

The stated meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, November 10, 2022, 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, VAUGHN (7:28 p.m.), THOMPSON, WINEGRAD, HENRY, ZAPPONE, SPIEGELMAN, BOLE, SCHREIBER, BOWMAN, VAHEY, HECKER
Excused: Commissioner CARSWELL

Also Present: Township Manager MANFREDI
Township Solicitor CLARKE

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:

President Hecker announced that public comment will be taken during the public hearing on the text and map amendments proposed by Toll Brothers as well as the motion to adopt FY Preliminary Budget for 2023 as listed under New Business on the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Adele Kubel, resident, thanked Commissioner Winegrad for taking time recently on a Saturday to speak with her about her concerns of “blighted properties,” and she hopes that discussion will lead to removal of trash and weeds on the Raymour and Flanagan property and their sidewalks are a safety hazard.

Lorraine Zwolak, 756 Kirkwood Avenue, said she lives immediately adjacent to the Toll Brothers property and objects to their project because it will result in a decrease in property value as well as cause an environmental impact. Also, “Toll Brothers already has 26 developments right around here and we do not need another one.” She asked for this zoning issue to be reconsidered as it will not bode well for the neighborhood.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the timing of receiving budget documents.

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

To approve the minutes from the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of October 13, 2022.

To approve the release of escrow #2 for LD-19-08, Galman Residential in the amount of \$199,237.50.

To approve the final escrow release for Abington-Jefferson Health Woodland Road Parking Garage in the amount of \$32,780.55.

To approve the release of escrow #2 for SD-20-02 for 1231 Susquehanna Road in the amount of \$144,746.00.

To authorize the Township Manager to execute an amendment to the Funding Agreement for the Township's 2018 Automated Red Light Enforcement Program (ARLE) grant as outlined in Resolution No. 22-027.

To adopt Traffic Safety Ordinance 2200 amending Chapter 156 – "Vehicles and Traffic," 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 – "Special Purpose Parking Zones" to add a "Stop" sign on Glen Road at Harte Road, "No Parking Here To Corner" on Miriam Avenue at Birchwood Avenue, "2-Hour Parking" on the north side of Tague Avenue between 2315 and 2327 and to add "Handicapped Parking" signs on Tulpehocken Avenue in front of 204 Tulpehocken and Tyson Avenue in front of 820 Tyson Avenue.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Bole asked his fellow Board members for their support on consent agenda Item f. regarding 2-Hour Parking on Tague Avenue as residents expressed concern about the parking, and although this is not a 100% cure all, it is a way to address it. Also, he thanked Traffic Safety Officer Freed for working with him for over two years on this matter.

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0. Commissioner Vaughn was not present at this time and Commissioner Carswell was absent.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item BOC-06-111022:

Public Hearing and consider Ordinance No. 2199 a Zoning Text Amendment to create the AR – Age-Restricted Carriage House Home Overlay District and a Zoning Map Amendment to rezone certain parcels on the northeast side of Fox Chase Road as AR-Age-Restricted Carriage Home Overlay.

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to open the public hearing.

MOTION was ADOPTED 13-0 – Public Hearing was opened at 7:22 p.m. Commissioner Vaughn was not present at this time and Commissioner Carswell was absent.

Solicitor Clarke said this is a public hearing to consider adopting Ordinance No. 2199, an ordinance amending Chapter 162 Zoning by adding a new Article XVII-A to establish an AR-Age-Restricted Carriage Home Overlay District by adding a new land use category identified as age-restricted carriage home dwelling unit and by adding a parking use requirement for age-restricted carriage home dwelling unit and to add age-restricted carriage home dwelling unit to the Comprehensive Use Matrix and by amending the Abington Township zoning map to establish an AR-Age-Restricted Carriage Home Overlay District.

A stenographer was present to transcribe the testimony of the public hearing.

Commissioner Vaughn entered the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Bole to close the public hearing.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0. Public Hearing was closed at 7:54 p.m.

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Bole to approve the zoning text and map amendments.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-07-111022:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido to adopt the Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget as the Proposed Fiscal Year 2023 Budget.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Winegrad commended Township staff for ensuring that residents will continue to receive essential services in a first-class manner from a budget resulting in a no tax increase in 2023. Also, there are personnel expenses paid through ARPA funds, and since that will not last forever, tough decisions will need to be made in the future. And regarding the Township's pension benefits, the Township allocates approximately \$4.5 million for the MMO (Minimum Municipal Obligation), which is extremely important to make sure it is fully funded as well as keep our Township on sound financial footing in meeting its obligations in the future.

Commissioner Rothman said in reviewing the budget regarding Alverthorpe Park, we may be able to get some of things done including trying to enhance and preserve green space, and although we do not have much control over property that is not Township-owned, this is an area where he recommends forward-thinking. He is happy with the budget and applauded everyone involved; however, we do need to keep an eye on expenses.

Commissioner Schreiber commented that she appreciates all the work that has gone into this budget, and we are fortunate that there will be no tax increase next year; however, we may not be in this position in the future.

Commissioner Spiegelman commented that everyone knows the budget process last year was unbelievably difficult that was reflective of the unprecedented challenges of the almost surreal times in which we live. The difficult decisions and sacrifice of every single taxpayer dealing with the tax increase is what got us here today, and although we will be faced with difficult decisions going forward, they can be made in a gentler way than what was necessary last year.

Commissioner Bole commented that Abington is known for its best service practices, and we cannot make normal the idea that we can sit here and not talk about raising taxes and expect services to Township residents from professionals to continue improving over the course of time. He thanked Township staff who have a service and professional mindset, and it takes investment to get them here, retain them and offer challenges and opportunities to grow. So going forward, he is committed to making the necessary investments in having the best people and all of that is done in the name of service.

President Hecker asked for any public comment.

Lorraine Zwolak, 756 Kirkwood Avenue, commented that the recycling program in Montgomery County is stellar, and although tax money goes into it, she applauds any recycling efforts.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the recycling process as well as the Township's website.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-08-111022:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to award the Abington Township Building HVAC upgrade to Clipper Pipe & Service, Inc., in the amount of \$1,371,000.00 and the electric upgrade supporting the HVAC upgrade to Electri-Tech Inc. in the amount of \$202,460.00 and authorize the Township Manager to execute the contract.

President Hecker called on Mr. Khal Hassan, Township Engineer.

Mr. Hassan said on October 27th, bids were opened for the HVAC and electrical, six for the HVAC and seven for the electrical work. References were checked and the Township has worked with both contractors previously who provided good bids. If these contracts are awarded, the next step would be to complete the contract documents and then set a pre-construction meeting at which time a specific schedule will be discussed; a notice-to-proceed date will be established as well as an emergency contact list for Township staff and the contractors.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Zappone asked when this project commences will the contractors provide a two-week look-ahead as well as hold progress meetings every two weeks?

Mr. Hassan replied yes, all specifics will be discussed during the pre-construction meeting. When the project begins, weekly meetings will be held, and as it moves further along, we will have meetings every two weeks making sure it is being done on schedule.

Commissioner Zappone questioned whether a project manager will be assigned.

Mr. Hassan replied yes, Robert Gould from his office will oversee both projects.

Commissioner Winegrad asked how long will the project take?

Mr. Hassan replied based on contract documents, the project is set for 180 days from start to finish, although there are supply issues so we will need to identify any potential lead time for placing orders for material.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-09-111022:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Bole to approve the settlement agreement between Comcast Cable Communications Management, LLC, and the Township of Abington.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item BOC-10-111022:

Manager Manfredi explained that there have been some questions regarding some of the provisions in this agenda item, so he requested that the Board take no action and move it to a future meeting.

Solicitor Clarke advised that since it is not being moved to a date-certain, the Board may consider taking no action and move on.

Item BOC-11-111022:

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido to review and approve the minor Land Development application LD-22-04 – 521 Moredon Road (Solar Panel Array).

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Receive Treasurer's Report:

Township Treasurer Jay W. Blumenthal reported that monies received from various departments deposited into Republic Bank in October 2022 totaled \$1,531,246 as compared to last year of \$2,159,037, representing a decrease of (\$627,791); YTD \$72,214,678. Real estate taxes collected in October 2022 totaled \$40,723; YTD \$32,482,509, and 98% has been collected with 2% remaining.

Item FC-01-111022:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the September 2022 expenditures in the amount of \$2,817,182.22 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$2,132,472.36, and authorize the proper officials to sign vouchers in payment of bills and contracts as they mature through the month of December 2022.

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

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

Item FC-02-111022:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to select Barbacane, Thornton & Company to act as Township's independent auditors for calendar years ending December 31, 2022, 2023 and 2024 and authorize the President and Township Manager to execute any appropriate agreements.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Lorraine Zwolak, 756 Kirkwood Avenue, said since the zoning amendment passed, what is the next step?

Commissioner Rothman replied when the applicant submits an application for the land development process, it will include reviews by the Township as well as active public engagement.

Solicitor Clarke added that the ordinance becomes effective five days after its approval.

Ms. Zwolak questioned whether a citizen can appeal the decision, and if so, where should it be filed?

Solicitor Clarke replied yes, with the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about “plans for another tax increase,” and about the Township’s website not having the meetings, minutes, and videos on one line for each meeting. Also, she feels the budget should be prepared like the one in 2017 that includes salaries of employees.

Manager Manfredi clarified that everyone should be mindful that not every year will be a year with no tax increase, and there are no plans at this time. Regarding the budget, it is more transparent and informative and goes beyond what was done in 2017, which is online for review.

Commissioner Zappone announced that the Edge Hill/Tyson project has been completed, and he thanked Solicitor Clarke for his help with the project running smoothly and getting it done.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary

The following resolution and ordinances were adopted by the Board of Commissioners on November 10, 2022:

Resolution No. 22-027

Ordinance No. 2199

Ordinance No. 2200