

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS BUDGET WORKSHOP
OCTOBER 23, 2023**

Attendance:

- a. The following were in attendance: Supervisors Cara Coless, Janine Darby, Peter MacFarland (by telephone), and Gary Neights; E.J. Mentry, Township Manager; Paul Donnelly, Assistant Township Manager; Rich Lafiata, Finance Director. Supervisor Sorgini was absent.
- b. The workshop convened at 4:30 p.m.

Budget Discussion

- A) Budget Workshop #1 Follow-up Discussion: topics included information on Funds 41 and 43, Library Budget and 2024 request, flood gates, wide-format scanners specs, and the Community Policing Memo.
 - i) Supervisor Neights articulated the need to implement a comprehensive approach to scanning documents, making sure that staff has an adequate filing system that is searchable.
 - ii) Board discussion ensued regarding the Community Policing Memo, with supervisors expressing the concern that understaffing may lead to staff burnout.
- B) Revisions since Budget Workshop #1: topics included changes to the Capital Fund (Fund 30), including removing the drone and moving a number of items to ARPA; and additions to the ARPA Fund (Fund 44), including library literacy computers, the Act 209 Study, increasing flood gates, and increasing funding for the Zoning re-write.
 - i) The \$106,000 for scanning grant match will be removed as township staff do not believe this project is eligible for current grant opportunities.
- C) ARPA Summary: highlights include a \$1.4 million 2023 actual/budgeted costs, \$345,000 in 2023 postponed or cancelled projects, and slightly more than \$1 million in proposed 2024 ARPA expenditures.
 - i) Supervisors requested that staff add \$500,000 into proposed 2024 ARPA expenditures for grant matching and a special community project.
- D) Review of Capital Budget Summaries by Department
 - i) Staff highlighted items to be paid for with ARPA funds.
- E) Additional revisions since Budget Workshop #1: topics include slight changes to the Park and Rec Fund (Fund 31), the EMS Fund (Fund 03); moving \$178,277 from the Liquid Fuels Debt Service Fund (Fund 21) to the Debt Service Fund (Fund 20), and increasing the Road Program by \$178,277 bringing the total 2024 Road Program to \$606,371. Changes to the General Fund include adding a full-time police officer, decreasing DVT insurances (health, property and liability, and worker's compensation), moving the cost of the Act 209 study to ARPA, and reducing the transfer to Capital by \$294,146.
 - i) Staff presented the total costs of an additional full-time officer. Some discussion ensued regarding the need for an additional officer. Chief Jackson may be requested to join future budget workshops to present on the force's need.
- F) List of 2024 budgeted items for board consideration.
 - i) The board elected to remove the Deputy Fire Marshal Turnout Gear, Upfitting the Deputy Fire Marshal vehicle, weather forecasting software, and the Deputy Fire Marshal radio.

- ii) Discussion ensued regarding the Deputy Fire Marshal's role and that the township should be receiving mutual aid in the event the Fire Marshal is unavailable.
- iii) E.J. Mentry mentioned the donations we make as a township. Board Members were comfortable with continuing some donations but requested Township Staff to reach out to receiving parties. We also showed that the Township donated \$5,000 to the Wall That Heals in 2023, which was not budgeted.
- G) Presentation of 2024 Fund Balance Estimates.
- H) Presentation of Revenue and Expenditure Projections. Staff showed that since 2017, the average annual increase to revenues was 3.67% and to expenditures was 4.69%.
- I) Millage Rate change options: 8 options were presented, ranging from no tax increase to a tax increase that would cover the full deficit while adding \$100,000 to Fund Balance.
 - i) Discussion ensued regarding expenditures outpacing revenues. No solutions were immediately identified.
 - ii) Supervisor Neights requested staff to present an option in the next budget meeting where there is no change to fund balance, and the township only increases its expenditures at a percentage rate equal to those in existing contracts (approximately 4%). Within this option, staff should propose where the township could sustain spending reductions.
- J) Millage Rate comparison across comparable municipalities: Lower Providence Township's current millage falls in the bottom half of the list. If the Board elects to raise taxes to cover 100% of the deficit, the township will move up one place.
 - i) Millage breakdown: if the Board elects to raise taxes to cover 100% of the deficit, the Township will make up 8.73% of the full millage in 2024, with the county representing 11.65% and the school district representing 79.63%.
- K) Public Comment:
 - i) Beth Ann Bittner Mazza, Township resident, asked for a clarification on the tax increase options and about the increases in insurance rates. She also expressed that public safety and fire services can share resources with neighboring municipalities.
- L) Adjournment
 - i) The budget workshop was adjourned at 7:30PM. The next workshop is scheduled for Monday, October 30, 2023, at 4:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

E.J. Mentry, Secretary