

**SOUTH STRABANE TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS NON-LEGISLATIVE MEETING**

February 14, 2023

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The February 14, 2023 Non-Legislative Meeting of the South Strabane Township Board of Supervisors (Board) came to order at 7:03 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Municipal Building (550 Washington Road, Washington, PA 15301).

The following were present:

Board of Supervisors: Bracken Burns, Chair; Mark Murphy, Vice Chair; Russell Grego; and Bob Weber

Absent: Richard Luketich

Also Present: Township Manager Brandon Stanick; Assistant to the Township Manager Jim Sutter; Police Chief Drew Hilk; and Township Solicitor Dennis Makel.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Burns led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Jeff Bull, property owner on S. Main Street, provided documents regarding the Strabane Manor Homeowners' Association ("HOA") to the Board. He stated the HOA's finances are much healthier presently compared with when Mr. Weber was a member of their board. Mr. Bull stated the leadership in the Township has bent over backwards beyond what is reasonable to accommodate developers. Mr. Bull expressed his opinion the Township should stop giving money to developers. He stated the development of a page on the website for the proposed Snuffy Planned Residential Development is not a good use of Staff's time.

Laynee Zipko, resident on Berry Road, expressed her concerns regarding the direction of the Township. She stated in 2016, an individual from the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors ("PSATS") had come in to provide advice during the Township's Comprehensive Planning Process. Ms. Zipko suggested having someone similar come in to provide recommendations in regards to the best use of the Township's tax revenues. Ms. Zipko expressed her opinion regarding the best sources of tax revenue.

Judy Panasik, resident on Green Crescent Drive, noted the meeting agenda lists the year as 2022 and claimed the meeting is illegal as a result. She expressed her opinion it is not proper to have a meeting on Valentine's Day. Ms. Panasik expressed her opinion all management should be salaried. She recommended there be a freeze on raises for all Township employees. Ms. Panasik questioned the effectiveness of all Township employees except those in the Police Department. She stated too much money is being spent on the Fire Department and that the Volunteer Fire Department ("VFD") was formerly able to handle all fire protection services in the Township. Ms. Panasik claimed the Township wants to get rid of the VFD. She suggested the Township explore a model for Public Safety similar to what North Strabane Township recently adopted. Ms. Panasik questioned the amount spent on legal costs associated with having the Township Solicitor reviewing certain right-to-know requests. Ms. Panasik suggested the Township cut off through traffic on Berry Road.

Nancy Zipko, resident on Berry Road, expressed her support for amending the Zoning Code to allow oil and gas wells in the vicinity of their property to raise additional revenue.

4. DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVE REVENUE SOURCES

Township Manager Brandon Stanick began a discussion concerning alternate methods of raising revenue that seek to minimize the burden on residents. The Township's location along I-70, I-79 and U.S. Rt. 19 has allowed it to evolve into the home of the largest retail and restaurant district in Washington County. As such, the Township's structure of service delivery, particularly police, fire and emergency services, is shaped by this characteristic. Calls for services to our commercial district, as well as those to accidents on the interstates, can burden resources. Mr. Stanick provided for the Board's review a sample ordinance concerning cost recovery for responses to public disturbances and a sample ordinance concerning medical billing for fire and emergency services. Additionally, Township Solicitor Dennis Makel had previously provided a memo concerning the adoption of a Traffic Impact Fee.

Police Chief Drew Hilk stated he has not discussed the specific legalities concerning the public disturbance ordinance, but noted similar legislation has been adopted elsewhere. Chief Hilk stated 10% of their 911 calls are for Wal-Mart, which is nearly equal to their calls for all residences. Chief Hilk displayed a chart comparing call volumes for various large commercial locations and residences. Chief Hilk stated thefts at Wal-Mart are their most common reason for being called and consume the most time. He then discussed the full process for responding to a call of this character.

Chief Hilk stated the intent of this ordinance would be to limit the number of disturbance calls received from these large retailers. He stated there were 21 calls to Wal-Mart in 2022 and all required 2 or 3 officers to respond. Solicitor Makel inquired on the mechanics of raising fees. Chief Hilk stated each business would be billed for each call after the first. Mr. Stanick noted it would likely be similar to the current billing structure for contracted services on the Comprehensive Fee Schedule. A discussion ensued regarding other examples of public disturbances and their impact on police services.

Mr. Weber inquired of how retailers would reduce their public disturbance calls. Chief Hilk stated the Police Department offers meeting with retailers to give them strategies to address safety, reduce thefts and be better witnesses. He stated many national retailers provide their own training. Mr.

Weber inquired on actions the Township can take. Chief Hilk expressed concern for the challenges of educating the retailers due to their high turnover rate. Chair Burns stated he was under the impression these retailers had internal security. Chief Hilk stated many places have reduced their internal security.

Ms. Panasik claimed crime from Charleroi and Belle Vernon areas is spreading to South Strabane and asked if the Police Department was aware of this. Chief Hilk stated he has not seen this in the official statistics. He stated changes in crime statistics over the last 10 years has more to do with store policies changing over time.

Mr. Grego asked who monitors hiring for in-house security and suggested it could have a negative impact. Chief Hilk stated he cannot speak to this. He noted internal security are typically tasked with contacting law enforcement and the Police Department focuses on establishing them as credible witnesses. He stated internal security are not necessarily bouncers. A discussion on the statistics presented ensued.

Mr. Murphy asked if Wal-Mart typically gives the Police Department grant funds. Chief Hilk stated they apply for and receive grant funds every year for the past 15 years. A discussion on funding received from Wal-Mart ensued. Mr. Murphy suggested the Police Department may no longer receive these funds if the Township adopts the proposed ordinance. A discussion on the relationship between the Township and Wal-Mart ensued.

It was the consensus of the Board for Staff to explore the costs for services and the benefit to charging for services in relation to public disturbances.

Mr. Stanick asked Mr. Makel if he had any information on Impact Fees. Mr. Makel stated a Traffic Impact Fee is the best option at this time. Mr. Murphy noted a Traffic Impact Fee only covers infrastructure related to roads and stated there is significant time and cost associated with implementation. He stated the Township's finances may be in better shape right now if one had been implemented 25 years ago. Mr. Stanick stated implementation of a Traffic Impact Fee is a process that lasts approximately 18 months and costs upwards of \$100,000. A discussion on the use of revenues from a Traffic Impact Fee ensued. Mr. Stanick stated it would not be a way to address current operating revenues. Mr. Murphy stated he would like to look into a Traffic Impact Fee in more detail, but it would not address the immediate concerns. A discussion on the implementation process ensued.

A discussion regarding concerns with Berry Road ensued. Mr. Bull questioned whether or not it was too late to reconsider the recent approval of a purchase of an aerial apparatus for the Fire Department.

Upon a question from Mr. Murphy, Mr. Stanick confirmed the Township would pursue a Tax Anticipation Note ("TAN"). Mr. Murphy inquired if this will pay for the Police and Fire Department pensions. Mr. Stanick stated it would not, but will help the finances moving forward. A discussion on funding the Police and Fire Department pensions ensued. Mr. Murphy noted the TAN is being pursued to cover 2022 expenses which are not in the 2023 Budget. Mr. Murphy stated he would like consultants from Washington & Jefferson College to look at the Budget. Mr.

Murphy expressed his displeasure with the accounting practices used by the Township and the overall state of the Township's finances.

Mr. Murphy discussed changes he would like to see made to the Township's Ballfield and Multipurpose Field Rental Policy. Mr. Murphy discussed amendments he would like made to the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. Mr. Stanick recommended the Board provide direction to the Planning Commission to look into making those changes. A discussion regarding rentals at the Oak Spring Fire Station followed.

5. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:26 p.m. the Board adjourned into Executive Session to review personnel matters by acclamation.

The Board came out of Executive Session and adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandon J. Stanick, Township Manager