

MINUTES

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

LOWER ALLEN TOWNSHIP

REGULAR MEETING

October 23, 2023

The following were in ATTENDANCE:

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TOWNSHIP PERSONNEL

Dean W. Villone, President

Thomas G. Vernau, Township Manager

H. Edward Black, Vice President

Steven P. Miner, Township Solicitor

Joshua Nagy

Rebecca Davis, Public Works Director

Jennifer Caron

David Holl, Public Safety Director

Charles Brown

Richard A. Grove, Finance Director

Nate Sterling, Administrative Secretary

Renee' Greenawalt, Recording Secretary

President Villone called the October 23, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners to order at 6:00 PM. He announced that Proof of Publication for the meeting was available for review. This was followed by a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEETING MINUTES: President Villone requested a motion to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2023 Regular Meeting. Commissioner **BROWN** made the motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner **NAGY** seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

PRESENTATION – West Shore Recreation Commission

Mr. John Minito, Executive Director of the West Shore Recreation Commission addressed the Board of Commissioners and expressed his gratitude for their continued support of the programs and activities offered by the organization. He noted the need to increase service rates for the upcoming year to offset the inflationary costs incurred by the organization.

Mr. Minito also specifically thanked Vice President Black for his long history of involvement and support of the West Shore Recreation Commission.

Vice President Black said that Lower Allen Township was very fortunate to have the benefit of the programs and services offered through the West Shore Recreation and noted how proud he was to have been a part of it.

PRESENTATION – Mechanicsburg Area Meals on Wheels

Mr. Dave Shiner provided some updates about the program, noting that in the prior year they had delivered 24,000 meal packages that were provided to homebound, elderly, and infirm individuals. The program is operated by one paid staff person and the rest are volunteers. The facility serves 160 clients, 23 of whom are residents of Lower Allen Township. He asked that Lower Allen Township consider supporting the program in the upcoming year.

President Villone noted that the Township had committed to a donation of \$500 for 2023 and he expressed continued support for 2024.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: Any item on the agenda.

President Villone advised the audience that if there were any item on that evening's agenda that they wish to comment on, to please indicate as such.

Mr. James Bew and Ms. Jessica Miller both indicated their intent to comment on Agenda Item #9 – Any Business Pertinent to the Township.

CONSENT AGENDA:

President Villone stated that any Commissioner, staff member, or anyone in attendance who would like to have an item on the Consent Agenda removed for further discussion, they could do so at that time. There were none.

Items on the Consent Agenda:

- a. Department Reports for the month of September for Community Development, Fleet Maintenance, Facility Maintenance, Public Works, and Public Safety.
- b. Tax Collectors Monthly Reports for March through September 2023.
- c. Check Register of October 7, 2023 in the amount of \$729,860.53.

PRESIDENT VILLONE:

Cumberland County Tax Bureau

President Villone presented an informational item. He noted that he and Manager Vernau serve as liaisons to the Cumberland County Tax Bureau. The taxing authority had discovered and identified some errors in the way tax collections were coded for several years, resulting in funds being paid to the Township that should have gone to the school district. Efforts are underway to rectify the issue. The total amount of money involved is between \$9,000-\$10,000. When additional information becomes available, it will be shared with the Board of Commissioners for potential action.

ANY BUSINESS PERTINENT TO THE TOWNSHIP:

President Villone noted that if anyone wished to speak at that time, there would be 10 minutes allotted per person to speak at the podium.

Mr. James Bew, resident at 1329 Sagamore Court, inquired about the recent changes to the refuse contract. He noted that while he applauded the effort to reduce waste and focus on environmental stewardship, the minimal difference in the cost between the 35- and 96-gallon totes offered little to no incentive for residents to select the smaller totes. He asked for additional information on the rationale for making the change. He also asked if there was any ability to negotiate the cost of the contract with Penn Waste.

President Villone thanked Mr. Bew for addressing the issue. He noted that there are few options for municipalities to choose from in the refuse marketplace. He also explained that the companies are transitioning to more fully automated vehicles and less staff, so that most of the cost is driven by the labor and fuel expenses. The landfill portion of the bill has not increased as much, which explains the small discrepancy between the regular and low flow tote options.

Mr. Vernau also noted that services were added to the new contract including additional roll off dumpsters around the Township for cardboard drop-off and additional special recycling events.

Ms. Jessica Miller, Director of the Frederickson Library provided an update. She thanked the Board for appointing Mr. Joe Swartz to the Library Board, noting he had been a very active participant. She reported that so far this year, 30,000 items had been checked out of the library by Lower Allen Township residents. She offered her congratulations on the recent grant for the pollinator garden and noted appreciation for the partnership between the Township and the library. She also announced a new English as a Second Language (ESL) Conversation Program to be held at the library on Monday nights from 7-8 PM.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Proposed Ordinance 2023-06

Director Holl introduced for discussion the proposed Draft Ordinance 2023-06 – Establishment of the Department of Public Safety Division of Fire Rescue Services. The major components of the presentation reviewed the purpose and goals of the Ordinance, the chain of command key advantages, passage process of the Ordinance, transition and implementation timeline, Township Fire Chief Appointment, District Chiefs Appointment, and a proposed Organizational Chart.

The purpose of the Ordinance is to establish a definitive Chain of Command authority for fire services in the Township under the direction and management of the Department of Public Safety. Goals include aligning three organizations for administrative and operational direction to optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of the fire service, to enhance and promote a collaborative environment that serves the needs of the organization and the community, and to develop and achieve a culture of cooperation that results in a professional fire service that serves the Lower Allen Township objective of "Community First".

Director Holl noted a goal to gain approval to advertise the draft Ordinance in November and approval to enact it in December. He also said that the draft Ordinance had evolved over the past twelve months through the work of the

transition work group, and that some items had been removed and instead placed into a policy manual. He also reported that the transition plan included the appointment of an Interim Fire Chief and Interim Volunteer Deputy Chiefs to serve until the Board approves a candidate for hiring in 2024. The powers and responsibilities of the Fire Chief, a position which is budgeted to begin June 1, 2024, and who will report to the Public Safety Director, are established in the proposed Ordinance.

Commissioner Brown thanked the members of the transition work group for their efforts and noted the ability to make changes to the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs), if necessary, as they are not part of the draft Ordinance. Director Holl confirmed that the SOG's are based on best practices. Commissioner Brown expressed his preference for a tiered process and to have the organizations continue as is until a new Fire Chief is hired and to allow the new Fire Chief the latitude to establish the SOGs, rather than appointing an Interim Chief. Director Holl noted that the proposal to appoint an Interim Chief was for the purpose of an effective chain of command and would allow for implementation of the Ordinance and stabilize operations going forward. Manager Vernau noted that an Interim Chief would put some of the details of the SOGs into place and have the authority to do so. Without that, they can operate business as usual but without a proper chain of command.

Commissioner Nagy commented on the voluminous amount of policy involved and asked for an explanation of how proposed policies are implemented into practice. Director Holl explained that there is a document management system that is used to disseminate the information and includes training and education. He said that transitional command personnel would be trained and empowered to train others.

President Villone thanked everyone involved with the initiative and noted the importance of getting the implementation right. He asked Director Holl about the need to tailor some of the policy changes to be specific to the programs offered in the Township. He also noted the need for some clarification on the oversight responsibilities for the Board of Commissioners. Director Holl agreed that there are policies that could be better defined and clarified.

Commissioner Brown reiterated his opinion that since the job description of the Fire Chief is to develop the SOGs, having those already done and in place could limit the effectiveness of and opportunity to gain the best candidate.

Commissioner Nagy noted the impact of changing the implementation on the timeline as outlined in the presentation. Director Holl noted that getting a structure into place was necessary and that having an Interim Chief in place would be helpful to the process. Commissioner Caron noted agreement with Commissioner Brown in the added value of having the new Fire Chief be responsible for developing the SOGs. Director Holl said that without an Interim Chief, the implementation would work through him for review with internal safeguards established for policy development and issuance. He noted that there would be many policies in need of future development, but that operational policies would be prioritized for issuance prior to the hiring of a Fire Chief. He also clarified that an initial set of SOGs would accompany the Ordinance for consideration by the Board of Commissioners, with the understanding that they could be adjusted to suit operational needs in the future.

Vice President Black asked firefighters to weigh in on the issue. Lisburn's Fire Chief, Greg Black noted his participation in the transition work group and offered himself as a resource to answer questions. He reported the importance of acknowledging some of the questions and concerns raised and providing a forum to members of the fire companies to offer explanations. He also noted that he would like to see the hiring process begin as soon as possible and acknowledged the need for additional collaboration between the fire companies.

President Villone noted that the draft Ordinance specifies that a candidate be hired after its enactment. Mr. Vernau clarified that advertising the position differs from hiring the position and that the process could take some time. The Ordinance does not need to be enacted to begin the process of advertising and recruitment for the position, which is budgeted to begin June 1, 2024. Mr. Vernau also cautioned that hiring prior to that date would have a budgetary impact.

Ms. Megan Rokowski, Vice President of Lower Allen Fire Company, expressed the desire to hold off on appointing any Interim Chief until after the upcoming fire company elections are completed to allow for the elected Fire Chiefs of each company to work with Director Holl to guide the direction of the Ordinance and building the structure of the volunteer side.

Commissioner Nagy suggested that the Board provide their guidance to Director Holl on the direction of what should be done about a Fire Chief, even if they're in agreement about the draft Ordinance. He also noted the need to work out the policy and daily operational issues prior to passing the Ordinance. Commissioner Caron agreed.

Commissioner Brown again stated that the new Fire Chief should be the individual charged with implementing most of the new policies, adding that the first ninety days are critical from a leadership perspective. Director Holl noted that the Fire Chief would still go through the structure of oversight approvals through the Director of Public Safety.

Mr. Brian Ariano, Assistant Fire Chief for Lower Allen acknowledged that most of the concerns he was aware of related to the way the Ordinance would be enacted and the transition times, noting the importance of setting the right precedent and tone from the beginning to ensure its success.

President Villone noted existing inaccuracies within the SOGs that need to be addressed. He said he had not heard much resistance to the proposed Ordinance itself. He echoed Commissioner Nagy's comments about needing more clarity on operational steps before taking any action.

Commissioner Caron asked for an opportunity to review the draft Ordinance, along with additional information provided to facilitate the arrival of a consensus regarding the appointment or not of an Interim Fire Chief or full time Fire Chief. She noted that an overall recommendation on that issue would be helpful before taking any additional action on the Ordinance. She also noted the need to ensure that any remaining issues about the SOGs are resolved prior to then.

Commissioner Nagy also said the planned objectives should include specific directions about a timeline for implementation.

President Villone summarized the discussion and clarified that the direction to staff was to develop recommendations for consideration by the Board:

1. Vet the Ordinance to ensure that it is ready for advertisement,
2. Decide on Interim versus permanent hiring of Fire Chief,
3. Ensure consensus on the SOGs,
4. Ensure consensus on the timeline and date of implementation.

Hearing no further discussion, President Villone requested a motion to table the discussion and possible action to advertise Ordinance 2023-06 until the next regular board meeting.

Commissioner **NAGY** made the motion, seconded by Commissioner **BROWN**. The motion passed 5-0.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Next Generation 911 System

Director Holl provided an update on the recent meeting held with residents to discuss the program and the relevant impacts. He noted that representatives from Cumberland County were in attendance to explain details of the program which permits identification of the location of a call coming into the emergency center. The technology identifies the location based on longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates. The statewide system eliminates inconsistencies and conflicting addresses that present challenges to emergency response teams. Director Holl noted that overall, there was positive feedback from residents in understanding the goal of effective and efficient emergency services.

President Villone expressed some concern that many residents who will be affected may not yet be aware of the changes which will go into effect in January 2024. Residents will be required to place visible, updated numbering at their location.

Ordinance updating Chapter 73 Buildings, Numbering of

Director Holl explained that the proposed update to the ordinance would implement standardized numbering and would implement practices for establishing addressing standards.

Commissioner **NAGY** offered a motion to authorize staff to prepare an ordinance updating Chapter 73 Buildings, Numbering of. Commissioner **CARON** seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Road signs and house numbers

Director Holl also explained that staff were requesting authorization to use Township funds for the creation and installation of private road name signs and the purchase of house number stickers for those residents affected by the change. The public works department would create and post the new street signs. Director Davis said there would be sixteen signs involved.

Commissioner **NAGY** offered a motion to authorize staff to use Township funds for the creation and installation of private road name signs and for purchase of house number stickers related to the address changes of the NextGen 911 program. Commissioner **BROWN** seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

FINANCE

Fund Budgets for Streetlights, Sanitation, and Highway Aid funds.

Director Grove reviewed the highlights for each of the fund budgets.

Streetlights: Director Grove noted that due to increased rates, the interest revenue had gone up and that there would be no change to the streetlight assessments.

Sanitation: Director Grove noted some additional funding for increases in public communications and education as well as training for Environmental Coordinator, Barbara Arnold.

President Villone observed the growth in the projected surplus. Director Grove explained it was due to increased interest revenue which remains in the fund and is used for program related items to provide services to residents.

Highway Aid: Director Grove explained that repaving is performed every other year. 2024 is an off year so there is a surplus noted. As a normal course of action, this accounts for repaving every other year. 2024 is an off year so if you see deficit in 2023 and surplus in 2024 and that is normal. No project next year. Becky added some increases in engineering and professional costs to prepare bids for traffic signal improvements in Carlisle Rd and Center street and bid project for construction. Also warrant analysis for Wesley Drive.

In response to a question about the Liquid Fuels tax, Director Grove noted that it had trended down for several years.

Fire Capital: Director Grove noted the fund was separated from the Fire Operating budget two years prior due to the long-term capital plan for equipment. He said the fund was healthy through 2035 if nothing else is added and accounts for the recommendations in the apparatus study.

Capital Improvement Fund: This is used to pay for special outlays of funds. This year there was a discussion about drawing on the fund to pay for paving in Allendale and Highland Estates.

Commissioners engaged in some discussion about the challenges facing future funding for paving. The issue will be revisited during strategic planning. Mr. Vernau clarified that the Board would prioritize initiatives through strategic planning and staff will develop the financing plan to meet those objectives. Director Davis also indicated that she could present data and estimated costs on paving needs for the Township.

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS

President Villone noted that members would adjourn to Executive Session following Commissioners Reports to discuss 2024 cost of living pay increases and receive a legal update. He said no action would be taken.

Director Davis presented the Board with the recently awarded Water Environment Federation's MS4 Phase II Innovation Award.

Commissioner Caron expressed her pride in the Township's efforts to work together to evolve and stay current in delivery of services to residents.

Commissioner Nagy thanked everyone involved with the fire services transition and specifically acknowledged the feedback and input from the volunteers.

Commissioner Brown announced that Trick or Treat was scheduled for Thursday, October 26, 2023 from 6-8 PM. He also shared congratulations to the West Shore Marching Band on their win at the State Championships. Next, he thanked staff for their thorough preparation of department reports, and he thanked the firefighters for their ongoing courage and bravery.

Vice President Black echoed all the sentiments shared by other Commissioners.

President Villone also expressed sentiments of thanks to the fire service, both the firefighters and the members of the auxiliaries in their work to raise funds and offset taxpayer dollars. He announced that Lisburn Fire Company was holding their second annual Community Day on Saturday, October 28, 2023 from 10 AM to 4 PM. He also thanked staff for their work in keeping the Board informed and providing quick responses to inquiries.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 PM.