

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS BUDGET WORKSHOP
OCTOBER 3, 2023**

Attendance:

- a. The following were in attendance: Supervisors Cara Coless, Janine Darby, Peter MacFarland, Gary Neights, and Jason Sorgini; E.J. Mentry, Township Manager; Paul Donnelly, Assistant Township Manager; Rich Lafiata, Finance Director; Mike Mrozinski, Community Development Director; Denise Walsh, Community Relations Coordinator; Michael Rohlfing, Fire Marshal & Emergency Management Coordinator; Kristin Maas, Human Resources Director; Joseph Chillano, Public Works Director; Jane Delaney, Parks & Recreation Director; Michael Jackson, Chief of Police; and William Hopkins, Police Lieutenant.
- b. The workshop convened at 4:30 p.m.

1. Budget Discussion

A) 2024 Proposed Budget Overview

- i) Mr. Mentry noted that a significant change to the budgeting process this year is that employee benefits have been moved from a single line item to under each individual department. He said that the department heads would present their proposed capital projects for 2024 and highlight notable changes and anomalies in their operating budgets.

B) Fire Marshal & Emergency Management

- i) Mr. Rohlfing listed his 2024 capital requests which include turnout gear and vehicle upfitting for the deputy fire marshal, purchase of a second drone, and two floodgates. Increases in operating expenses include funds for training, purchase of an AED for Eskie Park, emergency medical supplies, and weather monitoring software.
(1) There was discussion regarding the placement of the gates.
- ii) Also proposed is the creation of a full-time deputy fire marshal and emergency management coordinator position; currently the deputy is contracted for 32 hours per month. There was discussion regarding the costs related to the full-time position and whether the position would respond to fire calls.

C) Parks and Recreation

- i) Ms. Delaney said Parks and Recreation capital requests include tree canopy planting in Redtail Park, fence repairs/replacement (all parks/basins), a new play structure at Eskie Park, and replacement of 15 aging wood picnic tables with ADA-compliant, recycled plastic tables. Partial county funding will continue to be sought for a loop trail and tree canopy planting at the MARA complex.
- ii) She said operating increases recommended for 2024 include a .50 increase for returning camp counselors, a \$51 increase to Lil Perkiomy camp registration to offset a deficit created by staffing needs, and increased fees for movie ticket sales.
- iii) Ms. Delaney noted that sponsorship donations continue to decline, despite increased efforts by the department to solicit donors. She said the department is working on new events for next year including a suicide prevention event partnering with the Township's social services liaison, a wellness workshop, and an event for seniors.

D) Community Development

- i) Mr. Mrozinski said that in keeping with the effort to move to digital file storage, the department is requesting the purchase of a wide-format document scanner. He said the

primary use would be to scan historic documents. Also requested are placeholders for a replacement Code Enforcement Officer vehicle and electric vehicle chargers.

(1) There was discussion about the accessibility of the scanned documents and ensuring that there is a document management system in place.

- ii) Mr. Mrozinski said that due to some development projects moving more slowly than anticipated, revenue related to those projects has moved from 2023 to 2024. He reviewed anticipated new construction. There was discussion regarding revenue from residential building projects and the “built-out” status of the Township.

E) Public Works

- i) Mr. Chillano outlined his 2024 capital requests including: A new dump truck, plow and spreader to replace a 1996 model; a Bonnell plow; a replacement Township Manager vehicle; an air conditioning recovery machine for the mechanics, and continuation of the pipe lining project.

(1) There was discussion regarding building a vehicle replacement program into the operating budget.

- ii) Mr. Chillano reviewed the streets proposed for the 2024 road reconstruction project. There was discussion regarding the need to annually complete improvements to a sufficient number of road miles as part of a road replacement program.
- iii) He listed anticipated operating budget increases: Semi-annual bridge inspections, tree removal, specifically dead ash trees, and training.

F) Police

- i) Chief Jackson presented the department’s capital requests which include replacement of three patrol vehicles and upfitting equipment, stationary license plate reader (shared cost with West Norriton Township), radar message sign, and vehicle for the Social Services Liaison (seeking grant funds).
- ii) Personnel requests include hiring of a 32nd officer which would allow promotion of a corporal who would be assigned to the Community Policing Unit.
- iii) Operating budget increases include uniform and clothing, ammunition and supplies, contracted services and operating supplies.

At this point, the department heads were excused from the workshop.

G) General Discussion

- i) Mr. Lafiata presented the Admin/IT budget requests, including board room and computer upgrades, document digitization, document management software, and a new VOIP phone system.
- ii) Mr. Lafiata provided an overview of benefits and insurance, noting a 15% increase in Property/Liability insurance and additional increases in health insurance and workmen’s compensation. He also noted that the township is considering switching from the current HMO insurance plan to an HSA plan, but that the change would not take place for at least the first two months of the year.
- iii) Mr. Mentry presented 2024 compensation assumptions, noting wage increases based on collective bargaining agreements with both AFSCME and the Police. He also highlighted a sick time buyback plan and an increase to the 401(a) contribution. These items will all require discussion and approval from the Board of Supervisors.
- iv) Mr. Mentry reviewed proposed staffing for 2024. He noted cost decreases in Administration, the Finance Department, and Parks and Recreation; and increases in Public Works, Community Development, Fire Marshall/Emergency Management, and Police. The changes

in Public Works and Parks and Recreation are largely due to an accounting change, moving three Public Works employees from the Parks and Recreation fund to the Public Works section of the General Fund. Mr. Mentry also noted that the proposed Deputy Fire Marshall and Police Officer were not included in the proposed budget.

(1) Brief discussion ensued regarding concern of losing another fireman if the Deputy Fire Marshall was brought on full time.

- v) Mr. Lafiata presented other general expenditure highlights, noting increases in engineering services, I.T. costs, and tree maintenance, among others. Mr. Lafiata noted that the increase in engineering services is related to updating the township's transportation impact fee ordinance, as required by Act 209.
 - vi) Mr. Lafiata presented current and potential General Fund transfers, highlighting a transfer to the Capital Projects Fund and the Emergency Management Fund as well as a potential transfer to the Stormwater Fund.
 - vii) Mr. Mentry and Mr. Lafiata provided an overview of all remaining funds and the overall fund balance summary, including budgeted interfund transfers and the projected deficit. They also presented a summary of the 2023 year-end projections resulting in an anticipated surplus of \$6,378. Mr. Mentry presented the anticipated 2024 deficit based on the current budget and the tax increase required to cover that deficit. Mr. Mentry also showed that Lower Providence Township's millage rate is comparably lower than many townships of similar sizes or attributes.
 - (1) Brief discussion regarding shifting debt payment transfers to roadwork, given the township will be paying off its debt over the next 3 years.
 - (2) Brief discussion regarding potential use of American Rescue Plan Funding. The Board wants to ensure we use that money effectively before the end of 2024.
 - viii) After discussion, the Board directed the Township Manager to make the requested updates to the budget in advance of the next workshop, which would include discussion on the proposed staffing changes, American Rescue Plan Funding, and capital requests.
- H) Public Comment – None.
- I) Adjournment
- i) The budget workshop was adjourned at 10:30PM. The next workshop is scheduled for Monday, October 23, 2023 at 4:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

E.J. Mentry, Secretary