

COVINGTON TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS
PUBLIC HEARING ~ ORDINANCE 2023-01
APRIL 20, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

The Covington Township Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on Thursday, April 20, 2023 at the Covington Township Municipal building, Moffat Estate, 20 Moffat Drive, Covington Township, PA 18444 for the purpose of considering Ordinance #2023-03, Short-Term Rental Ordinance, an Ordinance to Regulate Short-Term Rentals within the Township and to Establish Penalties for Violations.

There were present: Chairwoman Melissa Kearney, Vice Chairwoman Vicki Williams, Supervisor Marshall Peirce, Supervisor William Willson, Supervisor Wanda Andreoli, Attorney Joel Wolff, and stenographer Michelle Smolskis.

Chairwoman Kearney opened the hearing at 6:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and then turned the hearing over to Attorney Wolff.

Exhibits:

Township #1: Proof of notice sent to The Scranton Times for publication dated April 6, 2023.

Township #2: Affidavit of publication on dates: April 8, 2023 and April 13, 2023 in The Scranton Times.

Township #3: Public Notice posted on front door of Municipal Office from April 6, 2023 to April 20, 2023.

Township #4: Proposed Ordinance #2023-01.

Supervisor's Comment: *Chairwoman Kearney stated the purpose of this ordinance is for the protection of the residents of the township.*

Public Comment: *Any public member who spoke was sworn in prior to making their comments.*

Amos Vered, property owner in Eagle Lake asked for clarification of section 11, #12 regarding the occupancy of recreation vehicles, camper trailers, and tents shall not be allowed, and #13 occupancy of manufactured homes is allowed. A discussion ensued. Mr. Vered also questioned the minimum square footage required for bedrooms.

Paula Perry, director of operations and project management for Eagle Lake and Covington Township resident questioned why Eagle Lake was left out of the 1st ordinance and they are now being included. A brief discussion ensued. She then questioned the definition of owner and asked if the deed for the property, title for the trailer and fact that they pay taxes qualify them as owners. A lengthy discussion ensued. Questions were raised on enforcement of the ordinance.

June Ejek, Clifton Township Supervisor and Clifton Township resident in Big Bass Lake questioned how enforcement will be handled. A lengthy discussion ensued on calling 911 for any after-hour issues.

Elizabeth Bako, resident of Clifton Township, representative of Short-Term Rental owners in Big Bass Lake questioned the fees regarding the residents of Covington Township within Big Bass Lake. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Neil Bresnahan, representative of Big Bass Lake read a prepared statement with feedback on behalf of Big Bass Lake. He mentioned (3) sections of the original ordinance that were not included in the newly proposed ordinance.

Paula Perry asked for clarification on the fees, asked that the board of supervisors meet with representatives from Big Bass Lake and Eagle Lake to discuss some differences with these developments, and questioned any current litigation with the township and short-term rentals. It was advised that the fees will be decided at the next monthly board meeting. A discussion ensued.

Brad Jones, Covington Township Fire Chief and representative of Preferred Management spoke on the safety issues within short-term rentals. He also stated that he would be willing to sit

down with both Big Bass Lake and Eagle Lake to work on a checklist that is more specific for the residences within these developments.

Paula Perry commended the fire company for their work within the township and mentioned her disappointment with the township on their lack of communication with Eagle Lake. Asking that the township work with Eagle Lake and not against them.

Chairwoman Kearney called for a 15-minute executive session to discuss the comments that have been made regarding the proposed ordinance.

Chairwoman Kearney re-opened the public hearing and turned it over to Atty. Wolff who advised that the board will be voting on the ordinance later. He advised the board has taken into consideration the comments made earlier. The Board will be revising the ordinance to include the following items from the original ordinance: the proof of insurance clause, the Homeowner's/Property Owner's Association provision, and the confidentiality clause. There will also be an addition for special exceptions to be added to the ordinance. This will allow a homeowner to apply for a special exception if they don't meet certain requirements, but it will be reviewed by the inspection officer and will be subject to the appeals process set forth within the ordinance.

Amos Vered asked when the revised ordinance will be posted for public review. Due to the office being closed the following week, it was decided that it will be available on May 1, 2023.

Paula Perry asked for verification on the HOA/POA provision previously mentioned. Atty. Wolff reviewed the section from the previous ordinance.

June Ejik questioned the status of inspections versus current commitments for rentals. Brad Jones, Preferred Management advised of the timeline and steps taken for the inspection. A brief discussion ensued.

Mark Holochuck, Covington Township resident/Eagle Lake property owner questioned how the fees were established and if Eagle Lake should not have to pay as much as a township resident. A discussion ensued on the fees for the short-term rentals.

Paula Perry asked the board of supervisors to consider reducing the fees for Eagle Lake and speak with representatives to come up with an amicable plan for Eagle Lake.

Neil Bresnahan questioned what services the residents of Big Bass Lake will be getting for the fees paid. He also asked for consideration when the fees are discussed.

Paula Perry asked about the township's liability insurance in connection with the Short-Term Rental Ordinance. A brief discussion ensued.

Lori Laperuta, Lehigh Township resident/property owner in Eagle Lake commented on the fees for the sewer inspection.

Vote: ON MOTION duly made (Andreoli), seconded (Willson) and carried 5-0 to adopt Ordinance #2023-03, A Short-Term Rental Ordinance with the additions of the proof of insurance clause, the Homeowner's/Property Owner's Association provision, the confidentiality clause, and the special exception provision.

(REMAINDER OF PAGE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY)

Adjournment: On motion duly made (Williams), seconded (Andreoli) and carried to adjourn at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Melissa Kearney, Secretary

This is not the official record of the public hearing. The stenographer's record is the official record of this hearing.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Melissa Kearney".