

**Lower Heidelberg Township Board of Supervisors
BOS Minutes – Regular Meeting
November 15, 2021**

The Lower Heidelberg Township Board of Supervisors held their monthly meeting in person at 720 Brownsville Rd. on the above date. The November monthly meeting was duly advertised to be held in person. Present were Chairperson Deborah P. Scull, Vice-Chairwoman Cheryl Johnson, and Member Michael Keltz, Township Solicitor Andy Bellwoar, Township Engineer Ryan Rhode (KE), Zoning Officer Glenn Kraft, Road Foreman Matt Clay, Chief Christopher Stouch, and Township Manager/Secretary/Treasurer Pamela J. Stevens. Also present were Fire Commissioner Jared Renshaw, Justin Schlottman Emergency Management Coordinator, and Guests, Dave Kurtz, George Lehner, Paul Prutzman, Marjorie Prutzman, Karen Krater, George Neubert, Scott Hart, Leigh-Anne Yackovelli, Linda Williams, Alan Kreider, Tobias Knechtle, Jeff Simcox, Dr. Chris Trickett, and Robert Melson.

Mrs. Scull called the meeting to Order & led the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:06 p.m.

1. Minutes: The minutes from the October 18, 2021 Regular Meeting were considered for approval. **On Motion** by Mrs. Scull, seconded by Mr. Keltz, approve the minutes for the October 18, 2021 Regular Meeting as presented. Mrs. Scull and Mr. Keltz voted yes and Mrs. Johnson abstained as she was not at the October meeting. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: NEW SCHOOL PROPOSED ON STATE HILL ROAD. Dr. Trickett and Jeff Simcox were present at the meeting to discuss the proposed new school on State Hill Road. Dr. Trickett discussed the current and future needs of the School District, growth in the area, and the demographer's study. Programming, technology, capacity, access and values are all important to the School District. He discussed the density demographics and they will be over capacity even though some of the schools have been renovated for more space. Glen Ridge Estates is expected to push the need for the new school. Options, construct a new elementary school, restructure and realignment of grades in the Middle School of 5-6 grades and 7-8 grades. Location where on State Hill Road and it is located next to the Cacoosing Park. Mrs. Scull asked cost of new school. Dr. Trickett replied that the school construction is through borrowing for new debt service, and they will stretch the bond for the more terms and not "pay" for the school. It is the staffing costs that keep increasing and it is estimated to cost \$1.5 mill per year for the staffing and related costs. Increased real estate assessment increases revenue for the School District. They are considering shifting teachers at Whitfield and moving them to the new School. The ancillary spaces such as the cafeteria, auditorium, gymnasium, special centers such as art & music are all needed in the new School. Mr. Simcox stated that the new homes and new permits help the school district, but the loss of the Berkshire Mall taxes has also affected the School District. The School District is trying to look at the effective ways to teach. Larger classes and larger capacity of the schools is not ideal and they are looking at 500 students in the new elementary school. PA Law prohibits the increase in taxes beyond an index. Mr. Prutzman asked about the tax increase and his analysis is there has been at least 50% tax increase in the last 10 years or so, and sees another 50% increase in the future. Dr. Trickett stated that the elementary school was already expanded, so the studies are geared towards a new school, and not renovating existing schools. Mrs. Johnson asked about the River Rock. Mr. Simcox stated that the School District does own the school and land, and it is around 14 acres. He responded that it is leased by River Rock, and the school would need to be torn down. Mrs. J. Stated that the Wilson School District is going to tax people right out of their homes. Dr. Trickett stated that the study was trying to focus on where the density of the school children are located so they do not have to bus the children as far, especially the elementary age as parents want to be close.

Wilcon School District Continued: Mr. Simcox stated that the construction of the new school can be paid for out of the debt service, but the staffing and the operation of the school will be the costs that will raise taxes. The demographer stated the children are coming, so they are trying to get ahead of the new children curve in the next 5 to 6 years so they are ready for the growth. Mrs. Scull asked about the administration costs and she is wondering if the Administrative staff can be consolidated instead of each school having the same redundant staff. Mrs. Scull and Mr. Keltz both stated that they are on a fixed income and they are pushing the senior citizens out of the Wilson School District. Mr. Simcox stated it is a hard issue. Mr. Prutzman asked about the growth to the School District and for the number of children they are estimating, the School District should grow 80 children per year. Dr. Trickett stated that grades K-1 the teacher to children ratio is 20 kids, grades 2-3 the teacher to children ratio is 22 kids, grades 3-4 the teacher to children ratio is 24 kids. The current needs of the children are different now than they were back in the older City of Reading schools. Now they have Individual Learning Programs for many students due to the current challenges. If the Hoffman Track and the Golf Course in Sinking Spring/Spring go forward, there will be another school needed near these developments. Mr. Tobias Knechtle stated that he is a husband of an Elementary School Teacher, and he stated that there are numerous Individual Education Programs in each classroom group. The smaller classrooms are required to provide the proper teacher to student ratio. There are many being diagnosed with new learning issues, and every child needs to be able to succeed. Teachers now have aides because of the larger class sizes. Mr. Lehner asked what kinds of taxes are coming to the Township from the farmland. Mrs. Scull stated that it is in AG preservation and the Township may get \$600 for the land. Mr. Simcox stated that a new school with all of the outdoor amenities creates a community including being adjacent to the Park and there may also be walking trails and other amenities added to the School Complex. No other questions so Mrs. Scull moved to the Faust Road Speed Limit Study.

PUBLIC COMMENT: FAUST ROAD SPEED LIMIT STUDY: Mr. Rhode presented the Faust Study LTAP recommendations. The recommendation is to increase to 35 mph and the area at the school is posted at 30 mph. There is a dense area that could be reposted at 25 mph. The LTAP study does not support the density posting of 25 mph. The 85% was 37 to 39 mph, so the recommendation could be 35 mph. Mr. Hart stated that the study results do not make sense. Mr. Rhode stated that the study results are because there have been complaints. The driver is feeling more comfortable on the stretch of road, and they go faster than posted limit and this creates the 85% of the posted speed limit. Mr. Rhode said there will always be outliers that go well beyond the 25 mph. There are 3 main options 1) do nothing, 2) repost to all 30 mph, and 3) repost to 35 mph. Chief Stouch responded that the people that disregard the speed limit are going to speed and enforcement is the key, but the LHTPD are not always able to be sitting on Faust Road. The Chief will work with the residents on Faust and if they have certain times that they see a repetitive timeframe of speeding. Mr. Hart brought up the multi-way stop signs and LTAP did investigate Faust and Fairwood and Faust and both Knollwoods and the multi-way stop signs did not meet the Penn DOT Warrant, so if a ticket is given at a "new" stop sign the District Judge will throw it out. Mr. Neubert, stated that the speeding has always been a problem, and he thought there had been a fatality, which the Board members noted was false. Mr. Neubert stated that there are blind spots outside of the straight section. He is concerned if the speed limit is raised the areas that have these blind spots may increase the unsafe areas. He stated that in the dense area going from 35 mph to 25 mph will not abide. People get frustrated being behind the 25-mph people and speed through Knollwood to then cut the slow person off and get ahead of them. Mr. Rhode stated that the Township is constantly improving the roads and making them safer.

Faust Road Speed Limit Study continued: Mr. Neubert stated that the bicyclists, runners and walking people do not realize how unsafe they are in the blind spots. He thanked the Road Foreman for clearing trees and keeping the sight distance as improved as possible. Mrs. Scull did not want to reduce the speed limit or increase the speed too much, possible a consistent speed is the best for conformity and enforcement. Chief Stouch stated they will keep enforcement, and **Mrs. Scull asked to table the matter.** Mr. Melson asked if the Township can educate Mr. Hart on the terminology. Mr. Rhode and the Supervisors agreed that Mr. Hart did not understand some of the terminology in the LTAP Study.

2. Tax Collector – Ms. Stevens reported she collected \$18,413.62 for the month of October as Sharon Boyer could not make the meeting.

3. Library – Leigh-Anne Yacovelli, the Library Director presented her October 2021 Report. Various events have been moved inside due to the weather. The held Trick or Treat Week, a Craft Program that was well attended for Pumpkin decorating. Masks are still required inside the building, masks are made available if they don't have masks, and outdoor activities, masks are optional.

4. Fire Commissioner – Jared Renshaw, Fire Commissioner presented his October 2021 Report. October is fire prevention month and they attended 9 public relation events for fire prevention. The November 6, 2021 Open House was attended by 150 to 200 people, and largest turnout. Sgt. Lawless was there with K9 Ozzy, Wernersville Library has a table, Spitler's Towing attended, Coast Guard Auxiliary. Mrs. Johnson asked Mr. Renshaw to note at the Fire Board Meeting on November 16, 2021, the Dementia Society of America will be presenting an Award to Deputy Lupko concerning their drone usage which made possible the location and rescue of the person with dementia.

5. Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) – Justin Schlottman, the Emergency Management Coordinator presented his October 2021 Report. He will be sending Ms. Stevens a list for the hazard mitigation grant and a letter of intent is due this Friday. Berks County did not meet the financial threshold for Hurricane IDA. There is still grant money for COVID related projects. A full-scale exercise with the Fire Department and the County Emergency Services should be scheduled soon. He is still waiting on his iPad.

6. Ambulance – Tony Tucci, the Ambulance Director was not present for his October 2021 Report. Ms. Stevens noted that for Lower Heidelberg for October, there were 32 incidents, 17 were transported with 11 to Reading and 6 to St. Joe's. The busiest time was 3 p.m. with 8 incidents. There was no Narcan administered, which is good.

7. Planning Commission – Ms. Stevens noted that there was a Planning Commission meeting on November 8, 2021 and the Commission members discussed the Eberly Subdivision Plan. The Supervisors have 2 Plans to be considered for approval under the Solicitor's Report: 1053 Brownsville Road Annexation Plan and the Eberly Subdivision Plan.

Mrs. Scull asked if Mr. Bellwoar could lead the discussion on the 2 Plans recommended by the Planning Commission.

Eberly Subdivision: Mr. Bellwoar stated that the Planning Commission reviewed the plans for a minor subdivision (no land development at this time) and recommended conditional approval. The Planning Commission also recommended approval of the waivers requested. The written Motion of Approval is attached to the Solicitor Report. **On Motion** by Mrs. Scull and seconded by Mrs. Johnson, to grant the Applicant's request for waivers from Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Sections 308, 406 and 658, as well as deferrals of Sections 652 and 653, and conditionally approve the application for preliminary/final subdivision approval for the accompanying plans, dated July 17, 2020, last revised October 12, 2021, pursuant to the written Motion of Approval.

1053 Brownsville Road Annexation Plan: Mr. Bellwoar stated that the Planning Commission reviewed the plans for a minor subdivision (no land development at this time) and recommended conditional approval. The Planning Commission also recommended approval of the waivers requested. The written Motion of Approval is attached to the Solicitor Report. **On Motion** by Mrs. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Keltz, grant the Applicant's request for waivers from Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Sections 302, 405.h and 658, as well as deferrals of Sections 652 and 653, and conditionally approve the application for minor subdivision approval and the accompanying plans, dated September 13, 2021 (hereinafter "Plans"), pursuant to the written Motion of Approval which includes any .

8. Building/Zoning – Glenn Kraft from Kraft Code Services presented his October 2021 Report. There were 15 permits issued for a construction value of \$1,336,922, 102 inspections were performed, 18 Certificates of Occupancy were issued, there were 7 zoning issues investigated, there were 5 property maintenance issues investigated with 3 achieving compliance, and 1 rental was inspected.

8A. Zoning Hearing for Green Valley Terrace on Gaul Road: The Hearing has been continued to December 14, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. and an amended application has been received today and the Solicitor needs to readvertise.

9. Engineers – Ryan Rhode, Township Engineer from Kraft Engineering presented his October Report. He has an escrow release and the sinkhole repair on Connecticut to discuss with the Board.

9A. Mr. Rhode stated that there is Escrow Release No. 11 for Cacoosing Crossing North Phase 1 in the amount of \$67,161.25. He reviewed the requested Escrow Release from Grande Construction and has the following recommendation for the BOS: Approve Release No. 11 requested by Grande Construction for Cacoosing Crossing North Phase 2 in the amount of \$67,161.25 and is for driveway aprons and sidewalk. No questions. **On Motion** by Mr. Keltz, seconded by Mrs. Scull approve Escrow Release No. 11 requested by Grande Construction for Cacoosing Crossing North Phase 1 in the amount of \$67,161.25, and authorize the Manager to send the documents to the Surety/Bonding Company. All in favor, yes and motion passed unanimously.

9B. Ratify the Emergency Payment to AH Moyer for the Sinkhole Repair near 79 Connecticut: Ms. Stevens stated the Payment was due by October 30, 2021, and since it was an emergency the amount of \$8,023.70 was paid to AH Moyer, and was made out of account 01-438-001 Highway, Road Work, Maintenance, Etc. Mr. Rhode had reviewed the invoice for the repair, and agreed the invoice was acceptable to pay AH Moyer. No Questions.

Sinkhole Continued: **On Motion** by Mrs. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Keltz, to ratify the payment to AH Moyer in the amount of \$8,023.70 for the emergency sinkhole repair in the street near 79 Connecticut, and concur the payment out of the line item 01-438-001. All in favor, yes and motion passed unanimously.

10. Recreation Board: Mrs. Scull who is the Recreation Board chair stated that nobody will volunteer so there will not be a Christmas Party.

11. Police Department - The Chief of Police, Chris Stouch presented the Police Department October 2021 Report which included 161 total incidents, 16 UCR and 8 MVA with one fatal accident.

11A. New Police Patrol Vehicle for 2022: The Chief of Police is requesting the Board consider purchasing the Vehicle in February 2022 as the Koch Dealer has a 2021 Ford Interceptor matching the Police Department's needs on their lot since a municipality cancelled their order. The cost will be the same, but the delivery of the Vehicle will be numerous months sooner. The Manger would like the Board to consider authorizing her to write a letter to the Ford Dealer requesting a hold on the Vehicle and Lower Heidelberg Township will purchase the 2021 Ford interceptor Police Vehicle. Chief Stouch stated that the delivery date for a 2022 Vehicle could take 6 to 9 months and possibly more time. This Ford dealer whom is located near Bethlehem has 2 Police vehicles on his lot. No questions. **On Motion** by Mrs. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Keltz, to authorize the Manger to write a letter to the Koch Ford Dealer concerning the purchase of the 2021 Ford interceptor that they have on their lot. All in favor, yes and motion passed unanimously.

12. Road Foreman - The Road Foreman to present his October 2021 Report and Updates. Repaired brakes on GMC, did some blacktop on Riegle, but will need to finish in the Spring, continued leaf collecting which will end December 3rd, they are starting to prepare the winter equipment to be placed on vehicles and placed on vehicles not involved in leaf collecting, Seidel's has a scheduling conflict for the trees on Faust. Kyle James had a 90-day review by Mr. Clay, and he did a great job so far and he is doing CDL driver training and will soon be taking his CDL test. The Road Crew attended various webinar classes including: Asphalt Roads Common Maintenance Problems, Winter Maintenance and Bridge and Culvert Inspections.

12A. Part-Time Plow Drivers: The Township received one application and the Road Foreman and Manager will review the Application. The person that applied has no snow plowing experience.

12B. Faust Road Closure: Mr. Clay is obtaining the new date from the tree service company for the tree removal on Faust Road. Once the date is obtained, the signs will be posted on Faust Road, and the Township Website and Next Doors will be updated.

12C: A-1 Traffic Controls: Ms. Stevens noted that the company was in the Township on November 10, 2021 painting the double yellow and single white lines, and completed the Contract.

Manager/Secretary/Treasurer/Sewer Engineer

13. and 14. Bill List and Treasurers Report: The Bill Lists are for the October/November 2021. No questions. **On Motion** by Mr. Keltz, seconded by Mrs. Johnson, approve the Bill Lists and the Treasurer's Report, and to file the Report for Audit. All in favor, yes and motion passed unanimously.

15. 2022 Budget: The Budget for 2022 was discussed at the November 10, 2021 Workshop. The Board can take action to authorize the Draft 2022 Budget to be advertised and made available for public inspection. 2022 budget continued: General Fund = \$5,243,422, Sewer Fund = \$809,238 and Liquid Fuels Fund = \$198,138 for a Total 2021 Budget of \$6,250,798.

Please note there is a proposed increase in the Township Taxes from 6.036 mills to 6.7496 mills.

The 2022 Draft Budget may be approved for Advertisement and Public Inspection. The Final Budget will be approved at the Board of Supervisors December 20, 2021 Meeting. No questions. **On Motion** by Mr. Keltz, seconded by Mrs. Johnson, approve the Draft 2022 Budget, advertise that the Budget is available for Public Inspection/Comment, and acknowledge the adoption of the Final Budget should be at the December 20, 2021 Board of Supervisors Meeting. All in favor, yes and motion passed unanimously.

16. Heidelberg Bridge Update: The Bridge Inspectors re-inspected the Bridge, and the Bridge has remained at 5 Tons, but continues to deteriorate. Rettew Engineering is in the process of sending to the Township both repair and replacement estimates. On Motion by Mrs. Johnson, seconded by Mrs. Scull authorizing Rettew Engineering to prepare the cost estimates for Heidelberg Bridge as noted in their proposal for \$6,400. All in favor, yes and motion passed unanimously.

17. Robesonia Wernersville Municipal Authority Rate Increase: Ms. Stevens noted that the Township has received correspondence that the Authority will be raising its sewage rate from \$4.40 per 1,000 gallons to \$6.60 per 1,000 gallons, which equates to a 50% increase.

18: Annual Donations: The Center for Excellence in Local Government and the Crime Alert Berks County have requested donations from the township. In the past we have donated \$500 to each organization and the two \$500 donations are in the 2021 Budget under 01-409-375. No questions. **On Motion** by Mrs. Scull, seconded by Mr. Keltz, approve the donations to the Center for Excellence in Local Government and the Crime Alert Berks County each in the amount of \$500.00. All in favor, yes and motion passed unanimously.

19. CPA Firm in lieu of the Elected Auditors: The Township will approve of the hiring of Herbein for the 2021 Audit services in lieu of the Elected Auditors and will advertise accordingly. No questions. **On Motion** by Mr. Keltz, seconded by Mrs. Scull, approve the use of Herbein for the 2021 Audit Services in lieu of the Elected Auditors. All in favor, yes and motion passed unanimously.

Solicitor – Mr. Bellwoar presented his October 2021 Report, and noted that there was an Executive Session regarding litigation held before the meeting and Wernersville has asked if the BOS were interested in the Wernersville Police matter. The Board all stated no that they are not interested in providing Police Service to the Borough of Wernersville.

Old Business - None

New Business - Ms. Stevens noted that the addition of the Drop Option in the Police Pension Ordinance is in process and will be presented next month.

Public Comment Mr. Prutzman asked why the vehicle is not being purchased now and Mrs. Scull stated that it was the Board's decision to keep the Police Vehicle Purchase in calendar year 2022, and Mr. Keltz stated that they buy a car every other year. Mrs. Johnson stated that it is November.

Mr. Kurtz attended the Open House and the Community's attendance was great. He was there the whole day taking photos and the children really enjoyed climbing in the vehicles, there was a K9 demonstration, and the lights and siren lit the children's faces.

Adjournment by Mrs. Scull and seconded by Mr. Keltz at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Pamela J. Stevens, Manager/Secretary/Treasurer Approved by BOS 12.20.21