

The stated meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, November 14, 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, DiPLACIDO, BROWNE, WINEGRAD, HENRY, ZAPPONE, YOUNG-GERTZ, SPIEGELMAN, SCHREIBER, BOWMAN, VAHEY, HECKER
Excused: Commissioners ROTHMAN, LANEY-MARTIN, BOLE

Also Present: Assistant Township Manager Wehmeyer
Assistant Legal Counsel Gallagher

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:

President Hecker announced that the Board of Commissioners held an Executive Session on the evening of October 29th to discuss a personnel matter.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Adele Kubel, resident, expressed concern that her petition was not written into the minutes and she read it into the record. Also, she said, “Baseless vicious attacks against citizens happen here and they are meant to intimidate. Incite, divide and silence is the goal.”

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the speaking rules. Also, she was concerned about not being included in the process of looking for a new manager, so this item should be removed from the agenda and a special meeting should be held where it can be discussed with public input.

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 Special Budget Meeting of October 1, 2024 and the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of October 10, 2024.

To appoint Commissioner John Spiegelman to the Vacant Property Review Board.

To authorize advertisement of a Traffic Safety Ordinance amending Chapter 156 – “Vehicles and Traffic,” Article II – “Traffic Regulations,” Section 14 – “Stop Intersections” to add the following restrictions: Stop sign on Elk Street, southbound, at the intersection of Geneva Street; Stop sign on Washington Lane, northbound and southbound, at the intersection of Fairacres Road; and Section 25 – “Parking Prohibited During Certain Hours” to add the following restrictions: “No Parking M-F 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.” on Highland Avenue, east side, from 961 thru 1039 Highland Avenue.

Install a “Stop” sign as experimental on Pine Avenue eastbound and westbound at Maple Avenue.

To authorize advertisement of an ordinance amending the code of the Township of Abington at Part II [General Legislation], Chapter 162 [Zoning], by amending and restating Article XXI [Use Regulations] to revise the definition of Indoor Recreation.

To approve the escrow release for LD-22-04 – 521 Moredon Road (Solar Array Panel) in the amount of \$82,324.00 and deduct the Maintenance Security in the amount of \$8,951.25 for a total release of \$73,372.75.

To ratify the 2024 PECO Green Region Open Space Program application for EV Charging Stations at Manor College and adopt Resolution No. 24-036.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Browne referring to Item BOC-03-111424 – regarding the installation of an experimental “Stop” sign on Pine Avenue eastbound and westbound at Maple Avenue; requested that a speed study be done prior to the install of the experimental “Stop” sign as well as a post-install speed study, so we can obtain data and identify how traffic patterns have changed both pre- and post-installed sign.

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item BOC-07-111424:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to appoint Mr. Christopher Christman as the new Township Manager effective January 6, 2025, and approve the related Employment Agreement.

President Hecker thanked those Commissioners who participated in recent interviews, and he thanked Commissioners Browne and Henry for joining Commissioners Vahey, Scheiber and himself in vetting the initial round of candidates. We appreciate your time, energy and effort.

This evening, the Board of Commissioners will be approving an agreement for one year, and the reason for one year is that the First-Class Township Code requires syncing the Manager's agreement with the Board's reorganization meeting, and that will take place one year from now, and at that point, any employment contract will be for a duration of two-years. The starting base salary for this position is \$240,000.00.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

Mr. Christopher Christman thanked the Board of Commissioners for their confidence with this appointment and he is honored to be selected as the new Township Manager and looking forward to getting started in January.

He thanked his predecessor Mr. Manfredi for his years of dedicated service to this community, which have not gone unnoticed. Rich has done a great job of creating the bedrock and foundation of all the good things going on in Abington over the course of the past seven years, and he set the goal and standard by which other managers who come after him to continue that process. He looks forward to filling Rich Manfredi's shoes going forward in helping to advance the Board's goals and objectives.

Also, he looks forward to joining this outstanding staff and meeting the community as well as working with all the Board members in getting to know them and their wards and what their individual goals and objectives are as well as how it meshes with the community's goals.

He looks forward to continuing making Abington Township a great place to live, work and play. Thank you.

President Hecker thanked Mr. Christman on behalf of the Board Commissioners, and we are delighted that he will be joining us, and he looks forward to working together and be guided by his expertise and experience with the opportunities and challenges that are before us as a community.

Item BOC-08-111424:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve LD-24-03 by LifeCycle Abington, 1329 Old York Road – Preliminary/Final Major Subdivision and Land Development Plan and adopt Resolution No. 24-037.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

Item BOC-09-111424:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve change order request #1 for MECO Constructors, Inc. for the Inclusive Park and Playground and to supplementally appropriate \$9,791 for the change order and to also supplementally appropriate \$200,000 from available American Rescue Plan Act funds for the Inclusive Park and Playground project.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

Item BOC-10-111424:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve and appoint Melillo Consulting as the Township's Information Technology (IT) management services provider and to approve IT managed services for 24/7 monitoring and firewall upgrades for three years in the amount of \$83,048.29.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

Item BOC-11-111424:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to enter into a three-year beneficiary agreement with Second Alarmer's Association and Rescue Squad for the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the amount of \$681,873 over FY 2024, FY 2025 and FY 2026.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

Item BOC-12-111424:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to adopt Resolution No. 24-038 for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSLFRF) allocation of majority of available funds to salary expenditures for January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2026, utilizing standard allowance in the Revenue Replacement Category.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

Item BOC-13-111424:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to adopt Resolution No. 24-039 for the approval of memorandums of agreements (MOA) for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSLFRF).

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Vice President Vahey said this includes a series of votes that will commit and obligate the remainder of ARPA funds, and he cannot tell you how excited he is to serve on a Board that prioritizes our parks and recreation in which the vast majority of these funds are going to support. We will be remediating decades of underinvestment in our parks and make them a bright shining star in our region. He is proud to serve with all his fellow Board members who share in this priority in getting this work done. Thank you.

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Item FC-01-111424:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the September 2024 expenditures in the amount of \$3,739,401.12 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$2,361,231.70 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 2024.

Roll call resulted in motion being passed 12-0. Commissioners Rothman, Laney-Martin and Bole were absent during roll call.

Item FC-02-111424:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Vice President Vahey to continue with United Healthcare as the retiree medical plan provider effective January 1, 2025.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 12-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Karin McGarry-Rosen, EAC Chair, noted that Commissioner DiPlacido pointed out that there was an incorrect value presented on a graph last month related to businesses who would support an ordinance prohibiting the business from providing single-use plastic bags to customers. The correct percentages are: 63% in favor, 19% ambivalent, 18% opposed. We revised the graph prior to posting it on our website.

Adele Kubel, resident, commented that for over four years, she has worked on getting dumpster lids closed on less than a three-mile stretch of Old York Road. She was concerned about not holding businesses accountable for open dumpsters; yards of broken sidewalks and curbing on Old York Road; and the new WAWA spreads trash into the creek impacting drinking water.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the public process of hiring a new manager. Also, 1209 Rydal Road and the Taco Bell applications should not have been presented on any agenda because it didn't meet the MPC rules, and "the Zoning Officer should have written a note that it does not meet the law."

Ross Abel, resident and member of Jenkintown-Abington Neighbors Association, congratulated our new Township Manager, and he looks forward to working with him as a resident as well as our organization.

Also, he commended the Township, Commissioner Stuart Winegrad, and staff from Township Engineering and Public Works for the great work on the Abington-Jenkintown Connections Project. We use and enjoy the new sidewalks and paths daily, and he and his neighbors would love to partner with the Township in being more proactive in making the remaining corridor safer and usable for our families.

He encouraged the Township to consider a multi-municipal study of Rt. 611 as there have been many crashes resulting in deaths, which is not just a problem for our Township but also for Jenkintown and Cheltenham. He would like the Township to partner with Montco to conduct a study on traffic calming on Rt. 611 to make it a corridor that unites both sides of the street as a usable space, not just for vehicles.

Mr. Tom McAneney, Director of Fire & Emergency Management Services, said in response to the previous speakers' continued smears against our Zoning Officer who works in his department; while he appreciates her vigor in trying to defend the zoning of the Township, her attacks are completely misguided and show a fundamental misunderstanding of the procedure for presenting applications to the Zoning Hearing Board.

The Zoning Officer's job in that process is merely to process the applications and the Zoning Hearing Board is the finder of fact in the case, and they are there to hear the case and determine whether there is a hardship or need for a variance. The continued attacks against our Zoning Officer are offensive to him, his department and to Mr. Vanhorn and are completely misguided.

President Hecker announced that the applicant has withdrawn their application for a Taco Bell on Old York Road, and they will not appear before the Zoning Hearing Board.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary

The following resolutions were adopted by the Board of Commissioners on November 14, 2024:

Resolution No. 24-036

Resolution No. 24-037

Resolution No. 24-038

Resolution No. 24-039