Board of Supervisors

MINUTES

December 9, 2008

Jim Brownlow, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

The Board held an executive session prior to this meeting to discuss legal and personnel issues.

Approval of Minutes - Not Ready for Approval

Bills for Approval

Barbara Lindtner asked if the township will be receiving more bills from Lanzolotta and Associates for the month of December. Rich Schilling replied the Township is expecting bills from Lanzolotta and Princeton Hydro for testimony at the PUC hearing. Karen Bedics **moved** to approve the bills list from November 26 – December 9, 2008 in the amount of $36,946.90. Barbara Lindtner **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously.

Reports

Road Department (posted) – Karen Bedics commended Rich Pursell and the road department for their diligent work in keeping township roads clear during Saturday night's snowstorm.

Code Enforcement (posted) – Barbara Lindtner noted that the number of permits issued in 2008 is down 26 percent from 2007.

Police (available on the website) – 75 incidents were investigated in November; of which 17 involved criminal offenses. There were 5 accidents involving 8 vehicles with 2 injuries and no deaths. $1,800 worth of property was stolen with $5 recovered. Chief Laudenslager secured a $5,000 donation for tasers for each officer. Officer McDonald is trained as a taser instructor. All officers will be required to be tased as a condition of being able to carry and use a taser. Early in November, the new officers received their uniforms and started working on the roadways. On December 2, Officer Jacoby began answering calls on his own. Officer Sepulveda will start working shifts on his own on December 8. Karen Bedics commended the officers for their work and stated it is comforting to see more officers on the roads, especially at night. Chief Laudenslager explained that Secretary Debbie Godshall has been entering the minor incident reports so the officers have more road time.

Township Manager's Report – Rich Schilling highlighted the following activity in November:

1. Rich drafted a letter to the Delaware River Keepers which he requested Board's authorization to send.
2. The Bucks County Community Development Advisory Board has recommended approving $33,569 for the handicapped accessibility grant for the Township. Funding will take place sometime after the middle of 2009. The township must use the funds within 2 years after receiving them.

Volker Oakey **moved** to authorize Rich Schilling to send the letter to the Delaware River Keepers. Karen Bedics **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Hans Reimann thanked the staffs of the township and the police department for the work they do for the community.

Public Hearing on Additions to Agricultural Security Area

Scott MacNair noted the applicants are Jason Geisinger, Allison Road; Harry Hottle, Route 212; Deborah Moore, Hickory Lane; Donald and Elaine Mease, Springtown Hill Road; Donald Metzger, Route 412; Robert and Stephanie

Zisko, Roundhouse Road. Mr. MacNair noted the process started in September; the properties were posted on September 17, 2008. No objections were received so the proposals were forwarded to the Bucks County Planning Commission, the Springfield Township Planning Commission and the Springfield Agricultural Security Committee. Each of these groups recommended that all the properties be included in Springfield's Ag Security District. Scott MacNair noted that a portion of tax map parcel #RA43A0719 is located partially in Lower Saucon Township and tax map parcel #14-2-80 is located in Haycock Township. Both townships passed resolutions approving inclusion of the parcels into Springfield's Agricultural Security District. Mr. MacNair explained that an advertisement about tonight's public hearing appeared in the Morning Call on December 2, 2008.

Scott MacNair opened the meeting for public comment. Hans Reimann said he was pleased to see the applications and hopes more properties will be preserved in adjoining townships.

Barbara Lindtner **moved** to adopt Resolution 2008-10, which is amended to include tax map parcel #14-2-80 and tax map parcel #RA43A0719. Volker Oakey **seconded;** the motion **carried** with Rob Zisko abstaining.

Old Business

1. 2009 Budget – This year's budget is $1,735,500 and the proposed 2009 budget is $1,594,840. Rich added that the board did everything they could to balance the budget and preserve current staff, but in order to make the budget work, they had to eliminate the full-time Building Code Officer and two part-time positions. Building inspections will be outsourced. He asked the board for a motion to approve the draft budget for advertising so they could move forward with discussion of the budget.

Barbara Lindtner **moved** to adopt the budget as a draft budget to advertise. Rob Zisko **seconded**. The motion **passed** unanimously.

The budget will be available for the public to review for 20 days. The Board will hold a special meeting on December 30 to adopt the budget.

Scott MacNair stated that the aggregate of the advertised budget cannot increase by more than 10 percent, and a line item cannot increase by more then 25 percent in order to pass it at the December 30 meeting.

Volker Oakey noted that 2009 revenues are anticipated to be 20 percent lower than in 2008. Volker noted that at the November 25 Board meeting, Jim Brownlow gave 4 options for balancing the 2009 budget: reducing expenses, taking out a loan, drawing from operating reserves, or increasing taxes. These options were discussed at great length, and several board members felt that a tax increase was not desirable because township residents will also be facing decreased income. They discussed taking out a loan to cover completion costs of the Act 537 expenses and then using the reimbursement from DEP when the plan is completed to pay down the loan. The second option is to decrease costs to the maximum amount possible. The Board does not expect to see the same number of permits in 2009, and that was the thought behind eliminating the Building & Code Enforcement Officer and part-time Zoning Officer positions. The budget also utilizes $50,000 in liquid fuel funds to pay for various road expenses that would normally be covered from the General Fund. The remaining $100,000 budget shortfall will come from the Operating Reserve Fund.

Karen Bedics stated she is seriously against any staff cuts in the township, and it is with great reluctance that she will vote yes to advertising this budget with the staff cuts. Ms. Bedics continued that she is doing so to be as fiscally responsible as possible in this difficult economic downturn. She is concerned that by making staff cuts, future services and enforcements in the township will suffer greatly. She questioned how much outsourcing the duties will really cost the township, and feels any loss in township employees will come at a great cost to township residents in terms of loss of service and professional knowledge.

Rob Zisko said many people in the township are struggling as well, and raising taxes was never an option for him. He feels the township has cut the expenses as much as is possible so as not to have to raise taxes.

Barbara Lindtner stated that this budget will require a lot more of township employees and with fewer resources. This severe economic crisis began in 2008 and will likely continue in 2009 and perhaps longer. Ms. Lindtner stated that the township will be taking from their reserve account to make it through 2008. She also noted that the township will

have to fund a very large pension liability in 2010 and 2011. If revenues do not turn around, the township will not be able to rebuild their Operating Reserve to meet this obligation.

Jim Brownlow thanked the board for their summary and the hard work they put into this difficult budget. Jim was not in favor of cutting staff. He preferred raising taxes by one mil, with that tax increase dedicated to fire and emergency services. The township spends about $80,000 a year in support for those services. Jim Brownlow stated that the budget in front of them was carefully talked through and every possibility was weighed. He supports the draft budget.

Barbara Lindtner **moved** to advertise for a special meeting to be held December 30 for the budget adoption and any other pertinent business that comes before the board. Rob Zisko **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously.

2. Request from Charles Diehl on Commercial Building Permit Fee Waiver – Rob Zisko **moved** to table this discussion until he requests it be placed on the agenda. Karen Bedics **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously**.**

New Business

1. Contract Renewal for auditing township accounts – Hutchinson, Gillahan & Freeh's proposal included a base auditing fee of $6000 for township accounts. There is $7,000 proposed in the 2009 budget. The extra $1,000 is for technical assistance to revise how the escrow accounts are set up in Quick Books and other help as required during the year.

Karen Bedics **moved** to appoint Hutchinson, Gillahan & Freeh to audit the township accounts and provide service to the township for 2009. Volker Oakey **seconded;** the motion **passed,** with Barbara Lindtner and Rob Zisko **abstaining.**

2. Allem Subdivision – Zoning Hearing Board application seeking a variance from the requirement to install a centralized sewage system – Rich Schilling explained that the application is a waiver for a package treatment plant which will be heard by the Zoning Hearing Board.

3. Herz Conservation Easement – Scott MacNair explained there are four different items that need to be addressed starting with the execution of the conservation easement. He asked the board to review, approve and sign the agreement of sale, and to review a resolution that discusses what is contained in the conservation easement, the cost associated with the township being the grantee, and settlement issues. He asked if the board would like either Heritage Conservancy or Bedminster Land Conservancy to act as a monitor and enforcer for this conservation easement. Heritage offered to monitor and enforce for $12,500. Bedminster Land Conservancy would only be monitoring $9,280. The property is located on the north side of Route 212 east of Route 412. It borders Cooks Creek and contains 29 acres. The easement will contain 27 acres.

Rob Zisko **moved** to authorize the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to execute the conservation easement and sales agreement as presented. Karen Bedics **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously.

Rob Zisko **moved** to adopt Resolution 2008-11, which authorizes the acquisition of the easement. Barbara Lindtner **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously.

Barbara Lindtner **moved** to appoint Heritage Conservancy to hold the conservation easement because their price includes enforcement and monitoring. Volker Oakey **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously.

4. Acknowledge receipt of Agricultural Security Application for Tax Map Parcel 42-012-105 - Scott MacNair explained that the board is recognizing the receipt of an application for tax map parcel 42-012-105 from Bob Harrington, owner of HMH Limited Partners, 374 Easton Road, Warrington PA 18976, total acres 78.3.

5. Resolution for PA "Right to Know Law" – Scott MacNair explained that Pennsylvania's Right to Know Law has changed. As of January 1, 2009, all townships and other government agencies are required to appoint an individual within the township to deal with requests for public documents. This proposed resolution designates Rich Schilling, Township Manager, as the Open Records Officer. The proposed resolution defines the duties of the open records officer. The open records officer has 5 days to provide the record, deny the request, or advise the requester that additional time will be required. If the open records officer makes a determination to deny a request, there is an appeals process listed within the resolution and public records law. For documents that are not of a criminal nature,

the request will go to Harrisburg. That state provides the forms to use for written requests. This resolution also repeals the previous resolution that dealt with open records. The resolution needs to be posted somewhere in the Township building and available on the website.

Barbara Lindtner **moved** to adopt resolution 2008-12 designating Rich Schilling as the Township's Open Records Officer. Rob Zisko **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously.

Public Comment

Hans Reimann stated he favors a four-way stop sign at Richlandtown Pike and State Road. He feels the new four-way stop at California and Pumping Station Roads in Richland Township has improved traffic safety. Hans asked if the board could start discussions with the EAC to possibly obtain grants for use of solar energy at the township building. He suggested doing an energy audit as well.

Supervisors Comments

Volker Oakey asked if calendar month-end financial statements could be issued at the end of each calendar month. Sandy Everitt, Treasurer, agreed to begin this in 2009. Volker explained it would be easier to go back and review with calendar month-end statements.

Karen Bedics thanked the board for considering keeping the cardboard recycling in the budget. She asked if there was any word on PennDOT regarding the intersection of Richlandtown Pike and State Road. Rich Schilling replied that PennDOT installed double and larger stop signs, as well as warning signs. Rich noted that PennDOT had not replied directly to the Township, but rather, Rich heard what they planned for the intersection from Senator Wonderling's office. Jim Brownlow noted that since the Township sent a written request to PennDOT, the Township should ask PennDOT to respond by providing in writing a list of what they plan to do.

Volker Oakey stated that he noticed a slower traffic pattern on Route 212 over the last week, and suggested that if the police officers sit at Richlandtown Pike, it may slow the traffic down. Chief Laudenslager stated it is generally not a speed issue, but accurately perceiving what is coming, or taking a second look before pulling out.

Barbara Lindtner asked if there was any contact with the Springfield Bucks Undesirable Land Use group. Hans, who is a member of S*bULU*, replied that the group is planning a dinner with the state senator to discuss fund raising issues. Barbara Lindtner noted that over 300 people came out to a daytime meeting to speak on behalf of the Township supporting their position. She suggested that the grassroots organization needs to get revitalized to work on the PPL issue. She does not feel it is appropriate for the supervisors to solicit funds to support the issue.

Barbara Lindtner also thanked the township road crew for their work and effort.

Barbara Lindtner **moved** to authorize the township to have an extra day off during the Christmas holiday. Karen Bedics **seconded;** the motion **passed** unanimously.

Adjournment

At 9:07 p.m., Jim Brownlow **moved** to adjourn the meeting. Volker Oakey **seconded**; the motion **passed** unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra L. Everitt
Secretary/Treasurer

Next meeting: December 30, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.
Approved: January 27, 2009