

**PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SPECIAL MEETING
October 25, 2018**

The special meeting of the Plainfield Township Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, October 25, 2018 at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA 18064.

Chairman, Randy Heard, called the meeting to order at 7:25 P.M.

The Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

ROLL CALL:

The following Supervisors answered roll call: Chairman, Randy Heard, Vice Chairman, Glenn Borger, Joyce Lambert, Jane Mellert, and Stephen Hurni.

Also present were Township Manager, Thomas Petrucci, and Administrative Assistant, Paige Gerstenberg.

I. SECRETARY–THOMAS PETRUCCI:

1. Executive Session (Collective Bargaining Strategy and Personnel Discussion - 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM):

An executive session was held from 6:00 P.M. to 7:20 P.M. The Board of Supervisors discussed personnel matters and a Collective Bargaining Strategy. No action was taken during the executive session.

2. 2018/2019 Boards and Commissions Reappointments:

ACTION: Motion was made by Chairman, Randy Heard, and seconded by Joyce Lambert to approve the advertisement of one full-time Zoning Hearing Board position and one full-time Recreation Board position. *Prior to the vote, Chairman, Randy Heard, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public.* Motion approved. Vote 5-0.

3. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Public Hearing November 7, 2018 7:00 PM (Approval to Send Representatives/Submit Comments):

The Department of Environmental of Environmental Protection (DEP) is holding a public hearing with respect to the DEP general permit application, minor modification application, air quality application, and the NPDES application that was submitted by the Slate Belt Heat Recovery Center.

ACTION: Motion was made by Chairman, Randy Heard, and seconded by Glenn Borger to authorize four speakers representing Plainfield Township to attend the public hearing which include Environmental Attorney, John Embick, Special Environmental Engineering Consultant, Michael Brunamonti, Senior Scientist from Hanover Engineering, Jason Smith, and the CEO of Material Matters, Inc., Trudy Johnston in order to provide technical comments. *Prior to the vote, Chairman, Randy Heard, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public.* Motion approved. Vote 4-0-1 with Stephen Hurni abstaining.

4. Approval of the 2019 Slate Belt Regional Police Department Budget:

ACTION: Motion was made by Chairman, Randy Heard, and seconded by Glenn Borger to approve the 2019 Slate Belt Regional Police Department Budget. *Prior to the vote, Chairman, Randy Heard, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public.* Motion approved. Vote 5-0.

Supervisor, Jane Mellert, requested more information on the budget in reference to school police officers. Mr. Hurni added that Pen Argyl Area School District is looking for a long term relationship with the Slate Belt Regional Police Department. Chairman, Randy Heard, mentioned concerns with school police officers considering schools are closed in the summer.

5. 2019 Plainfield Township Budget Discussion:

Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, stated that Plainfield Township EMS has raised a few issues with respect to the future of providing the Township with emergency services. Fire Company Chief, George Biggs, stated that their biggest issue is attracting personnel. He added that retaining volunteers is very difficult to do anymore and they have very few volunteers remaining. The company has recently increased the hourly wage for employees. However, they are unable to offer any benefits. Chief Biggs stated that this has a major impact on retaining individuals. Their competitors are able to offer benefits in addition to a higher hourly rate. Chief Biggs has seen a trend where personnel will join the department, get their experience that they need, and apply to other jobs that offer more incentives for the employee. Chief Biggs said that they cannot compete with their competitors.

Chief Biggs added that they were notified by Suburban EMS that they will no longer be undertaking their billing as of September 23rd, 2018. He added that their billing has slowed down since they received the notice and receipts were not coming in even when trip sheets were being sent to them. Cornerstone is now doing the billing at a base rate for the Plainfield Township Fire Company. Chairman, Randy Heard, questioned what has recently changed since they were originally able to provide the Township with EMS but has since then come to a halt. Chief Biggs stated that their circumstances have been previously discussed with the Board about retaining personnel. He added that the

company is always at a constant battle trying to cover all of the bills and retaining employees/volunteers. In the meantime, members of the fire company are doing everything they can to figure out what they are going to do for personnel, billing, etc. The fire company's relief money was also cut by \$10,000.00 this year.

Governor, Tom Wolfe, passed a bill as of today, October 25, 2018 which allows fire companies to bill for their services if they aide an individual without transporting them. For instance, if firefighters from their unit would be dispatched to a scene of a car accident and perform road clean up or put out a car fire, they can now bill for those services even if the individual(s) are not transferred. Chief Biggs stated concerns because there is no ordinance in Plainfield Township that enforces insurance companies to pay for these services. Mr. George Biggs added that the Board of Supervisors did have an ordinance for this, but has since then did away with that ordinance due to an auxiliary issue.

Vice Chairman, Glenn Borger, questioned if the fire company would consider writing a fundraiser letter to the community requesting their help. Mr. Borger stated that when he has read a letter in the past, it sounds as though he would be joining the fire company as a fire fighter only. He recommended that the letter be clearer that way so that residents can more clearly understand what is being asked of them.

Chief Biggs stressed that no matter how much money they could have in the bank, they are still having issues with attracting and retaining personnel for emergency management services. In order to provide 24/7 coverage, they need approximately 16-20 people as employees/volunteers.

Supervisor, Jane Mellert, recommended that when representatives of the fire company are at events like the safety fair, they should put out a money jar to aid in raising money. Mr. Biggs stated that they do put out money jars while at events, but doing so does not bring in enough revenue to make a difference. He is more concerned about educating the kids and other individuals when they are present at these functions.

Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, stated that the Plainfield Township budget is due for approval within one month. Mr. Petrucci would like some direction on what avenue to take in order to pass the budget. Mr. Petrucci added that the Board should keep in mind that if Wind Gap EMS were to become the main provider for EMS services, Suburban EMS would no longer service the Township since Wind Gap is not currently in good standing with their bills from Suburban EMS. It is essential to ensure that the Township will have adequate Advanced Life Service (ALS) availability, no matter what BLS provider is utilized by the Township. Suburban EMS has traditionally served the Township, and they are familiar with serving the Township. Mr. Petrucci added that Suburban EMS could be the main provider for the Township, however, there will be a greater cost associated with those services. Mr. Petrucci will be receiving a quote from Suburban EMS on Monday, October 29, 2018 for 24/7 coverage.

Ms. Mellert stated that retaining individuals will be very difficult considering that employees of the fire company are working over 30 hours a week without any benefits.

Chief Biggs recommended that the Township call St. Luke's for possible Emergency Management Services for both BLS and ALS. The Board of Supervisors requested that Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, look into additional possible EMS providers aside from the providers previously discussed. They also questioned whether Wind Gap EMS would be able to provide BLS and ALS services for Plainfield Township or if Wind Gap EMS could reconcile with Suburban EMS. Chairman, Randy Heard, also questioned why Wind Gap EMS has not been up to date on their payments to Suburban EMS.

Chairman, Randy Heard, requested to move onto the Plainfield Township Fire Company issue. Mr. Heard questioned Mr. Biggs on how much money the company is short as of today. Chief Biggs stated that the company has been updating their equipment which consistently needs to be done. He added that once they get a grant or some type of influx of funds that money goes right back out because of paying for the updated equipment. The average deficit each year is approximately negative \$60,000.00 to \$70,000.00. When necessary, Chief Biggs stated that they will pull from different funds and reserves in order to pay for the bills. Chief Biggs added that the largest debt they have is the new equipment that they purchased.

Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, stated to the Board that there would be an additional \$50,000.00 added into the Plainfield Township budget for the Plainfield Township Fire Company. The Township also pays for the insurance which is approximately \$25,000.00 that is already configured within the budget. In terms of funds, Supervisor, Joyce Lambert, mentioned about using funds from the Refuse Fund in order to pay for the extra \$50,000.00 for the 2019 fiscal year. The possibility of adopting a fire tax was also briefly discussed.

Ms. Mellert stated that she is inclined to give an additional amount each year to the fire company. Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, stated that he would need to take the capital engineering cost and put that into the Capital Reserve Fund. The Capital Reserve Fund could then be used for this expenditure towards the Plainfield Township Fire Company. Supervisor, Stephen Hurni, stated that he is in favor of using the Refuse Fund approach. Overall, the Board of Supervisors expressed that they are inclined to provide an additional \$50,000.00 a year to the Plainfield Township Fire Company.

ADJOURNMENT:

Having no further business to come before the Board of Supervisors, motion was made by Glenn Borger and seconded by Joyce Lambert to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved. Vote 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Petrucci, Township Manager/Secretary
Plainfield Township
Board of Supervisors

These minutes were prepared with the assistance of the Administrative Assistant of the Township, Paige Gerstenberg, under the direction of the Township Manager/Secretary