

The stated meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Township of Abington was held on Thursday, November 9, 2023 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, VAUGHN, BROWNE, WINEGRAD, HENRY, ZAPPONE, CARSWELL, SPIEGELMAN, SCHREIBER, BOWMAN, VAHEY, HECKER
Excused: Commissioner BOLE

Also Present: Township Manager Manfredi
Township Solicitor Clarke

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:

President Hecker congratulated his fellow Board members who were reelected this past Tuesday, and he looks forward to continuing working together. Also, the next portion of the Conditional Use Hearing for 1209 Rydal Road application will be held on Wednesday, November 29, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Sutherland Building on the campus of Penn State Abington.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Adele Kubel, resident, requested that the traffic light bulbs and traffic light poles be replaced/repared along Old York Road.

President Hecker replied that it will be addressed.

Joe Rooney, resident, commented that he hopes there will be a good discussion tonight on the budget.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern that salaries were not included in the budget; installation of sidewalks are funded by HUD; and the pilot taxes were not explained.

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

To approve the minutes from the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of October 12, 2023.

To approve the escrow release request #6 for LD-16-06, 1235 Meinel Road Subdivision in the amount of \$69,969.35.

To adopt Traffic Safety Ordinance No. 2209 amending Chapter 156 – “Vehicles and Traffic,” Article II – “Traffic Regulations” Section 14 “Stop Intersections;” Article II – “Traffic Regulations” Section 14 “Stop Intersections;” 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 27 – Parking Time Limited; and Section 28 – Specialized Parking Zones; to add a “Stop” sign northbound and southbound on Osbourne Avenue at Phipps Avenue and westbound on Cloverly Avenue at Rodman Avenue; “No Parking Here To Corner” signs between Limekiln Pike and the driveway of 112 Maple Avenue on the west side and on Rockwell Road 30 ft. from Hamilton Avenue on the east side; “2-Hour Parking” signs on the south side of Guernsey Avenue between eastern property edge of 1912 Guernsey Avenue and western edge of the driveway apron of 1140 Old York Road; “Handicapped Parking” sign at 317 N. Easton Road; and to remove the “No Parking Here To Corner” sign on the west side of Maple Avenue at Limekiln Pike.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item BOC-03-110923:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to adopt the Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Budget.

Manager Manfredi said the proposed budget includes detailed narratives with the theme of striving for perfection while achieving excellence. Proposed capital items will be presented from the Police Department, Engineering – Construction Services Division, and Public Works Department funded by excess revenue in compliance with the Government Finance Officers Association’s recommendations.

The budget as presented includes salary increases, although positions and salaries are not listed at this time as we are finalizing negotiations with Abington Township Police Association’s Per Diem Union, and once finalized, they will be listed.

Chief Molloy said back in 2015, President Obama assembled the best executives in law enforcement across the country who used the six pillars of 21st Century Policing: Building Trust and Legitimacy; Policy and Oversight; Technology and Social Media; Community Policing and Crime Reduction; Training and Education; Officer Wellness & Safety, and decisions made by the department are based on those pillars.

Our department is one of four in Pennsylvania with dual accreditation. CALEA – Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies and PLEAC – Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission.

Capital items requested align with both the Township and Police Department's strategic plans as well as accreditation standards.

Deputy Chief Porter said AXON is one of the largest items in the capital budget in which they are the leader in both the body-worn and in-car camera systems. This program provides transparency and it's easy to use. Its integrated technology includes a FLOCK camera system used nationwide. It is a five-year commitment for body-worn cameras and 10-year commitment for in-car cameras including replacement of the latest technology.

Another capital item request is replacement of firearms that will have a risk mitigation feature of red dot sights increasing accuracy and situational awareness and overall safety for everyone involved in critical incidents. Expenditure will be offset with a trade-in allowance provided by the vendor.

Previously, the Board approved the purchase of two motorcycles in which three officers were certified and they are used for traffic safety, public relations, enforcement, visibility, and patrol flexibility. Request is to purchase one additional motorcycle and train one more officer.

Mr. Tim Clark, Director of Engineering, said Construction Services Division began in 2018. Seven major projects were completed this year consisting of over 4,000 ft. of storm pipe, 37 drainage structures and 12 emergency repairs. Actual costs for material - \$215,000, equipment - \$18,711, and labor - \$275,288.25 for total cost of \$508,999.25. The purchase of a new excavator is needed in the amount of \$205,000 to replace the existing one, so we can take on larger projects.

President Hecker clarified that these projects must be completed, and if the Township did not have this in-house service, next year, it would cost taxpayers an additional \$1.6 million dollars. Is that correct?

Mr. Clark replied yes. These types of projects used to be sent out for bid and now they are completed in-house.

Mr. Mike Jones, Director of Public Works Department, said regarding the Paving Program, in 2023, 28 miles was paved, and if that work was contracted out, the cost would be approximately \$3 million dollars. Material cost of \$1,300,000 was funded by an In-Lieu-Of Paving Utility Program that our previous director Mr. Ed Micciolo and Angelo Pontelandolfo started 10 years ago. Street work has been coming to an end so the funding for paving is beginning to slow down, and the capital request is for material in the amount of \$1,250,000 and replace paving and milling machines in the amount of \$115,000 and \$112,000, respectively.

Manager Manfredi continued that no tax increase is proposed as well as no increase in refuse or wastewater fees. He thanked the Board of Commissioners for their support.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Rothman said it has been clearly demonstrated how the Township is saving money, and if we can continue to do more with less, that is awesome.

Commissioner Schreiber asked about the timeframe of the contract and whether the new one is from the same company.

Deputy Chief Porter replied the contract expires at the end of this year, and yes, the new one is from the same company.

Commissioner Zappone commended the directors of Code Enforcement, Police Department, Engineering and Public Works for doing a great job. They have always been there for the residents of Ardsley as well as all residents of the Township, and they should be applauded.

Commissioner DiPlacido said he still supports changing the name of the “Paving Program” to “Resurfacing Program” as the pavement is a place that is walked on outside the street.

Commissioner Browne commended Chief Molloy and Deputy Chief Porter for adopting and leading in President Obama’s six pillars of 21st Century Policing. He asked for further explanation on the body-worn camera policy.

Deputy Chief Porter replied it is a comprehensive policy in which other departments have reached out for a copy to model after. Officers are not permitted to turn cameras off unless there are certain situations such as a medical issue and supervisors are required to randomly select and review body camera footage monthly.

Commissioner Vaughn said being able to review footage, discuss the issues and get feedback from the advisory board helps to understand what the issues are, so she is a strong proponent of continuing the contract, and the public should be able to review the policy.

Deputy Chief Porter replied we will make sure it is available for review online.

Commissioner Spiegelman said he appreciates comments from Commissioners Browne and Vaughn.

Also, recently, he had to deal with, respond to, and debunk misinformation and misleading nonsense regarding the Township's budget and where it allocates its resources, so to see the outstanding presentations by Chief Molloy, Deputy Chief Porter and Directors Clark and Jones is heartening because not only is it truthful and factual, but we should be proud of this budget and those who are responsible for it as well as how the Township allocates its resources. This is the best budget he has seen in his time as commissioner.

President Hecker said our police department is first rate and second to none, and the work done by Mr. Clark and Mr. Jones saves taxpayers' dollars allowing the Township to stretch those dollars to meet the needs of the community in a much larger way than we otherwise could. He applauded the professional staff who run this Township on a day-to-day basis.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-04-110923:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to adopt Resolution No. 23-016 authorizing the Township's application for a 2023 Local Share Account Grant in order to fund a project for the revitalization of sidewalk along a section of SR-611 (Old York Road).

Ms. Kim Hamm, Director of Community Development, explained that proposed is funding sidewalk revitalization on SR-611 – Old York Road through the local share account grant from the State's Department of Community & Economic Development in which funds are taken from gaming revenue. If successful, there is no Township match required. Map showed a two-mile stretch of sidewalk along with curbing and ramps proposed to be revitalized from Moreland Road to Susquehanna Road. A resolution from the Board of Commissioners is required to be included with the application.

Vice President Vahey asked for the total dollar amount of the grant.

Ms. Hamm replied \$996,225.00.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for the timeframe for execution of work.

Ms. Hamm replied that the deadline for application submission is November 30th and there is no firm deadline to receive notice on success of receiving the grant; however, we can expect to be notified in March or April 2024. If we are successful, paperwork should come in by September at which time the project will be sent out for RFP for design, and construction would begin in the spring of 2025 with completion by the end of that year.

Commissioner Carswell said while working from home since the pandemic, she has seen more local foot traffic, so making the area more walkable and safer would be wonderful.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Item FC-01-110923:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Carswell to approve the September 2023 expenditures in the amount of \$2,297,130.39 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$2,262,376.76 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 December 2023.

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

Item FC-02-110923:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to adopt the amendment to the 2022 CDBG Annual Action Plan and Resolution No. 23-017.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Adele Kubel, resident, thanked Mr. Jones and the Public Works Department as well as the landscapers for doing a great job. Also, she requested that commercial codes are enforced for sidewalk repair.

Joe Rooney, resident, commented that there are specific ordinances to address that.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the budget presentation.

Remington Daron, resident, offered his condolences to friends and family of the cyclist who was killed in Jenkintown, which could have been prevented if there was safe infrastructure in the area. Doylestown Borough implemented pop-up bike lanes, which are being tested to protect cyclists, and he asked for something to be implemented in Abington.

Manager Manfredi noted there will be an upcoming presentation regarding the Noble area.

Ross Able, resident, also offered his condolences to the family and friends of the cyclist who was killed. Also, he is happy to see the plan for revitalizing sidewalks on Old York Road where the pedestrian experience needs to be improved. He encouraged the Board of Commissioners to look into “Vision Zero” and the organization of “Strong Towns” as traffic calming measures on Rt-611 are needed as it serves those traveling to/from the city and through Abington.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary

The following ordinance and resolutions were adopted by the Board of Commissioners on November 9, 2023.

Ordinance No. 2209

Resolution No. 23-016

Resolution No. 23-017