

PALMER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING
NOVEMBER 7, 2011

A general business meeting of the Palmer Township Board of Supervisors was held on Monday, November 7, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Palmer Library with all Supervisors in attendance: David Colver, Robert Lammi, Michael Mitchell, Ann-Marie Panella and Robert Smith. Also in attendance were the Township Manager, Director of Public Services, Police Chief, and Township Solicitor. Jerry Brahm from Patch Internet News represented the news media. Chairman Colver introduced Boy Scout Troop, Den 6, Pack 11, from the Palmer Moravian Church and asked them to lead the meeting with the Pledge to the Flag. Colver introduced the Board members, the Township Manager and the Township Solicitor to the Boy Scout Troop.

2. APPROVAL OF DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS – NOVEMBER 7, 2011

INFORMATION

The report will be provided at the meeting.

DISCUSSION

On motion by Mitchell, seconded by Panella, and agreed by all, the Board approved the disbursement of funds for October 25, 2011.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 25, 2011

DISCUSSION

On motion by Lammi, seconded by Smith, and agreed by all, the Board approved the minutes of October 25, 2011.

4. DISCUSSION OF 2011 SEWER RATE STUDY

INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove a sewer rate increase.

DISCUSSION

Colver said this was discussed at a prior meeting and Authority Engineer Jeff Golding and Public Utilities Director Paul Hosking were in attendance. Hosking said Jeff Golding submitted to the Board revised exhibits and schedules for the Board's review. Colver asked which exhibit shows if we leave rates alone next year. Hosking said Exhibit A reflects no increase for next year. Colver said we are still 10% less than where we were 15 years ago. Golding said he included revised 2012 budget figures to reflect what Paul will be submitting to the township. Golding said the exhibits reflect the status of funds as best we can project them right now and next year. Golding said right now sewer costs are exceeding revenues and have been since 2009. We project you will continue to rely on using retained earnings to balance the

budget. Lammi asked if Hosking had the rebate number for the budget. Hosking said yes the number shown is an actual number. Colver asked how a 10% increase would affect the normal average customer. Golding said a 20% increase would raise the average usage charge \$65 a year. Golding said the average user is currently being billed \$340 a year. With a 20% increase that would increase to \$405 a year. Smith said your projections show we would be okay if we don't increase this year. Golding said you will use your retained earnings bringing it down to about \$500,000. Lammi said 58% of your expenses you have no control over – they are payments to other communities and you can't reduce those payments. Smith said when you make payments to other municipalities it's because we feed into their communities. Hosking said for Wilson and Bethlehem Township that is correct. Tatamy is a fixed payment and the Easton Area Joint Sewer Authority is an operation payment. Smith asked if the treatment costs increase every year. Hosking said they are based on the prior year usage and they haven't gone up for the past two years. Colver said we need to decide if we want to increase fees or hold the rates the same for next year and revisit this issue again next year. Mitchell and Panella said they believe we should keep the rates the same for one more year. Lammi said we know we have to look at it seriously next year unless things turn around and we start getting more revenue. Lammi complimented Golding and Hosking in providing good scenarios with various options.

On motion by Smith, seconded by Lammi, and agreed by all, the Board agreed to not increase sewer rates for 2012.

5. DISCUSSION OF UNIFIED FEE SCHEDULE

INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove the proposed fee schedule and authorize administration to prepare a unified fee schedule for adoption at the Board's annual reorganizational meeting in January 2012.

DISCUSSION

Christman said he provided the Board with an updated consolidated fee schedule at our last meeting. Christman said there are some small increases in fees and they remain consistent with surrounding municipalities. Christman said while he was working on the 2012 budget he noticed the township didn't have a unified fee schedule. He would suggest revisiting this schedule annually and approving it at the January reorganization meeting.

Lammi questioned the \$10 fee for a window replacement. Lammi said for him to replace the windows in his house it would cost \$200. Lammi said we try to encourage these types of renovations and I feel this fee is too high. Colver said the fire inspection fee we previously approved but many of the other fees remain the same. Colver said he believes the window fee should be \$5. Mitchell asked why we don't just have a flat fee for the window replacements that wouldn't matter how many windows are being replaced. Colver said if we inspect the new windows then we need to make sure we cover our costs to go out and inspect. Chrisman said our Code Department recommended adding this item. Christman said he wasn't sure if there were any regulations through the UCC regarding window replacement. Christman said he believes \$10 could be aggressive and it could be backed down to \$5. Lammi asked the Township Manager to check on this item with the Code Department. Panella questioned the replacement sign cost. Lammi said they have to inspect the signs too. Christman said once approved this fee

schedule could be placed on the internet for the residents to have available to them. Christman will discuss the window requirement with the Code Department and report back to the Board.

6. 2012 CENTER FOR ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE CONTRACT DISCUSSION
INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove the 2012 Center for Animal Health and Welfare Agreement.

DISCUSSION

Christman said in previous agreements you were given the option to choose who could bring animals to the shelter and what kind of animals. Palmer Township always allowed all animals to be taken in but individuals needed approval from the Police Department. Colver said we really don't have much of a choice with this contract. Fretz said at their last Chief's meeting a lot of municipalities stated they are not allowing cats to be dropped off. Fretz said then if a resident would take a cat over the resident would have to pay for it. Fretz said by law we only have to cover dogs. Christman said the Center has presented a non-negotiable agreement. Lammi asked if a resident picks up an animal from the shelter if the resident has to pay the township back. Fretz said he didn't think they had to pay back the fee.

On motion by Smith, seconded by Panella, and agreed by all, the Board approved the 2012 Center for Animal Health and Welfare Agreement.

7. DISCUSSION REGARDING ALTERNATE STREET LIGHT ELECTRICAL POWER
SUPPLIER
INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove changing the electrical power supplier for street lights to Constellation Energy.

DISCUSSION

Adams said at the beginning of this year the state allowed us to look at alternative electric suppliers. Met Ed has now switched over all our lights and now we are looking for a cheaper option. Adams said the packet he distributed to the Board included a rate from last Thursday and today's rate is slightly less. Adams said this could save us \$15,000 a year. Adams said the contract will need to be reviewed by the Solicitor. Adams said the price is good until tomorrow at noon. Lammi said he thinks this is a no brainer. Colver asked the Solicitor if he reviewed the contract. Bruno said he did not have a chance to review the contract.

On motion by Lammi, seconded by Smith, and agreed by all, the Board approved Constellation Energy as the electrical power supplier for street lights contingent upon satisfactory review of the contract by the Township Solicitor.

John Griffith, 1531 Toursdale Drive, said there was a street light at his home that stays on all the time. It used to go on and off but now remains lit all the time.

Luca Scomillio, 370 Wedgewood Drive, said the street light at the intersection of Wedgewood and Old Orchard Drive is purple.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

Brendan Griffith, 1531 Toursdale Drive, said this past Saturday and this coming Saturday we are doing scouting for food. We dropped off a bag last week at homes and this Saturday we will come around and pick-up the food. We will take it to Redners to put in a large trailer. Colver said that is very good to know. Thank you.

Luca Scomillio, 370 Wedgewood Drive, said the leaf collectors haven't come around and he wanted to know if he is paying for that. Adams said they are a week behind schedule because of last week's storm cleanup. Scomillio thanked the Board for allowing him to play in his soccer tournament. Scomillio said they won the Garcia Cup.

Jonah Serfass, 18 Ridgewood Drive, said his dad is having trouble cutting the big maple tree in his front yard. Serfass asked how much it would cost to have it cut down.

Alexander Daggett, 3011 Windsor Street, said a few weeks ago his mom complained that there were no lights around his house. Daggett said there might be one but it doesn't work. Daggett also said his two cats ran away and he wondered if maybe the pet shelter would have them. Daggett said there have been a lot of cats in his neighborhood lately. Colver told him to have his parents call the shelter.

John Griffith, 1531 Toursdale Drive, asked if the township was going to build a skate park. Colver said we are looking into contributing to a centrally located skate park that would be in Easton.

Joey Fuhrer, 2704 Auburn Avenue, said he and his dad were wondering what they are building on Route 248. Colver said it is a CVS Pharmacy.

Victor Scomillio extended his thanks on behalf of the Boy Scouts and thanked Solicitor Bruno and Chairman Colver for setting this up and allowing them to come out tonight. Scomillio said the insight you gave us tonight was invaluable.

9. REPORTS

Township Solicitor

- Bruno said he emailed a conditional use decision letter to the Board to review for the Valla Conditional Use Hearing that was held last month. On motion by Mitchell, seconded by Panella, and agreed by all, the Board authorized the Chairman to sign the conditional use letter on behalf of the Board.
- Bruno said he would like to comment as a citizen of the township and commend the Public Works department for the great job they did in clearing the bike path after the snowstorm a week ago. Bruno said after the storm he counted 28 trees that were down and in just one week the path is now completely clear. Bruno said it was a tremendous effort by that department.

Township Manager

- Christman said as you know the Berks Street Yard Waste Center waived the fees last week to assist residents in clean-up after the storm. Christman asked the Board if they would be interested in waiving fees for this upcoming weekend from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Colver said he thinks we should. The Board agreed.
- Christman reported that the special yard waste curbside pickup is taking place this week.
- Christman had one real estate item for executive session.

Public Services Director

- Adams said the Public Services Department continues to clear trees in the township's right-of-ways and next Monday they will get back to leaf collection earnestly.
- Adams said due to the supervisors extending the hours of the Yard Waste Facility last week after the storm, there were a total of 693 drop offs during the week. Adams said a lot of residents expressed their thanks to the Supervisors.

Police Chief

- Fretz said he previously talked about the ability to share information between police departments in the Lehigh Valley. Fretz said Northampton County received \$374,000 in grant funds. Fretz said at the last chief's meeting we approved a product that will be web based. Fretz said it will be used by Northampton, Lehigh, Berks, Bucks and possibly Warren Counties. All departments in the area will be able to put information on the system. Fretz said this will allow officers to see information from the surrounding area when they stop anyone on the street.

Supervisors

- Smith said he was proud of the township soccer teams, football teams and cheerleaders this past weekend. Smith said it was a very successful weekend.
- Colver thanked the Boy Scout Troop for attending tonight. Colver said we can now let everyone in on the little fun we planned tonight. Colver said we lined up the questions and comments about the leaves and street lights to have a little fun with our Public Services Director.
- Panella reminded everyone that tomorrow is Election Day.

On motion by Panella, seconded by Smith, and agreed by all, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. with one real estate item for executive session.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher S. Christman
Township Manager