

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS BUDGET WORKSHOP  
OCTOBER 30, 2023**

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**Attendance:**

- a. The following were in attendance: Supervisors Cara Coless, Janine Darby, Peter MacFarland, Jason Sorgini and Gary Neights; E.J. Mentry, Township Manager; Paul Donnelly, Assistant Township Manager; Rich Lafiata, Finance Director; and Michael Jackson, Chief of Police.
- b. The workshop convened at 4:30 p.m.

**Budget Discussion**

- A) 32<sup>nd</sup> Police Officer discussion: Chief Jackson started the discussion explaining the department's need for another patrol officer. His key points were that (1) they have been requesting another officer for more than 7 years, (2) they have a goal to build up the community policing unit, (3) the Social Services Liaison requires a uniformed officer to accompany them in each response which is time consuming and currently done with available patrol officers, (4) there have been a large increase in drugs, suicides, and suicide threats in recent years, highlighting the value of the Social Services Liaison, (5) his concern about burnout of the current police officer overseeing the Community Policing unit and the Social Services Liaison, and (6) the increased administrative burden on the Chief and Lieutenant who must fill gaps due to lack of community policing support.
  - i) Supervisor MacFarland inquired about the Police force's structure.
  - ii) General discussion ensued regarding the police force and opportunities with an additional officer.
  - iii) Mr. Mentry stated that the average assessed property in the Township would pay an additional \$14.00 per year in property taxes to cover the cost of the additional officer.
  - iv) Chief Jackson departed after presenting.
- B) Review of Revisions since Budget Workshop #2 including:
  - i) Fund 03: removed turnout gear, vehicle upfitting, weather forecasting software, and Deputy Fire Marshal vehicle radio.
  - ii) ARPA Fund 44: removed \$106,250 for the scanning grant match and added \$500,000 for a community project or grant match.
  - iii) General Fund 01: increased the police budget based on contract negotiations and removed MCPC, reduced health care benefits for new employee, and reductions in the transfers to the EMS fund and Capital fund.
  - iv) Current deficit to be \$805,446.
- C) 2024 Fund Balance Estimates: There were no real changes since Budget Meeting #2.
- D) 2024 Proposed Budget Highlights: including a 5.89% increase in budget expenses amounting \$768,889, an increase in police salary/benefits, and increase in AFSCME salary/benefits, and increases due to a new officer, miscellaneous contractual obligations, replacing 3 police vehicles, replacing computers, replacing a snow plow, and purchasing a speed alert radar message board.
- E) Staffing Changes from November 2021 to October 2023: staff presented that there has been a net increase of 2.5 employees across all departments.
- F) Board-requested Budget Option: reduce expenses so they do not exceed contracted labor costs (4%)

- i) This option requires \$246,586 of spending reduction. Staff presented their list of recommended cuts if this option were pursued. Cuts include the 32<sup>nd</sup> officer, part-time IT support, furniture budget reduction, donation reduction, training reduction, upgrade the AV infrastructure to reduce overall service cost, reduce vehicle equipment repairs, judgement and damages line item, and stormwater damage repairs.
- ii) Staff presented three millage change options: (1) increase 0.2573 to cover 75% of the deficit, (2) increase 0.3431 to cover 100% of the deficit, and (3) increase 0.4045 to cover 100% of the deficit and add \$100,000 to fund balance.
- G) Current Budget Millage Change Options - staff presented three millage change options: (1) increase 0.371 to cover 75% of the deficit, (2) increase 0.4947 to cover 100% of the deficit, and (3) increase 0.5561 to cover 100% of the deficit and add \$100,000 to fund balance.
- H) Millage comparison across similar townships: Lower Providence is in the lower half of compared townships. With millage change to cover 100% of the deficit, Lower Providence would advance only one place, assuming no changes from other townships. Some discussion ensued about this list.
- I) Millage breakdown: in 2023, Lower Providence taxes amounted to only 7.35% of all taxes collected. With the proposed millage increase to cover 100% of the deficit, assuming all else equal, Lower Providence will represent 8.62% of all taxes collected in 2024.
- J) Discussion on millage increases:
  - i) Supervisor Sorgini talked about the value of the services provided by the township and spoke of his support for a 32<sup>nd</sup> officer. He stated his support for a millage increase to cover 100% of the deficit, with some potential cuts to non-essential items from the budget.
  - ii) Supervisor Darby also supported a millage increase to cover 100% of the deficit, with some potential cuts to non-essential items from the budget.
  - iii) Supervisor Coless agreed with Supervisor Sorgini.
  - iv) Supervisor MacFarland stated he could not support a millage increase given the township has no plan to expand revenues to meet the increasing expenditures long-term. He believes a source of additional revenue could be EIT paid to Philadelphia and the township should reach out to residents to encourage them to voluntarily direct that tax to Lower Providence.
  - v) Supervisor Neights stated his support for a millage increase to cover 100% of the deficit, with some potential cuts to non-essential items from the budget.
  - vi) The board directed staff to cut or reduce the following the following items from the budget: part-time IT support (\$5,000), furniture (\$5,000), trainings (\$1,000), and judgement and damages (\$5,000).
- K) Public Comment: Beth Ann Bittner Mazza, Township resident, thanked the Board for all their work on the budget and commented that it has been an interesting process.
- L) Next Steps and Adjournment
  - i) The budget will be authorized for advertisement at the November 16 meeting and adopted during the Board of Supervisors meeting on December 20, 2023.
  - ii) The budget workshop adjourned at 7:00 PM.

**Respectfully submitted:**

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**E.J. Mentry, Secretary**