

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

**January 23, 2024**

**APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The January 23, 2024, Regular 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; Jeff Bull; Russell Grego; and George Rowand.
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Absent	None
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Also Present	Township Manager Jeff Ziegler; Assistant Manager/Fire Chief Jordan Cramer; Police Chief Drew Hilk, Finance Director, Marie Coffman; Roadmaster, Kevin Montgomery; Township Solicitor Dennis Makel and Township Engineer Rob Horvat.
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Chair Weber welcomed everyone in attendance to the meeting. He noted that in addition to the Board, the Township Manager, Solicitor, Engineer, Assistant Manager/Fire Chief, Police Chief, Finance Director, Roadmaster and the WJPA reporter were also present.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Weber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Weber stated that before moving on to the next item on the agenda that he would like to raise a salute to the Police Department, Fire Department and the Public Works Department for the outstanding work that they do for the township. He said that at this time he wanted to single out Kevin Montgomery and call him forward to be introduced to the public as the township’s Roadmaster. Mr. Grego stated that he has known Mr. Montgomery for around 24 years and that for about 7 years he served as Mr. Grego’s Foreman. Mr. Grego said that Mr. Montgomery knows the township and that he works with the other departments very well and that he believes he will do great in this new role.

Chair Weber remarked that one of the most important functions of the township is public safety and that the Police Chief, Fire Chief and Roadmaster all carry out their duties in a professional manner. He went on to say that we have 24/7 services, and he hopes the public realizes they can all rest well knowing these employees are on the job. Chair Weber concluded his comments by asking for a round of applause for these employees.

### **3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Weber stated the Board allocates a period of time at each meeting for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the Board. Each person addressing the Board of Supervisors is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three (3) minutes.

Chair Weber went on to add that during the Public Comment Period Robert's Rules of Order will apply. He stated that those wishing to speak are to sign the sign-in sheet and that the Township Manager will call them to the podium when it is their turn. Chair Weber reminded everyone that upon taking the podium, they are to state their name and address and be reminded they have up to three minutes. He stated there would be no debating and no question and answer and that most importantly there would be no personal comments permitted. He stated that once the public comment period is concluded that the comments will not be addressed and that the Board will move on to the next business item.

Chair Weber reminded everyone that should they have questions during the week they can call the office during business hours or fill out the form to bring an issue to the Township Manager's attention. He concluded his comments by pointing out that the Township Manager and Board members remain for a while after the meeting is over and are available at that time. He stated that the Township Manager is the spokesman for the township and with that he opened the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Dale Flowers, Shawnee Drive stated that at the January 2, 2024, meeting he brought up a couple of issues that affect Strabane Manor and wondered if they had been investigated. He also commented that he has been reading articles lately regarding electric vehicles and fire suppression blankets that are used to extinguish lithium battery fires. He asked if the Fire Department is aware of the fire suppression blankets and had any plans to buy some of them.

Mr. Jeff Bull, Supervisor, stated that he is speaking under public comment because he and Mr. Rowand are trying to keep campaign promises and commitments to the public, but were given the wrong information about getting on the agenda and then denied the opportunity to discuss issues. He stated that the Board of Supervisors is not happy with the results of the last election. He is asking the Board to use the elected auditors to do the audit this year instead of paying a firm. He stated that the last time the elected auditors were used the former Township Manager was relatively new and the elected auditors were given the wrong information. Mr. Bull stated that taxes have risen over 90% over the past 5 years and he believes it is from gross mismanagement of funds. He stated that at one point the township had around \$2 million in the bank and now that money is gone. Mr. Bull commented that taxes in South Strabane are higher than those in Peters Township. He stated that last year the Board was made aware of issues when the Manager/Treasurer resigned, and no audit was done as was suggested by the state. He stated the Supervisors should honor the wishes of the 300 voters that cast ballots for the elected auditors and use them to conduct the audit.

Laney Zipko, Berry Road stated that she has been coming to township meetings for many years and wanted to commend Chair Weber because she feels very welcome now and hasn't always felt that way. She stated it was a nice way to start the meeting and said thank you. Ms. Zipko concluded her comments by congratulating Mr. Montgomery on his new position.

#### **4. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the December 12, 2023, Meeting Minutes Mr. Rowand seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the January 2, 2024, Reorganization Meeting Minutes Mr. Grego seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Bull stated that there were some corrections that needed to be made to the January 2, 2024 minutes. Township Manager Ziegler indicated that the changes were made.

#### **5. FINANCIAL BUSINESS**

- Payroll: \$ 126,219.96 (pay date of December 15, 2023)
- Payroll: \$ 139,165.62 (pay date of December 29, 2023)
- Payroll: \$ 179,786.79 (pay date of January 12, 2024)
- General Fund: \$ 257,350.79
- Liquid Fuels Fund: \$ 40,283.04
- Escrow \$ 13,107.44
- Sewage Enterprise: \$ 4,677.35
- **Total Expenditure: \$ 760,590.99**

- Overtime costs for the period include:
  - Police: \$ 2,088.51
  - Fire: \$ 2,021.17
  - Public Works: \$ 0.00
  - **Total OT: \$ 4,109.68** (pay date of December 15, 2023)
  
  - Police: \$ 3,671.06
  - Fire: \$ 165.18
  - Public Works: \$ 0.00
  - **Total OT: \$ 3,836.24** (pay date of December 29, 2023)
  
  - Police: \$ 5,418.01
  - Fire: 703.25
  - Public Works: \$ 1,111.76
  - **Total OT: \$ 7,233.02** (pay date of January 12, 2024)

General Fund:

- Municipal Employees Insurance Trust (Health Insurance January and February) \$121,550.08

Liquid Fuels

- American Rock Salt (Bulk Ice Control Salt) \$ 39,830.70

**Reports and Documents Attached:**

- Expenses by Vendor Summary and Detail for the Period; and
- Police, Fire and Public Works Overtime Analysis for pay December 15, 2023,
- Police, Fire and Public Works Overtime Analysis for pay December 29, 2023 and
- Police, Fire and Public Works Overtime Analysis for pay January 12, 2024.

Chair Weber reminded everyone that any Supervisor that makes a unilateral decision to solicit services that result in a cost from the solicitor, engineer, code enforcement or other staff without the knowledge of the Manager and approval of the majority of the Board will be responsible for the cost. He stated that all expenditures of the township must be approved by a majority of the Board at a township meeting. Chair Weber commented that recently a Supervisor violated this protocol on one and possibly two occasions. He asked the Manager to meet with the Supervisor, add up the charges and have the Supervisor reimburse the township. He stated that the Board is watching the budget very closely this year and there can't be unapproved expenses. Mr. Bull asked Mr. Weber to bring this to the public's attention regarding what he is talking about. Mr. Weber stated that he had already done so and moved on to the next order of business.

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the payroll for the periods November 26, 2023, through December 9, 2023, and December 10, 2023, through December 23, 2023, and December 24, 2024 through January 6, 2024 and bills for the period December 9, 2023, through January 19, 2024. Mr. Grego seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

**6. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND RECOGNITION**

Chair Weber asked if there were any announcements. Mr. Bull asked if there were any executive sessions since the January 2, 2024, meeting. Chair Weber stated that there were not. Mr. Bull stated that there was some sort of meeting held if a majority of the Supervisors chose to send a resident a letter censuring the comments he made during the public comment period at the January 2, 2024, meeting. Mr. Weber stated that deals with personnel and moved on. Mr. Bull stated that he was not finished. Chair Weber called for order and moved on to the next item.

**7. TOWNSHIP REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS**

**Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Report**

Chair Weber stated the Board of Supervisors allocates a period of time during this item for comments regarding the topic of stormwater. Each person addressing the Board of Supervisors is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three minutes.

There were no comments at this time.

**Township Manager's Report**

Mr. Ziegler seconded the comments made earlier regarding the Public Works Department. He stated that the employees were called out to out to treat roads a couple of times this year and did a great job and he asked Mr. Montgomery to pass his compliments along to the department. Mr. Ziegler stated that he had been requested to provide an update on a couple of economic

development projects in the township. Mr. Ziegler provided a brief update on: Menards, Medical office on Berry Road, Marijuana Dispensary, Burkett Manor, U-Haul and the Tropical Smoothie Café

### **Secretary/Treasurer's Report**

Mr. Ziegler noted that the following was transmitted to the Board through the Secretary/Treasurer's Report:

### **Minutes and Agendas:**

- a) Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes – October 5, 2023;
- b) Zoning Hearing Board Regular Meeting Minutes – October 9, 2023;
- c) Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes – November 16, 2023;
- d) Zoning Hearing Board Regular Meeting Minutes – December 11, 2023;
- e) Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Agenda – December 19, 2023;
- f) Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes – December 19, 2023;
- g) Board of Auditors Reorganization Meeting Agenda – January 3, 2024;
- h) Planning Commission Reorg. & Regular Meeting Agenda – January 4, 2024;
- i) Zoning Hearing Board Reorg. & Regular Meeting Agenda – January 8, 2024; and
- j) Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Agenda – January 16, 2024.

### **Reports and Publications:**

- a) Finance Report - December 2023;
- b) Building Department/Code Enforcement Report – December 2023;
- c) Police Department Report – December 2023;
- d) Tax Collector's Report & Interim Collection Only – December 2023;
- e) Township Engineer's Report – January 23, 2024;
- f) Animal Control Monthly Report – December 2023;
- g) Court of Common Pleas, Strabane Manor vs. SST – Recorded 12/8/23;
- h) OR, Legal Notice, Consider CPA to do annual audit – December 22, 2023;
- i) OR, Legal Notice, ZHB Public Meeting – December 22, & 29, 2023;
- j) Wash. Co. Chamber of Commerce, new location;
- k) DODGE Data & Analytics – January 2024; and
- l) PSATS News Bulletin – December 2023.

### **Correspondence:**

- a) Letter dated January 3, 2024, from Assistant Twp. Mgr., Jordan Cramer, regarding Waste Management Recycling;
- b) Letter dated January 4, 2024, from Kristin Sims, Audit Mgr. of PennDOT, regarding a monitoring review of the Townships Liquid Fuels Tad Fund on October 16, 2023;
- c) Letter dated January 5, 2024, from Jeff Ziegler to Dale Flowers, related to public comments;
- d) Letters dated January 12, 2024, from Jeff Ziegler regarding their reappointments; and
- e) Press Release dated January 17, 2024, from Fire Chief Jordan Cramer regarding the Residential structure fire on North Main Street.

### **Township Solicitor's Report**

Township Solicitor Dennis Makel had nothing to report at this time.

### **Township Engineer's Report**

Township Engineer Rob Horvat reported that the Township was successful in obtaining a Covid-19 ARPA H2O PA Grant in the amount of \$1million with a \$375k match for an upgrade to the Quarry Road pump station. He stated that we are now waiting to receive the grant confirmation and acceptance paperwork. Horvat also reported that there is an MS4 training/inspection scheduled with the Public Works Department next week. He also stated that last week presentations on the two LSA Grant applications were made to the committee at the County.

Marcia Deeb asked what the \$1million grant was to fund. Mr. Horvat answered that it was granted to make improvements to the Quarry Road pump station.

### **8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

### **9. NEW BUSINESS**

**9A: Motion Extending an Employment Agreement with Jordan J. Cramer as South Strabane Township Fire Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator.**

Mr. Murphy moved to Extend the Employment Agreement with Jordan J. Cramer as South Strabane Township Fire Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator. Mr. Grego seconded the motion.

Chair weber stated since this is a personnel matter it is a straight up or down vote. Mr. Bull asked if the solicitor had reviewed the Agreement. Solicitor Makel stated that he reviewed the Agreement when he received his packet. Township Manager Ziegler stated that the Agreement in front of the Board for consideration is an extension of the contract document that had been previously reviewed by the solicitor with changes made only to the term and an increase to salary and sick leave accrual. Solicitor Makel stated that it was just a modification of what he had previously reviewed with only those couple of small changes.

Chair Weber called for a roll call vote:

Ayes: Mr. Bull, Mr. Grego, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Rowand, and Mr. Weber

Nays: None

The motion passed by a 5-0 roll call vote.

**9B: Resolution to Appoint Cypher and Cypher, CPA to Conduct the 2023 Year Audit.**

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the Resolution appointing Cypher and Cypher, CPA to conduct the 2023 year audit. Mr. Grego seconded the motion.

Chair Weber asked Finance Director Marie Coffman if she had any comments on Cypher and Cypher doing the township audit. Ms. Coffman stated that Cypher and Cypher have been doing the audit for about 3 years and that they are very knowledgeable of the township's finances and do a very thorough job. She stated that the auditor comes to the township for about 2 weeks and any findings that they present are always helpful. Chair Weber asked if she is satisfied with Cypher and Cypher and she responded that she is happy with them.

Mr. Murphy asked Mr. Bull why he doesn't want Cypher and Cypher to do the audit, they are insured and do a nice report. He also asked Mr. Bull if he is sure the Board of Auditors want to do the township audit because he spoke with one of them and they told him they didn't think they should do the audit. Mr. Bull stated that there have been so many allegations of financial issues like the \$35k pension penalty. Mr. Murphy stated that is not an allegation, that was a penalty and not the fault of the auditor but was something done in-house. Mr. Bull stated there has been a lot of money spent to cover up things done in the township. Mr. Murphy asked what things were covered up and Mr. Bull replied that a lot of money was spent on an HOA lawsuit. Solicitor Makel interjected that a lot of times when you apply for grants and loans you need to produce an audit report done by a certified accountant. Mr. Bull stated that he has a problem using the same auditor every year. Mr. Murphy noted that the township is putting out an RFP for an auditor to do the audit next year.

Chair Weber called for a roll call vote:

Ayes: Mr. Grego, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Rowand, and Mr. Weber

Nays: Mr. Bull

The motion passed by a 4-1 roll call vote.

**9C: Motion to Appoint Penny Steggles to Fill a One (1) Year Term on the Township Parks and Recreation Commission**

Mr. Murphy moved to appoint Penny Steggles to fill a one (1) year term on the Township Parks and Recreation Commission. The motion failed to receive a second. The motion died on the floor for lack of a second.

**9D: Motion to Approving Subdivision for Schweinebraten Bus Co. at 1196 Locust Avenue in the R-3 Zoning District.**

Assistant Manager Cramer explained that the applicant for the Schweinebraten Bus Co. filed an application to move a couple of lot lines for estate planning purposes. Chair Weber asked is the Planning Commission had recommended approval. Mr. Cramer responded that they did recommend it for approval.

Mr. Bull moved to approve the subdivision for Schweinebraten Bus Co. at 1196 Locust Avenue in the R-3 Zoning District Mr. Murphy seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

**9E: Motion to Approve Country Canvas Awnings Land Development Application for a Minor Addition at 72 Davis School Road in the C-2 Zoning District.**

Township Manager Ziegler explained that Country Canvas Awnings is putting a 400 sq. ft. addition to the rear of their non-residential structure, which is considered a land development under the ordinance. He went on to indicate that the Planning Commission reviewed the submission and recommended approval.

Mr. Murphy asked if this addition is for their offices. The representative for Country Canvas Awnings stated that it is for office space. He also said they did look at building an accessory structure for the office but did not want to have to go outside the building to go to the office. Chair Weber asked how long they have been at the present location. The response was almost 20 years. Mr. Murphy moved to approve Country Canvas Awnings Land Development Application for a minor addition at 72 Davis School Road in the C-2 Zoning District. Mr. Grego Seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

As no further business came before the Board, Mr. Grego moved to adjourn. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey L. Ziegler  
Township Manager