

**SOUTH STRABANE TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS BUDGET MEETING**

October 4, 2023

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The October 4, 2023, Budget Meeting of the South Strabane Township Board of Supervisors (“Board”) came to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Municipal Building (550 Washington Road, Washington, PA 15301).

The following were present:

Board of Supervisors	Mark Murphy, Vice Chair; Russ Grego, Richard Luketich, and Bob Weber.
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Absent	Bracken Burns, Chair
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Also Present	Township Manager Jeff Ziegler, Finance Director Marie Coffman, Fire Chief/Acting Assistant Manager Jordan Cramer and Police Chief Drew Hilk.
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2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The Board allocates a period of time during this item for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the Board on any agenda item. Each person addressing the Board of Supervisors is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three (3) minutes.

Mr. Jeff Bull, resident of Main St., stated that people are just now receiving their fire tax bills when they are receiving their mortgage bills, and they are now seeing what the fire tax is going to cost them. He asked how the township has a fire hydrant tax and also collect the fire tax. The response was provided that the township does not assess a fire hydrant tax.

3. REVIEW OF PROPOSED 2024 DEPARTMENT EXPENDITURES
Police Department

Chief Drew Hilk reviewed his proposed expenditure budget for 2024. He pointed out to the Board that beginning with the 2024 budget the township will be separating the officers’ contractual Holiday Wages from Overtime Wages. Having these two types of wages combined does not give an accurate representation of the actual wage amount in either category. Chief Hilk was asked about Police Grant Expenses. He explained that this is a reimbursement account for the remaining authorized funds in the PCCD ARP grant to be used for technology for license plate readers and intersection cameras. Chief Hilk presented the Board with a (5) five-page document titled “2024 Budget Proposal – South Strabane Twp Police Department. The document called out and explained in narrative format several noteworthy proposals for the 2024 police budget. He mentioned Police

Uniforms, which are showing an increase of \$7,600. There is a minor increase of \$400 proposed in the Police Recruitment Budget. This is in anticipation of the cost the department expects to incur to hire (3) three officers in 2024.

Chief Hilk pointed out a proposed \$5,000 increase in the Vehicle Repairs / Maintenance budget. This is requested because several of the vehicles in the fleet are entering their last 1-3 years of service life. A discussion ensued about the continued difficulty in getting police vehicles and the extremely long wait once vehicles are ordered. Chief Hilk noted that there are a couple of vehicles at Woltz and Wind Ford that are available for the township to purchase even though our 2023 order was cancelled. Chief Hilk is recommending that the township consider his request for new vehicles in the 2024 budget and then purchased in January 2024. Discussion ensued on vehicle use and replacement.

Chief Hilk also noted an additional proposal of \$15,000 for a plate reader at Manse Street and Billy Bell Park. The Chief also reviewed a request he is making to add one new police officer position so that he can promote another officer to a police administration position of Lieutenant Chief. Chief Hilk raised this as a goal back in 2018, but due to the tightness of budgets, it has not yet been funded.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Russell Grego presented an overview of the proposed expenditures for the Public Works Department. He noted that his proposal for Uniforms is \$3,000 less than the 2023 budgeted amount. Mr. Grego stated that last year was the final year of the contract and the new provider is significantly less expensive. Mr. Grego stated that he expects fuel costs to be level overall for 2023 so is proposing the same amount of \$45,000 as last year. He is proposing the same amount for Vehicle Repairs & Maintenance Group as last year, he has not yet reached the 2023 budgeted amount.

Mr. Grego stated he would like to increase the Mtgs., Confs, Cont. Ed for the \$500 that was budgeted last year to \$2,500 in case the new Director would like to go to PSATS and/or join APWA. He stated these are good places to get to know people in the field and make connections. At this point, Mr. Grego reviewed the requested Capital expenditures. He noted that in 2023 the last payment would be made to the John Deere Loader. Mr. Grego stated he is requesting a Bobcat Trac skid steer with a mill head. He stated the useful life expectancy is 20 years and will be something that will be very useful to the department. He discussed getting the unit on a five (5) year lease purchase and noted that with the 20-year life expectancy it makes more sense to purchase the Bobcat and then once it is paid for it is an asset that will be useful for 15+ years beyond making the final payment. He also noted he needs to rent a Bobcat excavator next year to do some work in the township. For the same reasons noted above he is requesting a lease to own arrangement rather than budgeting a large amount for rental fees. It was noted that PW capital is higher than it should be, because it has the full purchase price and not a single year of a five-year lease payment. Discussion ensued.

Parks and Recreation

At this point Mr. Grego reviewed the expense proposals for Parks and Recreation. He noted that Civic plus, which is the reservation software was moved to the Parks and recreation budget where it is a better fit. There was discussion about how much to allocate for Recreation Programming now that the Parks and Recreation Commission is being reinstated. The consensus was that the \$10,000 that is being proposed is probably a good first year number. Mr. Grego stated that he is requesting the same funding for 2024 for each of the parks as was requested in 2023, with the exception of Community Park which is requesting an additional \$500. Mr Murphy requested that the following be put in the Parks and Recreation budget for 2024: \$32,000 – Community Park Overflow Parking; \$10,000 Streator Parking Lot and \$62,000 for Dog Park Fencing.

Mr. Grego reviewed proposed expenditures to be paid by the Liquid Fuels Fund. There was a slight increase in liquid fuels from last year. Mr. Grego is proposing the same amount for winter maintenance as last year. It was a mild winter last year and the township is in a good position regarding salt storage, Mr. Grego is proposing to pave fewer streets next year in an effort to try and rebuild a liquid fuels fund balance.

Mr. Murphy stated that he would not be able to make it to the next scheduled budget meeting on October 17th and asked if that meeting could be cancelled and instead take place on the October 19th - “if needed” meeting. Everyone was in agreement to the change.

4. ADJOURNMENT

As no further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM by Mark Murphy.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey L. Ziegler
Township Manager