

LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
December 19, 2019

The Board of Commissioners of Lower Pottsgrove Township held their regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, December 19, 2019 at the Lower Pottsgrove Township Municipal Building, 2199 Buchert Road, Pottstown, Pennsylvania. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The following were in attendance:

Board of Commissioners: Bruce L. Foltz President, Earl E. Swavely, Jr., Raymond W. Lopez, Robert Mohollen and Michael McGroarty.

Edward C. Wagner, Charles Garner, Solicitor; were also in attendance.

President Foltz stated the meeting will be recorded and asked any speakers to give their name and address.

PRESENTATION:

Ringling Hill Fire Company Volunteer Shift Program— Derek Dry from Ringling Hill Fire Company introduced himself to the board and explained that he would like to discuss a recent FEMA grant that they acquired for a recruitment program as well as a staffing program. Mr. Dry explained that Ringling Hill Fire Company did an internal review of their response times and noticed that over the last few years the response times are increasing, and personnel is decreasing. They decided to apply for a FEMA Safer Grant, and they were approved. Communications Solutions was contracted to come out and help the fire department with the recruitment over the course of 4 years. The stipend program is another part of the grant. Certain requirements have to be met in order to be part of the program. This program will be staffed by member of the companies Monday-Friday 6am-6pm who will be reimbursed a stipend of \$75 per day which include meals and incidental. Of the \$75 only \$9 is taxable and if an individual gross over \$600 they will received a 1099 Form. They currently have 10 individuals who wish to participate in the program which is slated to begin on January 2, 2020. They would like to staff one driver and two firefighters per shift. After the program is completed in 2023 Ringling Hill will be eligible to reapply for the grant if they feel as though they would want to continue the stipend program.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Lopez made the motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2019 and the December 2, 2019 Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Swavely seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS:

Julio Algarin, 63 Pine Hurst Drive— Mr. Algarin stated that he is a 30-year resident of Lower Pottsgrove Township and his concern is with the property taxes for 2020 for the new township building and wanted more clarification from the board on why the township needs a new township building.

Commissioner Foltz replied the first reason is that the building is too small for the employees and there are not enough bathroom facilities for them. The second is that the police department has 20 police officers who share a locker room that is not big enough for them. There are currently two female employees share the same bathroom and locker room with 20 male police officers. When the police department brings in someone off the street for holding, they are contained at a bench that sits in front of the police secretary. The interview room is currently too tight that if someone would get out of hand there is no room to try and protect yourself. There has been a lot of research that was conducted by the Infrastructure Committee which determined that the township has outgrown the currently township building.

Commissioner Lopez stated that this is an item that has been on the commissioners' mind for about 15 years. The commissioners have looked at it at a number of different options and three studies have been conducted. They have looked at expanding the current building, and every time the price has come in too high and expansion would take away the existing parking lot. Commissioner Lopez stated that there were a number of police studies done that indicated the police department needed more space.

Mr. Algarin asked if there is any talk of new businesses coming into the township.

Commissioner Lopez stated that Commissioner Foltz and himself tried to bring companies at the old Oxy location as well as the old Tri County Auto. They have been actively trying to bring in new businesses.

Linda Algarin 63 Pine Hurst Drive— Ms. Algarin stated that she feels that the township should find some business to come into the township so people coming off Route 422 can spend some money. Especially, since her taxes keep going up.

Commissioner Mohollen stated that when Sanatoga Green gets developed there will be commercial medical facility, if they don't build the medical facility, they will get fined a penalty.

Mr. Doyle stated that is not happy with the raises, and how they are given out in percentage. The person is who makes top dollar makes a lot more than other who are making less. He feels as though everyone should all get the same amount each year, instead of percentage of pay.

Commissioner Foltz stated that they have looked into across the board raises, but it did not fit the township.

Commissioner McGroarty stated that you need to compensate each person fairly on their job and importance with the township. Every employee is evaluated on their performance and how their direct supervisor feels that are doing at their job which in turns determines the percentage that they will receive.

Tom Troutman— stated that he feels that the police pension payouts come at such a young age where a person can retire from here and then go elsewhere and collect another pension.

Mike Coxe 2250 Barbara Way— stated that he is a member of the Pottsgrove Little League Board had a question for the board. Wanted to know if any Gerald Richards Park's fields were going to be improved in the near future.

Mr. Wagner commented that there was a grant that was obtained and the NPDES permit was just approved and now they are able to phase out the project. The parking lot phase should be going out to bid after the first of the year.

Mr. Coxe wanted to know if there was anything that can be done that can help the fields near Coventry Christian. The backstops are leaning, and the benches are coming up out of the ground, and it is a safety concern for the children.

Mr. Wagner stated that those fields are in Phase 2 of the project and advised Mr. Coxe to attend a Park and Recreation meeting and discuss his concerns.

Joseph Zlomek a member of the Park and Recreation board welcome Mr. Coxe to come to a meeting and they can discuss the project with him in more depth.

Mr. Coxe stated that he feels if they could update the fields sooner so that kids will have more of an interest in playing sports. Mr. Coxe asked if the police monitor the parking lot because summer there was a concern with a door that was jimmed off. Mr. Coxe also wanted to know if the fields that are at Sanatoga Park were being used.

Mr. Wagner stated that the police do monitor the park and there are cameras at Gerald Richards also. Mr. Wagner informed Mr. Coxe that there is a team that is using the park and he would need to contact the office to see who is using the field.

Mr. Coxe said that in his opinion the township does need a new building and that he toured the police department and that they are crammed down there.

CORRESPONDENCE AND INFORMATION: None

OLD BUSINESS:

Update on Infrastructure Committee— Commissioner Lopez informed the board that the Infrastructure Committee met with the architect based on the signed approval of the architect's contract. Every two weeks there will be a meeting with the architect, so that there is a constant communication with them.

Commissioner McGroarty asked if they are moving on with the architect and if there is still time to change the size if need be. Mr. Wagner stated that there will be two presentations of the building one in the second meeting in January and one the second meeting in February and there is still time to change the design.

Traffic Light at N. Pleasantview and High Street— Mr. Wagner stated that back in September he met with Commissioner Mohollen and Commissioner Lopez regarding the traffic light at

High and Pleasantview with the possibility of a left arrow at East High Street. PennDOT's preliminary analysis did not warrant for an arrow, but the arrow might be beneficial. They will modify the model to do a comparison with and without an arrow to determine the need for the arrow installation.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Advertise Ordinance 346 Bridge Weight Limits— Commissioner Lopez made a motion to advertise Ordinance 346 amending Chapter 228, Section 27 Vehicles Weight Limits Established on Certain Streets and Bridges. Commissioner Mohollen seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Animal Control Agreement— Commissioner McGroarty made the motion to approve one (1) year Animal Control Officer Agreement. Commissioner Lopez seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Resignation of Donald Wirt— Commissioner Lopez made a motion to accept the resignation of Donald Wirt from the Building Code Appeals Board. Commissioner Swavely seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Commissioner Foltz asked for a letter to be sent to Mr. Wirt for his time on the board.

Property Assessment Sanatoga and Buchert Ridge— Solicitor Garner stated that the township does not usually get involved in tax assessment appeals that are filed. In 2018 both Sanatoga Ridge and Buchert Ridge Communities filed for tax appeal for their properties and the township will be impacted and Mr. Garner wanted to make the Commissioners' aware of the impact.

Commissioner Lopez made a motion to approve and authorize the stipulation on the property assessment to settle for Sanatoga Ridge properties. Commissioner Mohollen seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Commissioner McGroarty asked Finance Director Michele Christman if a calculation had been completed for what the loss for the township would be.

Ms. Christman stated that the total for real estate, fire and capital for 2019 would be \$13,555 for Sanatoga and Buchert Ridge. For 2020 would be a total of \$14,011 would be the lost impact.

Advertise 2020 Meeting Dates—

Commissioner Swavely made a motion to advertise 2020 meeting dates for the Board of Commissioners, Sewer Authority, Planning Commission, Police Committee and Parks and Recreation Board. Commissioner Lopez seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

RESOLUTION AND ORDINANCE:

Ordinance No. 345— Commissioner McGroarty made a motion to approve Ordinance 345 repealing 2009 International Property Maintenance Code for the 2015 Edition. Commissioner Lopez seconded motion was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Ordinance No. 146-TT— Commissioner Mohollen made a motion to adopt the Lower Pottsgrove Township 2020 Budget. Commissioner McGroarty seconded motion was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Ordinance No. 133-SS— Commissioner Mohollen made a motion to approve Ordinance No 133-SS Setting the Real Estate Property Tax Rate for 2020. Commissioner McGroarty seconded motion was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Ordinance No. 134-TT — Commissioner Mohollen made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 134-TT Setting the Rate of Assessment of Street Lighting for 2020. Commissioner McGroarty seconded motion was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Warrant #891- Commissioner Mohollen made the motion to approve Warrant #891 for the month of November 2019. Commissioner McGroarty seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Acceptance of Treasure's Report- Commissioner Mohollen made the motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for the month of November 2019. Commissioner McGroarty seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Commissioner Lopez asked if Sanatoga Fire Company would like to comment on the program that Ringing Hill Fire Company gave a presentation on.

Sanatoga Fire Company stated that they are in support of Ringing Hill Volunteer Program that was presented earlier in the meeting. They are planning to hold a meeting with the Ringing Hill Chief to discuss how the program will operate over the next 4 four years.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:

Commissioner McGroarty — wished everyone a happy holiday. Thanked all of the volunteer fire fighters for their service to the community. Thanked Mr. Wagner and his staff for all of the work that they do. Thanked Michele Christman for all of the work that she does with the finances with the township. Thanked Mr. Garner for his legal counsel and all that he does. Commissioner McGroarty also thanked all of the residents that come out to the meetings.

Commissioner Mohollen— commented that Mr. McGroarty covered all of his comments and thanked all of the volunteers for everything. Stated that the board would just like to serve, and they are trying to keep taxes down and raising taxes is something they do not take lightly.

Commissioner Lopez— echoed all comments that were said by Commissioner Mohollen and Commissioner McGroarty. Thank them both for putting together the budget as well at Mr. Wagner and Michele Christman.


Commissioner Swavely— thanked Don Wirt for all of his time and dedication for all of these years on the Building Code Appeals Board. Thanked the police department and fire departments for all that they do. Thanked the township staff and the residents for a great year.

Commissioner Foltz— agreed with all of the commissioner's comments and believed that the township overall had a great year and progress is being made. He wished everyone a Happy Holiday and Happy New Year.

Mr. Wagner— had no comments.

Solicitor Garner – had no comments.

There being no further business, the public meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m. The next meeting will be on Monday, January 6, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Vlahos
Township Secretary