

The stated meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, October 10, 2024 via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with President Hecker presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners BRODSKY, ROTHMAN, DiPLACIDO, LANEY-MARTIN, BROWNE, WINEGRAD, HENRY, ZAPPONE, YOUNG-GERTZ, SPIEGELMAN, BOLE, SCHREIBER, BOWMAN, VAHEY, HECKER

Also Present: Assistant Township Manager Wehmeyer
Township Solicitor Clarke

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:

President Hecker announced that the Board of Commissioners held an Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter on October 1, 2024.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Adele Kubel, resident, expressed concern that her questions were not answered about the Comprehensive Plan, Roychester Park and the Roslyn Library. Also, she was concerned about the garbage next to the Rydal Train Station Bridge; trees not replaced at 100 Valley Road; Covid money not being spent on citizen resources; and the Street Department has not had an adequate compliment of employees in years and citizens are not getting basic services.

President Hecker replied the Comprehensive Plan will be revisited later in the calendar year; there were delays with the equipment for Roychester Park; and the Roslyn Library is still being worked on.

Joe Rooney, resident, commented that microplastics come from tire dust and paint and it doesn't have anything to do with plastic bags. He doesn't understand the EAC's position on the loss of open space from the development of 40 acres of land with 150 rowhomes. What is the replacement protocol for the tax collector? And he was concerned about the Township accepting a flyer and not petitions.

President Hecker replied that the petitions were accepted.

Lora Lehmann, resident, commented that she wants the plastic thing to be passed, and the problem with plastics is not a hoax. The application for the Mad Hatter was not vetted and does not belong on a voting meeting. Also, the 2241 Old Welsh item on the Working Session should be reviewed because they have an incomplete application.

Cakky Evans, Associate Member of the EAC, commented that Nancy O'Neill will be a fantastic addition to the EAC. The Willow Grove NAACP Banquet will be held on October 20th and Commissioner Spiegelman will be honored, and the EAC will also be honored with the Montgomery Award that same afternoon. Also, plastic bags really hurt our environment and there is overwhelming evidence, so it would be great to get it passed by January.

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

To approve the minutes from the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of September 12, 2024.

To award the contract for Residential Rehabilitation Consultant to CGP&H, LLC and authorize the Township Manager to execute the agreement.

To appoint the top five (5) qualified candidates from the Civil Service Eligibility List within the guidelines of the Civil Service rules to the position of Probationary Police Officer provided they successfully complete the background investigation, physical and psychological exams and all entry requirements of the Municipal Police Officer's Education and Training Commission for Action 120 Training.

To award the printing of the Abington Township 2025 calendar to Fort Nassau Graphics in the amount of \$23,300 to print 22,000 Township calendars.

To approve the Escrow Release #2 for LD-22-03 – AutoZone located at 1318 & 1330 Easton Road (Parcel #30-00-14016-00-3 & 30-00-14020-00-8), in the amount of \$151,121.30.

To approve the Escrow Release #1 for LD-20-03 – Minor Land Development Plan – New Life Presbyterian Church in the amount of \$126,462.48.

To appoint Nancy O'Neill to fill the Environmental Advisory Council unexpired term ending 12/31/24 as recommended by the Environmental Advisory Council.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item BOC-07-101024:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to adopt Ordinance No. 2219 amending Chapter 49 – “Vacant Property Review Board,” at Section 3 – “Vacant Property Review Board,” subsection A, and repealing all inconsistent ordinances.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Item BOC-08-101024:

Vice President Vahey clarified that this item is to approve the Hold Harmless Agreement, and the next item is to approve the Venue Hire Agreement, so if the Board agrees with the Venue Hire Agreement, then the Hold Harmless Agreement would not be necessary. Is that correct?

Solicitor Clarke replied that is correct. There is an exhibit that is part of the Hold Harmless Agreement, which can be included as an amendment to the Venue Hire Agreement.

Item BOC-09-101024:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Rothman to approve the Venue Hire Agreement with Abington Township, Fever and the Abington Art Center.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner DiPlacido said he will recuse himself from the vote as his wife is the resident artist for the Abington Art Center.

Commissioner Winegrad said this is a light and sound show at Sculpture Park to be held from November through March during nighttime hours with lights turning off by 10 p.m. There were some concerns from neighbors, so the vendor and reps of the Art Center provided two informational meetings, answered questions and addressed concerns. He has no issue with allowing this to go forward as it will not be a nuisance and will raise awareness for the Township and the Art Center, and he urged his colleagues to vote in favor of it.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-10-101024:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido to accept the resignation of Jay Blumenthal, Tax Collector, effective 12/31/24.

President Hecker said Mr. Blumenthal approached him as well as Manager Manfredi to signal his interest in retiring at the end of the calendar year. The Township will be accepting applications for the position of Tax Collector and that appointment will take effect on January 1, 2025. The individual who is appointed to that role will need to run for the position in next year's election.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Item FC-01-101024:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the August 2024 expenditures in the amount of \$3,460,435.59 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$2,365,138.62 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 November 2024.

Roll call resulted in motion being passed 15-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Adele Kubel, resident, read her petition into the record with over 200 signatures that she submitted to the Township. She was concerned that years ago, citizens considered Abington attractive with good services and schools, and the neighborhood has gone down, "and many live in apartments with mold, rats, mice, bugs and drugs, and 100 York has the same poor living situation." Also, concerns from citizens have been put on the Abington Request site and no one has reached out to them.

The neighborhood streets were never built for the dangerous increase in traffic; the middle and high schools are overwhelmed and failing to provide a quality learning environment; the Easton Road business area was charming, but now tattoo and smoke shops dominate; WAWA's parking lot spreads trash to the creek; Keswick stores do not get Township support, and the Maytag Laundromat is a "disgusting mess."

John Slade, 1925 Lycoming Avenue, expressed concern that at the upcoming October Zoning Hearing Board meeting there will be an application proposed for construction of a Taco Bell at the corner of Old York and Maplewood Avenue.

The plans for the new Taco Bell would have egress onto Maplewood Avenue and include 12 variance requests. There are ordinances in place, and we need to stick to them; however, if times have changed and the ordinance needs to be changed, then that would be a better approach, but the need for 12 exceptions clearly shows there is an attempt to put a “round peg in a square hole.”

President Hecker encouraged the resident and his neighbors to attend that Zoning Hearing Board meeting.

Brian Dugan, 1964 Lycoming Avenue, expressed concern about the safety of his young children who play in the street. The plan as currently proposed will change the fabric of the neighborhood forcing it on the neighbors.

Peggy Downs, 1932 Lycoming Avenue, commented that she is opposed to the development of the proposed Taco Bell, and this is the first time the neighbors have heard about it. The application includes several variances, one being that it is a fast-food restaurant, and the zoning code requires 40,000 sq. ft. and proposed is 33,000 sq. ft. Also, their application does not seem complete, and the only hardship will be the ones imposed on the neighbors. And she just received the zoning notice on Friday, and there is a staked notice, but it is difficult to read.

Joe Rooney, resident, expressed concern about the increased crime in the area and he does not know whether it is a manning problem, but the common thread seems to be Old York Road and those from Philadelphia. It is worth some discussion and explanation for our citizens. Also, he thanked the police for their good work.

Commissioner Browne said words matter and there are certain hidden meanings behind what people say, and Abington is a great place to live, and we do not need to throw Philadelphia underneath the proverbial bus to make us feel better, specifically, a city that has a high percentage of African American residents and has a very historical and documented history of being socially and economically depressed.

He wears a dog whistle around his neck because we heard a number of dog whistles throughout the meetings since he has been appointed and elected, and it is unacceptable, and the dog whistles will not go unchecked.

Commissioner Bowman agreed with Commissioner Jeffrey Browne. Also, his washer broke and he had to use the laundromat in Roslyn, and everything was fine, and it is a beautiful place.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern that questions should be answered, and resident's comments should be respected. She was concerned that the Taco Bell and 2241 Old Welsh Road should not be on the agenda because their applications were incomplete and they did not answer questions about hardships; also, she was concerned about the meeting process.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary

Ordinance No. 2219 was adopted by the Board of Commissioners on October 10, 2024.