

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BIENNIAL REORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2026**

- MEMBERS PRESENT** John J. Merhottein, President
John K. Gallagher, Vice President
Matthew Deckman, Commissioner
Michael D. Hudak, Commissioner
DeAnn L. Lawrence, Commissioner
- OTHERS PRESENT** James L. Broughal, Township Solicitor
Doug Bruce, Township Manager
Samantha Smith, Community Development Director
Ron Gawlik, Township Engineer
- CALL TO ORDER** Solicitor Broughal called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- OATH OF OFFICE** Laura Zapata, Township Notary, administered the Oath of Office to Commissioners-Elect John Merhottein and Matthew Deckman.
- ELECTION OF OFFICERS** Solicitor Broughal welcomed the newly elected Commissioners and explained the process for the election of officers. Solicitor Broughal then called for nominations for President of the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Gallagher nominated Mr. Merhottein. There were no other nominations. By unanimous voice vote, Mr. Merhottein was elected President of the Board of Commissioners.
- Solicitor Broughal turned the meeting over to Mr. Merhottein. Mr. Merhottein thanked the board and welcomed Commissioner Gallagher, Commissioner Hudak, and Commissioner Lawrence.
- Mr. Merhottein called for nominations for Vice President of the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Hudak nominated Mr. Gallagher. There were no other nominations. By unanimous voice vote, Mr. Gallagher was elected Vice-President of the Board of Commissioners.
- COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**
- RESIDENT
3116 CHESTER AVE.** The resident said he drove past the gas station located at the interchange of SR191 and Route 22 and asked if the owner can be forced to clean the lot. He said he was concerned about runoff polluting the Monocacy Creek. Ms. Smith said environmental concerns are handled by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Property maintenance is handled by the township, specifically her department. Ms. Smith said they were able to get them to put a fence around the empty property.
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES** Upon motion (Gallagher-Lawrence), the Board of Commissioners unanimously voted by voice vote to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2025, regular public meeting as presented.

PUBLIC HEARING

ORDINANCE 01-26 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 252, VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC; ARTICLE II TRAFFIC AND SECTION 252-15 STOP INTERSECTIONS OF THE CODE OF CODIFIED ORDINANCES TO PROVIDE CHANGES TO THE STOP INTERSECTIONS LOCATED WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP OF BETHLEHEM

Mr. Merhottein said this amendment changes the intersection of Dewalt and 7th Streets from a two-way stop to a four-way stop.

Upon motion (Hudak-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to adopt Ordinance No, 01-26 amending chapter 252, Vehicles and Traffic; Article II Traffic and Section 252-15 Stop Intersections of the code of Codified Ordinances to provide changes to the stop intersections located within the Township of Bethlehem.

RESOLUTIONS & AGREEMENTS

RESOLUTION R001-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTMENT A TOWNSHIP MANAGER

Mr. Deckman nominated Doug Bruce.

By 4-1 voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R001-26 appointing Doug Bruce as Township Manager. Mr. Gallagher opposed.

RESOLUTION R002-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A TOWNSHIP SOLICITOR

Mr. Merhottein nominated Broughal & DeVito, LLP.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved R002-26 appointing Jim Broughal of Broughal & DeVito LLP as Township Solicitor.

RESOLUTION R003-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING AN ASSISTANT TOWNSHIP SOLICITOR

Mr. Merhottein nominated Attorney David Backenstoe.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved R003-26 appointing David M. Backenstoe as Assistant Township Solicitor.

RESOLUTION R004-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A LABOR COUNSEL

Mr. Merhottein nominated Attorney John S. Harrison.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved R004-26 appointing John S. Harrison of Broughal & DeVito LLP as Labor Counsel.

RESOLUTION R005-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

Ms. Merhottein nominated The Pidcock Company.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved R005-26

appointing The Pidcock Company as Township Engineer.

RESOLUTION R006-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING AN ASSISTANT TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

Mr. Merhottein nominated Hanover Engineering.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved R006-26 appointing Hanover Engineering as Assistant Township Engineer.

RESOLUTION R007-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Mr. Gallagher nominated Steve Gallagher. Mr. Hudak nominated Lee Snover. Mr. Deckman nominated Mark Grandinetti.

Upon roll call vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R007-26 appointing Steve Gallagher to the Bethlehem Township Planning Commission. Mr. Gallagher, Mr. Merhottein and Ms. Lawrence voted for Steve Gallagher. Mr. Hudak voted for Lee Snover. Mr. Deckman voted for Mark Grandinetti.

RESOLUTION R008-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Mr. Hudak nominated Lee Snover. Mr. Deckman nominated Mark Grandinetti.

Upon roll call vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R008-26 appointing Mark Grandinetti to the Bethlehem Township Planning Commission. Mr. Gallagher, Mr. Merhottein and Mr. Deckman voted for Mark Grandinetti. Mr. Hudak and Ms. Lawrence voted for Lee Snover.

RESOLUTION R009-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP RECREATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gallagher nominated Alex Mumford.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R009-26 appointing Alex Mumford to the Bethlehem Township Recreation Commission.

RESOLUTION R010-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP RECREATION COMMISSION

By consensus, the Board of Commissioners tabled Resolution R010-26.

RESOLUTION R011-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP VACANCY BOARD

Mr. Gallagher nominated Frank Pologruto.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved R011-26 appointing Frank Pologruto to the Bethlehem Township Vacancy Board.

RESOLUTION R012-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP ZONING HEARING BOARD

Mr. Hudak nominated Paul Weiss.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R012-26 appointing Paul Weiss to the Bethlehem Township Zoning Hearing Board.

RESOLUTION R013-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Mr. Gallagher nominated Tim Brady.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R013-26 appointing Tim Brady to the Bethlehem Township Civil Service Commission.

RESOLUTION R014-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING AN ALTERNATE MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Mr. Deckman nominated Mike LaPorta.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R014-24 appointing Mike LaPorta as Alternate Member of the Bethlehem Township Civil Service Commission.

RESOLUTION R015-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mr. Deckman nominated Alex Mumford.

By voice vote, the Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 to approve Resolution R015-26 appointing Alex Mumford to the Bethlehem Township Environmental Advisory Council. Mr. Hudak opposed.

RESOLUTION R016-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mr. Gallagher nominated DeAnn Lawrence.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R016-26 appointing DeAnn Lawrence to the Bethlehem Township Environmental Advisory Council.

RESOLUTION R017-26 APPOINTING A COLLEGE ASSOCIATE MEMBER TO THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mr. Gallagher nominated Connor Newman.

By voice vote, the Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 approved Resolution R017-26 appointing Connor Newman, College Associate Member to the Bethlehem Township Environmental Advisory Council. Mr. Hudak opposed.

RESOLUTION R018-26 A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A TOWNSHIP TREASURER

Mr. Gallagher nominated John Petro.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board of Commissioners approved Resolution R018-26 appointing John Petro to Township Treasurer.

RESOLUTION R019-26 A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A REVISED OFFICIAL POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE USE OF THE PROCEEDS OF ANY FIRE TAX ESTABLISHED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FROM TIME TO TIME. (PREVIOUSLY RESOLUTION R066-25 WHICH WAS TABLED)

Upon motion (Gallagher-Hudak), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to untable Resolution R066-25.

Mr. Merhottein said the resolution was changed to not that 80 percent of annual fire tax revenues will be spent on vehicles and 20 percent on other uses. Mr. Gallagher wanted to make the policy very clear and suggested removing the following uses noted on Exhibit A:

- (A) building and maintaining suitable places for the housing of fire apparatus;
- (F) the purchase of land upon which to erect a fire house; and
- (G) the erection and maintenance of a fire house or fire training school a and center.

Upon motion (Gallagher-Lawrence), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve Resolution R019-26, as amended (noted above), establishing a revised official policy with respect to the use of the proceeds of any fire tax established by the Board of Commissioners from time to time.

RESOLUTION R020-26 A RESOLUTION REVISING RESOLUTION R065-25 AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION TO THE LOCAL SHARE ASSESSMENT (STATEWIDE) GRANT PROGRAM OF THE COMMONWEALTH FINANCING AUTHORITY

Mr. Merhottein said the revised resolution changes the amount of the BTVFC grant request to bring it above the minimum \$25,000 grant request amount.

Upon motion (Hudak-Deckman), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve Resolution R020-26 revising Resolution R065-25 authorizing an application to the Local Share Assessment (Statewide) Grant Program of the Commonwealth Financing Authority.

**SUBDIVISIONS &
LAND DEVELOPMENT**

MOTION A MOTION APPROVING AN IMPROVEMENTS SECURITY RELEASE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$616,843.35 FOR NANCY RUN ESTATES PHASES 7-10

Mr. Gallagher asked if this was the last improvements security release. Ms. Smith said it was and the 18-month maintenance period starts today.

Upon motion (Gallagher-Lawrence), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote approving an Improvements Security Release in the

amount of \$616,843.35 for Nancy Run Estates Phases 7-10.

**MOTION OF THE
BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS**

MOTION

**A MOTION APPROVING A CHANGE TO THE CIVIL SERVICE RULES
AND REGULATIONS**

Mr. Merhottein said the Civil Service Commission is planning a new entry-level police officer search and recommended a one-time waiver of the requirement that an applicant have either Act 120 certification or 60 college credits in order to attract more applicants.

Upon motion (Deckman-Lawrence), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote approving a change to the Civil Service Rules and Regulations.

MOTION

**A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF JOHN PETRO AS TAX
COLLECTOR**

Mr. Merhottein said Mr. Petro received four write-in votes and was elected Tax Collector. Mr. Petro sent a letter to the township resigning the position of Tax Collector. Solicitor Broughal said that, if the board accepts the resignation, it has 30 days to appoint a Tax Collector. Mr. Deckman asked if the board had the power to eliminate the position. Solicitor Broughal said the board has the power to eliminate any position it creates; however, the Tax Collector position was created by the State.

By consensus, the Board of Commissioners accepted the resignation of John Petro as tax collector.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

**PENNDOT'S
INTERSECTION
IMPROVEMENT
PROJECT**

**PENNDOT'S INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT IN
CONJUNCTION WITH THE FREEMANSBURG/WOLFE DENTAL LAND
DEVELOPMENT PLAN AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE
FREEMANSBURG AVE / FARMERSVILLE RD INTERSECTION**

Ms. Smith said PennDOT presented a preliminary design of the improved intersection, which includes installing sidewalks only at the intersection. Ms. Smith said she would prefer to see more sidewalks installed or installed at different locations based on potential future developments. She said Wolfe Dental received a sidewalk deferral 10 years ago. Mr. Hudak said disagreed with adding more sidewalk as they lead to nowhere. He said there are multiple gaps and the next sidewalk starts a half mile east on Freemansburg Avenue and no one walks there. Ms. Smith said CVS and Harvey's Corner may have sidewalks installed in the future. Mr. Hudak said he wants to keep the deferrals. Mr. Gallagher said the ordinance requires sidewalks. He said nine developments may be redeveloped in the future. Mr. Merhottein said waiting to install sidewalks will only cost more. Mr. Gawlik said at the time Wolfe Dental asked for the deferment, the cost to install was \$150,000; today the cost might be double that. Mr. Deckman said he would like see the progression towards a full sidewalk.

**LES WALKER
4109 BIRCH DR.**

Mr. Walker said Koehler Farms is behind his property and notices people walking along the street often which is a safety concern. He believes the sidewalks should be installed to make an unsafe situation better. He also believes the longer this is delayed, the more expensive it becomes.

**STEVE HUNT
2197 COOK DR.**

Mr. Cook agreed with Mr. Walker and said he enjoys walking very much. He asked if the road will be widened. Mr. Hudak said no. Mr. Cook believes if you have an opportunity to do something then it should be done.

Upon motion, (Gallagher-Deckman), the Board of Commissioners voted by voice vote to call in the sidewalk deferral for Wolfe Dental. The motion passed 4-1. Mr. Hudak opposed.

**JOHNSTON MANSION
SEPTIC TESTING AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
SITE ASSESSMENT**

Mr. Gallagher said he would like to move this along so the engineer could design a septic system. Mr. Bruce agreed and added the state grant consultant has discussed the need for an environmental assessment.

Upon motion, (Gallagher-Hudak), the Board of Commissioners voted by voice vote to appoint Whitestone consultants to conduct septic testing and environmental assessments for the Johnston mansion project, based on its proposals.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, Mr. Merhottein adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura G. Zapata
Recording Secretary