

MINUTES

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

LOWER ALLEN TOWNSHIP

REGULAR MEETING

December 9, 2024

The following were in ATTENDANCE:

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Dean W. Villone, President
Jennifer Caron, Vice President
Joshua Nagy
Charles Brown
Joseph Swartz

TOWNSHIP PERSONNEL

Thomas G. Vernau, Township Manager
Rebecca L. Davis, Assistant Township Manager
Steven P. Miner, Township Solicitor
David Holl, Public Safety Director
Alycia Knoll, Finance Director
Isaac Sweeney, PE, CED Director
Benjamin Powell, PE, Public Works Director
Nate Sterling, Administrative Secretary
Mary Ellen Banks, Recording Secretary

President Villone called the December 9, 2024 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 prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEETING MINUTES

President Villone requested a motion to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2024 Regular Meeting. Commissioner **BROWN** moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner **SWARTZ** seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

President Villone requested a motion to approve the minutes of the November 25, 2024 Regular Meeting. Commissioner **BROWN** moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner **SWARTZ** seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

PRESENTATION: Lower Allen Township Tax Collector – Bonnie Miller.

Mrs. Miller read a letter explaining that she was retiring at the end of her term (2025). This letter was given in writing to the Commissioners. After reading this, she stated that she was really advocating for the next person to be elected Tax Collector. She stated she knew how much time was involved in the job and is worth way more than what she has been paid. President Villone then opened this up for questions from the Commissioners.

- President Villone asked Mrs. Miller about the list of fees she provided of other Tax Collectors in the area and how her “fees” would not cost the Township anything.
 - Mrs. Miller explained the fees all come from settlement companies when you purchase or re-finance a home, and these fees have been increased in the surrounding municipalities per the spreadsheet. She explained that New Cumberland tax collector provides them with one year of data; and Mrs. Miller provides requestors with three years of data. Technically, it doesn’t cost the Township any money; however, she must pay income tax on this money. She went on to explain the fees and gave her suggestion for increasing the Tax Certificate fee to \$25.00; the Duplicate Bill Fee to \$5.00; and stated the Township fee for NSF checks is presently set at \$30.00.
- President Villone wanted to clarify the Tax Collector’s salary must be set prior to February 15th of the election year. Solicitor Miner confirmed the February 15th date is correct and it is the Board’s decision to increase or decrease the salary for the next term. President Villone also asked Mrs. Miller to clarify that the School District’s and County’s arrangement with her are separate to which she concurred.
- Commissioner Nagy asked Mrs. Miller how many hours she spends on the Lower Allen Township property taxes.
 - She stated she spends more time in March and April, and she can probably process 100 bills in an hour.

- President Villone asked about the Tax Collector's office located in the MSC and asked what Mrs. Miller thought the value of having an office here is for the residents.
 - Mrs. Miller stated it did make it more convenient prior to her health problems over the last three years.
 - Solicitor Miner explained if the municipality does not provide an office, the Tax Collector works out of their home. This creates a problem with security issues. Mrs. Miller stated she still has people who pay by cash but these funds are deposited immediately.
- Manager Vernau clarified that when you read through Mrs. Miller's letter it states when the law changed to separate the Treasurer and the Tax Collector is when the Tax Collector's salary was reduced by \$2,500. Manager Vernau stated this is not the case; by ordinance, it was specified the Tax Collector was paid \$7,500 for Real Estate, \$2,500 for Per Capita Tax, and \$500 for the Occupation Tax. This reduction of \$2,500 in salary occurred when the Township removed the Per Capita Tax. He also clarified that not everyone that lives in a neighborhood that has a streetlight receives a streetlight assessment; only those that are within 300 feet of a streetlight are assessed.

President Villone thanked Mrs. Miller for coming in and for providing her service.

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 wished to comment on, to please indicate as such. There were none.

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 could do so at that time. There were none.

Items on the Consent Agenda:

- a. Check Register of November 29, 2024, in the amount of \$185,616.21.
- b. Check Register of December 6, 2024, in the amount of \$658,435.36.
- c. Payment of Estimate No.5/FINAL to Kinsley Construction, LLC for labor for the 2024 Paving and Infrastructure Project in the amount of \$31,340.00.
- d. Authorization to enter into a Traffic Signal Easement Agreement with Steven K. and Kari A. Pincin, property owners of 1 Commercial Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011, including a payment of \$3,000.00 from the Township for the easement.
- e. Advertising of the 2025 Meeting Schedule for Boards, Commissions, and Authorities.

Commissioner **NAGY** moved to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. Vice President **CARON** seconded. With no further discussion the consent agenda was approved by a vote of 5-0.

PRESIDENT

President Villone introduced agenda item 7a., accepting the retirement of Manager Thomas G. Vernau, Jr., Township Manager; however, this was already done in a prior meeting, July 8th, 2024 so this vote did not need to occur.

President **VILLONE** made a motion to adopt **RESOLUTION 2024-R-41**, recognizing, commending and honoring Thomas G. Vernau, Jr., Township Manager, for his 37 years of Service. Vice President **CARON** seconded the motion.

President Villone invited former Commissioners Black and Schin to say a few words along with Representative Sheryl Delozier.

Former Commissioner Ed Black:

- Former Commissioner Ed Black congratulated Manager Vernau on his retirement and stated he was very proud of

him. He stated “We truly are a Township of the First Class and you deserve a lot of that appreciation, Tom, so I thank you very much.”

Former Commissioner Schin:

- Former Commissioner Rick Schin congratulated Manager Vernau on his retirement and wished him all good things.

Representative Sheryl Delozier:

- Representative Delozier congratulated Manager Vernau on thirty-seven years and presented him with an official citation as well. She appreciated the ability to say thank you and to read his name into the State record as an employee, that he did his very, very best for an emerging Township that has grown and developed into one of the best in Central Pennsylvania. She thanked him for all his work in doing that, and for having his hand in making that happen.

President Villone:

- President Villone congratulated Manager Vernau and reviewed his accomplishments through the years at Lower Allen Township.
- He finished up with the following statement, “As Commissioners, working doesn’t end with you and for that we are grateful.”

Vice President Caron:

- Vice President Caron congratulated Tom, thanked him for his help and wished him the best.

Commissioner Josh Nagy:

- Commissioner Josh Nagy congratulated him on his retirement. He mentioned his ability to remember people and always would have a story about his interaction with that person. He thanked Manager Vernau for his time here at Lower Allen Township.

Commissioner Chuck Brown:

- Commissioner Brown congratulated Manager Vernau and told him he hoped he would enjoy the next phase of his life. He mentioned his “open door policy” no matter when he stopped in to discuss things, Manager Vernau always made time and for that he thanked him.

Commissioner Joe Swartz:

- Commissioner Joe Swartz congratulated Manager Verneau and mentioned that even though he has the least amount of time working with him, he appreciated his candor, his directness, and the genuine care that he showed on a day-to-day basis.

Manager Thomas Vernau:

- Manager Vernau stated he had the privilege of working with different Commissioners over the years and the Boards have always been good solid Boards that supported the kinds of things he always wanted to do which included fair compensation and professional training for the employees. He thanked the Board for working with him and it had been a pleasure working with them.

The motion made above passed 5-0. (President **VILLONE** made a motion to adopt **RESOLUTION 2024-R-41**, recognizing, commending and honoring Thomas G. Vernau, Jr., Township Manager for his 37 years of Service. Vice President **CARON** seconded the motion.)

President Villone presented the **RESOLUTION 2024-R-41** to Manager Vernau and read it into the record:

RESOLUTION 2024-R-41

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF LOWER ALLEN TOWNSHIP,
CUMBERLAND COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA,
RECOGNIZING, COMMENDING AND HONORING**

THOMAS G. VERNAU, JR.

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Lower Allen Township desires to express its recognition and gratitude for 37 years of service provided by **Thomas G. Vernau, Jr.**; and

WHEREAS, Thomas G. Vernau, Jr. first joined Lower Allen Township in 1988 as an Accounting Department Supervisor; and

WHEREAS, Thomas G. Vernau, Jr. was appointed as the Finance Director in 1995; and

WHEREAS, Thomas G. Vernau, Jr. had successfully met the Board's Association of Government Accountants (AGA) certification requirements as an expert government financial manager, and was granted the designation of Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM); and

WHEREAS, Thomas G. Vernau, Jr. has chaired several offices in the Government Finance Officers Association of Pennsylvania (GFOA) since 1995 and served as President from 2004 to 2008; and

WHEREAS, Thomas G. Vernau, Jr. has chaired several offices in the Association of Pennsylvania Municipal Managers (APMM) and served as President from 2019 to 2020; and

WHEREAS, Thomas G. Vernau, Jr. was appointed to serve as Assistant Township Manager in 1999; and

WHEREAS, Thomas G. Vernau, Jr. was appointed to serve as Interim Manager in 2005; and

WHEREAS, Thomas G. Vernau, Jr. was promoted to serve as the Township Manager in 2006; now, therefore, be it

NOW, hereby resolve that

Sincere gratitude and appreciation be and are hereby extended to **Thomas G. Vernau, Jr.** for nearly 37 years of dedicated service to the citizens of Lower Allen Township, Cumberland County, and that this recognition be spread upon the minutes and records of Lower Allen Township for perpetuity.

ADOPTED, into a Resolution this 9th day of December 2024.

President Villone recessed the meeting at 6:49 p.m. for a brief period of celebration with cake and light refreshments.

President Villone brought the meeting back to order at 7:17pm.

President Villone called for a motion to adopt **RESOLUTION 2024-R-42**, a resolution of the Board of Commissioners of Lower Allen Township, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, establishing fees and charges authorized by various ordinances and statutes for administration of Township business in accordance with these ordinances and statutes, known as the "2025 Fee Schedule". Commissioner **BROWN** made a motion to adopt **RESOLUTION 2024-R-42** known as "2025 Fee Schedule" and was seconded by Vice President **CARON**. The motion passed 5-0.

President Villone called for a motion to adopt **RESOLUTION 2024-R-43**, adopting Minimum Municipal Obligations (MMO) payable to the Lower Allen Township Police Pension Plan and the Lower Allen Township Non-Uniformed Pension Plan in fiscal year 2025, and appropriating specific sums known as the pension budget for fiscal year 2025. Manager Vernau and Director Knoll updated the Commissioners on the MMO processes and status. Brief discussion ensued.

Commissioner **NAGY** made a motion to adopt **RESOLUTION 2024-R-43** adopting Minimum Municipal Obligations (MMO) payable to the Lower Allen Township Police Pension Plan and the Lower Allen Township Non-Uniformed Pension Plan in fiscal year 2025. This was seconded by Commissioner **BROWN**. The motion passed 5-0.

ANY BUSINESS PERTINENT TO THE TOWNSHIP:

President Villone noted that if anyone wished to speak at that time on any subject, there would be 10 minutes allotted per person to speak at the podium. There were none.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Discussion and possible action: Director Sweeney discussed with the board the scheduling of a public hearing and asked for permission to advertise proposed **ORDINANCE 2025-01**, which amends Chapter 65 Animals and Chapter 220-151 Non-intensive Agricultural Uses to provide for the keeping of domestic fowl as a permitted accessory use in the R-1 Zoning District.

Director Sweeney asked the Board to review the draft ordinance which was included in their packets. The only item that was changed from the previous draft SECTION IV, 2.c on the second page; maximum permitted number of fowl allowed in R-1 zoning districts. We have revised the numbers and hopefully this will be satisfactory.

Commission Swartz stated a resident discussed with him today 2.f under Coop size, #4, specifically about the runs. He stated this was something that may come up at the public hearing and wanted to inform Director Sweeney. Discussion ensued. Director Sweeney will clarify any changes in the first meeting in January.

Commissioner **SWARTZ** made a motion to schedule a public hearing and grant permission to advertise Ordinance 2025-01 which amends Chapter 65 Animals and Chapter 220-151 Non-intensive Agricultural Uses to provide for the keeping of domestic fowl as a permitted accessory use in the R-1 Zoning District. Commissioner **BROWN** seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Director Sweeney asked for clarification on the date and time of the public hearing. Commissioners agreed to schedule the hearing at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, January, 27, 2025 prior to the regularly scheduled Board of Commissioners meeting.

Discussion and possible action: Approve Financial Security Reduction request #2 in the amount of \$9,536.90 leaving a balance of \$0 for SLD #2023-04 Trinity High School Preliminary/Final Land Development Plan.

Commissioner **SWARTZ** offered a motion to approve the security reduction request #2 in the amount of \$9,536.90 for SLD #2023-04 Trinity High School Preliminary/Final Land Development Plan, seconded by Vice President **CARON**. The motion passed 5-0.

ASSISTANT MANAGER

Discussion and possible action: Yard Waste Equipment Program. Assistant Manager Davis reviewed the information in the Board's packet concerning this program which the Township has been part of for the last 30 years and it has worked very well. She explained that she is in favor of the program, but not in the way the documents were drafted and was asking the Board for direction. Solicitor Miner and Manager Vernau reviewed the documents and had concerns as well. Solicitor Miner gave detailed background and explained his concerns specifically; there are a great deal of questions that need answered before moving forward. Discussion ensued.

President Villone asked Assistant Manager Davis for her suggestion for moving forward. She stated we can draft a letter informing Hampden Township we are interested in the program; however, we would like some clarifications, and we would like to meet to discuss the matter further. Solicitor Miner agreed with this approach.

Commissioner **SWARTZ** made a motion to authorize staff to write a letter of interest to Hampden Township expressing interest in the participation of the Yard Waste Equipment Program and seeking further discussion, seconded by Commissioner **BROWN**. The motion passed 5-0.

Assistant Manager Davis introduced Mr. Ben Powell, P.E. to the Board as the new Public Works Director. He started last Wednesday and noted his years of experience. The Board welcomed him.

MANAGER

Discussion and possible action: Cohen Law Group proposal for cable franchise fee renewal representation. Manager Vernau gave the Board history about the cable franchise renewal service. The agreement was included in the Board's packets. This

agreement is good for 10 years. He explained the cost will be a minimum \$10,625/maximum \$11,250. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner **BROWN** made a motion to accept the Cohen Law Group proposal to negotiate the cable franchise fee, seconded by Commissioner **NAGY**. The motion passed 5-0.

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS

President Villone announced after the Commissioners Reports, they would recess to Executive Session.

Mary Ellen Banks congratulated Manager Vernau and knew he would enjoy his retirement.

Solicitor Miner extended his congratulations to Manager Vernau who was great to work with and a good friend, also.

Commissioner Swartz thanks the Board for their patience on the Fowl Ordinance on the suggestions from the public, he really appreciated it. He also thanked Director Davis and Solicitor Miner for looking out for the Township with the Yard Waste Equipment program. He informed the Board he had an opportunity to ride along with EMS staff which was an excellent experience. He told Captain Deaven he has a great team. He was also able to attend along with President Villone the PSATC Central which was a great experience to learn how that organization operates. He also reviewed the County Library tax which is 0.166 mills and if you were to apply that to your tax bill, for every \$100,000 for every assessment value, that would equate to \$16.60 tax attributed to the library – something for future discussion. Commissioner Swartz also thanked Tom for his guidance, candor and all the great work he has done.

Commissioner Nagy stated that when people heard Manager Vernau was retiring, everyone was thinking, how are we going to continue; however, after a little while, we came to realize that we will still be in good shape because of who you put in place here. This was a tribute to you and thanks to you for leaving us in good hands.

Commissioner Brown congratulated Manager Vernau and also welcomed Director Powell.

Vice President Caron told Manager Vernau she was looking forward to celebrating on Friday.

President Villone again thanked Manager Vernau for all his dedicated service. He also mentioned he was able to attend Lisburn Community Fire Company meeting in December as a member. It was nice to see more of the firefighters that are coming to the meetings. It is an organization that works through issues and they work through them in a good way. The administration side and the fire-side work together. He explained he attended the PSATC Central business meeting at the end of the year; regionally they have some revising of the Central PSATC. It was nice to see the Lisburn Fire trucks out with Santa Claus and he is looking forward to seeing Lower Allen Fire folks out with Santa Claus.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors recessed into Executive Session to discuss the following @ 8:25pm.

- a. Employee health insurance contributions for 2025.
- b. Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiations.

RECONVENE REGULAR MEETING

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners reconvened at 9:18 p.m.

Vice President **CARON** due to the rebate the Township received from the employee health care insurance carrier, Vice President Caron presented a motion to authorize the waiver of the premium share for the non-uniformed Township employees for the year 2025, seconded by Commissioner **SWARTZ**. The motion passed 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19pm.