

**PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP  
SPECIAL BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING  
OCTOBER 30, 2019**

A special meeting of the Plainfield Township Board of Supervisors was held on Wednesday, October 30, 2019 at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA 18064.

Chairman, Randy Heard, called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 Administrative Assistant, Paige Stefanelli and Township Manager, Tom Petrucci.

**I. TOWNSHIP MANAGER–THOMAS PETRUCCI:**

1. Executive Session- Potential Real Estate Acquisition:

The Board of Supervisors held an executive session from 7:00 PM to 7:18 PM in order to discuss potential real estate acquisition. No action was taken at this time.

2. Executive Session- Personnel:

The Board of Supervisors held an executive session from 7:18 PM to 7:45 PM in order to discuss personnel matters. No action was taken at this time.

3. Resolution 2019-25- Slate Belt COG Local Share Account Monroe County Gaming Grant Application:

Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, stated that the COG has recently submitted for a grant for 3 pieces of equipment. Representatives of the DCED communicated to the COG that they are not eligible to submit requests for grants. Mr. Petrucci recommended the Board submit an application for the grant on behalf of the Slate Belt COG as Plainfield Township is the last municipality to hold a voting meeting prior to the deadline of the grant application.

**ACTION: Motion was made by Joyce Lambert seconded by Stephen Hurni to approve Resolution 2019-25 in order to apply for the Local Share Account Monroe County Gaming Grant on behalf of the Slate Belt COG. *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.***

4. Approval of the Proposed 2020 Slate Belt Regional Police Department Budget:

The Proposed 2020 Slate Belt Regional Police Department Budget has not been received by Plainfield Township to date. Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, stated the department is intending to submit a proposed budget shortly. In the meantime, Mr. Petrucci incorporated an approximated 1.3 million dollars into the budget for the Plainfield Township share of the overall police department budget for review purposes.

5. 2020 Preliminary/Proposed Plainfield Township Budget Discussion:

Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, noted that the proposed budget does not require an increase in real estate tax millage as presented. The General Fund Budget as proposed will increase by approximately 1.6%, with the total amount of the General Fund set at \$3,282,188.21. The Highway Aid Fund was set at \$592,529.13, and that amount encompasses the accumulated balance of two fiscal years of State Liquid Fuels funds (2019 and 2020). The Board briefly discussed the monthly and quarterly host revenue received by the Township for the operation of the Grand Central Sanitary Landfill within the municipal limits of the Township.

In reference to capital projects, parks and recreation, etc., the Township will continue to obtain grants in order to off-set the total cost of those items. Throughout the past several fiscal years, the Township has been able to leverage township funds to obtain grants to assist with the total cost of the projects. Township Manager Petrucci identified that the monthly host revenue is utilized in its entirety for capital expenditures.

The Environmental Fund will have approximately \$365,000.00 remaining at the commencement of the 2020 fiscal year. The Township will be getting reimbursed with the Growing Greener Grant and should have approximately \$465,000.00 in the fund at that time. Mr. Borger questioned why the proposed budget for the Environmental Fund is lower than 2018. He is concerned that if there is an issue in the future where immediate funds need to be available, keeping this fund at the amount it normally is proposed for would be a better option, in his opinion. Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, noted that in the event of an environmental issue, the Township would be looking at the General Fund or Capital Reserve Fund to account for the increased unbudgeted expense and would need to adjust other items within the General Fund in order to account for those situations. Mr. Petrucci noted testing for Little Bushkill Creek will continue, and that the proposed budget amount for the Environmental Fund is for the continuation of the Little Bushkill Creek Watershed Management Plan.

Supervisor Mellert added that many environmental situations would likely involve an insurance claim which would ultimately be reimbursed to the Township for any costs that the Township endured. Following additional discussion by the Board members, it was decided that Mr. Petrucci will increase the Environmental Fund to match the 2019 fiscal year with the amount budgeted for the 2018 fiscal year.

Mr. Petrucci allocated approximately 1.38 million dollars for real estate acquisition in the Open Space Fund. In the beginning of the 2020 fiscal year, there will be approximately 3.6 million available in the Open Space Fund, which is funded by the .25% Open Space Earned Income Tax (EIT) assessed on residents for the acquisition of open space (as previously approved by voter referendum). Mr. Petrucci noted that the Township is currently receiving a better interest rate for this fund.

Mr. Hurni expressed interest in splitting the percentage of funds to use a portion to fund the Plainfield Township Fire Company. Mr. Petrucci clarified that a fire tax and EIT cannot be compared on equitable terms. The Township is only able to utilize Open Space EIT for open space; the collection of Open Space Funds can only be changed by referendum. The Township also collects separate EIT funds that may be used for any General Fund expenditure. However, that amount is set indefinitely, and may not be raised by the Township. A fire tax would be based on the real estate tax and apply to all property owners within the Township; whereas, EIT is assessed on the working population of the Township.

Mr. Hurni noted that he would like to see the EIT lowered for the 2020 fiscal year and provide a steady verifiable tax to benefit the fire company. Mr. Petrucci noted that the Township has the ability to impose a dedicated real estate fire tax; alternatively, the Township Board could simply raise real estate taxes overall in order to allocate an increased portion of available funds to the Plainfield Township Fire Company. He noted that the proceeds of a real estate fire tax would only be able to be used for the use of the Plainfield Township Fire Company.

Supervisor Mellert noted that interest will continue to gain in the Open Space EIT fund as well. Mr. Hurni questioned how much land is remaining for potential land acquisition in the Township. Mr. Petrucci noted that the farms are ranked very high in Plainfield Township. Therefore, Township funds are not always being utilized to preserve farmland situated within the Township. Most acquisitions are paid for by State and County funds. He added that the Township generally has very good farmland soils that have solid production, and it is a fair statement that the farmland preservation program may not require as many local open space funds as originally envisioned. He also counseled the Board members that the expanded use of EIT funds for open space acquisition (other than farmland preservation) could require the extensive use of open space EIT funds.

Mr. Petrucci identified the fact that the Plainfield Township Fire Company has requested a \$100,000.00 donation to support firefighting operations this year. Their current

operating expenses require approximately \$100,000.00 per year. Additionally, fundraising funds are no longer contributing as much to the operating expenses as it has in the past. Volunteers of the fire department must conduct extensive training, and there is less time to conduct fundraising activities.

The Board of Supervisors discussed the possibility of raising taxes. Taxes have not been raised in the past eight fiscal years- since 2012. Currently, the Township is utilizing more of the funds coming from the operation of the Grand Central Sanitary Landfill each year. Mr. Petrucci questioned whether the Board was interested in raising taxes or to continue taxes at 6.5 mills. He added that in reference to the continued receipt of the quarterly and monthly Grand Central Sanitary Landfill host revenue, Plainfield Township will be notified in about 1-2 years whether Waste Management intends to expand or shut down the landfill facility.

Based on extensive research compiled in preparation for the 2019 Proposed Budget, Mr. Petrucci provided the Board with scenarios for them to consider. The first scenario is to raise taxes over a shorter period of time to bridge the gap between the amount of revenue received in the General Fund and the amount of host landfill revenue used to balance the General Fund. The Board could also incrementally raise taxes and utilize a portion of the Township Municipal Trust Fund and any interest gained from the Fund until the Fund is depleted over a longer period of time. Finally, the Board also has the option of not raising taxes until such time that the Township Trust Fund has been depleted in its entirety, thereby utilizing the Township Trust Fund solely to keep real estate taxes low.

Mr. Borger mentioned the strong possibility of a recession within the next few years. Mr. Borger believes the Township is reverting back to engaging in the same fiscal practices that caused significant financial troubles when the landfill host revenue funds operated the Township. Mr. Borger added that it is better to raise taxes now when the economy is in good standing in order to compensate for later when there is a recession or when the landfill closes. Ms. Mellert stated that she is not in support of raising taxes. Mr. Hurni questioned the amount of property taxes received for lands owned by Grand Central Sanitary Landfill, Inc. /Waste Management. Mr. Petrucci noted that the landfill is currently assessed at approximately 1 million dollars based on a property reassessment appeal result that was favorable to the landfill in 2015. The Township receives approximately \$60,000.00 in property tax revenue from the Landfill.

Real estate tax revenue has been relatively flat over the past 8 years. Expenditures for the Township have gone up in that same time period. Mr. Petrucci added that the Township surplus is approximately \$300,000.00 overall each fiscal year over the last several years when factoring in landfill revenue, but this is largely due to the fact that the landfill has been operating at or near maximum capacity for the last several years. Mr. Petrucci stressed that the revenue from the Landfill is only temporary and postulated that the amount of revenue to be received under the current expansion/operating permit likely peaked in 2016, with the amounts set to decline over the next several years.

Following a question asked by Supervisor Mellert, Mr. Petrucci confirmed that there are cushions built into the budgeted line items with the General Fund and the Capital Reserve Fund; however, if there were to be an issue that would necessitate shifting the funds, the Second Class Township Code does permit municipalities to shift unappropriated line items and revenue on hand. Mr. Hurni stated that he agrees that the Township needs to raise taxes, but the overall question for the Board to consider is when to raise them.

**Motion was made by Glenn Borger to increase taxes by .5 mills.**

**Mr. Glenn Borger withdrew his motion in order to discuss the issue further.**

Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, questioned whether the Board would like to move forward with providing the Plainfield Township Fire Company the current annual amount of \$75,000.00 or to raise that figure to \$100,000.00 for next year. Fire Chief Alex Cortezzo noted that they will be doing an audit for this year. He added that the monetary donation from the Township essentially runs the facility; however, the Fire Company is not obtaining any revenue once all bills/obligations are paid. Additional revenue would help to support the future anticipated replacement of equipment.

Despite the fact that the Fire Hall is operated by the Fire Company, the Fire Hall has its own account and is not tied to the Fire Company for financial accounting purposes. This ensures that all Township-provided funds support Fire Company firefighting operations only. Mr. Borger requested a full budget from the fire department to review the line items of expenditures and revenue. Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, will provide for \$100,000.00 within the budget conditioned upon the Township receiving all financial documents as requested.

Mr. Petrucci also questioned the Board on whether they were interested in having landscaping done around the municipal building in order to make the area more aesthetically pleasing, as previously directed by the Board. Members of the Board expressed interest in doing the project, but questioned which portions should be priority and what the prospective design may be. Based on the discussion, Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, will update the budget to allocate \$20,000.00 for this project. Additionally, specifications must be developed for the project by the Township Manager in order to ensure that prices received are uniform and consistent for the goods and services to be provided.

The Board also discussed the renovation of the West Bangor Memorial. This project will cost approximately \$50,000.00. Items for this project include monolithic concrete walls, installing new sidewalks, new stone, and the installation of barriers around the stone. The Board was in favor of including this project in the Proposed Budget.

Township Manager, Tom Petrucci, also noted that the Board previously discussed repaving the driveway/parking lot for the Plainfield Township Fire Department. It will cost approximately \$36,000.00 in materials, and the project would be conducted by Road Department personnel. The Township will mill a portion of the entrance and add pavement to the top. Mr. Petrucci confirmed that the Township does not want to allocate the Fire Department's assets to the Township until such time that a dissolution plan, which needs to be approved by Orphans Court in accordance with the Non-Profit Corporation Law (as amended), is in place. It was identified that the Fire Department is currently in no danger of dissolving; this item was previously discussed for planning purposes.

Resurfacing of the front and rear parking areas for the Township Municipal Building are also needed. This project will need to be bid out separately from any highway reconstruction bid next year, as this building does not qualify for the use of State Liquid Fuels funds, as per Mr. Petrucci. The Board was in support of this project.

Ms. Mellert questioned about the amount of rental fees received for the fields in the Township. Mr. Petrucci stated that a majority of individuals that rent the fields are local organizations and therefore, are exempt.

Mr. Petrucci will remove the dog kennel expenditure from the budget. The Township no longer has dog kennels. Additionally, Mr. Petrucci will add additional 2019 achievements and anticipated 2020 goals to the budget for the various departments of the Township, as outlined in the Reader's Guide portion of the Proposed Budget.

In reference to the pavilion for behind the Township Building, Mr. Petrucci questioned the Board on whether they are interested in including this as an expenditure for the 2020 fiscal year. The pavilion would cost approximately \$450,000.00. If the Board intends to move forward, the Township will need to apply for an NPDES permit in order to obtain a grant. Mr. Petrucci will add approximately \$225,000.00 to the proposed budget to account for the construction phase of the project. The NPDES permit is already included within the Proposed Budget.

Mr. Petrucci noted that the Township must strategically prepare for the day when the current Road Department Building needs to be renovated and/or replaced. Additionally, the Township has never devised a long-term plan for how to address the continued maintenance, repair, and/or replacement of the Plainfield Township Farmer's Grove buildings. These long-term items do not need to be solved right now, but the Township should start strategically planning on how these items will be addressed.

**ACTION: Motion was made by Glenn Borger seconded by Joyce Lambert to increase Plainfield Township's real estate taxes by .5 mills within the 2020 Proposed Budget to make the total millage rate to 7 mills. *Prior to the vote, Chairman, Randy***

***Heard, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public.  
Motion approved. Vote 3-2 with Jane Mellert and Stephen Hurni opposed.***

Mr. Petrucci stated that the 2020 Proposed Budget will be placed on the November 13, 2019 regular agenda for consideration of advertisement in accordance with Second Class Township Code requirements. He added that he will make all changes as requested and a new draft 2020 Proposed Budget will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors prior to the November 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. The final 2020 Proposed Budget and the accompanying Real Estate Tax Resolution would be voted on by the Board of Supervisors during the Wednesday, December 11, 2019 regular Board of Supervisors meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 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 Stefanelli, under the direction of the Township Manager/Secretary.*