluated to include criteria for declaring burn bans, such as during drought conditions or elevated fire risks due to high winds, thereby ensuring public safety.

3. ENGINEER'S REPORT

There was no report.

4. SUPERVISORS' COMMENTS

Vice Chair Magne announced that the annual Harvest Festival would be held on Saturday, October 19 at the Middletown Grange Fairgrounds. All are welcome to attend and there will be door prizes.

5. MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Approval of Minutes of October 7, 2024. On a motion by Treasurer Lloyd and seconded by Vice Chair Magne, the Board of Supervisors minutes of October 7, with edits, were approved unanimously.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

An executive session to be held after the meeting to discuss personnel was announced.

7. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Treasure Lloyd, seconded by Vice Chair Magne, all voted to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gregg Schuster, Interim Manager