

The stated meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, December 12, 2024 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, LANEY-MARTIN, BROWNE, WINEGRAD, HENRY, ZAPPONE, YOUNG-GERTZ, SPIEGELMAN, BOLE, SCHREIBER, BOWMAN, VAHEY, HECKER

Also Present: Township Manager Manfredi
Township Solicitor Clarke

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Adele Kubel, resident, expressed concern that her petition was not detailed in the minutes in which she read it into the record. Also, she was concerned about businesses with open dumpsters that attract rats, and citizens have signed petitions asking for commercial code enforcement.

Jo Blumenthal, resident, thanked all the Commissioners for their volunteer work. She spoke in support of voting for an accountant for the position of Tax Collector as everyone wants the best for our Township. The position of Tax Collector is best served by an accountant as they have the education and expertise to collect the monies that are rightfully due to the Township to meet its budget. The vote should be for an accountant to serve as Tax Collector done without fear or favor in the best interest of our Township. Thank you for your time and service.

Tom Vallerias, resident, said as candidate for Township Tax Collector, he is deeply honored and humbled to be recommended by Jay Blumenthal, a public servant who has selflessly served the residents of Abington for the past 20 years.

He thanked the Board of Commissioners for taking time to get to know him and have an open dialog. He hopes he has demonstrated that he has the important skills and qualities needed to perform the job of Tax Collector. If he is appointed to the position, he will work tirelessly for the residents of the Township. Thank you for your consideration.

Lora Lehmann, resident, commented that all positions in this Township should be given to someone with experience and background that measures up to the job they will be undertaking. She expressed concern about the agenda item regarding Indoor Recreation and who it will affect, and residents should be notified about it. Also, the finance items should not be approved until she receives answers to her questions.

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

To approve the minutes from the Board of Commissioners Special Budget Meeting of November 7, 2024 and the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of November 14, 2024.

To approve the cable franchise agreement between the Township of Abington and Verizon Pennsylvania, LLC.

To adopt Traffic Safety Ordinance No. 2221 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.

To adopt Ordinance No. 2222 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 authorize advertisement of an ordinance amending the Code of the Township of Abington to repeal Chapter 127 – “Recycling.”

To authorize advertisement of an ordinance amending Chapter 92 – “Garbage, Storage and Refuse,” Article VII – “Separation, Storage, and Collection of Recyclable Materials,” at Section 92-40 – “Definitions,” Section 92-41 “Residential Separation and Preparation Requirements,” Section 92-42 – “Collection from Residence,” and Section 92-44 – “Multifamily, Commercial, Retail and Institutional Requirements.”

To approve, as advertised and approved by the Montgomery County Consortium, Wilson of Wallingford as the Township’s heating oil provider at the cost of \$3.995 per gallon and authorize the Township Manager to execute the contract.

To appoint Keiser Giordano CPAs, PC as the accounting firm to perform Financial Audits of the five (5) ATFD Fire Companies and prepare the corresponding Financial Statements and Tax Returns for FY2024, FY2025, and FY 2026.

To appoint Professional Health Services, Inc. (PHS) as the vendor to provide annual NFPA 1582 compliant physicals and stress testing for the members of the Abington Township Fire Department for FY 2025, FY 2026, and FY 2027.

To approve an extension of term for Salem Baptist Church PY 2021 CDBG Subrecipient Agreement.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

President Hecker acknowledged Tax Collector Jay Blumenthal who was present this evening, and on behalf of the Board of Commissioners, he thanked Jay on his outstanding career and for a job incredibly well-done. We have come to rely upon his expertise over the years as the Township's tax collection rates are enviable across the county as well as Southeastern Pennsylvania, and we appreciate his service and dedication and wish him well in the next chapter of his life. Thank you.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item BOC-10-121224:

President Hecker called for nominations for appointment of Tax Collector.

Commissioner Spiegelman said the fact that we had a legitimate embarrassment of amazing riches when it came to the applicants for this position is a testament to having a wonderful municipality, but especially a testament to the stewardship and incredible hard work and truly compassionate attitude of Jay Blumenthal in these past decades. He has immense respect for Jay and his gratitude to him will never wane. And he thanked the applicants who applied for this position.

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Brodsky to appoint Ms. Karen Sanchez to fill the unexpired term of Tax Collector effective January 1, 2025.

President Hecker asked for any other nominations. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Item BOC-11-121224:

President Hecker called for nominations for appointment of Treasurer.

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Brodsky to appoint Ms. Karen Sanchez to serve as Treasurer effective January 1, 2025.

President Hecker asked for any other nominations. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Item BOC-12-121224:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to hire the next four (4) qualified candidates from the 2024 Civil Service Eligibility List.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Item FC-01-121224:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to adopt Resolution No. 24-040 for the proposed CDBG-CV amendments as part of the PY2019 CDBG Annual Action Plan.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Item FC-02-121224:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Brodsky to authorize the Budget Transfers and supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year 2024.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Item FC-03-121224:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Brodsky to adopt Resolution No. 24-041 authorizing the disposition of certain Finance Office records as set forth in Exhibit "A."

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Item FC-04-121224:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Bole to approve the October 2024 expenditures in the amount of \$4,117,102.91 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$2,295,356.41 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 January 2025.

Roll call resulted in motion being passed 15-0.

Item FC-05-121224:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Brodsky to approve change orders from Brubacher Excavating, Inc. for the Abington Jenkintown Connections Project in the amount of \$137,940.70.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

PENSION COMMITTEE:

Item PC-01-121224:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to adopt Resolution No. 24-042 setting the Police Pension contribution rate for 2025 at five percent (5%) of compensation.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Adele Kubel, resident, expressed concern about rats from opened dumpsters of businesses and when will their dumpster lids be closed?

Jackie Pickering, resident, 1515 The Fairway, commented that regarding consideration of banning single-use plastics; every single day in the U.S. 500 million plastic straws go into the landfill and grocery plastic bags are recycled less than 9%.

The single use plastics are among the key items that breakdown into microplastics, and nano plastics key into soil, groundwater and the food we eat. There are multitude of studies that show microplastics cause incredible health problems and there is a study showing that we swallow or breathe a credit card's worth of plastics every week. Also, studies have shown that 50% of the plastics that go into landfills are single-use plastics.

Twelve states and hundreds of towns and townships have banned single-use plastics, and our children deserve the minimal effort it takes to have a beverage without a straw or take a reusable bag to the grocery store. We need to take a proactive approach to eliminate them from our environment.

Jeff Frazier, resident, 2445 Mt. Carmel Avenue, expressed concern about Abington Township lacking an outdoor lighting ordinance for residential. He knows Abington has an ordinance for commercial properties and there are state laws for light trespass mainly for governmental buildings, but not for residential neighborhoods. He will be happy to put his concerns in writing.

President Hecker replied we look forward to discussing the matter further and will connect with State Representative Sanchez about the work being done there.

Ms. Vivien, resident of Willow Grove, expressed concern about overdevelopment in our town such as multiple duplexes, rental and high-rise apartments; also, smoke shops and fried chicken shops are everywhere. Six smoke shops are located less than one mile from the school. She takes her kids to New Hope where they enjoy local Mom and Pop shops, dining and scenery, so why can't we have that here rather than lining our streets with fried chicken, smoke shops and gas stations all over Easton Road. We are overbuilt and our children deserve fresh air and space that should not be sold out to developers to build upon.

Her son does not want to go to school because kids are vaping and fighting in the bathrooms that are filled with trash. We want to build new schools, yet we are allowing businesses and high rises here. She is raising four children and wants them to enjoy everything Abington has to offer. She was also concerned about increased traffic and building on a floodplain resulting in flooding.

President Hecker replied we will follow up on the resident's concerns. And, at last month's working session, an ordinance was discussed relating to vape shops in the Township, and we will bring it forward for further discussion in the new calendar year. Also, the Township has no control over private real estate transactions.

President Hecker recessed the meeting at 7:38 p.m. until 7:40 p.m.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about feeding plastics to our children and plastics are in every single part of the ocean, so banning them isn't enough. And she was concerned about the problems at the Colonade, and the floodplain issue in the Township.

Ms. Evette, resident, commented that she speaks from a place of peace, love, community and protection, although right now as an Abington resident, she does not feel protected. She was informed that because she lives on a floodplain there is not much she can do, because when someone purchases a lot, they have the right to build whatever they want, which does not make her feel protected and safe.

Please listen to what is being said and remember that we are human beings with a voice and what we say matters, so please take into consideration what the residents are asking and put yourselves in our place.

President Hecker replied we will follow up with the resident's specific concerns.

President Hecker said tonight marks the end of an era as it is Manager Manfredi's final Township Board meeting as Township Manager after seven-plus years of incredible service to this community.

State Representative Ben Sanchez presented a Citation on behalf of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to Mr. Richard J. Manfredi congratulating him on his well-deserved retirement recognizing his exemplary record of service in keeping with the highest ideals and traditions of this Commonwealth and offered Best Wishes for a happy and fulfilling future presented on this 12th day of December 2024.

Chief Molloy and Deputy Chief Porter along with members of their Command staff expressed their sincere gratitude to Mr. Richard Manfredi on his work ethic especially during the difficult challenges in 2020, but most of all, Rich always stood by us along with our elected officials to help us during the challenging times with contracts, etc. They presented a plaque to Mr. Richard J. Manfredi in appreciation of his loyal dedicated service to the residents of Abington Township as well as from all the men and women of the Abington Township Police Department from May 2017 to January 2025 presented on this 12th day of December 2024.

President Hecker, Vice President Vahey, Commissioner Spiegelman and Commissioner Schreiber on behalf of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington presented Mr. Richard J. Manfredi with a Proclamation in recognition and celebration of his seven and half years of service to Abington Township as our Manager, during which our community faced profound and unprecedented challenges, locally, nationally and globally, and the Abington Township Board of Commissioners offers our heartfelt appreciation to our Manager and friend, Richard J. Manfredi, whose professionalism, steadiness, focus of leadership, vision, integrity, and good nature has helped Abington Township achieve new pinnacles of financial stability, strategic governance, communications, operational efficiency, transparency, and forward looking planning and investment that will continue to transform and enhance our community.

Therefore, it is herewith that the Board of Commissioners acknowledges his excellent public service with gratitude and thanks on this 12th day of December 2024. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary

The following ordinances and resolutions were adopted by the Board of Commissioners on December 12, 2024:

Ordinance No. 2221

Ordinance No. 2222

Resolution No. 24-040

Resolution No. 24-041

Resolution No. 24-042