

**COVINGTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2021**

The October 26, 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.

AGENDA: Agenda was reviewed, and no comments or changes were made.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: A budget workshop will be held this Thursday, October 28, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

MINUTES: Chairwoman Kearney stated she requested a change to the minutes. The Board will have that before next week to review and if there are any other changes to be made, please let Ms. Musso know.

BILLS: Bill list was reviewed as presented.

Supervisor Williams asked if there was any way the report can be put on one sheet. Chairwoman Kearney stated she will talk to Mrs. Patton about using the previous format.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer's report reviewed as presented.

Chairwoman Kearney stated she will also ask Mrs. Patton to condense this also.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS: None

PLANNING COMMISSION: No report submitted.

Chairwoman Kearney stated the commission will be submitting a recommendation for their new solicitor, Jamie Hailstone.

BUILDING INSPECTOR: No report submitted.

ZONING CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER: No report submitted.

ENGINEER: No report submitted.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS:

Cost overrun re: Senior Center side roof: Supervisor Peirce explained as the work is being done on the Senior Center, the side roof had damage that will need to be repaired.

Rite Temp estimate re: steam valves & air vents: Supervisor Peirce stated he felt the estimate was reasonable for continuing to try to make our furnace better. He stated there is always the possibility that it may cost a little more money if they find any issues but we need to get it taken care of.

Chairwoman Kearney stated she will ask Mrs. Patton if the township has been reimbursed for the furnace yet.

ROADMASTER: No report submitted.

MOFFAT ESTATE MAINTENANCE – GROUNDSKEEPER: No report submitted.

POLICE DEPARTMENT: No report submitted.

RECREATION COMMITTEE: No report submitted, but they did meet.

SEWAGE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER: No report submitted.

SOLICITOR: Attorney Wolff stated the North Point Developer's Agreement should be signed and the escrow check should be received by next week's meeting. He explained they are having problems with DEP on their sewage plan and summarized the issues with the sewage and salt issues created by the salt shed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Transcription software: Chairwoman Kearney had been discussing with Melinda Musso options with transcription software because there's a lot of time spent on doing the minutes. Ms. Musso stated she consulted with the company that does our website, along with the group we consult for IT services, and both recommended Nuance Dragon. Ms. Musso explained the one she is recommending utilizes the equipment we already have and explained how it would work. She also explained the amount of time spent on minutes and this could create an opportunity to free up time to get other things done that build up. Supervisor Williams asked if we would get any technical support with it. Ms. Musso stated there were instructions and guides on their website but was unsure if personal tech support would be included in the cost of the software for \$500.00.

Monthly meetings & if Work Session meetings are necessary: Chairwoman Kearney explained it was brought to her attention that not all townships hold work session meetings and agenda items cannot be decided upon in these sessions. She explained her experience as an auditor attending these meetings, they were very informative. Then as time went on and secretaries changed, things were just moved from work sessions to the regular meetings without much discussion. Chairwoman Kearney wanted to give the other supervisors something to think about and stated townships are only required to have a monthly meeting, not work sessions since we can't take any action at them. This would be something that wouldn't go into effect until the reorganizational meeting in January.

OLD BUSINESS: None

CORRESPONDENCE:

Lackawanna County Planning Comm. Re: Millard:

This has been approved by the county and just needs signatures from the township.

Lackawanna County Planning Comm. Re: Storm Estate subdivision:

This has been approved by the county.

10/14/21 PA DEP Notice of Appeal Rights re: Eureka Stone Quarry Surface Mining Permit:

Chairwoman Kearney asked if this was just the formal paperwork since it was talked about last month. Ms. Musso stated it was notification on our right to appeal the decision.

10/14/21 PA DEP Technical Deficiency Letter re: North Point's NPDES Permit:

Chairwoman Kearney stated this was already discussed by the solicitor.

10/15/21 PA DEP Covington Lakes Estates Phase 8 re: Planning Module returned:

Supervisor Peirce stated this item and the letter regarding North Point should be sent to the Planning Commission for their review.

SUPERVISOR'S COMMENTS: None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Roz Davis asked how much the transcription software cost. Ms. Musso stated \$500.00.

Roz Davis asked Attorney Wolff if it was the same water issue from when North Point presented their proposal to the Board explaining how they have to do a special filtration system and it would cost them a lot of money which was why they wanted the tax break from the township. Attorney Wolff stated he did not know and could not remember if it was due to the salt. Chairwoman Kearney remembered the water issue being brought up but didn't remember the details. Roz Davis stated she remembers North Point stating they had to do extra things to offset the salt contamination. Attorney Wolff stated what DEP is requiring is above and beyond what North Point had planned.

Paul Tashjian, property owner on Freytown Road, stated there's an issue that's a growing concern. Over the past 4-5 years there have been many improvements by the township, however the previous road crew had plowed into areas of state ground last year and opened up large unsanctioned parking spots. Since then, the issues have been exaggerated. When he previously spoke to the road crew, he was told they were specifically put in for the hunters. That person is no longer working for the township. Mr. Tashjian stated he reached out because there are people dumping, doing drugs, needles being disposed on the ground, and trespassing on their private property. He has even found coyote traps placed illegally on his property close to the pull off area which may severely injure his children if they were to step on them. He stated he understands that 30-40 years ago, the land was owned by the water company and people did what they wanted, however, times have changed with new property owners because it's now all private property. Mr. Tashjian stated they have caught multiple trespassers and Chief Klocko has criminally sited another Covington Township resident for defiant trespassing and criminal mischief. Mr. Tashjian stated there is plenty of parking at the new bridge where hunters could

walk to where they want to hunt on DCNR property, which is meant for recreational purposes and not just set aside for hunters. When he spoke to the road crew last month, large rocks were placed to deter people from parking there, however, the people that are causing the problems complained and got the large rocks removed. He is asking the township to help with a pragmatic solution to help the multiple property owners that are dealing with these problems and restore these areas back to natural forest by planting trees and shrubs. Mr. Tashjian stated he would be willing to donate native trees and bushes from local nurseries to assist the township in this effort.

Jesse Hinkley asked why the rocks were removed. Chairwoman Kearney stated it was something the township shouldn't have been involved with in the first place, however, was glad to hear their side. She asked if they have reported the illegal activity and Mr. Tashjian stated he has called game wardens and police.

Chad Faldowski stated these spots are enabling bad behavior. He explained he has moved here and built a beautiful home a year ago and has already chased off 5-6 trespassers. Mr. Faldowski walks his dogs and is seeing these problems every day. There are times when township police are not on duty and state police can't get out to them. Part of the problems are the people trespassing also have guns in their hands and it's not a good situation.

Vice Chairman Brostoski asked Mr. Faldowski if his land is posted and was told all four sides are posted. Mr. Hinkley stated having the property posted does not make any difference. He explained he takes two weeks off before deer season for the sole reason of getting people off his property and it's impossible to post any more trees than what they have already done.

Supervisor Williams asked about the areas hunters are accessing. Mr. Tashjian explained that some of the land is privately owned and some is state owned. Mr. Tashjian stated he has also reached out to the Forrester and has not heard back.

Supervisor Balish stated those spots were primarily opened for hunters and the township also used them to turn around in because the road is narrow. He stated they were made bigger to park equipment there too. He also explained he has witnessed people walking on private property while back there working.

Chairwoman Kearney stated she would like to work with the residents since the township created it years ago and if those areas were to be blocked off, it wouldn't prevent people from still trespassing on these private properties. Mr. Hinkley stated it would stop some of the dumping, parking, and drug use but understands it won't be eliminated. Supervisor Peirce stated we can do something about the spots located on their properties, however, the township attorney will need to look into the area on state property to see if we can take care of that too. Mr. Faldowski stated they aren't necessarily looking for it to be blocked but having it restored to natural forest. Supervisor Peirce stated by blocking it off, the forest will regenerate itself. Mr. Tashjian stated the Board should be looking at undoing what the township created in the first place.

Jesse Hinkley asked for the township to reach out to the state. Supervisor Williams asked how many times have they contacted DCNR and Mr. Tashjian stated twice and never received a call back from the ranger.

Chairwoman Kearney stated she is supportive of what Supervisor Peirce recommended and apologized that they had to come to a meeting to get the Board's attention, especially since it should have been a Board decision in the first place. She stated we can plant trees but blocking it off will allow those areas to regrow without people ruining it by driving over them. Mr. Tashjian expressed his appreciation to the Board for being professional, courteous, and working with the property owners to come up with a long-term solution.

Roz Davis expressed her concerns over the illegal traps being set because someone can lose an arm or leg and asked Mr. Tashjian if they were confiscated. He stated the game warden was called but since there was no identifying information on them, he was told by the warden he could legally dispose of them as he wished.

ADJOURNMENT:

ON MOTION duly made (Brostoski), seconded (Williams), and carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda Musso, Secretary

Approved: