

CUMRU TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
5th TUESDAY MEETING **OCTOBER 29, 2024**

The 5th Tuesday Meeting of the Cumru Township Board of Commissioners was called to order by Vice President Greg Miller 6:00 p.m. Other Commissioners in attendance were David J. Batdorf, Andy Donnell, and William B. Miller. Also attending were Chief of Police Madison Winchester, Superintendent of Public Works Robert McNichols, Jr., Asst. Superintendent of Public Works Michael Yost, Jr., Manager/Secretary Jeanne E. Johnston, Business/Personnel Administrator Peggy A. Carpenter, and Special Projects/Asst. Secretary Patricia A. Wylezik-Pfeiffer. President Lisha Rowe and Fire Chief James Beane were absent with prior approval.

NOTICE:

Public comment will be accepted in person. Please include your first name, last name and address for all comments. Any comments without a name or address will not be considered. To accommodate as many people as possible, we request that each person's comments be limited to 3 minutes (resolution no. 301). The meeting comment period is limited to a total of 60 minutes. This time period may be extended at the discretion of the Commissioners. While public comments will be given due consideration, immediate responses will be done at the discretion of the Commissioners.

Call to Order and Pledge to the Flag.

DEPARTMENTS

Police Department

A.) Trunk or Treat – update

Chief Winchester reported that the Trunk or Treat was a success and had high attendance. The PTO had an event at the same time. These events compliment each other and the plan is to coordinate for next year. Diamond Credit Union donated two bicycles that were awarded to the children with the best costumes. Public Works employees delivered all the equipment and helped serve refreshments.

B.) Werner St. Stop Sign

Chief Winchester explained that there had been an oddly placed stop sign, belonging to Cumru Township, that was far away from the intersection. Mohnton Borough has placed a new stop sign closer to the intersection, so the Cumru Township stop sign can be removed. Mohnton Borough would be responsible for the new stop sign. The Board agreed to the removal of the Cumru Township stop sign.

Fire Department

A.) Fire Station Construction – consider pay applications totaling \$71,280.90

1) Pay application #3 for HB Frazer Co. (electrical) in the amount of \$71,280.90

Ms. Johnston reported that the placement of the steel and roof trusses was easier with the mild weather. She requested that the Board authorize the pay application #3 for HB Frazer Co.

ON MOTION OF MR. DONNELL, SECOND OF MR. BATDORF, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO AUTHORIZE PAY APPLICATION #3 FOR HB FRAZER CO. IN THE AMOUNT OF \$71,280.90 FOR THE FIRE STATION CONSTRUCTION.

B.) Burn Ban

Ms. Johnston explained that the Township is a mandated recycling community, so burning is only allowed with a burn permit. There are requirements for burning such as the property must be at least 10 acres, not to be a means to clear the land, and trash may not be burned.

Due to the dry conditions and lack of rainfall, a burn ban has been instituted. All people with a burn permit have been notified. The burn ban announcement has been placed on the website. Other municipalities have also instituted burn bans.

Administration

A.) Consolidated Delinquent Accounts Ordinance – consider adopting

1) Advertised in the Reading Eagle on 10/20/24

Ms. Johnston explained that ordinance consolidates 3 ordinances into 1. She requested that the Board authorize adopting the consolidated delinquent accounts ordinance.

ON MOTION OF MR. WILLIAM MILLER, SECOND OF MR. BATDORF, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO AUTHORIZE THE ADOPTION OF THE CONSOLIDATED DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS ORDINANCE AS ADVERTIZED.

B.) Non-Uniformed Pension Ordinance – consider adopting

1) Advertised in the Reading Eagle on 10/20/24

Ms. Johnston explained that there was a slight change in the wording of the ordinance. She requested that the Board authorize adopting the revised non-uniformed pension ordinance.

ON MOTION OF MR. WILLIAM MILLER, SECOND OF MR. BATDORF, A MOAJORITY VOTE TO AUTHORIZE THE ADOPTION OF THE REVISED NON-UNIFORMED PENSION ORDINANCE AS ADVERTISED. MR. DONNELL ABSTAINED.

C.) Sewer Rate Ordinance – consider adopting

1) Advertised in the Reading Eagle on 10/20/24

Ms. Johnston stated that the Municipal Authority recommended an increase in the sewer rate, which had been the same for 3 years. The rate increase is due to the 12.5% increase in treatment and transportation rates from the City of Reading and the continued need for capital funds for infiltration and inflow (I&I) reduction projects, including the Angelica interceptor project. It is estimated that sewer main replacements since 2021 have saved over \$800,000 in I&I costs. She requested that the Board authorize adopting the sewer rate ordinance. Mr. Donnell confirmed that this was what was previously discussed. Ms. Johnston noted this would go into effect with the 2024 November billing.

ON MOTION OF MR. WILLIAM MILLER, SECOND OF MR. DONNELL, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO AUTHORIZE THE SEWER RATE ORDINANCE AS ADVERTISED.

D.) Retirement – Peggy A. Carpenter

1) accept letter of retirement

Ms. Johnston reported that Business/Personnel Administrator Peggy A. Carpenter has submitted her letter of retirement effective January 31, 2025. After 3 decades of service, financial guru “Hollywood Peg” will be greatly missed.

ON MOTION OF MR. DONNELL, SECOND OF MR. WILLIAM MILLER, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO ACCEPT THE LETTER OF RETIREMENT FROM PEGGY A. CARPENTER WITH REGRETS.

Mr. Donnell requested that the Board consider recognizing Mrs. Carpenter for her years of service to the Township.

ON MOTION OF MR. DONNELL, SECOND OF MR. BATDORF, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO RECOGNIZE PEGGY A. CARPENTER WITH A PLAQUE AND CERTIFICATE.

E.) Administrative Assistant Class 3

1) advertised 10/29/2024

2) application period closes 11/27/2024 at 4:30 p.m.

Ms. Johnston stated that the Administrative Assistant Class 3 position has been advertised to prepare for other pending retirements.

Public Works

A.) LSA Grant Application for the Angelica Interceptor Project – consider resolution authorizing application

Ms. Johnston explained that the Township would like to apply for a statewide grant for up to \$1 million for phase 1 of the Angelica Interceptor project which would be for a pump station at Harding and Hancock and associated sewer main replacements.

ON MOTION OF MR. DONNELL, SECOND OF MR. BATDORF, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO AUTHORIZE A RESOLUTION FOR THE LSA GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE ANGELICA INTERCETOR PROJECT.

Mr. McNichols reported that the Cedar Top Rd. project should be paved tomorrow and is expected to be open completely by Friday.

Ms. Johnston expressed her thanks for the tolerance of the residents during this difficult project.

Solicitor

A.) Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – update

1) Letters sent to property owners in MUGC district, dated 10/07/24

2) Advertisement for the Public Hearing on Nov. 19 scheduled for publication in the Reading Eagle on 11/03/24 and 11/10/24

3) Engineer’s review dated 10/24/24

4) Berks County Planning Commission 10/23/24

5) Pre-enacted ordinance delivered to Berks County Law Library on 9/26/24

B.) Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Text Amendment – update

- 1) Advertisement for the Public Hearing on Nov. 19 scheduled for publication in the Reading Eagle on 11/03/24 and 11/10/24
- 2) Engineer’s review dated 10/24/24
- 3) Berks County Planning Commission 10/16/24
- 4) Pre-enacted ordinance delivered to Berks County Law Library on 9/26/24

Atty. Frankowski explained both amendments together. The Township has received review letters from the Berks County Planning Commission (BCPC) and GVC. The recommendations are extensive and she needs time to review them. The Cumru Planning Commission will have additional comments at the meeting on November 4th. Since the present timeline might not allow adequate time to consider all the recommendations, she requested that the Board cancel the Public Hearings scheduled for 11/19/24 and reschedule them. This would allow time to thoroughly vet out all the concerns for comprehensive text amendments. There was discussion about taking the time to do it right the first time and when to reschedule the Public Hearings.

ON MOTION OF MR. DONNELL, SECOND OF MR. BATDORF, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO CANCEL THE PUBLIC HEARINGS ON 11/19/24 AND RESCHEDULE FOR 1/21/25.

PUBLIC

Attendance: Dave McCoy, Sue Haas, Perry Haas, Kathy Roland, Roberta Kennedy, JoAnn Dowling, Barbara Nagle, Keith Zielaskioski, Bev Leonti, Greg Leonti, Lisa Quinby, Beth McGeehan, Ruth O’Leary and Ellen Condon.

A.) Keith Zielaskioski, a resident of Hessian Blvd., introduced himself to the Board. He wanted to be considered for a alternate position on either the Planning Commission or the Zoning Hearing Board.

Ms. Johnston reminded the Board that all the open positions were filled as of the last Board of Commissioner meeting. There will be an opening in January on the Planning Commission when one of the members retires. She stated that there are no rules for who should be placed in which positions when filling an opening.

2025 BUDGET

A.) Fire Fund – revised

Ms. Johnston explained the revised proposed Fire Fund budget. While the previously proposed budget was lean, the revised budget is more realistic. The increase to 2.3 mil is due to increased wages and training associated with transitioning to a 24/7 paid Fire Department.

Mr. Donnell asked about the computers. The DES mandates MCT for fire trucks and fire equipment; seven are needed. The projected cost for the tablets and specialized mounting equipment is approximately \$1100 each. The carryover needed for 2026 would be approximately \$400,000.

B.) General Fund

1) Building and Grounds

There was discussion about the utility costs. This will be the first winter utilizing natural gas for the Township buildings. There has been only one bill for public water so far. Many improvements such as switching to LED lights, more efficient heating, and a new roof should help reduce costs. Mr. McNichols explained that switching from well water to public water has eliminated all the water purity testing required each day. It was like having 4 water companies because each building had its own water system.

Ruth O'Leary, a resident of Cedar Top Rd., questioned a few line item amounts. Ms. Johnston replied that she would investigate and that it appeared that the numbers on the spreadsheet did not populate correctly.

2) Police Department

Chief Winchester pointed out the notes on the side of the sheets that help clarify the line items. He proceeded to address several of the line items.

- 4100-130 for prior year sick reimbursement is an example of a one-time expense that will be adjusted and paid in January.
- 4100-156 is increased due to the 19% increase in healthcare insurance.
- 4100-183 and 4100-241 will receive reimbursements that will need to be deposited into revenue line items so the actual costs are not reflected on the worksheet.
- 4100-360 for Heart & Lung is extremely difficult to predict, so there is \$0 budgeted for 2025. The rules could change again with legislative changes. The H&L cost for 2022 was at the height of COVID. Mrs. Carpenter explained that Heart & Lung can only be used for wages, but is not paid out of the wage line item. Heart & Lung doesn't appear on a W-2 form and no taxes are paid on this amount.

Mr. Greg Miller asked about MMO-U and MMO-NU. The terms were explained as follows: MMO stands for Minimum Municipal Obligation for the pensions. "U" refers to the Uniformed pension for the Police and "NU" refers to Non-Uniformed pension which includes all the other employees at this time.

Chief Winchester explained that the Police Department is mandated to respond for animal control. The Township had contracted with an entity for \$10,000 in 2024 and only used the service to house 5 dogs. This entity has increased the rate to approximately \$23,000 for 2025. Chief Winchester is looking into alternatives to provide for this service that are closer to the previous rate.

Mr. Donnell asked about the cost for ammunition. Chief Winchester explained that training ammo is different from duty ammo. The Police Department makes ammo runs to stock up when they can get a better price. The Police Department needs training to remain proficient.

There was discussion about protective supplies going beyond gloves and masks to include a ballistic shield. There was also discussion about tech advancement, hardware and software needs of the Police Department.

The new medium-sized speed board and related software cost of approximately \$9000 was included in the proposed budget.

Mr. Donnell asked about more opportunities for community outreach. Chief Winchester replied that post-COVID, the opportunities have increased. Events like the fishing derby,

National Night Out, and Trunk or Treat, as well as Officer Ollie the therapy dog are valuable for community interaction.

Under police capital, purchase of 1 marked vehicle is proposed for the 2025 budget. Another vehicle was totaled in an accident and will be replaced using insurance reimbursement.

Mr. Greg Miller asked about the process used to decide how to replace vehicles. Chief Winchester said that a fleet management system is used to track the milage and body condition of all the vehicles. When a new vehicle is purchased, the older vehicles are placed in reserve to be used as needed. Mr. McNichols stated that idle time is also calculated into the equation and the police vehicles have a great deal of idle time. Chief Winchester confirmed that the police vehicles run approximately 24/7. The cars are usually in a 5 year cycle. Mr. Greg Miller asked how many vehicles are in the fleet. The answer is 10 in the fleet line. The MCTs are interchangeable in case a vehicle must be switched out.

There was discussion about the efficiency of using more speed boards and less vehicles. Chief Winchester stated that he does not believe that the police Department would be more efficient by decreasing the fleet. They try to police smarter by using predictive policing.

Chief Winchester reminded that the body cameras will need to be factored into the budgets for 2026-2029.

Ms. Johnston reminded the Board that the next budget meeting is scheduled for 11/07/24.

COMMISSIONERS

A.) Executive Session

- 1) collective bargaining issue – police
- 2) collective bargaining issue – fire
- 2) personnel issue

Executive session began at 8:37 p.m. – to discuss collective bargaining issues and personnel issues.

Executive session ended at 9:43 p.m. – collective bargaining issues and personnel issues were discussed.

ON MOTION OF MR. WILLIAM MILLER, SECOND OF MR. BATDORF, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO GRANT A 3-MONTH EXTENSION TO THE FMLA LEAVE FOR THE EMPLOYEE DISCUSSED DURING EXECUTIVE SESSION.

ON MOTION OF MR. DONNELL, SECOND OF MR. WILLIAM MILLER, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO AUTHORIZE THE SOLICITOR TO AMEND THE MOU WITH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO INCLUDE ACT 49.

REMINDERS

A.) Zoning Hearing Board 11/26/2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Application No. 827 – 812 Cameron St., second dwelling on same lot

Application No. 828 – 504 Summit Ave., accessory structure in front yard
Application No. 829 – 1601A Ridge Ave., dwelling unit on non-conforming lot
Application No. 830 – 529 Pershing Blvd., accessory structure in front yard

B.) Board of Commissioners meetings for November 2024

11/07/2024 at 6:00 p.m. – Budget Meeting

11/19/2024 at 6:00 p.m. – Public Hearing for text amendment to Zoning Ordinance (ZO)

11/19/2024 at 6:30 p.m. - Public Hearing for text amendments to SALDO

11/19/2024 at 7:00 p.m. – Regular Meeting

C.) Planning Commission 11/04/2024 at 6:00 p.m. (upper level)

D.) Office Closings

11/5/2024 administration office closed to the public for Election Day

11/28/2024 and 11/29/2024 offices closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

12/24/2024 and 12/25/2024 offices closed for Christmas Holiday

12/31/2024 and 1/1/2024 offices closed for New Year Holiday

Ms. Johnston reminded everyone that the administration office will be closed to the public on Election Day. The Police Department will be open.

ADJOURNMENT

**ON MOTION OF MR. GREG MILLER, SECOND OF MR. BATDORF, A UNANIMOUS
VOTE TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:46 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,



Jeanne E. Johnston
Manager/Secretary