

**BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
MARCH 20, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT John Merhottein, President
John Gallagher, Vice President
Jan Beatty, Commissioner
Luke Verdes, Commissioner

OTHERS PRESENT James L. Broughal, Township Solicitor
Doug Bruce, Township Manager
Amanda Raudenbush, Community Development Director
Richard Kanaskie, Public Works Director
Matt Miranda, PPIS Director

CALL TO ORDER President Merhottein called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATION

RESOLUTION 031-23 Mr. Merhottein presented a resolution recognizing and honoring the heroic actions of Ethan Christiansen, Nina Dziak, Arthur Grasso, Jr. and John Waldman on February 15, 2023, at the Bethlehem Township Community Center. The board thanked these individuals for their actions.

Resolution R031-23 was approved unanimously by acclamation.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

**PAUL WEISS
3649 CHIPMAN RD.**

Mr. Weiss said Mr. Sourbeck had brought up the idea of conducting public interviews for people that were interested in serving on township committees. He said he was disappointed the board had chosen not to do public interviews in filling Mr. Sourbeck's seat. Mr. Weiss said there had been corruption in township government in the 1980s and it was important for the current board to "maintain transparency." He said he was particularly concerned about two things: (1) a Facebook reference by one of the applicants for the current board vacancy, and (2) that he had heard Mr. Verdes had been introduced socially as the "next commissioner" before his actual appointment.

Mr. Gallagher said he privately interviewed all the candidates for tonight's board appointment, as he always does.

Ms. Beatty said she was not against public interviews, but they couldn't be worked out this time.

Mr. Verdes said he was not introduced anywhere as a commissioner prior to his appointment. "That's false," he said. Mr. Verdes said he privately interviewed all applicants for tonight's appointment. He said his criteria for the appointment was how aligned the applicants are with Mr. Sourbeck's positions. Mr. Verdes said the applicant referenced by Mr. Weiss was very much qualified for the position.

Mr. Merhottein said tonight's appointment should go to "the person who can hit the ground running" since it is an eight-month appointment.

**GLEN KRIER
3942 KENRICK DR.**

Mr. Krier asked how Bethlehem Township would be affected if Northampton County left the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. Solicitor Broughal said Northampton County would then have to create its own planning commission.

**TOM KEEFER
3803 CARTER RD.**

Mr. Keefer said, regarding the commissioner appointment, that the board should have conducted public interviews.

**ROY ROTH
4323 CHETWIN TERR.**

Mr. Roth said a property, which retains stormwater, is under construction in his neighborhood and asked where the water will go. Ms. Raudenbush said there must be at least 10,000 square feet of impervious coverage in order to enforce the stormwater ordinance. She said the township is currently updating the ordinance.

Mr. Roth asked if the board was just “laughing off” stormwater concerns. Mr. Merhottein said the board never laughs off stormwater concerns, as shown by the majority of the board voting to create a stormwater authority and capital improvement plan.

**BARRY ROTH
4323 CHETWIN TERR.**

Mr. Roth said Mr. Sourbeck will be sorely missed.

**LES WALKER
4109 BIRCH DR.**

Mr. Walker said he serves as chair of the Planning Commission. He said of recent appointees to the planning commission that one member missed three to four meetings since being appointed, one missed the first meeting, and another one quit before attending a meeting. Mr. Walker pointed out the board chose not to reappoint Mr. Grandinetti, who has lived in the township for 21 years and served for 10 years and Mr. Wright, who has lived in the township for 53 years and served for 11 years. He said both attended the meetings prepared and asked appropriate questions. Mr. Walker said the task of the Planning Commission is to vet out projects to ensure they meet all of the SALDO requirements and then make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. “We read the novel and give the Cliff notes,” he said. The board should make appointments based on qualifications and experience, not politics, he said. Mr. Walker asked the board to consider reappointing Don Wright to the Planning Commission.

**DON WRIGHT
2815 HOPE RIDGE DR.**

Mr. Wright thanked Mr. Walker. He said transparency is key to good government.

**APPROVAL OF
MINUTES**

Mr. Gallagher noted that the February 6, 2023 meeting minutes have not yet been approved.

Upon motion (Beatty-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the March 6, 2023 regular public meeting minutes, the October 20, 2022, October 25, 2022 and November 3, 2022 Budget Hearing minutes as presented.

**SUBDIVISIONS AND
LAND
DEVELOPMENT**

MOTION

A MOTION AUTHORIZING A WAIVER OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR GREEN POND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FOR A GAZEBO INSTALLATION

Ms. Raudenbush said the applicant proposes to put up a gazebo and is seeking a waiver from the land development process. Mr. Gallagher asked what happens if the circumstances change. Solicitor Broughal said the waiver is a shortcut, meaning they would skip the process of going to before the Planning Commission and going directly to the board for a vote. Ms. Raudenbush said the applicant is also requesting a waiver of the \$1,200 application fee and the \$5,000 escrow. She recommended against it saying it would set a precedent from a legal perspective. Ms. Beatty agreed. The applicant explained that Green Pond United Methodist Church has only about 80 members and believes the gazebo would be a good way to bring people to the community. Mr. Gallagher said the applicant should get most of the escrow back.

Solicitor Broughal said that because they are changing the recorded plan, the applicant must file a new plan to be recorded.

Upon motion (Gallagher-Beatty), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve a motion authorizing a waiver of the land development process for Green Pond United Methodist Church for a gazebo installation.

Upon motion (Gallagher-Verdes), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to deny the motion authorizing waiver of the application fee and escrow account for Green Pond United Methodist Church for a gazebo installation.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RESOLUTION R033-23 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPOINTMENT TO FILL THE VACANCY OF A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ms. Beatty nominated DeAnn Lawrence. Mr. Merhottein nominated Rodman Law.

The Board of Commissioners voted 3-1 by roll call vote to appoint DeAnn Lawrence as Commissioner. Mr. Merhottein voted for Rodman Law.

RESOLUTION R027-23 A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE EXPENDITURE OF \$611,301.98 FOR A 900-ECO 12-YARD TRUCK-MOUNTED COMBINATION SEWER CLEANER ON A WESTER STAR 47X CHASSIS, AND AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CERTAIN MASTER LEASE PURCHASE AGREEMENT WITH LEASE SERVICE CENTER INC., DBA NCL GOVERNMENT CAPITAL

Mr. Gallagher said the interest rate on a five-year lease would equal approximately 12% of the cost of the truck. He asked if it could be purchased outright. Mr. Bruce said a lease-purchase was recommended, as the sewer fund did not have enough money to cover a straight purchase. Ms. Beatty asked the board to table the resolution. Mr. Verdes asked how long the vehicle lasts. Mr. Miranda said they last about 10 years. By consensus, the board requested staff to consider outright purchase versus lease purchase.

Upon motion (Gallagher-Beatty), the Board of Commissioners unanimously voted by voice vote to table Resolution R027-23 approving the expenditure of \$611,301.98 for a 900-ECO 12-yard truck-mounted combination sewer cleaner on a

Wester Star 47X chassis, and authorizing the execution of a certain master lease purchase agreement with Lease Service Center Inc., dba NCL Government Capital.

RESOLUTION R028-23 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ATTENDANCE OF INVESTIGATOR PATRICK BREHM AT BASIC CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHY TRAINING MARCH 27-31, 2023, IN HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

Upon motion (Beatty-Verdes), the Board of Commissioners voted 4-0 by voice vote to approve Resolution R028-23 authorizing the attendance of Investigator Patrick Brehm at basic crime scene photography training March 27-31, 2023, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

RESOLUTION R029-23 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION TO A PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES GRANT PROGRAM, REQUESTING A GRANT OF \$250,000 FOR MUNICIPAL PARK PLAYGROUND RENOVATION

Mr. Kanaskie said the playground at the community center has been there before the building was constructed and the parts cannot be replaced. He said it is heavily used and is need of total replacement.

DAVE BUCHERER
4220 NICHOLAS ST. Mr. Bucherer asked when the playground at Chetwin Terrace would be updated. Mr. Kanaskie said that was next on the list.

Upon motion (Beatty-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted 4-0 by voice vote to approve Resolution R029-23 authorizing an application to a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources grant program, requesting a grant of \$250,000 for Municipal Park playground renovation.

RESOLUTION R030-23 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION TO THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY LIVABLE LANDSCAPES GRANT PROGRAM, REQUESTING A GRANT OF \$75,000 FOR MUNICIPAL PARK PLAYGROUND RENOVATION

Upon motion (Beatty-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted 4-0 by voice vote to approve Resolution R030-23 authorizing an application to the Northampton County Livable Landscapes grant program, requesting a grant of \$75,000 for Municipal Park playground renovation.

RESOLUTION R032-23 A RESOLUTION AWARDED THE CONTRACT FOR THE HOUSENICK PARK PHASE 3 TRAILS PROJECT

Mr. Kanaskie said this is the final phase of the trail.

Upon motion (Gallagher-Verdes), the Board of Commissioners voted 4-0 by voice vote to approve Resolution R032-23 awarding the contract for the Housenick Park Phase 3 trails project to Barwis Construction based on its Alternate 1 bid.

RESOLUTION R034-23 A RESOLUTION APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN UPDATED EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (EOP) AND ADOPTING THE NOTIFICATION AND RESOURCE MANUAL OF THE BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP EOP FOR THE PREVENTION AND MINIMIZATION OF INJURY AND DAMAGE

**CAUSED BY A MAJOR EMERGENCY OR DISASTER WITHIN
BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP**

Upon motion (Gallagher-Verdes), the Board of Commissioners voted 4-0 by voice vote to approve Resolution R034-23 approving and authorizing the implementation of an updated Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and adopting the Notification and Resource Manual of the Bethlehem Township EOP for the prevention and minimization of injury and damage caused by a major emergency or disaster within Bethlehem Township.

RESOLUTION R035-23 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATIONS TO VARIOUS GRANT PROGRAMS FOR THE POLICE COMMUNICATIONS UPGRADE PROJECT

Upon motion (Gallagher-Verdes), the Board of Commissioners voted 4-0 by voice vote to approve Resolution R035-23 authorizing applications to various grant programs for the police communications upgrade project

**MOTIONS OF THE
BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS**

MOTION A MOTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A NOT-TO-EXCEED AGREEMENT WITH GENERAL CODE TO REVIEW AND UPDATE THE TOWNSHIP'S CODE OF CODIFIED ORDINANCES

Upon motion (Beatty-Gallagher), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve a motion authorizing the township manager to enter into a not-to-exceed agreement with General Code to review and update the township's Code of Codified Ordinances.

BILL AGENDA OF MARCH 15, 2023

Upon motion (Gallagher-Beatty), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the bill agenda of March 15, 2023 as presented.

**APPROVAL OF
PURCHASE ORDERS**

- PO 20230632 – WITMER PUBLIC SAFETY GROUP – CD – \$4,680.00**
- PO 20230633 – WITMER PUBLIC SAFETY GROUP – CD – \$1,197.59**
- PO 20230675 – NORTH EAST PARTS GROUP – PW – \$2,013.87**
- PO 20230676 – GREEN POND NURSERY – PW – \$3,148.50**
- PO 20230677 – GROFF TRACTOR & EQUIPMENT – PW – \$171,900.00**
- PO 20230678 – ARMORED REPUBLIC – BTPD – \$3,490.66**
- PO 20230681 – HYDRA-NUMATIC SALES – PPIS – \$5,601.24**
- PO 20230721 – PITNEY BOWES – FINANCE – \$21,040.80**
- PO 20230763 – WINCAN – PPIS – \$3,300.00**
- PO 20230765 – TK ELEVATOR CORP. – BTCC – \$3,243.88**
- PO 20230781 – CHEMUNG SUPPLY CORP. – PW – \$2,140.00**
- PO 20230782 – GROFF TRACTOR & EQUIPMENT – PW – \$2,813.16**
- PO 20230784 – BATH SUPPLY CO. – PPIS – \$2,525.00**
- PO 20230785 – H.T. LYONS – PPIS – \$18,438.00**

Upon motion (Gallagher-Beatty), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the purchase orders as presented.

**TREASURER'S
REPORT OF
FEBRUARY 28, 2023**

Upon motion (Gallagher-Verdes), the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the treasurer's report of February 28, 2023, subject to audit.

**ZONING HEARING
BOARD MEETING OF
MARCH 29, 2023**

Ms. Raudenbush said four applications seeking variances were on the agenda.

MONTHLY REPORTS

The monthly reports were accepted as presented without comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, Mr. Merhottein adjourned the meeting at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura G. Zapata
Recording Secretary