

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

**October 11, 2022**

**APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The October 11, 2022 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	Bob Weber, Chair; Mark Murphy, Vice Chair; Bracken Burns; and Richard Luketich.
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Absent	Russell Grego
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Also Present	Township Manager Brandon Stanick; Assistant to the Township Manager Jim Sutter; Finance Director Janna Luton; Building Official Scott Heckman; and Fire Chief Jordan Cramer.
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It was noted Mr. Grego, also serving as Public Works Director, was not in attendance due to an emergency storm sewer and sanitary sewer failure on Lacock Hill.

**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 matter. Each person addressing the Board of Supervisors is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three (3) minutes.

There were no comments from the Public.

**3. REVIEW OF PROPOSED 2023 DEPARTMENT EXPENDITURES**

**Building Department/Code Enforcement**

Building Official Scott Heckman presented an overview of the proposed expenditures for the Building Department. Mr. Heckman noted Code Enforcement has received 407 total complaints to date in 2022, with 141 occurring the three months since the Quality of Life Ticketing Ordinance was approved. He stated they have collected \$450 in income from the tickets with all other complaints being resolved (94% resolved). In response to a question from Mr. Burns regarding the time it takes to resolve a Quality of Life ticket, Mr. Heckman stated it currently averages three days. Mr. Heckman stated they have issued 96 building permits to date in 2022. Mr. Heckman stated the Department anticipates an uptick in revenue and workload due to the new occupancy permitting process established earlier this year. The process is a result of improved coordination among building, fire and land use planning and zoning functions. A discussion ensued on fees for occupancy permits.

Mr. Heckman stated they are requesting fewer funds for supplies as they are largely caught up with what is needed for the Department in 2023. Mr. Heckman noted the funds requested for uniforms is down slightly as they do not anticipate new purchases and simply need to maintain what is currently on hand.

Reviewing the Minor Equipment requests, Mr. Heckman stated they are requesting a new laptop to have in their vehicle to enable working from the field. He stated utilization of this process would take away a reporting burden related to junk vehicles from the Police Department. Mr. Murphy asked if they will be able to look up a Vehicle Identification Number (“VIN”) with this system. Mr. Heckman stated they will be able to do this. Mr. Heckman stated they are requesting funds to purchase display racks for various plans and blueprints. A discussion ensued on legal requirements for keeping physical plan sets and the digitization of existing plan sets.

Mr. Heckman reviewed the requested funds for Professional Services, the majority of which is comprised of legal services for an update to the Building Code. A discussion ensued regarding the Building Code Review Task Force. It was noted by Township Manager Stanick the review and has not moved forward yet as the Township is currently recruiting for the committee. Mr. Heckman reviewed requested funds for Communications, Fuel, Dues, State Fees and Vehicle Maintenance. He noted the 2014 Ford Interceptor is ready to be sold. Mr. Heckman reviewed the request for Continuing Education and stated this is required to maintain certifications. Chair Weber inquired on the progress of Code Enforcement Officer Troy Lucas in obtaining his plan review and building inspection certifications. Mr. Heckman stated Mr. Lucas is preparing to start his testing and noted there are no concerns with Mr. Lucas obtaining the necessary certifications within the time period prescribed as a condition of his employment.

Mr. Heckman stated they are requesting \$40,000 in Capital expenditures in order to implement a new building permit, code enforcement and customer service tracking software. Mr. Heckman stated this is a comprehensive platform which will coordinate all zoning, building and code enforcement operations in addition to the service requests received by the Township. Mr. Stanick stated there are different modules available which utilize different functions, including a customer service function which would allow Staff to more effectively track complaints and service requests. Mr. Heckman stated they have used KLH Engineers services for tracking Code Enforcement to date, but have reached the limits of the tool. Mr. Stanick stated the cost reflected in the budget is the cost for the platform, training and the first year service cost. Mr. Heckman stated permit management activities would also be done through this platform and there is also a module to allow for direct citizen complaints via the Township website. He noted it can also incorporate planning and zoning reviews undertaken by Mr. Stanick and Assistant to the Township Manager Jim Sutter. The platform also carries payment processing capabilities allowing the Township to receive payment by credit card. Overall, it is a significant upgrade to their current operations.

Mr. Murphy asked if the Township would be charged a processing fee for payments. Mr. Heckman stated there is a processing fee, but it would be setup so the end user covers the processing fee. Chair Weber asked if they had compared this platform with others to receive the best price. Mr. Stanick stated they have reviewed several platform demonstrations and believe they have a good understanding of the associated costs. Mr. Burns asked if there is an annual fee associated with the platform. Mr. Heckman stated there would be an annual fee of \$9,000 for the building and code

enforcement platform and approximately an additional \$3,500 annually for a citizen service request module. Mr. Burns inquired of using a system without ongoing costs. Mr. Stanick stated over the past several years companies have restructured their pricing models where software as a service requires annual fees. This cost typically covers training, trouble shooting, cloud storage, and updates to the program would be more readily available to users. In response to a question from Mr. Luketich, it was noted the platforms that have been demonstrated to Staff would create efficiencies in administering building and code enforcement functions.

Mr. Heckman expressed his desire to add an additional part-time Building Inspector in anticipation of the construction of the Burkett Manor development starting over the next year and the new occupancy permitting process. A discussion regarding existing Staff and workload ensued. Mr. Stanick also noted the difficulty in recruiting Building Inspectors because of competition with the private sector. He noted Staff had discussed establishing a Building Inspector apprenticeship program that could recruit from the Fire Department. Chair Weber inquired of the qualifications for this prospective part-time employee. Mr. Heckman stated they would primarily handle code enforcement functions while training on for building inspection certifications similar to the strategy used with Mr. Lucas. A discussion ensued on wages and inspections.

## **Fire Department**

Chief Cramer reviewed the Fire Department accomplishments in 2022, notably reaching 24/7 staffing, reduced response times and improved volunteer-career relations. He outlined major objectives for 2023 including staffing enhancements, placing a new rescue/engine into service and continued enhancement of service delivery with the fire inspection program and EMS services. Chief Cramer noted there is a need to increase fire inspection fees for large buildings and fines for false alarms.

Chief Cramer presented statistics showing overall expenditures and those specific to just the Volunteer Fire Department (“VFD”). He stated the Township currently provides for insurance and worker’s compensation for the VFD, with worker’s compensation being a requirement of the State. Chief Cramer proposed covering 50% of the VFD’s utilities. He stated the weekly bingo events and other fundraising is doing well, but repair costs are high. A discussion ensued regarding the logistics for paying the VFD’s utilities.

Chief Cramer presented a proposed schedule change to 24/7 using a 24-hour on, 48-hour off configuration which equates to 48 hours of work per week for a full-time Firefighter. Chief Cramer stated he would like to implement the new proposed schedule before the end of the year. He presented a sample week of the proposed new schedule, showing four firefighters working during weekday daylight hours, three overnight on weekdays, three working daylight on weekends and 2 overnight on weekends. The Board Fire Chief Cramer and Mr. Stanick to move forward with the schedule change. Mr. Stanick noted a memorandum of understanding will be used to depart from the current Union contract.

Chief Cramer displayed a pie chart showing a breakdown of operating expenditures, noting fire hydrants comprise the largest individual segment (29%). He then showed a breakdown of operating expenditures without fire hydrants included. Chief Cramer reviewed Uniforms and Minor Equipment. Chair Weber inquired on the need to equip the Department with bulletproof

vests and helmets. Chief Cramer stated firefighters are targeted by firearms and are on the scene at shootings. In response to a question Mr. Luketich, Chief Cramer indicated he was on a call in the past year where a bulletproof vest was needed. This allows the Fire Department to immediately render aid to any injured persons as a result of a school shooting or other shooting incident.

Chief Cramer reviewed the requested expenditures for Professional Services, Communications, Vehicle Maintenance and Recruitment/Retention. He discussed a potential Community Fire Academy initiative using funds from an International Association of Fire Chiefs grant. It is an 8-week program to increase awareness of fire prevention operations for taxpayers and potentially recruit volunteers. Chief Cramer reviewed Medical Supplies, Fire Prevention and Outreach, Building and Grounds funding and Minor Equipment. He noted the importance of an identification badge maker, as it can be used by all Township departments and is a safety concern given the amount of time firefighters spend in healthcare facilities and schools.

In reviewing personnel, Chief Cramer discussed the request for a new part-time Emergency Management Specialist. He gave an overview of the role, stating this individual would support fire and emergency management and stormwater management/MS4 requirements. He also stated they would assist in an administrative capacity with the Township's fire inspection program. He added this person would be a non-suppression employee and non-union.

Chief Cramer reviewed Capital expenditures highlighting the need for long-range planning for turnout gear given the hiring of nine Township Firefighters in a relatively short period of time. Chief Cramer reviewed a request for new radios and the need to fund the lease payments for the new Ford Explorer and F-150 squads. Chief Cramer discussed the new rescue engine and presented a 15-year cost breakdown.

Chief Cramer provided a comprehensive inventory of the Department's large apparatus and recommended the Board consider starting the process to order a new ladder truck. He expressed his concerns for the length of the ladder on the current apparatus and stated by the time a new ladder truck is received by the Township in 2026 the current apparatus will be nearing the end of its useful life. It is suggested a replacement is in service 2026. Chief Cramer explained should the Board desire to move in that direction, an order will need to be placed prior to the end of 2022 to avoid a 6% increase in price after the first of the year. Chief Cramer reviewed the financing for a new ladder truck.

Mr. Stanick stated the personnel costs identified in the draft budget are representative of a 24/48 hour schedule. A discussion ensued on the wage differences. Mr. Murphy inquired on why the bulletproof vest cost is much lower than what the Police Department spends. Chief Cramer stated these are soft vests without plates. He noted he would like to purchase plates at some point. Mr. Luketich inquired on the lifespan of the bulletproof vests. Chief Cramer stated it is five years for the Police Department, but they will use them for an extended period of time. Mr. Luketich asked if it would be possible to use the Police Department's vests after that time. Chief Cramer stated this would be inadvisable as they are custom-made. A discussion regarding bulletproof vests ensued.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

As no further business came before the Board, Mr. Murphy moved to adjourn. Mr. Luketich seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandon J. Stanick  
Township Manager