

COVINGTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021

The August 3, 2021, Monthly Meeting of the Covington Township Board of Supervisors was called to order with a Pledge of Allegiance at 7:10 p.m. in the Municipal Building, 20 Moffat Drive, Covington Township, PA 18444, by Chairwoman Melissa Kearney.

PRESENT:

Chairwoman Melissa Kearney; Vice Chairman John Brostoski; Supervisor Marshall Peirce; Supervisor Chris Balish; Supervisor Vicki Williams; Solicitor Joel M. Wolff; Secretary Melinda Musso.

Also present were: Corporal Bastek; David Lamm, Building Inspector; Ronald Donati, Zoning Officer.

AGENDA:

ON MOTION duly made (Williams), seconded (Balish) and carried to accept the agenda as presented.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

There was an Executive Session held August 3, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. for personnel reasons to discuss open township positions.

MINUTES:

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Peirce) and carried to accept the minutes from July 6, 2021, Monthly Meeting and July 27, 2021, Work Session Meeting.

BILLS:

ON MOTION duly made (Williams), seconded (Brostoski) and carried to accept the bills as presented.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Roz Davis asked if the reports are available for the public to see. Chairwoman Kearney advised copies will be made.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Williams) and carried to accept the Treasurer's Report.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

Vicki Williams' Resignation Letter from the Board of Auditors:

Chairwoman Kearney read the letter dated July 7, 2021. ON MOTION duly made (Peirce), seconded (Balish) and carried to accept Vicki Williams' resignation from the Board of Auditors.

PP&L EU Lackawanna – Pocono 69kV Line Rebuild Project – second notification:

Chairwoman Kearney stated PP&L is only replacing lines, but they are not in Covington Township, however, they may be using the access road on Freytown to the substation and they may put gravel down. Engineer Mary Lou Butler confirmed that was what she was told and added that this was a typical notification letter.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Peirce) and carried to accept the PP&L contract.

David Lindsey estimate re: Moffat Mansion roof:

Chairwoman Kearney stated there was a quote for \$1,235.00 on July 11, 2021, received from David Lindsey and the roof has been repaired. Vice Chairman Brostoski explained the leak came from the vent pipe and Mr. Lindsey also did a few other repairs with windows, the entrance overhang, the area above the picture window, and the roof at the back entrance was subbed out to Demeck's. Vice Chairman Brostoski added that we were very fortunate to get a local individual that did the job right for a minimal amount of money and the township is happy with it. He added repairs were also done to the dance studio roof. Chairman Kearney advised the bill came to \$4,889.00 and included all indoor and outdoor work at the dance studio building and Moffat Mansion.

Chairman Kearney stated they are working on problems discovered at the Recycling Center now and the building is closed, but they are still holding recycling as scheduled outdoors. No one can enter the building.

Hire SRO:

A letter was received by Chief Klocko that was read by Chairman Kearney recommending Christopher Macguire is hired as SRO for the 2021-2022 school year.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Balish) and carried to accept Officer Ciannella as the interim SRO.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Balish) to hire Christopher Macguire as the SRO beginning in January 2022.

Hire Moffat Grounds Keeper/Maintenance: Chairwoman Kearney advised we will come back to this item.

Hire Interim Director of Public Works:

ON MOTION duly made (Kearney), seconded (Balish) and carried to hire Tom Hall as Road Master. Supervisor Kearney stated she would like to see the township have a part-time Director of Public Works that would oversee the Road Department & township buildings.

ON MOTION duly made (Kearney), seconded (Brostoski) and carried to appoint Marshall Peirce part time as the Director of Public Works. Motion passed with 4 yes votes and one abstention from Supervisor Peirce. This salary would be set by the Board of Auditors.

Hire Philip Setzer for Road Department:

Vice Chairman Brostoski asked why we are rehiring Mr. Setzer. Supervisor Peirce stated Mr. Setzer use to work for the township where he would help out when an extra pair of hands were needed and also with recycling on a part-time basis. Supervisor Kearney clarified this would be for an as-needed basis and Mr. Setzer would not have any set hours to work but would be called in.

ON MOTION duly made (Peirce), seconded (Balish) and passed to hire Phillip Setzer as a part-time, as-needed employee for the Road Department.

Liaisons:

Chairwoman Kearney explained these two vacancies existed due to the resignations of two previous supervisors & stated since Chris Balish was currently on the Sewer Authority Board, she felt he would be a good candidate for the Sewer Authority Liaison.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski) to appoint Chris Balish as the Sewer Authority Liaison. Motion not seconded at this time. Roz Davis asked if this was a conflict of interest. Chairwoman Kearney stated she didn't believe so because they serve on the Board and Sewer Authority Board, and they are just a liaison where he is just relaying information or questions they may have. Chairwoman Kearney also explained she was the liaison to the Planning Commission but that it doesn't make her a Planning Commission member or give her any extra rights. Roz Davis stated she understood but when someone is a liaison and there happens to be a problem with that individual, not that there's going to be one, but it seems like a conflict with the liaison trying to hash it all out. Vice Chairman Brostoski stated the liaison is just for communication and he is the liaison for the Police Department. Roz Davis stated that it seems unusual to have a liaison that also sits on both Boards. Vice-Chairman Brostoski stated this is what was done in the past with Tom Yerke who was liaison to the Sewer Authority and also served on the Board and Sewer Authority Board. Mr. Yerke would bring back any questions they had, and it didn't give him any administrative power to make any decisions or anything of that nature. Roz Davis commented that she just thought you wanted to do things differently. Vice Chairman Brostoski felt it was the most logical thing to do. Chairwoman Kearney stated appointing Christ Balish is because he is already at all the meetings and would make a good point of contact. She added that if anyone had any issue, they can still reach out to any supervisor and are not limited to only the liaison.

ON MOTION duly made (Peirce), seconded (Brostoski) and passed to appoint Chris Balish as the Sewer Authority Liaison.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Balish) and passed to appoint Vicki Williams as the Lackawanna County Tax Collection Committee's 1st Alternate.

Resolution 2021-05 Plan Revision for New Land Development re: Covington Lakes Estates Phase 8 (DEP):

Chairwoman Kearney read this resolution out loud. Vice Chairman Brostoski asked Mary Lou Butler why this was a revision to the original plan. Mrs. Butler explained that anytime a new property is added, especially with on-lot systems, they have to update the sewer module with PA DEP because the new user was not in the original plan.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Williams) and carried to approve Resolution 2021-05.

Computer Visionaries, Inc.:

Chairwoman Kearney stated the camera installation has begun and yesterday there was a misunderstanding concerning the original quote for the police station where a monitor would be installed at the station. Corporal Bastek explained the police department would be monitoring all cameras throughout the township properties and the current 19" monitor isn't large enough to accomplish that. He explained Chief Klocko requested a monitor between 40"-50" be installed on the wall at the station. Chairwoman Kearney explained this wasn't in the original quote and after speaking to Computer Visionaries, they recommended it would be more cost efficient to purchase a 48" television to use as a monitor. There was a small increase of \$458.80 for the wiring and brackets that would be needed for this.

ON MOTION duly made (Kearney), seconded (Balish) and carried to approve the Computer Visionaries, Inc. quote for \$458.80 and the purchase of a 48” television for the Police Department’s monitoring of township cameras.

Hire Moffat Grounds Keeper/Maintenance:

Chairman Kearney advised they will be hiring for two positions. One is for Moffat groundskeeper/maintenance and the other is for the Department of Public Works. One of the applicants had a CDL B license and is very qualified for the position.

ON MOTION duly made (Balish), seconded (Peirce) and carried to hire William P. Moore at \$18.00/hour with benefits as a Department of Public Works laborer.

Chairwoman Kearney stated that after his six-month probationary period, they will discuss raising his salary to \$20.00/hour.

Chairwoman Kearney stated the candidate for Moffat grounds keeper/maintenance also comes very qualified for the position but does not currently have a CDL license. This is something he may be interested in and they will discuss this with him in the near future.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Williams) and carried to hire Kevin Kowalski at \$18.00/hour with benefits for the Moffat Groundskeeper/maintenance position.

Vice Chairman Brostoski stated there were a lot of good, qualified applicants that made it difficult to decide who to hire and then spoke of the two new employees. He also thanked all those who applied and that all new employees go through a six-month probationary period.

PLANNING COMMISSION:

Chairwoman Kearney reviewed the items from the Planning Commission’s report from their July 21, 2021 meeting.

ON MOTION duly made (Balish), seconded (Peirce) and carried to accept the Planning Commission’s report.

BUILDING INSPECTOR:

David Lamm reviewed his monthly report as submitted.

ON MOTION duly made (Williams), seconded (Balish) and carried to accept the Building Inspector’s report.

ZONING CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER:

Ronald Donati stated Wonderful Art Studio was sent a letter, sign ordinance, and sign permit application because they never turned in any applications for signs at the building they rent from the township. Currently there are three signs attached to the building and two of those signs have been bolted through the building. He felt this should be addressed with the supervisors since they are their tenant.

Mr. Donati stated Notices of Violations have been issued to Sheridan, Sparrow, DeMarco, and Brouillette. He also reviewed the remainder of his monthly report.

Scott VanFleet asked about the Notices of Violations for the people mentioned and what’s the steps. Mr. Donati stated the violations were issued and there’s a ten-day period where they can appeal to the Board of Supervisors. After that, they would be given notice by the magistrate.

Mr. VanFleet asked why four out of the nine people on the list were chosen and not the others. Mr. Donati stated the other people on his list still aren’t in compliance, however, they are working with him to make the appropriate corrections.

Bill Willson stated he was going to ask the same question. He asked if the appeal to the Board of Supervisors means there would be a special meeting held. Chairwoman Kearney stated if they requested an appeal, the Board would hold a public hearing to hear their case within twenty days. Mr. Donati stated that if they don’t appeal, then the case goes directly to the magistrate. Chairwoman Kearney stated these four properties are those that clearly aren’t doing anything to come into compliance. Mr. VanFleet asked if this was selective enforcement since there are five more properties that have just as many issues. Chairwoman Kearney replied that she agreed with him and they are working on all the properties that have issues, but this is where they began. She also stated the other properties will not fall by the wayside and will be addressed soon.

Roz Davis asked about the ten days they have to respond and what that cutoff date is. Mr. Donati stated it is ten days after the letter is received. Melinda Musso clarified the notices are sent certified mail and it’s ten days after the date they accept the certified letter.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Balish) and carried to accept the Zoning Code Enforcement Officer’s report.

ENGINEER:

Mary Lou Butler reviewed her report as submitted. Mrs. Butler stated she does not have a start date for the road projects yet due to the rain delaying the contractor's other projects and things got moved back. She advised once they start, they have 60 days to complete the project.

Mrs. Butler stated George Parker is doing the surveying/engineering on the Storm Estate. It is still under review since no action was taken at the last Planning Commission meeting. She stated her revisions have been submitted and the plans have been updated. George Parker presented the Board with revised plans reflecting the changes Mrs. Butler suggested. Mr. Parker stated what wasn't addressed was some signatures and the sewage planning module. He explained the delays with the sewage planning module, issues the owner has faced with the house increasing in cost, and not being able to obtain building permits because the subdivision has not been approved yet. Mr. Parker asked the Board if they would allow the owner to proceed at her own risk especially since the sewer module is the only thing left to submit. Mr. Parker stated if the contractor doesn't get an answer from the owner soon, then he will move onto another job and since the house is already ordered, it will be delivered whether the owner is ready for it or not. Chairwoman Kearney clarified that they are waiting on the sewer part of the process and Mr. Parker stated he just doesn't know what module to complete until DEP gets back to him. Vice Chairman Brostoski stated he had no problem with that and asked Attorney Wolff if it would be proper to allow this. Ronald Donati stated he can't issue a zoning permit without the module and everything is completed. Mr. Donati asked what the chance was that DEP would deny their plan and Mr. Parker stated he did not know. David Lamm stated he is not allowed to issue a building permit without a valid septic permit. Vice Chairman Brostoski asked Mr. Lamm if there was any other work the owner can do to which he replied that it all depends on what the township wants to be liable for. There was a lengthy discussion. Mr. Donati suggested waiting to see if the paperwork can be completed and represented at the September meeting since the house isn't being delivered until November and there's enough time to accomplish everything through DEP and the Planning Commission before the September monthly meeting.

ON MOTION duly made (Balish), seconded (Brostoski) and carried to accept the Engineer's report.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS:

Tom Hall mentioned the issue in Skyline Acres with the blocked culvert was due to someone putting a garbage can lid to cover the drainpipe. The ditch has been cleaned out and should work fine now.

Mr. Hall reviewed his report as submitted. Chairwoman Kearney asked about the issue at Belle Terrace and Mr. Hall explained a resident is discharging their sump pump so that it flows out to Route 307. Since the resident refused to change it and this affects a state road, PennDOT was contacted, and they are having their engineers come out to see how to resolve the problem.

Chairwoman Kearney stated the service request concerning mulch at Moffat Park is currently being worked on.

Vice Chairman Brostoski asked about the dead tree branch hanging over Route 435. Mr. Hall explained the township has numerous trees that are dead on this property and he can knock them down, but he would need another person to help.

ON MOTION duly made (Kearney), seconded (Balish) and carried to pay Tom Hall \$25.00/hour as Road Master to be retroactive to the July 2021 meeting.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Peirce) and carried to accept the Department of Public Works report.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Corporal Bastek reviewed the monthly report as submitted.

ON MOTION duly made (Peirce), seconded (Balish) and carried to accept the Police Department's report.

RECREATION COMMITTEE:

Chairman Kearney stated they didn't meet in July, however, a letter of interest was received from Elmira Brown that was read. There was a discussion about her emergency preparedness experience and Melinda Musso was asked to call her to see if she can meet with the Board before the next work session meeting.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Williams) and carried to appoint Elmira Brown to the Recreation Committee in the vacated position from Barbara Havenstrite that expires in January 2023.

SEWAGE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER:

No report was submitted this month.

SOLICITOR:

Mr. & Mrs. Hinkley submitted a real estate tax assessment appeal for a property located at 675 Freytown Road and recommended he be allowed to enter an appearance on behalf of the township so the township can be notified of all the proceedings.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Balish) and carried to approve the Solicitor to enter an appearance for the Hinkley tax appeal.

ON MOTION duly made (Balish), seconded (Brostoski) and carried to accept the Solicitor's report.

NEW BUSINESS:

2020 Liquid Fuels Tax Fund Audit:

Chairwoman Kearney stated the results for the 2020 Liquid Fuels audit was sufficient and no discrepancies were found.

Municipal Recycling/Waste Planning Program Grant re: final payment processing:

Chairwoman Kearney stated we will be receiving reimbursement of \$4,374.00 for the recycling containers and then this grant will be closed out.

Social Media Integration with New Website:

Chairwoman Kearney stated our new website is up and running. She advised that since Melinda Musso has been covering two jobs during this interim period, the newsletter has fallen by the wayside. The new website can integrate with social media to get the information out to our residents immediately. There are ways to handle comments by either restricting them altogether or previewing them before we allow them to be posted to our social media page.

Melinda Musso stated the new website was designed to have an integration with social media. Once we put information on our News section of our website, it will automatically make a post with our social media account. The only setup needed will be created our Facebook page and then contacting the programmer to link the new account to our site which would take approximately thirty minutes. Ms. Musso suggested addressing comments by a preapproval basis since there is a value to questions and more than likely, multiple people can have the same questions.

Roz Davis stated she doesn't do Facebook and asked if the posts will only be on social media. Ms. Musso advised all posts would be on both the website and Facebook. There was further discussion on whether to allow comments, those who may not have any internet access and the time that would be spent reviewing the social media comments.

United Concordia dental insurance renewal rates for 10/1/21-9/30/22:

Chairwoman Kearney stated our dental insurance renewal rates have stayed the same.

Windmill yearly service:

Supervisor Balish stated the windmill needs to get reset when it starts spinning too fast and it does need to be repaired. He explained months ago, former supervisor Tom Yerke contacted Bob Jones because it sounded like it threw a bearing. Supervisor Balish didn't know if he was too busy, but he never came. He stated someone should call Mr. Jones about this or he can call him. There was further discussion on how much the windmill benefits the township and other people that may know about windmills.

Land bank/Repository Acquisitions re: 22701-020-122 & 22003-060-086:

Chairwoman Kearney stated Lackawanna County Land Bank is looking to acquire two properties in Eagle Lake Community. The township signed up with this program last year.

ON MOTION duly made (Williams), seconded (Balish) and carried to allow the county land band to acquire the properties in Eagle Lake.

OLD BUSINESS:

Northeast Signal & Electric Co. Inc. estimate re: 2021 preventative maintenance:

Chairwoman Kearney stated the preventative maintenance bill is \$14,000.00 from January and they are still tracking down the other streetlight plans to get an estimate from another company.

Fire tax:

This will be discussed at budget time.

Roof leaks/issues at Senior Center, Dance Studio building and Recycling Center:

Vice Chairman Brostoski had already reported on these earlier in the meeting.

Pillar repairs on Moffat Drive:

There were no updates on this. Supervisor Peirce asked about the quote Mr. Donati requested from Mr. Reid for fixing these. Mr. Donati stated it was submitted to Doug Hein months ago and presented to the supervisors.

Vice Chairman Brostoski asked Tom Hall if he thought the Road Department can handle fixing the pillars. Supervisor Balish stated he didn't feel it would look as good if they were to use a concrete frame around it. There was a discussion about reaching out to Bernie McGurl & Yvette Whetland for assistance. Attorney

Wolff stated he has the deed and conservation easement that outlines all the restrictions associated with the Moffat property.

Sign Ordinance:

Chairwoman Kearney advised this is being reviewed by our two new board members so that it can be presented and addressed shortly.

Appoint new EMA Coordinator:

Chairwoman Kearney advised they are going to reach out to Elmira Brown to see if she may be interested in this position.

Moffat Mansion Boiler:

This has been removed and we are waiting on the installation for the new boiler.

Camera System:

This was discussed earlier.

Zoning Map Update:

Chairwoman Kearney stated they need to speak to Mary Lou Butler concerning this.

Free Library at Pavilion:

Chairman Kearney stated she received a message about this and the Board had discussed this months ago but nothing every came of it. She had called the interested person and is waiting to hear back.

CORRESPONDENCE:

7/9/21 Lacka. County Conservation District re: NP Covington Twp LLC's NPDES permit review:

This is regarding the former RGM property and read by Chairwoman Kearney.

7/14/21 Letter from Spring Brook Township re: proposed meeting with N.P.C.O.G. & local volunteer fire & ambulance companies:

Chairwoman Kearney stated we haven't heard anything further yet.

7/19/21 Letter from Ashburn Advisors, LLC re: DCED CFA Multimodal Grant for Route 435 Driveway and Traffic Improvement project:

Supervisor Peirce asked if PA DOT was looking to have a traffic light installed there. No one knew any further information. Ms. Musso pointed out a subsequent letter that replaced this later in the agenda that withdrew the wording for a traffic light. Chairwoman Kearney advised we are only being notified because they are applying for a grant.

7/24/21 Email from Bryan Williams re: volunteer professional painting services for restoring mansion window trim:

Chairwoman Kearney read email. Bryan Williams stated he would be able to have all the windows restored before it snows since it would be done in his spare time. He asked if the township would supply the materials needed. Supervisor Peirce asked if he would be willing to purchase the materials he prefers to use and then submit the receipts to the township for reimbursement. Mr. Williams agreed. Chairwoman Kearney asked Mr. Williams to submit his certificate of insurance to the township office. Ms. Musso stated this has already been sent into our office. Gratitude from the Board was expressed to Mr. Williams.

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Balish) and carried to allow Bryan Williams to restore the mansion window trim and doorways and to submit bills for the reimbursement of materials purchased.

7/27/21 Letter from Ashburn Advisors, LLC re: DCED CFA Multimodal Grant for Route 435 Driveway and Traffic Improvement project -Replacement of 7/24/21 notification:

This was just discussed.

7/28/21 Worker's Compensation decision:

Chairman Kearney stated this was a claim for a volunteer fireman that was approved.

7/28/21 Letter from Lacka. County C.O.G. re: August 19th convention voting information:

Chairwoman Kearney stated this was just notifying the Board of the items that will be voted upon at the convention.

SUPERVISORS COMMENTS:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ronald Donati stated he found a copy of the quote for the Moffat Drive pillars and reviewed the information and cost involved.

Alex Sponza informed the Board he's been contacted by a company that wants to put a cell tower in his backyard and he wants nothing to do with it. He's concerned with environment issues they affect and has rejected their offer. Mr. Sponza is concerned that they may try it somewhere else and questioned if the township has any cell tower regulations. Mr. Donati stated there are regulations and stated if they can co-locate on an existing tower, it would be better since

the township already has four cell towers. Mr. Sponza stated these new towers are much higher to accommodate 5G and wanted to make sure the Board is aware of it. There was a discussion on how detailed, expensive and time consuming the process would be to establish a new tower. Mr. Sponza asked to be notified if a request for a new tower gets submitted to the township.

Bill Willson stated that the Board of Auditors will meet Monday, August 9, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. to set Supervisor Peirce's wages as a working supervisor. Chairwoman Kearney stated that since there are only two auditors, they would both need to be in agreeance for a majority to set his wages.

Mr. Willson asked Attorney Wolff if now that Mr. Balish is a supervisor, his rate of pay is supposed to be decided by the Board of Auditors and asked if that's something the Auditor's also needed to address. Chairwoman Kearney stated that since he was an existing employee, and later took on supervisor it would stay the same but added she would check on this. Mr. Willson expressed he wanted to make sure everything was done correctly.

Bill Willson asked about the township fuel oil for all the township building and asked if anyone has notified ABC Oil to not do an autofill so the township can obtain other prices. Ms. Musso stated the former caretaker use to call when the tank needed to be filled. Mr. Willson suggested calling COG for their prices because they can be up to .40 cents cheaper per gallon. Chairwoman Kearney stated there hasn't been a COG meeting in a while but there should be soon.

Chairman Kearney stated she forgot to mention earlier in the meeting and is proud to announce the township was approved for the ARPA Grant in which we will receive \$237,703.78. We have already received the first half of the money already and the second half will be disbursed next year. The only restriction is that it must be used for COVID related expenses within a certain time frame.

Tom Hall stated Ted Stefansky with PA DOT told him the township has 96 tons of antiskid and 98.95 tons of salt in their shed. Mr. Hall doesn't know if Mr. Hein ordered any salt for the township since it should have been ordered in the beginning of the year. There was a discussion about how much salt the township puts in their shed, the tracking of how many times our trucks fill up and the discrepancies in how much a bucket holds. Tom Hall stated the township usually orders approximately 200 tons to begin with and mentioned last year the township used approximately 300 tons.

Roz Davis stated she had asked before Mr. Hein resigned if the township was going to do an audit, the same as was done when Kate left the township. Supervisor Williams stated there was an audit. Chairwoman Kearney stated it was performed by the township's Board of Auditors and everything was found to be in compliance.

ADJOURNMENT:

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Balish) and carried to adjourn at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda Musso, Secretary

Approved: