

**TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HUNTINGDON, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2016, 7:00 P.M.
11279 Center Highway, North Huntingdon, PA 15642
Presiding Officer – Tony Martino, President, Board of Commissioners**

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Commissioner Herold	Present	Also Present:
Commissioner Haigis	Present	John Shepherd
Commissioner Bertani	Absent	Michael Turley
Commissioner Gray	Present	Rich Albert
Commissioner Faccenda	Present	Dan Miller
Commissioner Kucera	Present	Chief Lisiecki
Commissioner Martino	Present	Andrew Blenko

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CITIZENS' INPUT

Ray Jedd ó 229 Bethel Road ó states he has lived in the Township for twenty years and feels he is being driven out of the community because he feels the Board is spending too much money on the Town House building. Norwin School District is raising taxes too along with the County and State. He states is against spending money to revitalize the building.

RESPONSE TO CITIZENS' INPUT

Commissioner Gray states he has spoken to Mr. Jedd before and explained that what was in the Norwin Star proposed by the architect were ideas of what could be done to the building but was not final. He states the Board has agreed on items to make the building handicapped accessible and general upkeep on the exterior of the building.

Commissioner Martino states he agrees with Commissioner Gray in that most of the items were discussion items and still need to decide which ones are to be done.

Commissioner Faccenda states he also agrees with Commissioners Gray and Martino. The Board decided to not move forward with that item.

Commissioner Haigis states he often hears from residents about raising taxes.

Commissioner Gray adds the Township has nothing to do with the school taxes, County or State taxes. He states the Township raised taxes once in 2000 by 1.5 mils and since then has lowered them twice, a half mil each time. Since 1998 the taxes have increased a half mil.

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Work Sessions Discussion Topics

1) Development of Strategic Plan – discussion.

Manager Shepherd states the Board met to discuss the introduction to strategic planning with John Trant to help guide the Board through the process and was included in last year's budget. He states Mr. Trant is here and has met with Mr. Turley and all the Department Directors to get a vision for their department but still need some guidance from the Board. This will be the start of an ongoing process.

Mr. Trant states he will give an overview of the strategic plan and some of the results from the meeting with the department directors.

Administration 6 one of the key topics is economic development and prioritizing the development and role of the Township. The community identity / brand needs to continue to be a priority. Consistency and clarity of a message goes a long. The branding says what the Township is all about. Ensuring the identity should be consistent from our plow trucks to website to letterhead. The consistency of message from the process of new development or redevelopment through the final issuance of occupancy permit is important and also to have a single point of contact. Also a continued priority is business community education and outreach, such as the e-newsletter, evaluations, development incentives and LERTA properties.

Manager Shepherd states this is one of the areas the Board is interested in is economic development that started with the Norwin shopping center.

Mr. Trant states economic development and prioritization of efforts is a key issue to come full circle of financial stability. External communication is an area with additional opportunities for public engagement. Mr. Trant also states social media, online, online permitting system, and online work orders will make it easier for the public engage the Township. Customer service is often overlooked by local government but is easily translated from the business community to local government. Improving customer service with opportunities for customer service, interactions, ease of signing up for programs and renting facilities.

Commissioner Faccenda states the Township should be able to ask the residents what the Township is doing right or wrong through surveys.

Mr. Trant states online facility rentals is a high level strategic plan that can be researched as to what can be done. Community stakeholders is another area to make priority to revisit every year. He recommends annually or twice a year to have an open forum for the residents to provide their input. Providing, budgeting and requiring customer service training for the staff who interact with residents. Strategic planning should be done once a year to discuss priorities.

Parks and Recreation 6 Mr. Trant states the Township is fortunate with park acreage. Planning to have the priorities for facilities, what the needs are, how to pay for them and where they're going to go is important. If there is a plan in place, then potentially municipal money, grant money or private money could be available for funding.

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Manager Shepherd states parks is one of the most concrete examples easy to grasp. A few years ago, the Township looked at an extensive recreation facility. The majority of the residents voted not to have the facility. There is a cost associated with planning for more.

Mr. Trant states providing the opportunity through the planning process is what is important.

Recreation programming to increase and provide programs through contractors. Staffing has to be level to the programs and activities provided. There is also a need from the maintenance perspective of day to day operations such as submitting grant applications and planning.

Commissioner Herold asks about having a grant writer for the Township.

Mr. Trant states he has seen it as a part of a position, not necessarily one person.

Commissioner Herold states he feels a grant writing position takes a lot of time, effort and research and feels it should be a position in itself to help out all the departments.

Mr. Trant states that opportunities are being missed because we don't have the capacity, the project, or the time to do it.

Commissioner Gray asks Mr. Trant if he can give an example of a community that has a successful grant writer.

Mr. Trant states that Cranberry Township had a dedicated person to grant writing. He states a total would be tens of millions of dollars in grants not solely because of the grant writer, but it certainly helped.

Commissioner Kucera states there are firms that do grant writing so an individual person would not need to be hired.

Planning & Zoning – Mr. Trant states there is a need to update the regulations and ordinances continually. A single point of contact is helpful to interact with residents. The department functions and responsibilities are important as to which functions are assigned to the staff.

Manager Shepherd states the Planning & Zoning is small for the size of the Township but have impressive credentials. The staff is continuing to grow but may need to increase the staff to uphold the level of service and realign the resources. The building inspection is doing well and have heard no complaints.

Mr. Trant states to align priorities to make sure they are clear. Code enforcement, for example, is a reactive or proactive position. The position is complaint driven.

Commissioner Herold asks Mr. Blenko how he thinks the Township is doing with Code Enforcement.

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Mr. Blenko states it tends to be feast or famine. The busy time for building inspection is in the Spring. During that time, Code Enforcement takes a back seat. After the pools have been installed and buildings are nearing completion, there is more time for code issues. He states they could probably use another code enforcer during some points of the year.

Commissioner Faccenda states technology would be helpful in this field in having WIFI in the cars and IPADS available for onsite pictures.

Mr. Blenko states they do not, but agrees would be very helpful.

Commissioner Herold asks that Mr. Blenko give a cost to upgrade their technology.

Manager Shepherd states we may want to explore technology in general throughout all the departments.

Mr. Trant states the first step is to upgrade to WIFI and IPADS.

Commissioner Faccenda asks if any departments have a scanner.

Chief Lisiecki responds the police cars have scanners in the cars and were the first department in Westmoreland County that were allowed to go with e-citations. The laptops were upgraded to have MIFI system in the laptop, so they don't have to worry about a malfunctioning battery. The scanners allow them to scan registration cards and licenses to automatically download it into record management system.

Commissioner Faccenda asks if the Township can run debit cards.

Manager Shepherd states no.

Mr. Trant states debit access fees are often the challenge.

Manager Shepherd states if the Board wants to look into electronic payments to do so.

POLICE – Mr. Trant states to make the police force more effective is community engagement and outreach with programs to engage the public. Also to build customer service.

PUBLIC WORKS – Mr. Trant states the biggest priority is the road program. The two components are funding and policy making. Implementing the rural roads in policy and road program. The paving program in looking at how it is sustainable over time and to analyze the roads. Funding and the levels of customer service are important. Finding ways to engage the residents and getting feedback. The work order process is good in that it is digitized and updated and also the reporting is consistent and regular.

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INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL / STRUCTURE – Mr. Trant states the key to implementing any of these priorities would be to having a clear system of communication and action. This ties together a lot of things spoken about tonight such as the benefit of having the Township Manager structure, the benefit of having professional staff, clarity of communication and actions. The Board sets policy, the Township Manager finds a solution, then the staff implements work orders.

Chief Lisiecki asks if under each director, should be employees. When there is communication that goes round and round, you end up with chaos. Communication needs to follow the chain of command and proper avenues.

Commissioner Martino states that Emergency Management needs to be included.

Mr. Trant states he will work with staff to finalize the draft report and send to the Board.

Manager Shepherd states the roles of all the departments should be included with the level of service.

Mr. Trant states each department needs decision making for expenditures.

Commissioner Kucera states to also talk about the level of safety for employees.

Commissioner Herold states he would like the citizensø police academy and the junior police academy added again.

Chief Lisiecki states he couldnøt agree more to bring back these programs, however the funding for the programs was the issue. They once received funding, but when there was no more funding, it cost thousands of dollars to continue.

Commissioner Gray states there has been a lot of discussion about public outreach and stakeholder input. He feels globally North Huntingdon Township is a great place to live and he feels the majority of the residents here believe that. The phones are not ringing off the hook with complaints, but he feels it is up to the Board to gather what the silent majority want. If the Board reacts to every complaint received, there is going to be insanity. Some complaints need to be dismissed for situations that are not our issue or canøt do anything about them or private property matter and need to direct them to the proper people. He feels the Township should be in maintenance mode and that we have a good thing, letøs keep it that way. There is money in the bank because it has been managed very well up to this point. He states that residents have approached him saying North Huntingdon is a great place to live. Letøs plan for the future with specific goals.

Mr. Trant states this is a good way to end with a strategic plan of keep a good thing going in North Huntingdon Township.

Commissioner Faccenda states this is 2016 and the Township is still punching timecards. The Township needs to be technically updated and move forward.

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Manager Shepherd states the budget meeting will be in November.

Commissioner Haigis asks if recommendations will come from Mr. Trant or the staff.

Mr. Trant states it starts with staff and the Board and he will help facilitate the process.

Mr. Turley states they can implement some of it or none of it.

Chief Lisiecki gives credit to Manager Shepherd for the five year plan instead of a yearly plan. Most importantly is the department heads having to justify everything they need.

H. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Commissioner Haigis

Motion to adjourn.

Second: Commissioner Faccenda

Motion carried 6 0 0 0 (8:56 P.M.)

- Strategic Planning Meeting minutes of August 24, 2016 were approved by the Board of Commissioners on _____.

Tony Martino, President

John M. Shepherd, Township Secretary
/jjm