

**COVINGTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2021**

The August 31, 2021 Work Session meeting of the Covington Township Board of Supervisors was called to order with a Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 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 Vicki Williams, Supervisor Chris Balish, Solicitor Joel Wolff, and Secretary Melinda Musso.
Also present was Police Chief Bernie Klocko.

AGENDA:

Chairwoman Kearney stated a new rule went into effect today and any additions to the agendas would need to be approved by motions, then more posting requirements after the meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Executive session was held on August 25, 2021 to discuss the lease for Wonderful and met with someone concerning EMA Coordinator.

MINUTES:

Minutes presented from August 3, 2021. Any changes need to get to Melinda Musso before the end of the week.

BILLS:

List of bills presented as of August 31, 2021

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Treasurer's report presented as of August 31, 2021

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

Motion to advertise to sell bulldozer:

Chairwoman Kearney stated the township would like to sell a bulldozer. Supervisor Peirce gave the secretary information to make an ad and next week they will need a motion to sell it. Supervisor Balish asked if there's a set price we were looking for. There was further discussion on whether to have a minimum bid amount, the right to reject any bids, trade in value with CoStars.

Motion to sign bulldozer title:

Chairwoman Kearney stated they need a motion to have one of the Board members sign the bulldozer title once it's sold. Chairman Peirce said there isn't a title for machines, but he will need a letter from the Board authorizing him to sign the documents needed for the sale.

Lease agreement with Wonderful:

Chairwoman Kearney stated her and Supervisor Balish met with Kelly Davies regarding her lease last week. Ms. Davies told the Board she could only pay \$850/month with all utilities included for a one-year lease. There were concerns by Ms. Davies about two Head Start buses parking in the township lot, lines marking the parking area were faded, and a local student driver instructor using the lot on occasion to practice parallel parking. Chairwoman Kearney stated Occhipinti Dance Studio does pay for their utilities. Attorney Wolff confirmed the original lease stated Ms. Davies is responsible for all utilities. Chairman Kearney stated the subsequent lease had utilities removed from it and her rent was reduced to \$450/month due to a hardship during COVID. There was further discussion about the electric to that building being on one meter which includes Wonderful and the Police Department usage, the sewer bill can be split, the oil heat is separate, and the township's other tenants already pay for their utilities. Supervisor Williams suggested all township leases be the same for all tenants to avoid issues in the future. Supervisor Peirce estimated Wonderful occupies approximately 1,800 sq.ft. and is also getting free snow removal and free garbage along with the electric, sewer, and heat. Supervisor Balish informed the Board that Ms. Davies shovels her sidewalks in the winter whereas Occhipinti Dance Studio does not. Wonderful has also expanded this past year to occupy 2 extra rooms for an extra \$50/month. There was further discussion on this township building being a commercial property, the fairness of the leases, and the other benefits tenants are provided by the township. Roz Davis asked how much the garbage dumper costs the township. Chairwoman Kearney stated the \$205.23 was the August fee on the bill list. Roz asked if the garbage fee can be divided to

share the cost. The supervisors requested Attorney Wolff to revise the one-year lease for \$850/month plus heating oil, also, to add the list of benefits the township is providing with the other utilities and to get it to Ms. Davies before the end of the week for review. This will be further discussed and decided upon at the monthly meeting on September 7th. Chairman Kearney stated Ms. Davies was asked to attend the meeting in case there were any questions she had for the Board. If it's approved that night, the rent will be immediately due. If it's not signed, then she may not want to be our tenant anymore, in which case, the township would give her time to move. Roz Davis asked if the sign issue was going to get addressed and Chairwoman Kearney stated it has already been addressed by the Zoning Officer, however, the lease also states the tenant must abide by the regulations of the township.

JanPro estimate re: Senior Center cleaning:

The estimate is for cleaning services needed since that building has been closed since the beginning of the pandemic. There's a one-time service cost and also a quote for quarterly services.

Melinda Musso stated Ehrlich is exterminating the building on September 7th and repeating the treatment two weeks later. We will find out at that time when it's safe to get the building cleaned. Chairwoman Kearney added that these expenses can be reimbursed by the ARPA money the township received for COVID expenses.

PLANNING COMMISSION:

Report submitted from their meeting on August 18, 2021.

BUILDING INSPECTOR:

No report was submitted.

ZONING CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER:

No report was submitted.

ENGINEER:

No report was submitted

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS:

Supervisor Peirce read a list of items that need attention:

- Lines are needed to be repainted on the road going into the high school since they are almost completely faded. Supervisor Balish stated once the township lines a road, the township is responsible for anything that happens. Supervisor Peirce stated it was already previously lined and being so faded is a liability. Supervisor Balish offered to find out who can do this.
- Eagle Lake has asked about putting a single yellow center line on the hills and curves of A.M. Hughes Boulevard. Supervisor Peirce stated it may not be a good thing for the township to do since the road is very narrow. Eagle Lake is concerned about accidents. Chief Bernie Klocko stated he was thankful there has not been any issues with accidents there. Supervisor Peirce informed Eagle Lake the township doesn't want to do that. Supervisor Balish stated he spoke to Chett Havenstrite and asked if Eagle Lake will assume responsibility if something happens, as opposed to someone coming after the township but he doesn't see the township doing that.
- Purchase tire chains for the front drive axle of the big John Deere loader and this would allow it to become more usable in the winter. This will cost approximately \$1,500.
- Purchase parts to fix the spreader on one of the small dump trucks that has been broken since last winter.
- Purchase parts to fix the blade that goes on the big John Deere loader that has been broken for a few years.
- Fix leak in the front differential of the 4-wheel drive Freightliner. Supervisor Peirce stated Chris Balish could attest that this has leaked from the beginning and while under warranty, was never taken back to get fixed. This is currently at Pocono Transportation where it's a major job to tear it apart to fix it properly from the inside.
- Papers were taken to A.J. Auto on the four rubber-tired machines that don't have license plates.
- There are a lot of road and ditch problems from last week's hurricane and is anticipating more problems with the upcoming hurricane on Thursday.

- Eagle Lake has a runoff from Red Fox back gate onto Lehigh Road. He looked at it with Chett Havenstrite who said Eagle Lake is talking to an engineer that stated the ditch needs to be made wider, however, Supervisor Peirce pointed out that a wider ditch will still have a tremendous amount of water flowing down to Lehigh Road washing the road out completely. There is significant damage regularly to this road due to the runoff from Eagle Lake that warrants Eagle Lake needing to possibly get a detention pond. Supervisor Balish stated he clocked almost a mile of roadway that gets washed away just from the runoff from Eagle Lake and down the hill. Supervisor Peirce suggested possibly sending an official letter asking Eagle Lake to take care of their runoff issues. Attorney Wolff suggested taking pictures of the runoff from their property. Supervisor Balish stated it has gotten worse since Eagle Lake has been removing field stone from their property over the past few years which is also contributing to the destruction of the road. Chairwoman Kearney asked that any pictures or videos of this be sent to Melinda at the office.
- The two Head Start buses need to be notified to find somewhere else to leave their buses during the day.
- There are more roof leaks: two leaks at the mansion and one leak over men's room in the pavilion which is possibly the vent pipe.
- We will need to bid out for oil this year. Chairwoman Kearney stated she spoke to ABC Oil who wanted to clarify that whoever told the township they were paying .45/gallon more was completely mistaken since all providers buy oil for the same price. While there may be a small difference, it's never as much as .45/gal. Chairwoman Kearney said she informed him the township is bidding their oil this year and assured him he will be included to place a bid. Supervisor Kearney stated we should reach out to COG about the oil bid contracts they do. Supervisor Balish stated when a machine gets filled by the tank, it's marked on the calendar and doesn't know what issues there was with the fuel. Supervisor Kearney stated it came from the auditors where slips weren't being marked properly. Supervisor Balish explained there are two tanks they pull fuel from for equipment when the gas station is closed, or they are in a rush.
- We need to order salt.

ROADMASTER:

No report was submitted.

MOFFAT ESTATE MAINTENANCE – GROUNDSKEEPER:

No report was submitted. This category will be discussed under New Business for Executive meeting.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

SRO Contract:

Chief Klocko explained in the past there had never been any written agreements for SRO's between Covington Township and North Pocono School District. In recent years, the police department was kept out of the loop in the hiring process of the SRO and it has now brought us to where we do not have a SRO because the district decided who they wanted and what they were going to pay. Every other school district in the Commonwealth has police officers subcontract through a police department. There's a contract in place and the police department will supply the district with the officer and the police department sets the rate of pay. The school board does not decide what they want to pay the officer. Chief Klocko further explained we may need to readvertise this position because of the low rate the school board wants to pay the officer. The officer that was just hired will not take the job for the amount the district is offering. This is also the reason we lost our last SRO due to the lack of pay.

Chief Klocko stated he drew up a contract based on contracts throughout the United States, as well as NASRO (National Association of School Resource Officers), that will protect the township as well as the school district. He stated he didn't know why one was never put in place before but as the chief administrator of the police department, they are his liability and not the school district's liability. Chief Klocko stated the rate set in the contract is \$27/hour and the school board's only decision here would be whether to hire Covington Township or not. The township does not have any obligation to supply the district with an officer right now since there is no contract in place.

Supervisor Brostoski asked about the other three schools and Chief Klocko explained those are not police officers but school employees that have to abide by all school policies. They are retired law enforcement and are equivalent to armed security guards where they have no power to make an arrest and can only act within the guideline of the district employee policies.

Chairwoman Kearney stated she has reached out to have a meeting with the School Board so things can be fully explained by Chief Klocko. Supervisor Brostoski stated the high school needs someone with arrest powers, whereas the other schools not as much. Chief Klocko stated it would be a benefit to the community to have a sworn police officer in the high school. Chief Klocko also stated Ron Collins should be the only one involved with the interviews since he will be working with this officer, however, who is hired is ultimately the police chief's decision because the district knows nothing about vetting an officer.

Supervisor Peirce asked if the district decides they don't want to enter into a contract with the township, then should we just say okay and not be involved. Chief Klocko agreed and stated we are giving the district the opportunity to decide if they still want a law enforcement officer in the high school. Supervisor Brostoski stated if something were to happen in the school without having an SRO in it, it could possibly take 6 minutes for an officer to arrive from Freytown Road to render aid and, by that time, the situation would be over by the time an officer arrived on scene.

There was further discussion about the breakdown in communication between the district board and administration that affected the last SRO and Chief Klocko stated we should speak directly to the board to make sure the district board and administration is fully aware of the differences in having an officer versus a security guard and having a contract that would protect both parties. Chairwoman Kearney stated she was waiting to hear back from Ian Farr at the district to schedule this meeting.

Chief Klocko stated he will keep Melinda in the loop for the SRO hours for school events. Chairwoman Kearney stated the Treasurer, Diana Patton, will be handling that. Supervisor Brostoski asked if the district will be paying the interim officer's benefits while he is covering the vacant SRO position. Chief Klocko stated they never had to previously since the former SRO didn't need medical benefits, however, the current temporary SRO receives full benefits and since the district agreed to this arrangement, they should be billed since he is only working in the school during this period.

Chief Klocko also stated he will be meeting with Eagle Lake and asked the Board what the cost would be to provide dedicated police service to them for next year. He also stated Eagle Lake had a lot of positive feedback this year with the increased enforcement. The Board informed Chief Klocko the rate is \$65/hour due to the township's expenses of paying overtime and benefits for this service.

RECREATION COMMITTEE:

No report was submitted.

SEWAGE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER:

No report was submitted.

SOLICITOR:

North Point Development:

Attorney Wolff stated the Planning Commission approved their plans with several conditions. There is a timeline for the Board to make a decision by September 13th. If a decision is not reached by then, he will need to ask for an extension agreement with the developer. The contingencies of this plan are reasonable and have to do mostly with outside agencies. The Board can decide to approve their plans with the listed conditions, and unless all the conditions are met, the Board doesn't sign any of their plans. This would avoid the developers needing to come back to the Board every month.

Supervisor Peirce stated he asked at the Planning Commission if there needed to be a new traffic light on Route 307 due to this project and he was told it was not needed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Executive meeting needed re: personnel & possible hiring:

Chairman Kearney would like to schedule an executive meeting to discuss hiring of the township secretary, part-time zoning secretary – office assistant, and Moffat maintenance – groundskeeper positions so that at the next meeting there can be a motion to advertise for the open positions. There was a discussion about the resignation of Kevin Kowalski being due to his previous employer offered him a large bonus and more benefits.

Supervisor Peirce stated Christian Kramer showed interest in still working part-time after school for a couple hours a day throughout the year. There's a possibility that our other part-time seasonal worker, Robert Van Brunt, may also be interested in some hours too.

It was agreed to meet for executive session on Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

Sewer & stormwater issue on Route 435 by Covington Lakes Estates:

This is an issue that will be discussed with the township engineer.

OLD BUSINESS:

Windmill yearly service:

Chairwoman Kearney asked Supervisor Balish if he reached out to someone for the windmill service. Supervisor Balish stated we need to talk to Bob Jones however former supervisor Yerke reached out to him months ago and didn't know what came of it. Supervisor Balish stated he would call Mr. Jones tomorrow.

CORRESPONDENCE:

PennDOT LTAP summer 2021 information sheet #216 & newsletter:

Chairwoman Kearney stated this was just for our information.

8/25/21 ELCA re: Notice of application for groundwater withdrawals from 3 wells:

Chairwoman Kearney stated this was just to notify the township.

SUPERVISORS COMMENTS:

There were no comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Roz Davis stated she has worked with Melinda Musso on the Zoning Hearing Board for the past two or three years and didn't want to lose her there, however, since the Board will be discussing her salary, she felt Ms. Musso should be paid \$25/hour which would be equivalent to what was paid to the previous secretary. Ms. Davis stated Ms. Musso brings more experience and an invaluable asset of integrity, where the Board will not have to worry about her disrespecting anyone or being insubordinate, she treats everyone with respect and would not cause any harm to the residents of this township because she goes out of her way to help people, and for those reasons, deserves to be paid the equivalent to what the previous secretary earned. Chairwoman Kearney stated this will be discussed at the executive session and that she would be taken care of but what needs to be taken into consideration was the previous secretary was also the treasurer. Ms. Davis stated Ms. Musso would be doing more and then asked Ms. Musso if she helps the current treasurer to which she replied yes since the current treasurer is in the office two days per month. Ms. Davis pointed out that Ms. Musso also takes care of the website. Chairwoman Kearney stated this is why the Board is having executive session to discuss the duties and the possible hiring of another person.

Chief Klocko asked if before the Board has their budget meetings, he requested to discuss his contract and some proposals he had regarding pay scales and vehicles with the police department. Chairman Kearney stated the budget talks will begin at the end of September or beginning of October so there is time to discuss those matters.

ADJOURNMENT:

On motion duly made (Williams), seconded (Balish), and carried to adjourn at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda Musso, Secretary

Approved: