

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS BUSINESS MEETING
December 20, 2023**

Call to Order: Chair Coless called the hybrid live/virtual meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Protocol for Hybrid Meetings: Chair Coless provided an overview of the protocols for public participation for members of the public attending the meeting virtually over Zoom. She also noted that the Township had been experiencing internet issues sporadically during the day and the meeting is being recorded should any issues arise.

Roll Call:

- a. The following members were in attendance: Chair Coless, Vice Chair Darby, and Supervisors Neights, MacFarland and Sorgini.
- b. Also in attendance were: E.J. Mentry, Township Manager; Michael Clarke, Township Solicitor; Paul Donnelly, Assistant Township Manager; Tim Woodrow, Township Engineer; Mike Jackson, Chief of Police; Mike Mrozinski, Community Development Director; John Salamone, IT Specialist, and Rich Lafiata, Finance Director.

Chair's Comments

- Chair Coless announced that an Executive Session was held prior to the meeting on December 20, 2023, to discuss legal and personnel matters, and contract negotiations.

1) Consent Agenda

- A. **MOTION:** Chair Coless announced that the consent agenda included the following: Moving the meeting minutes of December 6, 2023 into the record; accepting various meeting minutes and monthly reports; approving payment of bills in the amount of \$1,231,701.63; authorizing advertisement of the Board's Reorganization Meeting for January 2, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. and the Auditor's Reorganization Meeting for January 3, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., and approving the 2024 holidays.
 - a. Supervisor Darby, seconded by Supervisor Neights, made a motion to approve the consent agenda.
 - b. There was no public comment.
 - c. The motion *passed* 5-0.

2) Old Business

- A. Consideration of Resolution 2023-43, Approving Waiver of Land Development for 3936 Germantown Pike
 - a. Mr. Mentry explained that the property owner, Davis Troxel, had appeared before the board at the December 6th meeting and was granted the waiver subject to approval of the formal resolution. He requested a waiver of the Subdivision and Land Development ordinance (SALDO) for construction of a storage building with a minor parking expansion and a minor expansion to an existing building. This is a standard SALDO waiver resolution. If the Board votes to approve the waiver, Mr. Mentry said Mr. Troxel is required to go through the building permit process and comply with any grading or stormwater requirements that may be triggered.

- b. **MOTION:** Supervisor Sorgini made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-43, seconded by Supervisor Neights.
- c. There was no public comment.
- d. The motion *passed* 5-0.

B. Ratification of the Police Contract

- a. Mr. Mentry said that he was pleased to present to the Board the new 5-year police contract; it has already been ratified by the Police Association. The contract term is January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2028. He said the contract was the result of amicable collaboration between the negotiating teams from the Township and Police Association.
- b. Chair Coless, who was part of the Township team, stated she appreciated the professionalism with which the negotiations were conducted.
- c. **MOTION:** Supervisor Sorgini made a motion to ratify the police contract. Chair Coless seconded the motion.
- d. There was no public comment.
- e. The motion *passed* 5-0.

C. Consideration of Resolution 2023-44 Adopting the 2024 Budget and Appropriating Specific Sums Estimated to Be Required for the Specific Purpose of the Municipal Government

- a. Mr. Mentry said the Board had authorized advertisement of the draft 2024 Budget at the November 16, 2023 meeting. Under the Second Class Township Code, the draft budget is to be advertised for a minimum of 20 days. He said the draft budget has been available for public review for over a month; one inquiry had been received and answered. He noted that no changes had been made to the draft.
- b. The proposed budget anticipates a millage increase for General Fund millage of .5131 mills which would generate additional revenue for the General Fund of a little over \$835,000 which would balance the budget. It would allow the Township to avoid dipping into the fund balance to pay for operating costs. Using the average property assessment, the average home would see an annual increase of \$86.66.
- c. Supervisor MacFarland expressed concern with the budget, specifically the lack of a resolution for the Township's revenue problem and the likelihood of future tax increases.
- d. Supervisor Neights agreed with the need to address the revenue problem. He stated that the proposed budget allows for the hiring of a 32nd police officer and improves the Township's financial position and borrowing capacity. He noted the average cost of the increase per home, per month is \$7.
- e. Supervisor Sorgini noted that it is never easy to vote for a tax increase but said that a large portion of the budget is to properly compensate existing staff and ensure that the Township has the proper complement of staff. He noted that much time is spent on the budgeting process, including public meetings, and it was a collaborative effort. He also highlighted that within the next year, the Township's debt service will be retired, providing opportunities for how to spend that revenue.
- f. Vice Chair Darby cited inflation and noted that the increase will help the Township maintain services and quality of life.
- g. Chair Coless thanked everyone for their work on the budget and said it will ensure that residents have the services they need.
- h. **MOTION:** Supervisor Neights, seconded by Supervisor Sorgini, made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-44.
- i. There was no public comment.
- j. The motion *passed* 4-1, with Supervisor MacFarland opposing.

D. Consideration of Resolution 2023-45 Establishing the 2024 Real Estate Tax Millage Rate

- a. **MOTION:** Supervisor Sorgini made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-45. Supervisor Neights seconded the motion.
- b. There was no public comment.
- c. The motion *passed* 4-1, with Supervisor MacFarland opposing.

3) **New Business**

A. Consideration of Resolution 2023-46 Appointing Transportation Impact Fee Advisory Committee

- a. Mr. Mentry said formation of the Transportation Impact Fee Advisory Committee (TIFAC) is the first step that is required to commence the Act 209 process which is the Transportation Impact Fee Study update. Forming the TIFAC kicks off the 18-month process. The majority of the work will be completed by the Township's traffic consultant and the land use consultant that was appointed for this project. All final decisions will come to the Board of Supervisors. He said that under the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), there are specific requirements for number and types of members, and staff has been working on recruiting members. He noted that there was a last-minute change to the resolution as one potential member had to decline and a new name was added.
- b. Chair Coless asked what the minimum number for the TIFAC is. Mr. Mentry responded that the minimum number is seven, 40% of whom must be industry professionals. Mr. Mentry also clarified that changes can be made to the committee composition through the process.
- c. Supervisor MacFarland confirmed that 40% of the proposed names are industry professionals with Mr. Mentry.
- d. The Board decided to table the item until the January 18th meeting.

B. Adoption of Post-Offer, Pre-Employment Physical Exam Policy

- a. Mr. Mentry said he and the Human Resources Director are requesting the new policy that, as part of the post-offer, pre-employment process, would require a physical exam in addition to the already required drug and alcohol screening, and background and driver's license checks. It would be specific to labor-intensive jobs. The policy is recommended by the Township's workers' compensation insurance carrier. He said it is based on a model from the carrier, with some revisions in consultation with the labor attorney.
- b. **MOTION:** Vice Chair Darby made a motion to adopt the post-offer, pre-employment physical exam policy. Supervisor Sorgini seconded the motion.
- c. There was no public comment.
- d. The motion *passed* 5-0.

4) **Announcements/Meetings**

- A community holiday dinner, sponsored by Chadwick's Restaurant, will be held Dec. 21 from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. All Township residents are welcome; to-go meals will be available.
- The Administration office will be closed December 25 and 26 and January 1 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays.
- Planning Commission meeting – Dec. 27 – *cancelled*
- Zoning Hearing Board meeting – Dec. 28 at 7:00 p.m.

- 5) Presentation to outgoing Supervisor Jason Sorgini – Supervisor Sorgini, who served as supervisor for 12 years, was attending his last board meeting. He was presented with a gift, a plaque and a certificate from the PA State Association of Supervisors.
- a. His fellow Board members thanked Supervisor Sorgini for his service, remarking on their respect for his longtime leadership and collaboration. They recognized all he had done for the community, especially his work on infrastructure updates.
 - b. Supervisor Sorgini said representing and serving the citizens of Lower Providence has been an awesome and humbling honor and that he regarded the responsibility as a sacred trust. He personally thanked all the supervisors with whom he had served, Township staff members, emergency responders, Library staff, Sewer Authority staff, and Township consultants. He said the best government takes place through civil and respectful disagreement and dialogue. He stressed that he is proud of what the Board has accomplished through their productive and respectful compromise in the interest of the residents of Lower Providence Township. He thanked his family for allowing him to follow his dream of serving in elected office, referencing his grandparents, parents, and his own pursuit of the American dream.

6) Board Comments / Other Business

- a. Vice Chair Darby thanked Karen Hegedus, outgoing Park and Recreation superintendent, for her service.
- b. Supervisor MacFarland wished the community happy holidays and recognized the Park and Recreation Department for their work with the Caring and Sharing Program that helps brighten the holidays for Township families.

7) Courtesy of the Floor

- a. Jackie Rittenhouse, Township resident, thanked Supervisor Sorgini for his outstanding service.

8) Adjournment

- a. **MOTION:** Supervisor Sorgini, seconded by Supervisor Neights, made a motion to adjourn. The motion *passed* 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Reorganization Meeting: Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.