

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

October 28, 2019

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The October 28, 2019 Budget Meeting of the South Strabane Township Board of Supervisors (Board) came to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Mae C. Reynolds Meeting Room of the Municipal Building (550 Washington Road).

The following were present:

Board of Supervisors Rich Luketich, Chairman, Bob Weber, Vice Chairman; Bracken Burns; Thomas Moore; and Laynee Zipko.

Also Present Township Manager Brandon Stanick; Assistant to the Township Manager Patrick Conners; and Financial Analyst Marie Coffman

One visitor was in attendance.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Luketich stated 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 is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three (3) minutes.

Ms. Cynthia Rossi of Zediker Station Road stated that the audio quality of the Board of Supervisors broadcasts has been spotty. She next outlined her concerns with Citizens Library's Board requesting that the Township Board of Supervisors request a forensic audit of the Library's finances. She cited apprehension with the number of donors and the lack of transparency for the organization's financial reporting. In response to a question from Mr. Burns regarding if this information has been brought to the attention of the Library Board, Ms. Rossi stated that it has not. Chair Luketich stated that the Township wishes to know how its annual contribution is used. He concluded by asking Ms. Rossi to relay any correspondence and notes to Township Manager Stanick at her convenience.

3. REVIEW OF EXPENSES, CAPITAL, PENSIONS, AND PERSONNEL FOR 2020

Assistant to the Township Manager Conners began by discussing the proposed 2020 Fee Schedule. He highlighted changes including the consolidation of commercial signage and fire inspection fees in order to allow for revenue generation consistent with the costs to provide those services as well as to provide a more streamlined structure. He also discussed the establishment of an escrow-based system for zoning variances, conditional uses, text amendments, zoning map amendments, and

special exceptions. Township Manager Stanick highlighted that establishing escrow accounts for the aforementioned applications will ensure the Township does not have to chase after reimbursements from applicants. In response to a question from Mr. Burns, Township Manager Stanick advised Staff will ensure the proper method to establish escrow accounts is used. Assistant to the Township Manager Conners continued by discussing an increase in the false alarm fire fees citing that establishments with frequent false alarms will be receiving a higher fine. Next, he reported that dye test fees and no lien letter charges would be increasing to more accurately reflect the time and effort put into their preparation. He then discussed the implementation of a zoning verification fee, highlighting the charge would be \$50 per request. He concluded by discussing slight increases for park pavilion and field rentals. He stated that increases follow trends for comparable municipal facilities in the region and the Township's cost to maintain such facilities. He also stated that the increases will be reflected in the launch of a park and pavilion rental platform and Community Park facility upgrades. Mr. Weber inquired regarding the landlord occupancy fee and requested Staff ensure that it is properly being enforced.

Township Manager Stanick discussed a proposed millage adjustment in the amount of 0.1 mil. He highlighted this would result in approximately \$130,000 of additional revenue. He stated that based on a \$200,000 total assessment valuation, property owners would realize a \$20 increase in property taxes. Ms. Zipko expressed her apprehension regarding a tax increase highlighting the increases in the proposed 2020 fee schedule as an additional source of revenue. Assistant to the Township Manager Conners highlighted the minimal revenues that will be generated from the increased fees. Township Manager Stanick illustrated millage rates and tax revenue for surrounding Townships in Washington County highlighting that with the proposed adjustment South Strabane would remain below the average of 1.1059 mils. A discussion regarding the proposed millage for 2020 ensued. Township Manager Stanick reported that the additional revenue accomplishes several things, including: i) complying with the Township's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit (an unfunded state mandate); ii) increasing wages following the negotiated contracts with the Police Union and the Public Works Union, as well as the anticipated increase in wages for the Fire Union; iii) fulfilling a recommendation from the Township's professional auditor to reduce reliance on one-time revenue sources that vary from year to year; iv) staffing of professional administrative positions; and v) seeking to minimize the unfunded liability that resulted in the 2016 arbitration award between the Township and the Fire Department.

Mr. Moore noted a small incremental increase in property taxes on a gradual basis would be preferable to a large increase implemented all at once. Mr. Burns stated that a slight increase is needed in order to meet the Township's pension obligations. Mr. Luketich stated that the proposed millage increase seems necessary but voiced his desire to seek alternate revenue streams in the coming year. He stated he would like to have the Township Solicitor re-evaluate the oil and gas ordinance to facilitate the distribution of more well permits in the A-1 Zoning District. He highlighted that such action could result in additional revenues from Act 13.

Township Manager Stanick next discussed the establishment of a Capital Improvement and Vehicle Equipment Fund, citing the Auditor's recommendation in the Fiscal 2018 Audit. He

highlighted that revenue generated from the sale of vehicles and equipment would be used to fund the Capital Fund. He stated that the Fund would include any large scale single or multi-year projects and equipment costing in excess of \$5,000. Next, Township Manager Stanick discussed the Garber Road repair stating that engineering estimates have resulted in projected expenses of between \$175,000 - \$220,000 for the repair to Garber Road. He highlighted that since Garber Road is not a heavily travelled road Staff is evaluating alternative solutions until funding becomes available.

Next, Township Manager Stanick reviewed the establishment of a 5-year capital improvement plan which will assist in planning for vehicle and equipment purchases. He reported the delayed delivery of the newly designed Police Interceptor SUVs ordered for 2019, citing Ford's production line issues. Next, he discussed anticipated Pension costs, reporting that increased state-aid resulted in higher contributions to the Fire Department's Pension Account in 2019. He reported the Township's goal is to reach 70% funding level for the Fire Department's Pension in 2020. Township Manager Stanick also discussed the implementation of a Sustainability Fund created from Act 101 funds received from the state. He highlighted that budgeting an accurate number on a yearly basis will be a challenge due to the fluctuating levels of recycled material, which is the basis for Act 101, as well as the state's ability to distribute the funds on a consistent basis. Chair Luketich inquired regarding the establishment of a single waste hauler. Township Manager Stanick stated that he is finalizing a Request for Proposal (RFP) which will be sent and advertised in early November. Mr. Weber inquired regarding the Township's contribution to Citizens Library. Township Manager Stanick stated the Budget is proposing to allocate \$1 per Township resident towards the contribution as the Library had requested. Mr. Burns highlighted that the Library's ability to secure state funding/grants is directly tied to their ability to secure local match dollars. Ms. Zipko highlighted the numerous services and programming offered by Citizens Library.

Mr. Weber inquired regarding the proposed purchase of a brush truck for the Fire Department. Township Manager Stanick stated the Township has budgeted \$35,000 for the purchase of the truck in addition to the 2019 4th Quarter contribution. Mr. Burns expressed his support for the Township providing half of the funding for the purchase of the new brush truck, highlighting that it will help establish a partnership between the two parties.

4. NEXT BUDGET MEETING

Township Manager Stanick reported the next Budget Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Monday November 4th at 6:00 p.m. (if necessary).

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Weber moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Zipko seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote and the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandon J. Stanick
Township Manager