

The stated meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, March 13, 2025 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 ROTHMAN, DiPLACIDO, BROWNE, WINEGRAD, HENRY, ZAPPONE, YOUNG-GERTZ, SPIEGELMAN, BOLE, SCHREIBER, BOWMAN, VAHEY, HECKER
Excused: Commissioners BRODSKY, LANEY-MARTIN

Also Present: Township Manager Christman
Township Solicitor Clarke

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

BOARD VICE PRESIDENT ANNOUCEMENTS:

Vice President Vahey thanked our amazing volunteer firefighters and all those who responded from across the region. It takes courage to run into a burning building. It takes a different level of bravery, an order of magnitude greater to run into a 6,000 sq. ft. blazing inferno. If you need a hero, look no further than your volunteer firefighter living next door to you. These men and women are heroic and amazing, and we owe them an incredible debt of gratitude.

He has never, ever been prouder to be a resident of Abington Township. He is so grateful there was not a single injury and no fatalities from the fire at SPS, and he cannot imagine what we could ever do to fully thank the firefighters for battling that fire for an entire week.

Township management was beyond compare. Manager Chris Christman had just begun as manager six weeks before this fire and he did not miss a beat. He had a steady and calm leadership that was an example to the entire team and that is why we were so successful in managing the disaster and the communications thereafter.

Ashley McIlvaine and Grace Sekelewski were rockstars communicating with our residents who were fully informed due to their excellence and expert communications skills.

Chief Molloy taking the rounds of press in queries and leading our response publicly as well as his entire command staff. Tom McAneney and Chris Platz, the dynamic duo, in leading our emergency management. Terry Castorina and Kathleen Przybylowski along with everyone from the Emergency Operation Center. We responded and rose to the occasion, and he is so proud of all of them. Thank you so much for your service.

We have a long road, but he is confident we will come out of this even better. He is so thankful for his neighbors and their patience, gratitude and their collaboration with the Greater Glenside Civic Association, who we have been working with to make sure we have a full response in knowing what the residents need from their good communications.

He also thanked his fellow Commissioners for their support and help with managing the greatest disaster in County history, especially Commissioner Bill Bole for such a great partnership.

Let's never underestimate the purpose and work that we do. This is a great Township, let's keep fighting for it, and he is so excited about our future. Thank you.

President Hecker said we are looking for other opportunities to officially express our gratitude as a Board and as a Township, and more information will be forthcoming. It was impressive to see the coordination within the Township as well as with other neighboring municipalities who expressed how incredibly professional and well put together the fire, police and staff are. This was not a rehearsal, it was life or death, and we rose to the challenge as a community, so thank you everyone.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Adele Kubel, resident, expressed concern about the minutes. She was also concerned about "rat infestation and blight decorating people's backyards," and that she is not able to show her photos through the projector.

Joe Rooney, resident, commented that St. Patrick's Day in Glenside was a great time had by all. Also, SPS has disappeared, so what will the tax implications be for the Township and School District?

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern that items on the agenda have not been vetted, and that the working session was cancelled. She was also concerned about funds coming from multiple accounts for mowing and it should be an item in the budget. And she asked about the vehicle used by the Friends of Briar Bush.

CONSENT AGENDA:

President Hecker made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to TABLE Item c. as listed under Consent Agenda and bring it back next month after further discussion.

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0.

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve Items a. b. and d. as listed under Consent Agenda as follows:

To approve the minutes from the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of February 13, 2025.

To adopt Resolution No. 25-012 authorizing the disposition of certain Tax Office records as set forth in Exhibit "A."

To approve the completion of an updated Delegation of Signing Authority for DCED HOME Contract C000092911 and authorize Manager Christman and Director Hamm to complete and electronically sign the forthcoming contract documents.

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item BOC-04-031325:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Zappone to adopt Resolution No. 25-013 recognizing the month of April 2025 as Pennsylvania Safe Digging Month.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0.

Item BOC-05-031325:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to award the Abington Township Mowing Contract, Zones 1, 2, and 3 for years 2025, 2026, and 2027 to M & M Lawn Care East Inc. in the amount of \$187,850 per year and authorize a fund balance transfer in the amount of \$89,516.00 to be taken out of account #01-82000-279-000000. The remaining balance of \$98,334.00 will be taken out of the Parks and Recreation budget account #01-10450-451-000000.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Spiegelman said the Ward 11 neighbors on Wanamaker and Baeder Roads who live near the Township-owned lots and where homes used to be prior to the 96' flood, have been very patient and keen observers of the mowing situation, and without their complaints and concerns, this very important change would not have been made. He thanked them for their input.

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0.

Item BOC-06-031325:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Zappone to reject the Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary Phase 2 Project Bids as opened on March 4, 2025, and authorize rebidding of the project.

Manager Christman said the Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary Phase 2 Project went out for bid several times, and the last time it was sent out, the Board rejected it due to structural deficiencies within the bid packages. Again, when the bids came back, the low bidder on the project made a fatal flaw in the submission, and as a result, the Solicitor's Office advised to reject all bids. So, the request is for the Board to reject all bids and then readvertise.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Bole questioned whether the Board should review the restructuring of the request for bids.

Ms. McIlvaine replied we worked with the Solicitor's Office on modifying the bid, and we received three bidders. There is no issue with our bidding documents, we are receiving incomplete documentation. We are hopeful this time around that we will be able to award at least the base bid. Also, this bid as well as the design needs to be approved by DCNR who advised there is nothing further that we can remove from the project that would make it what it was intended to be.

President Hecker asked if we authorize the rebidding, what is the timeline for the project?

Ms. McIlvaine replied the objective is to bring this back next month and we are obligated to get this project done by the end of year.

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0.

Item BOC-07-031325:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between Abington Township and the Friends of Briar Bush.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for further explanation regarding the truck.

Manager Christman replied the truck will be purchased by the Township and utilized by the Friends of Briar Bush. They currently have a van that was used for a variety of things, but it can no longer be used as it does not have safe operating seatbelts. It will become part of the Township's fleet, but it will reside there for their use only. The existing van will go out to bid so that it can be disposed of with other vehicles.

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0.

Item BOC-08-031325:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Vice President Vahey to recommend appointing Peter Kim to the Zoning Hearing Board to fill the term ending on 12/31/2027.

President Hecker thanked Vice President Vahey, Commissioner Schreiber and Commissioner Winegrad who took the lead in vetting the candidates who have applied for the Zoning Hearing Board, and he appreciates their effort.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0.

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Item FC-01-031325:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Bowman to approve the January 2025 expenditures in the amount of \$3,699,986.30 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$2,493,864.17 and authorize the proper officials to sign and approve invoices and supporting documentation in payment of bills and contracts as they mature through the month of April 2025.

Roll call resulted in motion being passed 13-0. Commissioners Brodsky and Laney-Martin were absent during roll call.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Adele Kubel, resident, presented photos of buildings falling down and neighborhood homes rotting out, tires piling up, rat infestation, and open dumpsters. She expressed concern about “speculators being invited into everyone’s neighborhood.”

Matt Miller, resident of 1300 block of Arnold Avenue, expressed concern about being “harassed” from all the different traffic patterns flowing onto his street. 90% of the detour goes onto Arnold Avenue and the traffic is “ungodly.” His neighbor’s kid was almost hit going to school. He suggested making it a temporary one-way street and on the next block up make it in the opposite direction as well as installing speed bumps. Traffic is bad and constant on weekends and kids play in the street. He asked for help in getting this resolved or something done.

President Hecker replied we will be coordinating with Commissioner Schreiber as well as with Township staff on figuring out what can be done recognizing that this is a county project. We appreciate the concern, and no one wants kids to be unsafe.

Samantha Miller, resident, commented that there is a school bus stop at Patane and Arnold, and there are 12-15 elementary school-aged kids walking to the school bus who almost get hit every day. Also, cars are doing donuts at the intersections of Patane and Arnold and Woodland and Arnold. There have been two accidents in the past two weeks, and we are being harassed trying to back out of our driveways, so safety is our biggest priority.

Bob Dudley, resident, Woodland Road, asked why it takes eight months for a small bridge project, and why are the detour signs being ignored? Traffic impact has become a real issue and safety concern.

Delores Johnson, resident of Woodland Road and Arnold Avenue, expressed concern about speeding cars and revving engines, and she was told that the only place they can be ticketed is on Brookdale, but they are not allowed to use radar. Something needs to be done. We can’t do this until November.

Commissioner Schreiber said she understands this is a nightmare and has received several emails. She put this in her newsletter and the police had a meeting about it. We were as surprised as the residents when we saw the signs and we did not know about the project, so the county needs to provide an explanation. SEPTA was not told by the county project either, so that is why the buses were going through. She was told they stopped, but if not, we will look into it. She sent all the suggestions to the police for evaluation and then we will have a meeting with the residents.

Traffic Safety Officer Mike Coughlin said we were also taken off guard by the project and we hear your concerns and see the traffic issues. SEPTA was not told originally, and received a delayed response, but we were under the impression it was taken care of, but obviously that is not the case, so we will reach out to them. There is no truck restriction on the road; however, we added two message boards that the road is closed at Woodland Road and then we saw an increase in the number of trucks following the detour at the intersection. We also put up a message board by the Burger King that all traffic needs to detour. The county will provide another message board for Old Welsh Road.

In the meantime, we placed a portable speed sign on Arnold Avenue for southbound traffic. Regarding the traffic lights at Easton and Woodland, the timing of the signal was changed to further push the Woodland Road traffic out. We covered up the “No Turn on Red” sign, so now they are allowed to make the right turn on red. We also put in a parking restriction at Pershing and Arnold. And we are doing an overtime detail where officers will be there between 2-6 p.m., showing presence, sitting at the “Stop” sign, providing speed enforcement, and doing whatever we can. Also, patrol officers will be there in the morning at the intersection at the beginning of their shift for about an hour.

Commissioner Schreiber said she will ask reps from the county as well as the police to be present at our community meeting that will be held in about two weeks.

Commissioner Spiegelman said he has seen many buses driving by his house as well as an increase in truck traffic. He will support Commissioner Schreiber and the police in their work to make sure traffic follows the detour, so we are all protected.

Joe Rooney, resident, agreed with Commissioner Vahey about the courage of the firemen, first responders and police in handling dangerous situations. Occasionally, we need to thank them in front of the community. 2025 is the 80th Anniversary of the end of WWII and he suggested having a community event at the War Memorial site. Also, Abington School District will have a referendum question on May 20th that is available to everyone.

Lora Lehmann, resident, suggested speed monitoring signs for the detour traffic. She expressed concern that her “Right To Know” requests are not being answered properly as well as a document relating to Old Welsh Road; also, vacant properties should be cited. And she thanked the firefighters who ran into the flames.

Ross Abel, resident of Washington Lane, with Jenkintown Abington Neighbors and Bike Montgomery County, gave a shoutout to our first responders who had the massive task of fighting this fire, he appreciates them. He also thanked Chief Molloy and Manager Christman for the discussions on traffic calming.

He recommended to Board members and staff to find a busy road with a speed limit of 35 MPH or higher with a midblock crosswalk and try to cross as a pedestrian. It is an incredibly frustrating and dangerous task because it is hard for drivers to slow down before they realize there is a pedestrian trying to cross. We have a pedestrian injured about every 12 or 13 days in Abington, which is something we can take strong action against.

He requested budgeting for speed cushions and suggested a Traffic Calming Committee to fight against aggressive driving on behalf of our residents. We need an ongoing strategic approach to developing pedestrian and trail infrastructure in our town. Also, please pursue a multi-municipal study for traffic calming on Old York Road. Also, he recommended attending the Vision Zero Conference by the Bike Coalition of Greater Philadelphia to be held at Temple University on March 28th.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Recording Secretary

The following resolutions were adopted by the Board of Commissioners on March 13, 2025:

Resolution No. 25-012

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