

MINUTES
EXETER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2020

Public Meeting

A Special Meeting of the Exeter Township Board of Supervisors held virtually was called to order on Monday, November 2, 2020 at 6:00 PM by David Speece, Chairperson.

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

Absent: John Cusatis

Others in Attendance: Brian Ahrens, Reading Country Club
Jeff Bartlett, Township Manager
Chris Bickings, Exeter Township Volunteer Fire Chief
Laurie Getz, Township Secretary
Clarence Hamm, Highway Superintendent
Mallory Hoffman, Exeter Community Library
Larry Piersol, Fleet Manager
Derrick Sandritter, Reading Country Club
Jen Savage, Finance Director

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.

NONE

PRESENTATIONS

Reading Country Club

Derrick Sandritter and Brian Ahrens presented their 2021 proposed budget. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Sandritter reviewed 2020 highlights and discussed the year in rounds, the mild winter contributed to higher rounds all season. The course was only closed 7 days due to snow. Reviewed impact of COVID-19 on the course, positives and negatives.

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Discussed RCC Heritage tournament, which celebrated the course being added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Discussed 2020 rounds, they were up over 2019. Merchandise sales were decent, biggest sales are in the driving range and men's apparel. Patio Grill sales were also up. Overall course sales were up over 2019.

Reviewed 2021 golf packages, biggest change was to distinguish rates for public, military rate, seniors, residents. Residents get a bigger discount than other categories. Reviewed 2021 greens fees.

Mr. Ahrens reviewed the 2020 course maintenance. Relayed that COVID-19 allowed for some additional maintenance and projects being completed on the course. Saved on payroll while the course was closed for several weeks due to the pandemic. Increased traffic on the course when the property reopened has caused additional maintenance to be required.

Discussed course conditions, good conditions allowed for bunker work, removal of trees. Dealt with extreme temperatures and flooding over the summer.

Reviewed goals for 2021 maintenance. Plan to aerify and slit seed all fairways. Some of this work will be contracted out. Requesting to purchase a slit seeder, this is a new purchase that the course has not previously owned. Plan to renovate bunkers for holes 10 through 13.

Discussed that the course was initially designed as a private course, and could benefit from a master plan to develop a concept for renovations going forward.

Plan to continue working to replace old and outdated equipment.

Would like to work with an architect on a master plan for approximately \$12,000. Would like to obtain new tee markers and upgrade signs, improve drainage on the course. Would like to work on cart path improvements, continue working on tree removal.

Discussed need to work on driving range improvements, maintenance on the range as well as a replacement range picker.

Mr. Sandritter reviewed the golf operations revenue. Proposing a slight decrease in 2021 in revenue, explained that he is planning conservatively because he feels a lot of the business this year was related to the pandemic. Reviewed administrative expenses. **Mr. Ahrens** reviewed the course maintenance expenses. Some changes in wages due to changes in allocations.

Mr. Sandritter reviewed the ProShop expenses. Discussed a commercial that they ran in 2020, experienced a great return on that investment.

Mr. Staub asked about the salary changes included in the budget. **Ms. Savage** explained that Mr. Ahrens' salary had previously been split between the RCC and the Parks, 65% RCC and Parks 35%. For 2021 it is being proposed that his salary be fully allocated to the RCC.

Mr. Staub asked about the driving range improvements, does he anticipate increased use if improvements are made. **Mr. Sandritter** responded that he does believe that it will. **Mr. Staub** asked

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about the master plan and whether it was previously budgeted for. **Mr. Ahrens** responded that it was not previously budgeted for.

Mr. Galtere asked about capital purchases. Mr. Ahrens stated that he has not added that in at this point. Mr. Galtere asked about the purchase of capital equipment. Ms. Savage responded that equipment can be put in the equipment fund and amortized out of the RCC budget.

Ms. Savage asked for a recommendation on which items should be purchased. **Mr. Ahrens** stated that the most important item is the mower. Explained that not everything would need to be purchased at once.

Ms. Savage explained that a clubhouse budget is not being presented tonight, is asking for direction from the Board on how they would like to handle capital improvements at the property. The clubhouse fund is currently running with a large deficit, asking if the Board would like to utilize some of the proceeds from the wastewater treatment sale to cover that deficit and take care of capital needs.

Mr. Bartlett discussed that he has reached out to several companies to seek interested parties in managing the property.

Mr. Speece stated that he would like to see there be a budget that would allow some of these items to be worked on. **Mr. Staub** agreed that he would like to see the books be balanced. **Ms. Savage** explained that she would prepare the wastewater proceeds budget to include a balance transfer into the clubhouse fund to cover utilities and other expenses. **Mr. Speece** asked about any outstanding claims on the property. **Ms. Savage** explained that there are some pending claims related to the water damage sustained by the property.

Mr. Sandritter discussed outings and their use of the clubhouse. Is recommending that outing lunches be held outdoors with social distancing for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Hamm explained that the outdoor steps leading from the ProShop to the ballroom will be replaced in the next several weeks. **Mr. Galtere** asked where that expense is being paid from. **Ms. Savage** explained that it is being paid from the capital fund, and the project is the result of an insurance finding.

Mr. Sandritter, Mr. Ahrens, and Mr. Hamm left the meeting.

Exeter Community Library

Mallory Hoffman presented the 2021 Exeter Community Library budget. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.

Ms. Hoffman reviewed the funding process for the library, receives a combination of state and county funds, as well as funds from the Borough of St. Lawrence and Exeter Township. Reviewed expenses, largest being for payroll.

Discussed challenges presented by COVID, launched curbside pickup and many virtual programs.

Continues to hold PA Forward Gold Star Library status.

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Discussed programs offered by the library, and current partnerships with local community groups and businesses.

Exeter Community Library is the 2nd highest circulating library in the Berks County Library System, though circulation has been down due to COVID.

Discussed 2021 plans, continued virtual planning and programming.

Reviewed the 2021 budget, is requesting \$200,000 for 2021 in funding from Exeter Township. That is a \$30,000 increase over 2020 and is the amount that they will not be receiving from the state. Explained that in the 2021 proposed budget the line item for repairs has decreased as a result of the work done by the Township to improve the building.

Mr. Galtere asked how COVID has impacted the use of staff. **Ms. Hoffman** explained that most of her part-time staff about 20-30 hours/week providing curbside service. Full-time staff have continued working on other projects and priorities during COVID.

Mr. Staub asked for clarification on the \$30,000 increase request. **Ms. Hoffman** explained that this amount is due to reduced funding being provided by the state for 2021. Explained that programming would be the first thing to be cut, staff is always a last resort to be cut.

Ms. Hoffman left the meeting.

Exeter Township Volunteer Fire Department

Chief Chris Bickings presented the Exeter Township Volunteer Fire Department's 2021 budget presentation. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Bickings reviewed 2020 operations. Explained that they are a volunteer department supplemented by part-time staff who are on site 24/7 365 days a year. Currently have about 60 volunteers, and oversee the Fire Police.

Reviewed current apparatus, community events and involvement. Reviewed 2020 stats for responses, calls have been steady over the last several years. More than ¼ of their calls overlap, demonstrating a need for a larger service.

Reviewed 2021 operations budget. Primary source of income is from the township in the form of the fire tax. Revenue also comes from social quarters, St. Lawrence Borough, and miscellaneous grants.

Discussed expenses, explained that the enactment of the Homestead Act reduced the funding they saw from the fire tax. The Township provided additional funding as a result, hoping to continue that for 2021. Plan to establish a committee to replace Tower 25 apparatus.

Reviewed goals for 2021.

Reviewed the Fire Services Fund. Explained that the numbers are staying fairly steady. There have been some changes as a result of the Fire Police being incorporated into their operation. Revenue is in line with 2020 as well as expenses.

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Reviewed Apparatus Fund, explained that last year the Township put \$1M into this fund. Do not anticipate any apparatus expenses in 2021, planning for 2022 and 2023.

Mr. Bartlett asked what year the tower truck is that they are looking to replace. **Mr. Bickings** responded that it is a 1995.

Administration and Other Funds

Ms. Savage reviewed the 2021 Administrative Overview. A copy of this presentation is attached to these minutes.

Reviewed Elected Officials budget, saw some additional meeting expenses this year due to COVID. Expect those expenses to continue. Reviewed Tax Collection budget, this includes tax bill printing expenses which increased in 2020 due to the implementation of the Homestead Exemption. The printing could not be accommodated by the County so we transitioned to BCIU for Township taxes.

Reviewed IT budget, explained that the administration is currently seeking proposals for IT services in 2021. Hopeful that a new vendor will allow realizing cost savings. **Mr. Galtere** asked where new computers are budgeted. **Ms. Savage** explained that in the past they have been budgeted to the department for which they are purchased. We have also looked into leasing equipment for the future.

Mr. Bartlett explained that we will also be working with the new IT vendor on server replacement, which would be a capital item.

Ms. Savage reviewed the library budget. Library debt was defeased in 2019, included the \$30,000 increase requested by the library.

Reviewed the Township Manager budget; contains the manager's salary as well as the executive secretary's salary. Also contains legal fees. The recycling expense is also contained under this item, the expense has increased significantly. Hoping to see some cost savings with a new bid, but not guaranteed.

Reviewed animal control services, cost has increased slightly for 2021 due to an increase in services being offered to the Township. Part of the contract will include the Township providing her a retired K9 vehicle that would otherwise be scrapped.

Reviewed Township Secretary budget, this encompasses two partial staff members. There were some additional expenses in 2020 due to advertising.

Reviewed Finance Department budget, discussed finance staff, defeased debt, TIF payment, and insurance costs. Reviewed Human Resources/Risk Management, recommending filling the vacant HR Manager position for 2021 at a lesser salary than previously filled. A Finance staff member does partial HR work, and a portion of her salary is in this budget.

Mr. Bartlett explained that he will be continuing to work on the budget along with Ms. Savage, and anticipate having the preliminary budget prepared for the 11/23 meeting. Budget approval at the 12/14 meeting.

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Mr. Galtere stated that he is concerned about the timetable, there is not a lot of time to review and ask questions. Would like to see the whole budget before the 11/23 meeting. **Ms. Savage** stated she can provide the complete budget for the 11/9 meeting for review, it just won't be the complete budget packet but the spreadsheets will be done. **Mr. Galtere** asked that changes be pointed out for ease of review.

Discussion on fee schedule, **Mr. Galtere** would like to see the fee schedule discussed earlier than December if the budget numbers are based upon the schedule.

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.

NONE

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION of Mr. Galtere, seconded by Mr. Staub, the meeting adjourned at 7:57 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laurie Getz
Township Secretary