

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
BUDGET HEARING  
OCTOBER 28, 2025**

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT</b>	John J. Merhottein, President John K. Gallagher, Vice President Matthew Deckman, Commissioner DeAnn Lawrence, Commissioner
<b>MEMBERS ABSENT</b>	Michael Hudak, Commissioner
<b>OTHERS PRESENT</b>	Doug Bruce, Township Manager Andrew Freda, Finance Director Felix Martinez, Jr., Assistant Finance Director William Walczak, Treasurer, Freemansburg Bethlehem Township Athletic Association Chris Payano, Treasurer, Bethlehem Township Athletic Association Nate Connors, President, Bethlehem Township Athletic Association Nicholas Santiago, Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company C.J. Kuronya, Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company Dave Stapinski, Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Company Joseph Smith, Nancy Run Fire Company
<b>CALL TO ORDER</b>	Mr. Bruce called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
<b>FREEMANSBURG BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION</b>	Mr. Walczak said their organization has 300 children enrolled. They have had to go into their reserves to pay for the replacement of the stairwell. They are requesting \$60,000 and this year marked the last year of the repayment of the five-year loan. Mr. Merhottein suggested they try and fundraise the money to pay for the lights. He said he spoke with the fire department about helping them put the lights up. Mr. Merhottein thanked them for doing a wonderful job. Mr. Deckman said he appreciates them being a valuable outlet for the children.
<b>BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION</b>	Nate Connor, president, said their request is five percent less than last year. They presently have \$80,000 in the bank. Mr. Deckman asked what the number for football registration was. Mr. Connor said there was a total of 100 children registered. Mr. Merhottein asked for the total all the sports. Mr. Connor said there are an average of 1,800 registrations including basketball, soccer, cheerleading, and lacrosse. He said he would get the board a more accurate number and thanked the board for their support.
<b>BARRY ROTH 4323 CHETWIN TERR.</b>	Mr. Roth said the Freemansburg-Bethlehem Township Athletic Association need to come up with a long-range plan for lighting.
<b>BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY</b>	Nick Santiago, Treasurer, said they are making sure their assets are appropriately valued and adequately protected. They have increased their budget for EMS training leadership and development, he said. Mr. Santiago

said the new incentive program is designed to recruit and retain active members.

Mr. Bruce said the incentive program is built into the annual contribution from the township to the fire company. He said the money may be used as the company sees fit, as the township will not be involved in compensating volunteers. He said the companies have created a program to encourage volunteers to participate in calls and training.

Mr. Deckman asked if everyone would be eligible. BTVFC chief C.J. Kuronya said it was based on their training. Mr. Merhottein asked how much this would cost. Chief Kuronya said they are requesting a \$60,000 contribution from the township and then the fire companies would match. Other municipalities offer something similar.

Mr. Stapinski said Community Days is not part of the company's normal fundraising. Any money made from Community Days is placed in a separate account, he said. Mr. Merhottein said he appreciates that and the township is lucky to have these two fire companies.

#### **NANCY RUN FIRE COMPANY**

Joe Smith, President, said there is a slight increase in the budget. Mr. Gallagher asked how many calls are received. Mr. Smith said 1,300 which is a similar number as the Bethlehem Township Volunteer Fire Co. The difference is their department is closer to Lower Nazareth Township. Both fire companies go to different municipalities for mutual aid.

Mr. Smith provided information on radio projects to the board. He said 33 radios were still needed. Mr. Bruce said they are applying for grants for money to purchase them. Mr. Deckman asked if the grant money would cover all the radios. Mr. Bruce said that was unlikely.

Mr. Merhottein said he would like to increase the fire tax and amend the ordinance so fire tax funds are not limited to paying for vehicles. Mr. Gallagher said the tax was raised last year. Mr. Merhottein said amending the ordinance would allow them to purchase the radios with fire tax funds. Mr. Gallagher said the ordinance should note specific equipment. Chief Kuryona the state has restrictions on what the money can be used for. He thanked the board for their support.

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

Mr. Bruce said the total number of wages and benefits projected was \$15.7 million dollars, most of which involve union contracts. He recommended a four percent wage increase for non-union employees. No wage increase is proposed for the township manager. Mr. Gallagher said he would forgo his stipend for 2026. Mr. Bruce said it was a very gracious gesture.

Mr. Freda said they typical release contributions to the Miracle League in the spring. Mr. Gallagher noted that the organization does amazing things.

Mr. Gallagher asked if the number for non-reimbursable legal expenses was enough. Mr. Bruce said that as of September, they are slightly over budget on this line item. Discussion ensued resulting in no changes to the budget.

The meeting concluded at 7:21 p.m. Mr. Bruce said the third and final budget hearing will be held Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura G. Zapata  
Recording Secretary

## **ADJOURNMENT**