

MINUTES
EXETER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2020

Public Meeting

A Regular Meeting of the Exeter Township Board of Supervisors held virtually was called to order on Monday, June 22, 2020 at 7:01 PM by David Speece, Chairperson.

Supervisors Present: David Speece, Chairperson
Michelle Kircher, Vice Chairperson
John Cusatis
Gregory Galtere
Joseph Staub

Absent: None

Others in Attendance: Jeff Bartlett, Township Manager
Laurie Getz, Township Secretary
Clarence Hamm, Highway Superintendent
Sam Cortes, Fox Rothschild, Solicitor
Wendell Morris, Chief of Police
Joseph Rogosky, Great Valley Consultants, Township Engineer

REGULAR MEETING

The Meeting was opened with the Pledge to the Flag.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Agenda Items

Public comments were submitted in advance of the meeting via email and voicemail. The e-mail comments were dictated by computer software.

Vinny Biancone; Discussed the advertisement for July Board meetings. Thinks that the meetings should continue to be held virtually as it is the safest decision. Has heard that some are suggesting holding socially distant meetings at the Reading Country Club, pointed out that a significant amount of planning an cleaning/disinfecting would need to happen in order to do that. Thinks the best decision is to remain virtual at this time.

John Carmello; Asked a question about the treasurer's report showing future expenses for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Commented on the potential purchase of parcel at the Exeter Scenic River Trail Trailhead, does not think this should be considered at this time before the full impact of COVID on finances can be seen. Thinks that July meetings should return to in-person and not be held virtually.

David Hughes; Commented on advertising for July's meetings, thinks they should return to in-person and that audio issues need to be addressed for in-person facilities. Asked a question about the disbursements relating to Engineering/Zoning and Planning Consulting costs appearing over budget.

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Mr. Staub stated that he has also asked Ms. Savage for an explanation on this item. **Ms. Savage** explained that there have been significant expenses this year related to the Perkiomen Avenue project as well as traffic signal upgrades with McMahon Associates.

Mr. Speece asked if Mr. Bartlett would like to chime in on the process for public comment. How would he recommend questions be handled. **Mr. Bartlett** stated that he is happy to reply to individuals who have questions that are not able to be easily answered at the meetings. Mr. Bartlett clarified that there is no requirement that the Board enter into a discussion during public comment period.

REGULAR APPROVALS

Minutes – June 8, 2020

MOTION of Mr. Cusatis seconded by Mr. Galtere, the Board UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED the June 8, 2020 Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes.

Disbursements – June 22, 2020

Ms. Savage explained costs for Black Cipher, this is one of the last invoices we will pay to this company. Construction Masters charges were related to paving. Mast Roofing was for a roof replacement at the District Justice/Tax Collector's office. This was an insurance claim as well as the damage was related to a storm. Hopewell Trucking charges are for mulch grinding at Trout Run.

MOTION of Mr. Staub seconded by Mr. Cusatis, the Board UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED payment of the bills presented on the Disbursement List dated June 19, 2020 in the amounts of \$261,326.71 in the General Fund; \$15,614.70 in the Utility Fund; \$71,251.51 in the Fire Fund; \$18,647.32 in the Capital Expense Fund; \$632.50 in the Developer's Escrow Fund; \$14,684.32 in the Sewer Fund; \$30,085.94 in the Golf Fund; \$8,429.04 in the RCC F&B Fund; \$4,604.00 in the Promenade Fund; \$13,755.15 in the Capital Improvement Fund; \$87,714.00 in the Equipment Fund; \$1,870.00 in the Debt Services Fund; \$137,398.64 in the State Liquid Fuels Fund, subject to audit.

Treasurer's Report – May

Ms. Savage explained in response to Mr. Carmello's public comment that there are two more projects slated to come out of the WWTP proceeds, OPEB costs and sewer debt payments.

MOTION of Mr. Staub seconded by Mr. Cusatis, the Board UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED the May Treasurer's Report subject to audit.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Discussion on Community Park

Mr. Hamm explained that since the last meeting 4 of the 5 Board Members toured the facility with him. The restrooms are not in good shape, they would need to be completely renovated along with the pavilions. Significant work is needed, the park has been subject to serious vandalism over the years. Suggested that the structures with the exception of the basketball courts, and the tennis courts which belong to the school district, may need to be removed. Alternatively, perhaps the school district would like the park back.

Mr. Galtere agreed that the facility has been poorly treated by many users over the years, and putting continued funds into the property does not make sense. **Mr. Cusatis** also agreed and suggested removing pavilions and structures and leaving it as greenspace. **Mr. Hamm** further clarified that the buildings were constructed in the mid-70's, so they have exceeded their useful life. **Mr. Galtere** clarified however that the restrooms are in the condition that they are in due to vandalism.

Mr. Staub commented that it is clear significant repairs are needed. This would mean replacing something that is not ours, which does not make sense to make such a financial investment with only 5 years remaining on our lease. He offered to reach out to the School Board and discuss our potential plans and try and work together towards a solution. **Ms. Kircher** agreed, she toured the facility recently on her own. She also agreed that some of the equipment that remains at the park should be removed. Does not feel it would be a good idea to continue putting funds into the property.

Mr. Speece stated that Joe should have a discussion with the School District to work towards a plan, and determine our path forward. **Mr. Galtere** suggested we ask the school about ongoing maintenance responsibilities.

Mr. Bartlett also agreed with the discussion.

Authorize Purchase of Parcel at Gibraltar Road/Exeter Scenic River Trail Trailhead

Mr. Rogosky explained that our Trout Run Master Plan includes a second access being constructed into the facility. The parcels being discussed would be necessary for the second access, as well as creating additional parking. One of the property owners has expressed interest in selling the property that houses the boat launch constructed by PennDOT during the Gibraltar Road bridge construction.

Ms. Kircher asked if this will be a main thoroughfare or just park access. **Mr. Hamm** responded that this is park access and does not need to be a thoroughfare.

Mr. Staub clarified that right now this will just be to find out if there is interest in selling. An actual purchase will be authorized if agreements can be reached.

MOTION of Mr. Galtere seconded by Mr. Cusatis, the Board UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED to negotiate the purchase of parcels at Gibraltar Road/Exeter Scenic River Trail Trailhead.

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NEW BUSINESS

Authorize Advertisement of Amendment to Parking Ordinance 360-14

Chief Morris reviewed the significant issues that the Department has been experiencing with individuals parking illegally on Klapperthal Road to access the Neversink Mountain Trail.

Mr. Hamm explained that the Conservation District is installing a bike rack at the Klapperthal trailhead, and the administration is also working on signage to encourage individuals to utilize other trail parking areas in addition to this change. These plans are in hopes of reducing the parking issues.

MOTION of Mr. Cusatis seconded by Mr. Galtere, the Board UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED authorize Advertisement of Amendment to Parking Ordinance 360-14 on Klapperthal Road.

Authorize Advertisement of July Board of Supervisors Meetings

Mr. Speece explained that ‘Green’ doesn’t mean pre-COVID green, restrictions remain in place and it does not mean an automatic return to pre-COVID meetings. We are tasked with considering all issues and planning for continued meetings and determining when we are comfortable moving to the next step.

Ms. Kircher stated that she feels the public should be provided an opportunity to appear in person eventually. Solutions should be found. Masks should be required. Does not feel that there is a high risk of contracting COVID from surfaces.

Mr. Cusatis further commented that green doesn’t mean back to normal. We need to be safe.

Mr. Speece stated that we will likely move to some type of hybrid meeting system. We will need to work out a plan, and determine a location. Reading Country Club was not designed for this, and investing resources and time into converting the property to a functional meeting space doesn’t make sense because it’s not the long-term goal for the facility. Tasked the administration with creating a plan to determine how we can move from full virtual to a hybrid type meeting. **Mr. Cusatis** agreed.

MOTION of Mr. Cusatis seconded by Mr. Galtere, the Board APPROVED advertisement of July Board of Supervisors Meetings to be held virtually.

Ms. Kircher opposed.

Discussion on Recreation Events and Facility/Field Rentals

Ms. Getz discussed plans for the Parks & Recreation department given the announcement of a tentative move to Green. Recommended that as of Monday, June 28th that basketball courts reopen with signage posted including guidance for how to use safely. Discussed the challenges with meeting the required levels of sanitizing and cleaning in park restrooms and rental facilities. Recommended keeping the restrooms closed, as well as rental facilities as this time through the end of the emergency order. It would be an extreme challenge to keep the restrooms sanitized up to standards, and would be cost prohibitive to clean in between reservations.

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Mr. Cusatis asked if we even have sufficient supplies for sanitizing. **Mr. Hamm** stated it would be extremely hard to meet the standards with limited staffing. Playground equipment is also very hard to continue to clean and sanitize.

Mr. Galtere stated that he has concerns with reopening the basketball courts. Asked what type of liability we might be opening ourselves up to by reopening. **Ms. Getz** explained that she will be reviewing all plans with our insurance company before officially opened, and further explained that all available guidance has indicated that green is the earliest the courts can open. Has been receiving a lot of requests for the courts to be opened.

Mr. Speece suggested checking with the insurance company, PSATS, and others. **Mr. Staub** agreed with getting additional information before the Board will make a decision. We do not even reach green until Friday, so feels a decision may be premature. Suggested coming back at the next meeting for a decision. There is a lot of liability, and these are all high-touch areas.

Mr. Galtere stated that he agrees tennis is low risk, but basketball is higher risk. **Ms. Kircher** asked about field rentals, thinks it should be all or nothing. If basketball isn't open fields shouldn't be open. **Mr. Galtere** stated that he thinks every sport is different, so different regulations may apply.

Mr. Hamm stated that Lower Alsace recently reopened their basketball courts and they have been extremely crowded.

Ms. Getz stated that she would gather additional info to bring before the Board at the next meeting. Asked for direction on existing facility rentals, would like to provide advance notice to renters for cancellations to those who have dates coming up.

Motion of **Mr. Galtere** seconded by **Mr. Speece** the Board UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED cancelling Pavilion and Dunn Center reservations through the end of July.

Ms. Getz also asked for direction on Fall Festival, scheduled for the Columbus Day weekend at the Daniel Boone Homestead. Raised concerns with the restrictions on group sizes, uncertainty surrounding what the Fall might look like. Recommended a cancellation of the event in the format in which it was held last year, and suggested instead to work on planning smaller scale pop-up events that require less planning, resources, and staffing and attract smaller crowd sizes.

Mr. Galtere stated that for safety reasons he is inclined not to have it. **Mr. Cusatis** agreed and stated he likes the idea of trying to do smaller pop-up events as we are able to. **Mr. Staub** would like to avoid staff putting significant time and resources into planning an event that might not be able to happen. **Mr. Speece** agreed. **Ms. Kircher** agreed and also likes the ideas of smaller events.

Authorization for the Township to Acquire Permanent Storm Easements for the Butter Lane Culvert Replacement Project

Mr. Rogosky explained that two permanent easements are needed as part of the Butter Lane Culvert Replacement project.

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MOTION of Ms. Kircher seconded by Mr. Staub, the Board UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED Authorizing the Township to Acquire Permanent Storm Easements for the Butter Lane Culvert Replacement Project.

Update on Community Communications Committee

Ms. Getz explained that the electronic newsletter went out after the last meeting. There was a 68% open rate, over 1000 people were reached on social media, and we have 356 subscribers. Working on quotes for postcards discussed at the last meeting.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Chief Wendell Morris; Police Department: Chief Morris stated that Sgt. Bentz recently had a truck inspection detail along with other agencies. It was very successful, 67 violations, 3 trucks out of service, and issued citation in excess of \$13K in fines.

Excited to announce that cadet Frank Santiago is graduating from the police academy this Thursday. Santiago and Officer Davi will both be starting on Monday.

Joe Rogosky, Township Engineer/Great Valley Consultants: Information received from contractor on Gibraltar Road/Shelbourne Road intersection improvement project is requesting input on two potential traffic control options. Recommend allowing for the intersection to be closed for 6-weeks and detour traffic because it will allow the contractor to complete the project sooner to avoid impacting school buses in the fall. This option would prevent the work spanning over two construction seasons.

Mr. Staub stated that he would rather it be closed for the 6-weeks rather than having it extend into two construction seasons. **Mr. Rogosky** explained that this option is also PennDOT's preferred option. The total project will span 6-months, but this intersection closure will be 6-weeks.

Discussed projects that will be closing to public comment in July.

Sam Cortes, Fox Rothschild: Announced executive session held before this meeting to discuss real estate, personnel, and litigation involving Callen Properties.

Clarence Hamm, Highway Department/Public Works: Prepping roads for paving, just completed bituminous seal coat on several roads within the Township. Completed first round of state mowing contract.

Jeff Bartlett, Township Manager: Had a great first week, staff has been very welcoming and helpful sharing information and providing tours.

PUBLIC COMMENT – General Comments

Public comments were submitted in advance of the meeting via email and voicemail. The e-mail comments were dictated by computer software.

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Vinny Biancone; Welcomed new Township Manager, does not agree with prior comments made that the manager should be required to live in the Township. Discussed vocal minority that comments at meetings, do not represent his views. Would like to see the township move forward and stop hearing comments rehashing the past.

David Hughes; Discussed the rules of the meetings included on the agendas, does not feel that the Board follows the same rules that are asked of the public. Feels that Mr. Cusatis is allowed to criticize a fellow board member.

Mr. Speece asked that the comment be paused. Mr. Speece stated that this is a matter we have addressed before, the Board does not support comments that directly attack supervisors or staff individually. He feels it is his job to maintain order, does not allow for individual attacks as a general meeting rule. Asked for discussion on how to move forward.

Mr. Bartlett stated that he has been doing this for some time, and this issue has come up in many public meetings he has been involved in. He feels that everyone needs to be respectful of one another. Does not appreciate his staff being attacked. Public comment is intended for just that, comments. It does not require that a detailed answer or discussion be had. Residents are entitled to give input, and that input is important, but it should not be allowed to turn into a major discourse.

Mr. Staub stated that he has observed animosity on both sides in his experience before being on the Board and after. Feels that it is important to maintain respect and civility even when two parties don't agree.

Mr. Cusatis stated that he promises as well to do better. Clarified that the individual making comment was sent a letter warning him to watch his tone several months ago. **Mr. Speece** asked the Board whether they would like to continue this comment.

Mr. Galtere stated that he doesn't feel that the resident's point is unfair, but asked that he not use specific names. Direct comments to the Board as a whole.

Mr. Cortes stated that it is up to the Board to decide how they would like to proceed.

The Board decided to allow the comment to be read in full.

Mr. Hughes stated that he feels Mr. Cusatis makes unfair statements, and he does not believe his behavior is appropriate. Suggested censure by the Board. Asked that Mr. Cusatis resign immediately.

Mr. Cortes clarified that Mr. Hughes' comment included several words in quotations that the computer did not specify were in quotations.

SUPERVISOR REPORTS

Mr. Cusatis: Welcomed Jeff to the Township. Is excited to have him on the team.

Mr. Staub: Also welcomed Jeff to the Township. Reported on the Reading Country Club, they have been having a great month. Tuesday night scrambles have been selling out. 192 rounds on Father's Day. Total revenue is only \$17,000 behind year to date last year, with having been shut down for 6-weeks. July 11th the Heritage Tournament will be held to celebrate the Reading Country Club being added to the

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National Historic Register. Will be revisiting policies for the golf course as the county transitions to the green phase.

Ms. Kircher: Wished Jeff a good week, is looking forward to working with him.

Mr. Galtere: Welcomed Jeff to the Township. Thanked Clarence for stepping up and taking on the interim role. Did a great job in a difficult situation. Looking forward to working with the staff going forward.

Mr. Speece: Welcomed Jeff, discussed that there is a lot going on in the Township so he is happy to have him here. Appreciates the staff continuing to update COVID plans. Mentioned pet food giveaway that took place at the Promenade Shopping Center following the last food pantry give.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION of Mr. Speece, seconded by Mr. Cusatis, the meeting adjourned at 8:32 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laurie Getz
Township Secretary