

The stated meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, March 10, 2022, via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with President Hecker presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners BRODSKY, ROTHMAN, DiPLACIDO, THOMPSON, WINEGRAD, HENRY, ZAPPONE, CARSWELL, SPIEGELMAN, BOLE, SCHREIBER, BOWMAN, VAHEY, HECKER
Excused: Commissioner VAUGHN

Also Present: Township Manager MANFREDI
Township Solicitor CLARKE

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE WAS FOLLOWED BY A MOMENT OF SILENCE IN SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY FOR THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF UKRAINE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING BRUTALITY IN THE FACE OF TYRANNY AND STANDING UP FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Cindy Shapiro, resident, expressed concern that recently she only became aware that the Township is considering Republic as the new recycling company since contract with JP Mascaro will be expiring. She has not had time to research the extent of this decision and feels the Township also has not had the time required to fully review the impact of this change, so she requested that the Board table the decision to vote on the two proposals until the Township and EAC have ample time to review and offer a comprehensive assessment of the pros and cons of each one. If that is not possible, she suggested awarding the contract for just one-year rather than seven and then take the time to perform the due diligence necessary to make the best decision.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the amount of speaking time on agenda items; also, about the economic development feasibility study.

Mike Tobin, resident, asked for clarification on what is included in the renovation of the restroom project as well as the amount of funds for the economic development study and whether that is part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Tom McAneney replied that the renovation project for the bathrooms at the Edge Hill Fire Company has been one to two years in the making that involves moving walls and expansion of the footprint of the bathrooms as the original plumbing dates back to 1933 with only the fixtures updated in 1956. This project will bring the restrooms up to code and ADA compliant and it was publicly bid with four bids received and \$143,000 was the low bid.

Commissioner Zappone clarified that the bid includes electrical, plumbing, ventilation, demo and rebuild. Is that correct?

Mr. McAneney replied yes, there will be three ADA compliant restrooms and expansion of the outer wall into the kitchen.

Commissioner Zappone said being in this business for over 45 years, there is a lot of work involved and this is a good price.

Manager Manfredi added that the specific bid information on the agenda item is included in the Executive Summary of the meeting binder.

Janet Lewis, resident, commented that regarding the crosswalk proposed for Acorn Lane and Edge Hill Road, there are seven to 10 children who live on Acorn Lane less than ¼ mile from Overlook Elementary School, and because it is deemed an unsafe walk, they are not allowed to walk to school. She thanked Commissioner Carswell for working incredibly hard with the Township and the County to find a way to make this possible as well as everyone who put time into it. She has a petition signed by over 200 people who support this initiative and requested that the Board pass the resolution for this program.

Cakky Evans, EAC member, expressed concern about the Township switching to Republic because it would reduce the amount of recycling and increase what may get incinerated or landfilled as well as the carbon impact of longer hauls. She spoke with Mascaro's recycling manager who indicated they can recycle plastic bags, saran wraps and any residential plastic, and municipalities such as Ambler are taking advantage of this program.

Fuel emissions from fleet vehicles account for 53% of Township's municipal emissions, 56% of total energy usage and 64% of total energy expenditures for the Township's operations not including the Fire Department, so she would like the EAC to have time to review this proposal and for the Board to consider whether they are losing something by not continuing with JP Mascaro.

Mark Smith, resident, expressed concern about the upcoming vote on a new recycling contract replacing the one expiring with JP Mascaro. In reading through the consultant's report, it appears the recommendation is to award the contract to Republic due to cost at a time when environmental degradation and climate change should be major considerations in all aspects of decision-making, and the recycling contract for Abington Township should be given equal weight to other considerations.

He respectfully requested that the Board of Commissioners delay the vote on the recycling contract until the Township can fully analyze the two proposals and receive feedback from residents. If extensions or delays are not possible with the current contract, please consider a limited-time contract for Republic to provide equal and adequate time for all parties for a more thorough consideration.

Joe Rooney, resident, expressed concern about not being given an opportunity to speak on any issues.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve Items a. - i. as listed under Consent Agenda as follows:

To approve the minutes from the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of February 10, 2022.

Proclamation recognizing April 29, 2022 as Arbor Day.

To approve revisions to the Conway Field License Agreement between the Township of Abington and Ardsley North Hills Athletic Association.

To authorize the one-year extension of Active Network Parks and Recreation software to April 13, 2023.

To adopt Ordinance No. 2191 amending Chapter 156 – “Vehicles and Traffic,” Article II – “Traffic Regulations,” Section 14 – “Stop Intersections,” and Article III – “Parking Regulations,” Section 25 – “Parking Prohibited At All Times; No Parking Between Signs; No Parking Here To Corner; Parking Prohibited Except Certain Hours; No Stopping or Standing,” Section 26 – “Parking Prohibited During Certain Hours,” and Section 28 – “Special Purpose Parking Zones;” add “Stop” signs on Rothley Avenue at Woodland Road, Center Avenue at Upland Avenue, Cricket Avenue at Jefferson Avenue, Cedar Lane at Hamel Avenue, Grovania Avenue at Penbryn Avenue, Woodrow Avenue at Tennis Avenue, Woodrow Avenue at Garfield Avenue, Jefferson Avenue at Maple Avenue, Herkness Drive at Stocton Road, Corinthian Avenue at Lycoming Avenue and Parkview Avenue at Lycoming Avenue; add “No Parking” on Fitzwatertown Road from Susquehanna Road to Moreland Road, Fitzwatertown Road from Woodland Road to 1371 Fitzwatertown Road and Fitzwatertown Road from Anzac Avenue to Woodland Road; add “No Parking Here To Corner” on Tyson Avenue north and south side of Easton Road; add “No Parking M-F 8AM-4PM on Huntingdon Pike from the north driveway to the “No Parking Between Signs” sign; add “Handicapped Parking” on Edgewood Avenue at 1426 Edgewood Avenue and remove the “Stop” sign on Crescent Avenue at Fortune Road.

To approve the revisions made to the Municipal Police Officer’s Education and Training Commission Physical Fitness Testing Standards outlined in Section 4.5 Civil Service Rules and Regulations.

To approve Resolution No. 22-008 authorizing the disposition of certain police records.

To approve Resolution No. 22-009 authorizing the disposition of certain Tax Office records.

To approve Resolution No. 22-010 to appoint Margaret M. Tyler as Deputy Tax Collector.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item BOC-09-031022:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Winegrad to approve a 7-year Recycling Contract with three optional one-year extensions retaining 100% of the commodity revenue with Republic Services, King of Prussia, for processing and marketing of the recycling consortium's recyclable materials and reject bid proposals received for transfer station operations and transportation of recyclables.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Thompson echoed sentiments from the public speakers tonight, and he appreciates the hard work by Public Works Department staff who put in a lot of time and effort in developing this report as it is a sound financial analysis and reasonable, but this is a multi-faceted issue, and we are missing the big picture if we do not consider the environmental aspects of this particular issue.

He understands we do not have much time or opportunity to reconsider and that we are up against a contract deadline, but moving forward, we need to rethink how we can be a "greener" Township and consider how we handle recycling of plastic bags either by ordinance, special recycling events or implementation of various programs. He has concerns about the proposal before the Board tonight, but we are up against the clock and should move it forward.

Commissioner Schreiber agreed that we all need to look towards the future and the environment, which is important to all of us, and she duly notes there is a deadline; however, she would like the recycling and environmental issues as well as the timeframe to be addressed.

Manager Manfredi reminded everyone that previously this matter has been brought before the Board for approval of extensions and the consortium and Public Works Department has been working on this for some time, and he called on Mr. Mike Jones.

Mr. Mike Jones, Director of Public Works Department, said this was not just an economical decision, and we do consider the environment as well as the carbon footprint. The cost savings going to a plant that is much closer outweighed the ability to recycle flexible plastics at Birdsboro. This plan addresses the initiative of going "greener" and provides the ability to recycle additional plastics with future programs, and we strongly recommend and request that the Board approve the seven-year contract with Republic.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-10-031022:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Thompson to award the following bids received and opened on February 17, 2022:

- a. 2022 Engineered Retaining Wall System Materials Bid to JDM Materials Company in the amount of \$50,000.00.
- b. 2022 Storm Sewer Inlets and Manhole Structures Bid to Commonwealth Precast, Inc. in the amount of \$15,000.00.
- c. 2022 Ready Mix Concrete Bid to Eureka Stone Quarry, Inc. in the amount of \$55,630.00.
- d. 2022 Superpave Materials Bid Part 1 to Eureka Stone Quarry, Inc. in the amount of \$1,578,500.00, Part 2 and Part 3 to Glasgow, Inc. in the amount of \$97,200.00.
- e. 2022 Milling Project Bid to James D. Morrissey, Inc. in the amount of \$631,299.34 and to authorize the Township Manager to execute all contracts for all bids here and above awarded.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Thompson thanked Public Works Department as it is a good collection of bids and they did a fantastic job leveraging PennBid in getting a lot of bids in a competitive market, and he appreciates the work that was involved. He clarified that due to the current geopolitical climate and rapidly rising costs of petroleum that will affect some of these costs, the Township is locked in on these bid prices and there will be no increases. Is that correct?

Mr. Jones replied that is correct because we did not use liquid fuels funds for asphalt, so the Township is not subject to that increase.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-11-031022:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve an extension for the agreements (C000064042 and C000070588) by and between the Department of Community & Economic Development for the Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant, which supports the Old York Road/Susquehanna Road project until June 30, 2023.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-12-031022:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Winegrad to approve Resolution No. 22-011 the submission of the “Safe Routes for Youth and Seniors in Abington” project grant application to Montgomery County’s Montco 2040 grant program.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-13-031022:

Vice President Vahey said this is to consider a feasibility study regarding potential for economic development in Abington Township and authorizing the Township Manager to proceed with the Request For Proposals process and approve an appropriation from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds not to exceed \$75,000.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Zappone asked for further explanation on what the Township is paying for?

Manager Manfredi replied this request was sponsored by Commissioner Schreiber to have an economic development study done to see what would make sense for economic development is any given area of the Township.

During previous discussions regarding the proposed Economic Development Corporation, it was questioned what the corporation was being created to accomplish and plan for, and with each discussion, there were ideas and thoughts on economic development; however, there has never been an expert to determine what areas should be developed and how that should be done. So, the purpose is to send out for an RFP to find an expert to do a study and have them make a presentation before the Board of Commissioners and then we will have something to plan from for economic development, and because no dollars were appropriated, it requires a supplemental appropriation.

Commissioner Zappone clarified that the Township has an EDC (Economic Development Committee) who would handle that. Is that correct?

Manager Manfredi replied that committee’s role would be to review the final report and provide input during the process.

Commissioner Schreiber agreed that the current EDC would review and possibly offer suggestions for the RFP. A written feasibility study would include marketing and what would work in different business areas. Also, the study needs to be a written report for the Township to apply for other funding. There were plans written previously; however, they did not focus primarily on what types of businesses would work in various sections. Also, the agenda item says “not-to-exceed \$75,000,” so it may not cost that much. She clarified that ARPA funds could be used for this study. Is that correct?

Manager Manfredi replied yes, a portion of the ARPA funds can be used for it.

Commissioner Schreiber asked her fellow Commissioners for their support and to put it into motion form so we can move ahead with it.

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to authorize the Township Manager to proceed with the Request For Proposal process for an Economic Development Feasibility Study, and approve an appropriation from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds not-to-exceed \$75,000.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-14-031022:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Zappone to award the bid to complete the renovation of the restrooms at the Edge Hill Fire Company to Premier Builders, Inc. (1015 Big Oak Road, Yardley, PA, 19067) in the amount of \$143,000.00 as the lowest responsible bid for this project.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Thompson encouraged his fellow Commissioners to approve this motion as the restrooms at the Edge Hill Fire Company are original, 60 years old, and they are difficult to use for anyone with any type of physical disability. Also, the Fire House and this fire hall does not just serve the firefighters, although it is important to provide adequate restroom facilities for our First Responders, but it is also used as a public meeting hall, event space and polling place, and it is important to provide adequate access to a public building such as this one.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-15-031022:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by President Hecker to authorize the appointment of Special ACT 511 Tax Counsel, Ms. Kathleen M. Thomas at a rate of \$175, (Business Privilege and Mercantile Collector).

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-16-031022:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Rothman to approve the Abington Township Uniformed DROP Plan Administrator.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-17-031022:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Carswell to appoint members to the Human Relations Commission and Civil Service Commission as included in Exhibit "A."

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Carswell clarified that there was an additional round of public announcement for filling of one seat on the Human Relations Commission and an alternate seat on the Civil Service Commission.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Receive Treasurer's Report:

Township Treasurer Jay W. Blumenthal reported that February was the first month that we began collecting real estate taxes, and in that month, we collected \$1,171,954 as compared to February 2021 of \$1,153,523 with an increase of \$18,431. Monies from various Township departments deposited into Republic Bank in February 2022 was \$5,064,694 as compared to last year of \$4,118,152 representing an increase of \$946,542; YTD was \$7,221,083 as compared to last year of \$5,351,233 representing an increase of \$1,869,850.

Item FC-01-031022:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the January 2022 expenditures in the amount of \$2,248,166.81 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$2,421,171.81, and authorize the proper officials to sign vouchers in payment of bills and contracts as they mature through the month of April 2022.

Roll call resulted in motion being passed 14-0. Commissioner Vaughn was absent during roll call.

Item FC-02-031022:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Carswell to adopt Resolution No. 22-012 designating Republic Bank as the official depository for Abington Township funds for a term expiring January 10, 2024.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Commissioner Zappone commented that today's gas prices will have an impact on the budget, and he suggested the Township look into electric or hybrid vehicles.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Joe Rooney, resident, expressed concern that there was a 60% increase in general Township purposes year-over-year; also, since tax bills and paying taxes are discussed in the meeting, he was going to talk about that in the first comment section, but he was "cutoff and that was inappropriate."

Horace Tony Davis, President of the NAACP, questioned whether there were any educational opportunities provided to community members on environmental issues to help them understand projects related to recycling of plastics, etc., as all environmental issues involve social issues, and he wants to be sure that the Township has a relationship with everyone in the community and not just certain members.

President Hecker said the Township's relationship with the NAACP is longstanding and an important one, and we would be happy to find ways to continue partnering with the organization along with the EAC on those suggestions.

Mike Tobin commented that prior to the survey for the Comprehensive Plan being sent out; the quarter mile map has not been released, and the demographic numbers, populations, and projected number of residents in 2034-2045 are all wrong, and although he knows it will be fixed, he heard that the survey will be released as early as next week before any of it is corrected, so how can a plan be put together if it is based on inaccurate information, and who is in charge of this plan, is it Abington Township or Montgomery County?

Commissioner Thompson replied that the Township oversees the plan joined by the Township's Planner from the Montgomery County Planning Commission to assist in the exercise. We started the plan in 2019 with projections of what the 2020 population would be, and during that time, we received U.S. Census data that shows that previous projections were low.

Projections received from the 2020 Census exceeded the numbers projected by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission for 2035, and based on that, we know that the DVRPC needs to recalculate their projections as growth occurred at a faster rate than anticipated. Those projections typically come out in the summer, so we will receive it after the draft is complete but during the public comment phase, and we will make those updates as we move forward. The online survey relates to personal preference in terms of what housing could look like around the Township, and it will be reviewed by the Comp Plan Development Team at its meeting on Tuesday, March 15th.

Eric Sorkin, resident, thanked the Board of Commissioners for the hard work they do. He is a resident of Edge Hill Road, and the road looks beautiful especially with the addition of sidewalks from recent construction. Also, there is a hoarder living one house away from him and he requested that Code Enforcement look into it as well as any property maintenance issues. And many people have sheds and put things behind them, and he suggested a "Dumpster Day" to encourage residents to clean out their sheds.

President Hecker replied that we will follow up on the concern about the neighboring home.

A resident expressed concern about high rise apartments developed in parking lots at malls, and those who rent will not be driving \$80,000 electric vehicles, so “please stop overdeveloping.”

Janet Lewis, resident, thanked the Board for their support of “Safe Sidewalks” noting that traffic-related danger is the second most common reason parents do not allow their children to walk to/from school and parents then drive them to school; however, motor vehicles is one of the leading causes of death for school-age children according to the NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) and Overlook Elementary School has anywhere from 50-75 vehicles at morning drop-off. She thanked the Board for approving the crosswalk on behalf of the kids, seniors, and the community.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the Comp Plan regarding the roads.

Cakky Evans, EAC member, commented that for the 2022 budget, the EAC made recommendations regarding hybrid/electric vehicles such as an audit of the Township’s fleet to review mileage and determine the best way to phase-in. Regarding the Comp Plan, she believes we need more affordable housing in our community, and she does not want this to become “a dog whistle for racism” and wants to see the community get more involved, and the transportation survey received a phenomenal response. Also, she supports comments made by the President of the NAACP.

Gene Geld, resident, commented that he does not see racism in his neighborhood, and it is a socioeconomic problem and has nothing to do with racism. We want our community a certain way and it is not about racism. Also, he expressed concern about not getting information or any newsletters, and he asked for information to be sent out more expeditiously, so people know what’s going on their neighborhood.

President Hecker pointed out that the Township publishes a monthly newsletter that all residents can sign up for via email and the link is on the Home Page, and we will do more to publicize it, which is a comprehensive monthly listing of everything happening in the community.

Commissioner Spiegelman said that is in addition to the many newsletters sent out by individual Commissioners on a regular basis.

Jeanette DiMeo, resident, commented that there are multiracial residents who own their homes in her ward, and what has been proposed for the Willow Grove Park Mall and the Huntingdon Valley Shopping Center will be renters overcrowding an area that is already “jammed up” during rush hour causing air pollution from traffic; also, she expressed concern about residents not knowing about the newsletters and what’s going on.

Commissioner Brodsky commented that during public comment tonight, Cindy Shapiro raised some ideas that have merit, and he requested a further review.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary

The following ordinance and resolutions were adopted by the Board of Commissioners on March 10, 2022 as follows:

Ordinance No. 2191

Resolution No. 22-008

Resolution No. 22-009

Resolution No. 22-010

Resolution No. 22-011

Resolution No. 22-012