

LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**March 25, 2021**

The Board of Commissioners of Lower Pottsgrove Township held their regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, March 25, 2021 through live video feed. The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. The following were in attendance:

Board of Commissioners: Bruce L. Foltz, Earl Swavely, Raymond W. Lopez, Robert Mohollen and Michael McGroarty were all present through live video feed.

Edward C. Wagner, Manager; Charles Garner, Solicitor; and Kathryn Vlahos, Secretary were also present through live video feed.

Commissioner Foltz stated the meeting will be recorded and viewed through live video feed through Zoom due to Covid-19 pandemic, he asked any speakers to give their name and address for public comments. The township is following social distancing guidelines recommended by the Center for Disease and Control to limit exposure.

Solicitor Garner stated that in accordance with the Sunshine Act on March 10, 2021 the Board met in Executive Session to discuss a matter of personnel, litigation and collective bargaining, no action or decision was made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Lopez made the motion to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2021 Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Swavely seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS: None.

CORRESPONDENCE AND INFORMATION:

Update on the Route 422 Westbound Ramp at the Sanatoga Interchange— Mr. Wagner stated that they held a preconstruction meeting on March 17th at the Limerick Township Building. The contractor is looking to begin the new westbound ramp construction at the Sanatoga Interchange on April 5th with the substantial completion date of October 10, 2021. The contractor did state that there will be minimum lane closures due to the fact construction will be mainly off road. There is a preliminary schedule in the packet for the next couple of weeks. Currently they are trying to schedule a groundbreaking ceremony with Limerick Township and Lower Pottsgrove Commissions, there is no date yet, but once Mr. Wagner receives the date, he will inform the board.

Update on the American Rescue Plan and the fiscal impact to local government— Mr. Wagner stated that the American Rescue Plan was passed by Congress this month as part of the Covid-19, \$1.9 trillion-dollar financial boost. Lower Pottsgrove is projected to receive \$1.2 million dollars, which will be received in two installments. The first will be around May 10th the second payment will be one year later. Eligible use of the funding includes revenue replacement for the provision

of government services to the reduction in revenue due to Covid 19, possible premium pay for essential workers, assistance to small businesses, households and hard-hit industries in economic recovery or investment in sewer, water, and broad band infrastructure.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion on the Draft Fire Service Agreement & Voluntary Service Credit Program— Solicitor Garner gave an overview of the draft Fire Service Agreement and Voluntary Service Credit Program. Solicitor Garner stated that a couple of weeks ago he met with Mr. Wagner, Commissioner Mohollen and Commissioner McGroarty to talk about some issues that have been brought up regarding the fire companies. One of the issues that was discussed was that in many municipalities there is some kind of written document in place between townships and their respective volunteer fire companies. It is a good idea to have a document so that way everyone knows their respective responsibilities, obligations and duties. The committee suggested that a draft Fire Service Agreement and Voluntary Service Credit document be drafted up for the boards review. In the packet is the draft documents for both Ringing Hill and Sanatoga Fire Companies. The second item that was discussed was the fact that a couple of years ago the Pennsylvania Legislature amended the statue to allow for certain tax credits for certain volunteers that are eligible in volunteer fire companies and emergency service providers which is Act 172. The township has talked about this a couple of years ago and did not decide to move forward with it. During the committee meeting they discussed another concept that other municipalities are using which is a stipend in lieu of a tax credit, which would provide a payment to the companies for their eligible volunteers that have qualified and satisfied the criteria for volunteerism.

Commissioner Mohollen stated that many of the volunteers do not live in Lower Pottsgrove Township so the tax reduction would not be beneficial for them. The stipend program would hopefully allow for more volunteers to benefit. Most of the other townships have an agreement with the fire departments on what each of their responsibilities are. The township would be asking for the fire departments to show them their operations in order for the township to properly fund them. He hopes that the fire departments would see the benefits of this and support the program.

Commissioner Foltz asked if the fire departments were involved in the meeting, and how they felt about the program.

Commissioner Mohollen stated that there were no members of the fire department at the meeting.

Solicitor Garner stated that the meeting was to begin the discussion with the board and the committee so that the township could potentially move forward. Once the board wants to move forward with the program, then the next step would be to talk with the fire companies and review the agreements and any issues they might have.

Commissioner Foltz stated that he does not mean to be negative, but that we have two great fire companies. He knows several local fire companies that have tried this program and it caused animosity between the two. He feels that the township would be opening a can of worms if they went with this agreement. Commissioner Foltz stated that he totally against the agreement and he will not vote for it.

Commissioner McGroarty stated that he was at the meeting to represent the finance committee, and over the past two years trying to prepare the township budgets they have had meetings with both fire companies. At these meetings, they have expressed concerns with the financial contribution from the township. The township has asked for more information from the departments, and they have not received the information that will make the committee feel comfortable raising the fire tax. This is what started this discussion, and this will formalize the agreement between the township and the fire departments. This is not a final document it was a draft for discussion and receive feedback on the document.

Commissioner Mohollen stated that the fire departments come to the township every year looking for a tax increase. Commissioner Mohollen stated that they have not provided the township with enough information to justify raising the fire tax. This is step one in seeing what their needs are, and if the township needs to raise the fire tax.

Commissioner Lopez stated that he agrees with Commissioner Foltz that the fire departments have done a great job for a long time, but he is interested in hearing more information. The fire departments have been looking for something to recruit new members and some incentives for them might help. The fire fighters now require more than they did in the past, they need to train and supply a lot of costly equipment to each volunteer. Commissioner Lopez stated that he would like to at least listen to the program and see if this is something the fire departments are looking for to help them.

Solicitor Garner summed up the discussion stating that the township is looking at two different items. First, they are looking at a document that will list out the responsibilities of the fire department as well as the township. The second is the program for a possible stipend. The township can go with one option, both or neither.

Commission McGroarty asked if Solicitor Garner or Manager Wagner could provide the commissioners with the first-class township code that mentions fire service. protection That way everyone knows what the requirements under the first-class township code.

Grant Agreement for Pruss Hill Road Bridge— Manager Wagner explained that this grant agreement is for the bridge at Pruss Hill Road which the township received a grant from Montgomery County for \$196,800. The total project is estimated at \$246,000 and there is a 20% match required from the township that was accounted for in the township budget this year. The grant expires June 30, 2023.

Commissioner Lopez made a motion to authorize President Foltz to execute the Montgomery County Transportation Program implementation Grant Agreement in the amount of \$196,800 for the Pruss Hill Road Bridge. Commissioner Swavely seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

1350 N Charlotte Street Sanitary Sewer and Access Agreement—Commissioner Lopez made a motion to authorize President Foltz to execute the Sanitary Sewer and Access Agreement for Edward Termyna at 1350 North Charlotte Street. Commissioner Swavely seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Discussion on the future meetings of the Board of Commissioners held in person at Sunnybrook Ballroom— Commissioner Foltz stated that they would like to do away with the zoom meetings and start having the Board of Commissioners meetings at Sunnybrook Ballroom. Commissioner Foltz commented that if the virus should get worse again then they would go back to virtual meetings.

Commissioner Lopez made a motion for the Township Secretary and Township Manager to advertise the Board of Commissioners meetings as live meetings at Sunnybrook Ballroom, 50 Sunnybrook Road Pottstown, PA 19464 starting April 5, 2021. Commissioner Swavely seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

RESOLUTION AND ORDINANCE:

Resolution 1240-21— Commissioner McGroarty made a motion to approve Resolution 1240-21 Telecommunication Policy. Commissioner Lopez seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Warrant #906 Commissioner Mohollen made a motion to approve Warrant #906 for the month of February 2021. Commissioner McGroarty seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Acceptance of Treasurer's Report- Commissioner Mohollen made the motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for the month of February 2021. Commissioner McGroarty seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:

Commissioner McGroarty – Commissioner McGroarty brought up a subject from the prior months meeting about the SRO (School Resource Officer) in the school and what the township should do moving forward. He asked Mr. Wagner to look into what surrounding school districts do with securing their buildings. He discovered that majority of the schools are not providing SRO service through the local municipality. He feels that financially it will not cost the school more money if they hired their own security, since they are already paying for the SRO to be there. For the township they will have another officer to add to the patrol squad to patrol the streets.

Commissioner Foltz replied to Commissioner McGroarty's comment that before they pull the SRO from the school that they make sure that the school has coverage that is needed.

Commissioner Swavely commented that he agrees with Commission McGroarty's comment pertaining to the SRO. Taking the SRO out of the school will allow for more manpower on the street where it is needed at this time.

Mr. Wagner said that he can set up a meeting with the Superintendent Shirk and the Community Relations Director DeRenzo to discuss the options.

Commissioner Lopez commented that he is in favor of the SRO not returning back to the school once the contract is completed on August 31, 2021. This decision is not just made by the comments from the meeting this evening but also from the police study that was conducted by Safe Cities and their findings.

Commissioner Mohollen stated that he thinks it would be a good idea to open up communication with the school district so that the township can move forward.

Commissioner Mohollen – Commissioner Mohollen commented that they are not trying to overturn everything within the fire departments and the township. They are just trying to start a dialogue with them to understand responsibilities. If the Commissioner choose not to go down that path that is fine, they are just trying to see what is best for the community overall.

Commissioner Lopez— Commissioner Lopez had no comments.

Commissioner Swavely— Commissioner Swavely appreciates all of the work that Commissioner Mohollen is doing following up with the fire companies needs as well as other ways to support them.

Commissioner Swavely stated that there were trees removed on Pruss Hill Road earlier this week which has made quite a difference and was thankful for the removal from the property owner.

Commissioner Foltz—Commissioner Foltz stated that they had a pre-bid meeting with the contractors who are interested in bidding on the job for the new municipal complex. He said that it did not go really well because the townships architect could not come because he was exposed to Covid-19. He was on Zoom and it was hard for everyone to hear his responses to questions. Commissioner Foltz commented that we have hit a bad time with pricing, everything is more expensive. The bids that come in could be high because of that. From that meeting the bid due date was extended to April 6, 2021 at 1:00 PM.

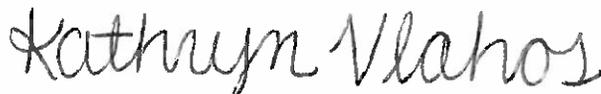
Commissioner Lopez made a motion to extend the bid due for the new municipal complex date to April 6, 2021 at 1:00 PM instead of April 5th at 10am. Commissioner Foltz seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Vote was 5-0 in favor.

Mr. Wagner— Mr. Wagner had no comments.

Solicitor Garner – Solicitor Garner had no comments.

There being no further business, the public meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m. The next meeting will be on Monday, April 5, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. at Sunnybrook Ballroom.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathryn Vlahos
Township Secretary