

Board of Supervisors

MINUTES

November 10, 2009

Jim Brownlow, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He opened with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in honor of veterans.

Supervisors Present: Karen Bedics, Jim Brownlow, Barbara Lindtner and Rob Zisko. **Absent:** Volker Oakey
Also present: Terry Clemons, Solicitor; Sandy Everitt, Secretary/Treasurer; Mark Laudenslager, Chief of Police; and Rich Schilling, Township Manager.

The minutes for the October 27 regular meeting or the November 5 budget meeting were not prepared. The Supervisors held an executive session during the November 5 meeting to discuss personnel issues.

Bills for Approval

Barbara Lindtner **moved** to approve the following bills paid from October 28 through November 10, 2009:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. General Fund | \$ 15,324.13 | 3. Highway Capital Improvement | \$ 939.52 |
| 2. Liquid Fuels | \$ 7,307.78 | 4. Open Space | \$ 540.00 |

Karen Bedics **seconded**; the motion **passed** unanimously.

Reports

Road Department - Accepted as presented (posted).

Police Report - (Posted on website) – The State Police report of incidents handled in October was included in this month's report as well as a comparison of incidents handled by Springfield Township police during the same period of 2008. Karen Bedics noted there were three accidents at or near the Richlandtown Pike/State Road intersection. She asked if the police planned to increase monitoring this section of Richlandtown Pike. Chief Laudenslager said other current duties at this time do not permit increased traffic monitoring there. He did not feel police monitoring would have prevented any of the three recent accidents.

Officers Jacoby and Sepulveda completed their one-year probation period on November 3 and Chief Laudenslager recommended both officers be retained as full-time officers. Karen Bedics **moved** that Ronald Jacoby and Jules Sepulveda be removed from probation and become full-time police officers. Barbara Lindtner **seconded**; the motion **passed** unanimously. Rich Schilling added that both men were exceptional officers. The Board also expressed their appreciation for Officers Jacoby and Sepulveda.

Chief Laudenslager obtained information from the recent *Township News* article about Town Watch programs in Pennsylvania. He will arrange a phone or physical meeting with the police chief of Amity Township (Berks County), referenced in that article, to see how their program operates.

Karen asked that Chief Laudenslager commend Officer McDonald for his assistance on Saturday, November 7, during the EAC roadside cleanup project.

Manager's Report - The Township received comments from the Bucks County Planning Commission and the Bucks County Health Department on the revised Act 537 Plan. Lombardo & Associates will make the necessary changes and advertising for the final public meeting should be possible by the end of November or in December. Police negotiations should also be completed and ready for Board approval by the end of this year. GIS training for township committees and township staff will begin in early 2010. Rich will try to arrange evening or Saturday training times so that committee members who work during the week can participate.

Public Comments on Agenda Items – None

Old Business

1. Act 32 EIT Tax Collection Committee - Irene Elinich, Springfield Township's appointed delegate to the TCC, presented a report on the first official meeting of the Tax Collection Committee held on November 5. The first meeting was rather contentious because approximately a week to two weeks prior to the November 5 first meeting, several school districts got together and organized a meeting to which only a few of the municipalities and other school districts were invited. As a result, the appointments of the chairman, vice chairman and the secretary took less than 15 minutes on November 5, which indicated advance preparation for appointments to these positions. For that reason, the municipalities present at the November 5 meeting banded together against an attempt to address bylaws, funding and other issues obviously discussed and prepared before the official first meeting until all the delegates had time to review them. The officers will invite DCED to attend the next meeting in January to give an educational presentation. The delegates requested a listing of all official delegates along with their email addresses. Irene suggested that the Township consider a budget line item of approximately \$400 to fund required legal support and advertising for the Tax Collection Committee. The estimated total financial need is approximately \$50,000, which will be pro-rated among the 54 municipalities and 13 school districts based primarily on the amount of tax currently being collected by each municipality. Springfield's weighted vote will be approximately .0079%, while Council Rock or Central Bucks School Districts are about 14.4%. Irene feels that the townships plan to band together to make their vote more significant. Jim Brownlow asked if DCED plans to review the cost of collecting EIT taxes under the newly established collection agent as opposed to the costs that were paid by individual townships/school districts under the existing collection system. The Board asked Irene to raise this issue at a future meeting. Irene also expressed concern about the policy third-party collection agencies might use to collect delinquent accounts. TPAs often add on exorbitant collection fees for past due accounts, making the fees onerous for people who are already struggling to make the tax payment itself.

Terry Clemons offered to obtain the names of the elected chair, vice chair and secretary of the TCC. The Board thanked Irene for her good report.

2. 2010 Draft Budget - Jim explained that the Board went over the budget in detail at the special, advertised public budget work session held on November 5. However, there were no residents present, so the Board decided not to vote to advertise the budget until this regular meeting. Jim requested comments from the Board on the revised draft.

Jim Brownlow noted that the 2010 draft budget was balanced without the need for any tax increases. He pointed out that the Township spent over \$200,000 to prepare the revised Act 537 Plan with the understanding that when it was completed and approved by DEP, half of that amount would be returned to the Township by the State. However, because of the current economic downturn, the 2010 budget reflects receiving only \$40,000 of that amount in 2010. If the Township receives no 2010 reimbursement from the State, this \$40,000 will come from the Reserve Fund.

Barbara Lindtner commented that both the 2009 budget and the 2010 draft budget are very tight budgets, enabling a balanced budget for the second year without a tax increase, while coming through one of the greatest economic crises this country has faced in the past 30 years. She feels both employees and supervisors have done an excellent job of managing expenses. In 2009, for example, revenues were down over 20%, and the 2010 budget is not anticipating that revenues will rebound. Even without a tax increase, the Township is taking care of the employees and emergency services.

Rob Zisko is happy that the budget was balanced without a tax increase, which he would not have voted for.

Irene Elinich, also elected real estate tax collector for Springfield Township, thanked the Board and the Township for this accomplishment. When she learned there would not be a street light tax increase or a real estate tax increase, she was very happy. As tax collector, she knows of residents who will do without their medication in order to pay their real estate tax, and it is hard to face that kind of person across the desk when she is receiving their tax payments. These people are the "salt" of the township and on their behalf, she thanked the Board for not increasing taxes.

There being no further public comments, Karen Bedics **moved** that the \$1,537,072.49 budget be advertised for consideration for adoption at the December 8 meeting. Barbara Lindtner **seconded** the motion. Jim pointed out that even after advertising; adjustments can be made in the budget as long as they do not increase the entire budget more than 10% or any category more than 25%. Jim called for the question. The motion **passed** unanimously. Jim noted that Volker Oakey indicated he would have voted for this budget had he been able to attend this meeting.

3, Acceptance of Modified Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) for Pension Plans - Karen Bedics **moved** that modified MMO figures of \$50,803 for the non-uniformed pension plan and \$41,415 for the police pension plan be

accepted. Barbara Lindtner **seconded** the motion. These modified MMO figures are as a result of the Township's choice related to Act 44. Jim called for the question. The motion **passed** unanimously.

New Business

1. Zoning Ordinance Amendments - Terry Clemons presented a draft ordinance that covers modifying the stream, wetland and riparian buffer zone requirements to provide increased natural resource protection; prohibiting electronic message boards; correcting internal cross references; and implementing provisions to ensure consistency with the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO).

There were a number of concerns expressed about the amendment in its present form. Some corrections of what appear to be errors or inconsistencies will be required. Rob Zisko is concerned about (i), page 19, which requires applicants seeking a special exception or conditional use approval for disturbances of the riparian or wetland buffers regulations to submit their proposal to the EAC for an advisory opinion. Rob feels this section should state "may be required" to submit their proposal to the EAC. Terry Clemons felt that the intention of the Planning Commission when suggesting this alternative was to help the applicant avoid costly study requirements if they could get the EAC to approve their project as having minimal impact. Further discussion on the draft ordinance was deferred until the combined work session meeting of the Board with the Planning Commission scheduled for November 24 when Bob Wynn, township engineer, will be present. Rich Schilling will invite representatives of the EAC and the Planning Commission to attend this meeting.

Public Comment

Lisa Burland expressed concern about the stream definitions in the proposed zoning ordinance amendment. Second, she asked if she would need an environmental impact study done if she wanted to put a paddock within 40' of Cooks Creek, which borders her property. Rob Zisko asked Terry if the *Right to Farm Act* supersedes most ordinances. Terry said the opinion in the Commonwealth Court is that the *Right to Farm Act* does not overrule ordinances.

Willard Weierbach asked if the Township was proceeding with installation of the proposed solar panels for the Township building. He has concerns about whether the systems work as projected by the consultant. He used two panels at Community Day and they did not produce the results he expected. Jim Brownlow said nothing was proposed for the 2010 budget because of current economic constraints.

Bruce Strock feels that the zoning regulations are creating situations where people cannot do things on their properties which are logical to do. He feels that the current regulations are making it impossible to create any commerce in Springtown, which historically, has made Springtown what it is today. Bruce is an environmentalist, and is in favor of protecting our resources, but feels the current zoning regulations are impractical.

Robert Allen had some questions about flood plains. Terry Clemons said that the current Zoning Ordinance amendment reduces the disturbance areas around various kinds of streams. Mr. Allen and Mr. Strock both had other questions about livestock permitted on their properties. They were asked to stop in the office and speak with Rich Schilling, Zoning Officer, about this issue.

Supervisors Comments

Karen Bedics said the Township will host a low-cost pet vaccination clinic on November 21 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the front parking lot of the Township building. She also noted that a wreath will be placed in the Veterans' Memorial Garden on November 11 in honor of our veterans.

Adjournment

At 9:02 p.m., Jim Brownlow **moved** to adjourn the meeting. Rob Zisko **seconded**; the motion **passed** unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra L. Everitt
Secretary/Treasurer

Next meeting: October 27, 2009
Approved: November 24, 2009