

**TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HUNTINGDON, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021, 7:00 P.M.
11279 Center Highway, North Huntingdon, PA 15642
Presiding Officer – Zachary Haigis, President, Board of Commissioners**

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Haigis called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Commissioner Stump Present
Commissioner Atwood Present
Commissioner Blasko Present
Commissioner Zona Present
Commissioner Bevan Present
Commissioner Gass Present
Commissioner Haigis Present

Also Present:
Jeffrey Silka
Solicitor Dice
Ryan Fonzi
Chief Rizzo
Mike Turley
Rich Albert

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CITIZENS INPUT

Zach Davies – 14500 Michael Drive – states his concern is public safety for the fire departments. He lives in Hartford Heights fire district and his neighbor called for a gas leak on January 25th, 2021 at 11:30am. He states his local fire department never showed but Circleville VFD was there. On February 9, 2021 on Sherrick Drive there was a smell of something burning inside a house but again his local fire department never showed. He states he is concerned about safety.

RESPONSE TO CITIZENS INPUT

Commissioner Gass asks if there is any type of internal affairs that can look into to this because this should not be happening.

Commissioner Haigis states they can follow up with Westmorland 911 to check response times. He states there is no policy on fire departments dropping calls or not responding to calls as part of getting the tax stipend money.

Manager Silka states there is no operational policy over fire departments.

Commissioner Haigis states we can get records from Westmoreland 911.

Commissioner Gass asks about creating an ordinance that states if a fire department does not respond to calls, why should they get support from the Board and receive the tax money.

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Commissioner Haigis states they can discuss when the one mil tax was adopted and was to be split evenly amongst the fire departments.

Manager Silka states the tax is divided by seven departments but there is no policy on how they get the money or how the fire department operates.

Solicitor Dice suggests that Manager Silka meet with the fire department first to discuss what is going on.

Commissioner Atwood suggests to look at whether or not they have the personnel to respond to calls.

Chief Rizzo suggests attending the monthly chief meeting.

Work Sessions Discussion Topics

1) 2020 4th Quarter / Year End Presentation

Manager Silka gives the fourth quarter end of year review and thanks the Board and staff for working together.

Commissioners Atwood, Gass and Haigis commend Manager Silka, the Department Heads and staff for working together.

2) Townhouse Expansion Project Presentation

Manager Silka gives an update of the expansion of working space within the Town House. With the Planning & Zoning Department moving upstairs will allow the Police Department to expand and move the Detectives Division and Chief Rizzo into the current Planning & Zoning Department. The current managers office will be split into two offices for Jonathan Beskid and an intern. Dan Miller's current office will be turned into storage and he will move into assistant managers office. Manager Silka and Mike Turley will move upstairs with a conference room and a work area. He states all current furniture will be used. Manager Silka welcomes the Board to look at the areas of space.

Commissioner Stump asks if any partitions will be used in the main planning department.

Manager Silka states movable cubicle walls will be used.

Commissioner Stump asks what would be left in the police department.

Chief Rizzo states by moving the detectives upstairs will create their own personal spaces for sensitive cases, confidential informants, etc. and will have their own entrance instead of walking through the police department. The current detective office will be used by all the patrol sergeants. Chief Rizzo invites the Board to tour the police department.

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Commissioner Stump asks if the staff would be in any kind of risk.

Chief Rizzo states there will be no risk for the staff.

Commissioner Blasko asks if any additional security would be required.

Chief Rizzo states he would like to upgrade the camera systems. Manager Silka states that camera system is already in the capital plan for 2021.

Commissioner Haigis asks if the rough estimate of fifty thousand dollars will be enough.

Manager Silka states that amount is already budgeted and feels will be enough.

Commissioner Gass asks what the end date is.

Manager Silka states by end of year 2021.

Commissioner Atwood asks if there is room for expansion if needed.

Manager Silka states there is very little room for expansion.

3) Public Comment Options

Manager Silka states the current system is not compatible for Zoom meetings, etc. He recommends residents either email him by 4:00PM on the meeting day, or leave their phone number to call during the meeting. They can also send a letter.

Commissioner Haigis agrees.

4) Westmoreland County Housing Authority Letter of Support

Manager Silka states Westmoreland County Housing Authority is doing a senior housing development in Irwin and North Huntingdon and is looking for low income housing credits and also a letter of support for this project. He states there are two phases planned with the first phase being a fifty unit apartment in Irwin and phase two will be single unit and patio homes with common walls in North Huntingdon. The development is accessed off of Laurel Avenue. The Housing Authority is looking for a letter to support their financing application for low income tax credits to fund this project that was originally started by Don Kattic.

Commissioner Blasko asks if this is a tax free property.

Manager Silka states as of right now it is taxable but will ask for tax exemption.

Commissioner Stump asks how much tax revenue would be lost.

Manager Silks states he can get that information.

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Commissioner Haigis states they will have to go through stormwater management as there is a creek bed that runs along Caruthers Lane that has already given way in Irwin Borough. He also states the turn on Laurel Avenue is already dangerous and added traffic would be a safety concern.

Ryan Fonzi states they have yet to receive an application and is a concept idea so far.

Manager Silka states at this point they are only looking for a letter of support for the financing application.

Commissioner Blasko states his concern is how desirable this property is to developers and if this is potentially room for twenty or thirty houses in the future that would provide a nice income of taxes.

Commissioner Stump states her understanding is even though someone is a non-profit, they can choose to pay taxes and possibly make that a condition once the application is received.

Manager Silka states they will ask for a pilot program for payment in lieu of taxes. He will put on the agenda for next week.

5) Budget Process

Manager Silka states he will schedule a work shop devoted to the departmental budgets and would like to schedule in March. He states this will be a stand-alone meeting and not on a regular meeting day. The Board agrees.

6) County Hauling Update – M. Turley, Assistant Manager

Assistant Manager, Mike Turley gives an update on County Hauling. He states 2021 began the second year of a four year contract and has seen some progress in the service the last half of 2020. Recently, however there have been complaints with billing and customer service but not all complaints are valid. Mr. Turley adds that he feels we are still not where we need to be with the increase of complaints.

Commissioner Atwood asks if he sees the increase of complaints stemming from when County Hauling took over Hempfield Township.

Mr. Turley says possibly as the timing would indicate that.

Commissioner Blasko states that he expressed that same concern that County Hauling is spreading themselves too thin and the Township should not have to suffer the consequences.

Commissioner Gass asks Mr. Turley if he has personally spoken to County Hauling about taking over Hempfield Township.

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Mr. Turley states he speaks with County Hauling every day or every other day and told them there is a perception that this is going to impact us. He states the Township has a good working relationship with County Hauling.

Manager Silka states we have a contract and if the customer service aspect is not being met, then it has to be rectified regardless of other townships.

Commissioner Haigis states he is more concerned that staff time is being wasted addressing the issues and how many times have they been on notice about breach of contract and have there been any fines due to breach of contract.

Manager Silka states three breach of contract letters in succession and are fining them on a regular basis for performance.

Mr. Turley agrees that too much staff time is being used resolving issues.

Commissioner Blasko states his concern going forward is that they have had thirteen months to get their act together and what is being described does not paint a professional picture.

Commissioner Stump asks who make the determination whether a complaint is valid or not.

Mr. Turley states sometimes complaints cannot be confirmed but the Township most times confirms a complaint.

Commissioner Stump asks if the Township has spoken to them about road damage.

Mr. Turley states this has been talked about.

PLANNING / ENGINEERING TOPICS:

- 1) S-01-2021: Gongaware-Zawodni Subdivision, First Street/PA Avenue, R-2 Zoning**
**Proposed boundary line revision in StrawPump area of the Township.*

Mr. Fonzi states this is on First Street and Amy Lane which is a small private lane where the Zawodni's live at the end of it. He states the Gongaware property is a non-conforming lot that has two homes and a barn on it. The Planning Commission recommends for approval and there were no other concerns.

There were no Board comments.

- 2) S-02-2021: Zavacky Subdivision, Silver Lane/Maroon Lane, R-2 Zoning**
**Proposed boundary line revision between two lots off of Coulterville Road.*

Mr. Fonzi states Jason and Kate Zavacky own two lots on a private drive and would like to add .256 acres to the lot in the rear of the property. The Planning Commission recommends for approval.

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OLD BUSINESS

1) Conditional Use of Chicken Keeping in Residentially-Zoned Areas (Process Update)

There were no Board comments. Commissioner Haigis states for the record that there was a public hearing and two residents spoke at the hearing opposing backyard chickens.

FURTHER BOARD COMMENTS

Commissioner Blasko reminds residents of the snowman building contest with the Parks & Recreation Department. He also states when staff went on the platoon schedule reflects the leadership and character of the Board and concerns for safety.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Commissioner Blasko

Motion to adjourn.

Second: Commissioner Zona

Motion carried 7 - 0 - 0 (8:11 P.M.)

- Special Meeting minutes of February 11, 2021 were approved by the Board of Commissioners on March 10, 2021.



Jeffrey Silka, Township Secretary
(jjm)



Zachary Haigis, President