

**Pocono Township Board of Commissioners  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
December 21, 2020 7:00 p.m.**

The regular meeting of the Pocono Township Board of Commissioners was held remotely on December 21, 2020 via video and teleconference and was opened by President Rich Wielebinski at 7:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:** Jerrod Belvin, present; Ellen Gndt, present; Jerry Lastowski, present; Keith Meeker, present; and Rich Wielebinski, present.

**In Attendance:** L. DeVito, Township Solicitor, Broughal & DeVito; Jon Tresslar, Township Engineer, Boucher & James, Inc.; Taylor Muñoz, Township Manager; and Krisann Wean, Administrative Assistant.

**Public Comments** – No public comment.

**Announcements**

- An executive session was held on Monday, December 14, 2020 and Tuesday, December 15, 2020 for the purpose of discussing litigation pertaining to a short-term rental injunction hearing.
- On behalf of Pocono Township, we would like to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. We wish our residents all the best for a healthy New Year.
- If you have not already, we would encourage you to sign up for the Township newsletter at [www.poconopa.gov](http://www.poconopa.gov), follow our Facebook page for frequent community updates and subscribe to our Township-wide Savvy Citizen notification system at [www.savvycitizenapp.com](http://www.savvycitizenapp.com).

**Presentations** – No presentations.

**Hearings**

Ordinance 2020-09 – Motion to adopt a budget and appropriate funds estimated to be required for the purposes of the government of the Township of Pocono, fixing the real estate millage rate for the 2021 Fiscal Year at a rate of 2.16 mills per dollar of assessed valuation and a proposed fire tax at 0.201 special purpose mills.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by K. Meeker, to open a public hearing on Ordinance 2020-09. All in favor. Motion carried.

E. Gndt asked for clarification regarding the ordinance and whether the fire tax was included. She indicated she is not in favor of raising taxes, but would support further raising the Amusement Tax. Also asked clarification question regarding millage for libraries. J. Lastowski referenced history about residents having voted to enact library tax. J. Lastowski inquired about the fire tax and T. Muñoz gave clarification. R. Wielebinski noted the county reassessment appeals resulted in over \$200,000 in lost revenue to the Township, costing taxpayers more.

No public comment.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by J. Lastowski, to close the public hearing on Ordinance 2020-09. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by J. Belvin, to adopt a budget and appropriate funds estimated to be required for the purposes of the government of the Township of Pocono, fixing the real estate millage rate for the 2021 Fiscal Year at a rate of 2.16 mills per dollar of assessed valuation and a proposed fire tax at 0.201 special purpose mills. Roll call: J. Belvin, yes; E. Gndt, no; J. Lastowski, yes; K. Meeker, yes; R. Wielebinski, yes. Motion carried.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by E. Gndt, to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2020 regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners. All in favor. Motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Personnel** – No new business.

### **2. Financial Transactions**

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by J. Lastowski, to ratify vouchers payable received through December 17, 2020 in the amount of \$228,392.48. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by K. Meeker, to ratify gross payroll for pay periods ending December 13, 2020 in the amount of \$185,894.03. E. Gndt asked if it included end-of-year buyouts. T. Muñoz gave clarification. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by K. Meeker, to approve vouchers payable received through December 17, 2020 in the amount of \$130,368.62. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by K. Meeker, to approve sewer operating fund expenditures through December 17, 2020 in the amount of \$109,733.46. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by K. Meeker, to budget adjustments through December 17, 2020 in the amount of \$62,887.61. E. Gndt stated she would not give approval for future budget adjustments unless the adjustments are approved prior to paying bills, citing statutory requirements per the First Class Township Code. All in favor. Motion carried.

3. **Travel/Training Authorizations** – No new business.

## **Report of the President**

Richard Wielebinski

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by J. Belvin, to allow office staff, road crew, and police administration, as long as there is no snow on 12/24/2020 and the Union concurs that this will not set a precedent, that they will have the day off on 12/24/2020. E. Gndt asked if police would be paid double time for working on Christmas Eve. L. DeVito will inquire further. All in favor. Motion carried.

- Discussion regarding ongoing maintenance issues with the Township Police Department's 2015 Ford Taurus Interceptor and need for a new or refurbished engine.

Chief K. Werkheiser indicated there have been ongoing problems with the car. The vehicle would shut off for no apparent reason. While maintenance records maintained by the Township are meticulous, the dealership could not replicate numerous issues with the car. The vehicle has undergone many warranty repairs and by putting in a new or refurbished engine, it is not a guarantee the original problem of the vehicle shutting off would be solved.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by J. Belvin, to install a new engine in the 2015 Ford Taurus Interceptor police car. E. Gndt indicated because money was moved from the Police budget, the Township needs to make sure the money is available. All in favor. Motion carried.

## **Commissioner Comments**

Jerrod Belvin – Vice President

- COVID-19/Emergency Management Update – ER Management report details were given for 2020.

- FEMA Flood Mitigation grant application – Waiting to hear about the grant application.
- Township Ice Skating Rink – Advertising to residents and upkeep – We are ready to go with our ice-skating rink. R. Sargent indicated the rink is currently ready for skating and, once an inspection is done, T. Muñoz will put a notification on Facebook.

Ellen Grandt – Commissioner

- Commended the Fire Company for their work with Santa. A resident contacted her and was very appreciative of Santa coming to their house with the Fire Company.

Jerry Lastowski – Commissioner

- Traffic light timing issues at intersection of S.R. 314 & S.R. 611 – Thanked J. Belvin and R. Sargent for their work addressing the traffic light timing.

Keith Meeker – Commissioner

- PMCCI Health & Safety Issues – Zoning Inspection(s) – No update.

## **Reports**

**Zoning** – No report.

## **Emergency Services**

- Police – No report.
- EMS – No report.
- Fire – No report.

## **Public Works Report**

- Current and remaining Public Works projects for 2020 - Crew worked hard during last snowstorm for significant snowfall. Replenishing supply stock and fixing trucks.
- Update – Park Lane Culvert Replacement – Dirt and Gravel Grant – Placeholder. No report.
- Update – Well Work at MVP – Still working on final resolution with DEP.

## **Administration – Manager’s Report**

- Update – Leasing of Township Vehicles – Ordered three Ford Explorers for the police department for 2021 which will take approximately three months to receive.
- Update – Receipt of COVID Grant Funds from County – All COVID grand funds were received. In total, approximately \$50,000 was received from the County.
- Update – Stolen electronic radar sign – A claim was filed with the insurance company. The sign costs approximately \$3,000 to replace. The Township is responsible for a \$250 deductible and the insurance company covered the remaining balance. The check was received by the insurance company and the sign has been reordered. GPS tracking units were ordered and installed in the signs.
- Discussion and possible action regarding request of Kaeli Waldstein, Scout with Troop 85G in Tannersville, to install book/library boxes at Mountain View Park for her Eagle Scout project.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by K. Meeker, to approve the request of Kaeli Waldstein, Scout with Troop 85G in Tannersville, to work with the Township Manager to install book/library boxes at Mountain View Park for her Eagle Scout project and for her to report back to the Board with final design. All in favor. Motion carried.

- Evaluation of Township's Wireless Carrier – Verizon vs. FirstNet (ATT) – Currently ongoing. Received devices from FirstNet to test around the Township, primarily with the police. Also had conversations with Verizon about current contract. Comparing services, charges, and offerings between the two. Conversations will include Chief Werkheiser and Sargent Goucher as they are most in need of that service, and to make sure we are not compromising coverage or quality if carriers are changed.
- Monroe County Land Bank – Potential acquisition of 17 Summit Avenue, Pocono Manor – Application is complete. Waiting on record from the assessment office that has to accompany the submission. Application will be formally submitted to the Land Bank within the week.
- Amended Sign Ordinance Update – Received comments with recommendations from Monroe County Planning Commission on proposed changes to the Township Signage Ordinance. Recommendations are being reviewed by Township Zoning officials, as several remarks pertain to changes recommended by Zoning. The County's review is comprised of recommendations only and is not binding on the Township. Once Zoning reviews the changes, the draft will be sent back to the Planning Commission for further discussion, and then back to the Board of Commissioners for final approval.
- Update – Pending grant applications – LSA, Multimodal & Recreation Grant Applications – Received grant support letters for active grants. It will be January or early spring before action is taken on grant monies. Looking to submit new applications for the police department.
- Wine Press Inn – Interest in Township-owned property – Potential buyer of Wine Press Inn is still interested in Township-owned property.
- Update – Regional HSPS Comprehensive Plan – Wednesday, January 20, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. is the next Comprehensive Plan meeting. There will be a virtual meeting in January.
- New Police Hires – Moving forward with hiring three new police officers and working with John Harrison from the Civil Service Commission to get things in order. Chief Werkheiser has been working with a company called PoliceApp which is the new standard in the law enforcement industry for advertising open police positions and getting qualified candidates. PoliceApp takes care of publicizing and advertising, they collect application fees and take all information provided by the Township to formulate into job postings. L. DeVito and Chief Werkheiser have reviewed the contract. L. DeVito indicated PoliceApp collects a \$50 application fee that is split with the Township. Asking permission from the Board to have T. Muñoz sign the PoliceApp contract.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by J. Belvin, to allow T. Muñoz to sign the contract with PoliceApp to assist in hiring police officers. All in favor. Motion carried.

### **Township Engineer Report**

Has been working back and forth with DEP on the Park Lane Culvert which is still in process.

- St. Paul's Lutheran Drainage Basin – Received a full submission from church's engineer, Deanna Smoyer.
- Archer Lane Drainage Issues – No new report.

- Update – Righthand turn lanes from Rt. 611 onto Rimrock Road and Bartonsville Avenue – Continuing with the design work.

### **Township Solicitor Report**

- Update – Gravatt's Way Short-Term Rental 12/15 Injunction Hearing – A settlement offer was received that states the owner of the property will agree to a permanent injunction that the property would not be used as a short-term rental. The permanent injunction will be effective January 18, 2021 the owners will pay a \$1,000 trash fine. The Township will not pursue two additional civil judgements against them. One judgement was never appealed, and the other is still within the appeal period. The matter was resolved so that if the owners try and use it as a short-term rental, we can file a contempt petition against the owner. L. DeVito thanked T. Muñoz, Township Zoning officials, Pocono Township Police, and the diligence of residents within the Township for their help with this case.
- Discussion regarding I-80 parcel easement request – Jonathan Weber - Received a letter from Jonathan Weber, represented by his attorney, who is interested in access across a Township-owned property on I-80 to an adjacent parcel, which prompted the Township to get an appraisal of the Township property. He is requesting an easement to access the property and contending that, because it is land locked, there is a legal process to require access. L. DeVito is researching whether a legal right to the easement exists. A couple of issues need to be checked and a report will be given to the Board the first week of January 2021. T. Muñoz has been working with Tom McKeown, appraiser, and indicated J. Tresslar is currently reviewing property files and answering some of the documentation questions from an engineering perspective that the appraiser had asked. The property is in process of being evaluated.
- Discussion regarding HJP Park – Talked to Todd Weitzmann. Will circulate some dates as to when we can meet with our Jackson counterparts to have a conversation about the future of the park. T. Muñoz reached out to a Jackson Township representative to have preliminary conversations for potential dates in January. Waiting to hear back.
- Update – Kelly Family Trust – The required 10-day default notice was sent out. Heard nothing from Trustee. Expiration date is December 25, 2020. Matter is moving forward in a positive direction for the Township.
- Zoning Hearing Board Update
  - Sheetz, Inc. variance request for sign construction – December 15, 2020 – The proposed Sheetz project had a sign package that was approved by the Zoning Hearing Board.
  - Ryan Possinger Appeal Zoning Hearing – December 22, 2020 at 5 p.m. is the Ryan Possinger zoning appeal for the billboard being proposed on Rimrock Road. This will be an in-person meeting with dial-in. The matter was delayed from the original December 15 date due to the Zoning Hearing Board lacking a third member present.

E. Gnadit inquired about alternate Zoning Hearing Board members. T. Muñoz indicated the Township is working to have three members present and one alternate member present at each hearing to avoid scenarios where someone is unable to attend for any reason.

T. Muñoz commended J. Tresslar for his help getting several projects completed before Christmas. Some projects are having escrow funds released back to them as a result of Jon doing final walkthrough inspections and certifying that everything was complete.

**Public Comment** – No public comment.

### **Adjournment**

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by J. Lastowski, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.