

approved

**LOWER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MINUTES – February 3, 2025 @ 7:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER - The February 3, 2025, meeting of the Lower Mount Bethel Township Board of Supervisors was held at 6984 S. Delaware Drive, Martins Creek, Pennsylvania, 18063 Martins Creek, PA, 18063. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson DeBerardinis at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were M. DeBerardinis, S. Disidore, C. Cook, D. Ascani, J. Mauser (zoom), J. Zator, J. Smethers, and M. Mastrogiovanni. There were 15 members of the audience present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 20, 2025. MOTION by M. DeBerardinis, second by S. Disidore to approve the minutes as submitted. Vote: 4-0.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

1. Nicole Palmeri – Rec. Board updates. Nicole reported we are down to 3 people on the Rec. Board, she would like to have a “meet the Rec. Board night”. She needs more members and volunteers and asked the Board to get the word out. Tree Lighting – The event was successful but had less people from last year. Nicole thanked the Fire Company for participating. May Day / Community Day: This will be held with the Fire Company on Saturday, May 10th (Community Day will be from 1-5 p.m.) at the Riverton Park. Spring Plant Sale / Farmers Market: Will be held on Saturday, May 31st from 9 – 1 p.m. Nicole is going to call around and get prices for flats of plants. Pickle Ball lessons: Nicole reached out to the instructor; she would like to do it again. We have people interested in the next session which will be held in May or June. Movie Night: We will have (3) movie nights in June, July and August. We are going to try and have food trucks at movie night. Nicole asked we post the Rec. Board openings in the Newsletter, website and Facebook.

2. Tara Mezzanotte – Rt. I-80 Retaining Wall Replacement Update. Tara reported in April and May; Section 106 NJ DOT will be addressed related to historical resources and retaining wall project. The 2017 Rock Fall Mitigations Visual Impact Assessment; the new version is coming up in April / May. Other things being explored are visitor use impact to National Recreation Areas and long-distance trails. Tara discussed Emergency Services impacts as it relates to the project. LMBT falls into the Gateway Communities, Tara asked the Board to adopt a Resolution. Pilot Program participants – They will be identifying which communities they will be studying Recreation Areas specific to Rt. 611 and Rt. 80.

SUBDIVISIONS / ZONING – None.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **Consideration of Purchasing a New Brush Truck for the Fire Company** - George indicated he doesn't have the specifications ready for tonight's meeting, they are still working on getting the figures together and will have ready for next month. George asked the BOS if they have any questions about the budget. M. DeBerardinis noted the budget is good, but they should make sure they don't get too tight with their budget and make sure maintenance is included.

Fire Company breakfast – Sunday March 9th at Centerfield, they will set up on March 8th. They will coordinate times with the office. “May Day” – May 10th, they will be getting a liquor license and insurance like they did last year for the beer tent. George mentioned Suburban EMS has new people in charge. They had a meeting and are looking to rebuild the relationship with the Fire Company and are having quicker response times. They brought one of their rigs down to the Fire Company. Suburban also helps re-stock their supplies on their fire trucks. By replenishing expired supplies which saves them money.

2. Consideration of Street Light Assessment Abolition or Amendment. D. Ascani suggested the street lights be paid from the General Fund and abolish the assessment without raising taxes. There are a lot of other functions such as leaf collection and road maintenance that not all residents get. Everyone uses the light as they go through Martins Creek and people come and walk in the village. Parks and Recreation are not all used by residents, but our tax dollars pay for it. Parts of the township should be lit up, not only in Martins Creek. M. DeBerardinis noted the streetlights provide a safety feature and shouldn't be turned off; safety takes precedence over everything. How the streetlights have been funded, has always been questioned. J. Zator noted a straight repeal would be easiest. S. Disidore indicated she is not in favor of paying for the streetlights out of the General Fund. Martins Creek is a more densely area, if paid from the General Fund, then indirectly all residents would be paying the streetlights. The leaf collection is for more densely area, less densely area are able to deposit their own leave, we could consider to be equitable picking up everyone leaves. We need to look at the budget to see where to get the \$17,000 from and should only consider any change during next year's budget. We also are in need of Road equipment. Susan mentioned the streetlights are only 18% of the properties in the Township and believe the way it is managed now, is the fair way of assessing streetlights in Martins Creek. If a majority of Township had streetlights, that would make more sense to be absorbed in the General Fund. D. Ascani mentioned only 2 towns in Pennsylvania have street light assessment. Susan suggested before moving forward with any change, she would like input from the entire township on this topic, like we did with the cell tower. She would also like to know if any residents are paying for leaf removal. J. Zator mentioned the statute does not provide for any other municipal services, such as leaf collection. C. Cook agreed it should be absorbed in the General Fund. J. Smethers indicated there is \$12,000 in the street light fund, that would need to be used first and \$51,000 in unallocated funds. D. Ascani would like to see the assessment absorbed in the General Fund for this year, we are saving money by paying Road Department salaries using Open Space money for them working at some of the parks. If you vote to get rid of the street light assessment, you will need to authorize Joe to draft the ordinance abolishing it. There was discussion about leaf pick up. J. Mauser noted we have spent a lot of time on this issue and tied in with Legal firms for uncollected assessment. We should look at absorbing the street light assessment into the General Fund and get this off the table, look at doing this for the 2026 budget; or see if we can find funds this year. M. DeBerardinis suggested the change for 2026. D. Ascani would like to see if we can resolve this issue this year, before April when the bills go out. J. Smethers mentioned we need to use up the funds from the Street light fund before taking it out of the General Fund. S. Disidore expressed her concern with doing something different, than was passed for the 2025 budget. There was discussion if we can delay billing. The Board will put this topic on the March 3rd meeting to allow the public to come and voice their opinion, then if, inclined we can move forward with advertising and possible adopting of the ordinance at the April meeting. This will be announced on Facebook, the website and Code Red inviting the residents to attend the March 3rd meeting.

3. Changing Traffic lights to LED – J. Smethers indicated we received a quote from Telco and still waiting on an estimate from Tyler. There was a question if we need the new lamps, or just LED lights. Chris and Melissa will call Telco next week and verify.

4. Citizen Survey for Police Study Follow-up – J. Smethers provided the Board with the survey from Dave Mettin, the consultant working on the police study. He would like to know if the Board has any interest in conducting a Survey Monkey so that the residents can voice their opinion on the topic. If not, he would like to do one with you just to get a feel of what you believe we are missing from our current coverage. S. Disidore suggested in the study a question about the costs involved.

5. Resolution 2025-06 A Supplemental Appropriation to Increase Code Enforcement Wages and Enforcement Initiatives within the Township – M. DeBerardinis, D. Ascani, J. Smethers and Anthony DiSante met to discuss moving forward with Code Enforcement and increasing the hours. Jen indicated the Resolution is to increase the Code Enforcement Officer's hours an extra 5 hours a week to enable the code officer to address abandoned vehicles and blighted properties that are on the list that Anthony is going to develop. Anthony has the staffing to do this. The amount needed to fund this is \$17,000 from the 2024 General fund year-end balance. S. Disidore asked if there is a need for this right now, she thought at the last meeting the Board agreed to have him compile the list. There was a discussion about if code enforcement is going to be complaint driven or proactive and can the Zoning Office do this during his regular hours. D. Ascani noted there is money budgeted that wasn't spent last year that could go towards Code Enforcement. S. Disidore suggested we allocate the \$17,000.00 for Road Department equipment. Tabled until we received the list from Anthony and then re-address depending on what the list shows.

6. Appointment of Barry Isett & Associates as Code Enforcement Officer – J. Smethers indicated this is to create a blanket appointment to allow any of Barry Isett & Associates code enforcement officers to assist the township. J. Zator noted for enforcement letters, they should be named in the Resolution. Tabled.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Accept Jenny Leggett's Resignation from the Recreation Board – **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by M. DeBerardinis to accept Jenny Leggett's resignation and thanked her for her services. Vote: 5-0.

2. Consideration to Submit a Letter of Intent for a Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grant – This is a grant to elevate the property at 5876 Del Haven Road owned by Jon Russo. J. Smethers explained the County would be the grantee for the grant, not the township. PEMA would require 50% of the grant upfront and the township doesn't front any money. The Township would complete the letter of intent and PEMA would review. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by C. Cook to have J. Smethers submit a letter of intent for the FMA grant. Vote: 5-0.

3. Portnoff Law Associates Open Accounts – J. Smethers explained Portnoff intends to return the uncollected tax and trash fee accounts that were sent to their firm for collection over 14 years ago. As of 12/31/24, there were 79 open accounts with a total principal balance totaling \$20,031.57. The Township has the option of either taking back the uncollected accounts or having them stay with Portnoff in an inactive status and they will not take any additional collection action, other than including them in payoff requests and accepting payments. D. Ascani asked that we get a copy of the list. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by D. Ascani to stay with Portnoff. Vote: 5-0.

CORRESPONDENCE - All Correspondence is in the Township office.

APPROVAL OF THE BILLS - MOTION by M. DeBerardinis second by D. Ascani to pay the bills in the amount of \$76,773.33. Vote: 5-0.

REPORTS

Township Solicitor Report – J. Zator submitted his written report. Joe discussed item #1. Baggitt Minor Subdivision and issue regarding the widening of the right-of-way for the road. We don't need to take any action at this time.

Chairman's Report – M. DeBerardinis asked if we received any complaints about snow removal this week, to give him a call.

Board Members Reports

D. Ascani – Dave reported Jason Swanson is still working on the camera for Gravel Hill, Met-Ed wants to put a meter on the township right-of-way. J. Smethers and C. Cook met with Met Ed who informed us the pole belongs to the Township. We might want to look into solar. J. Smethers will call Met Ed to figure out our right-of-way.

C. Cook - No report.

J. Mauser - John mentioned the article about the Kiefer farm receiving an award from the National Corn Growers Association Yield Contest. He would like it featured in the Newsletter.

S. Disidore - No report.

Township Manager Report - J. Smethers gave an update on the grants: We received a Greenways Grant for \$77,625.00 and \$75,000.00 Livable Landscape grant, now we can start the process to fix the trails. There was an executive order freezing the Federal grant funds, she is not sure if this will affect our American Rescue Relief funds. We have \$150,000 in there earmarked for the cinder shed. Jen placed a call to Ann Floods office; she will let the Board of Supervisor know when Ann gets back to her.

Road Department Report – F. Heitzman reported they had a few snowstorms, cleaned the JM trails, there were some down trees, they repaired two snowplows, they had the wiring straightened out on the snowplow, they did 2 days of cold patches and regular maintenance of equipment.

PUBLIC COMMENT – J. Matthews commented he would like to see the safety issue statistics on streetlights being turned off. Mr. Matthews noted it seems like a personal issue of a supervisor. J. Zator responded it's only a personal issue if it impacts a supervisor personally, but if affects the entire Community, an elected official can have a strong opinion on a specific topic. J. Matthews questioned the hours spend for allocation of salaries for street light funds. S. Disidore explained it's similar to expending funds for Road Department maintenance from Open Space Funds

ADJOURNMENT - The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Supervisors was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Mastrogiovanni, Township Secretary - Lower Mount Bethel Township

Approved

**LOWER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MINUTES – Special Meeting
February 18, 2025 @ 7:30 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER - The February 3, 2025, meeting of the Lower Mount Bethel Township Board of Supervisors was held at 6984 S. Delaware Drive, Martins Creek, Pennsylvania, 18063 Martins Creek, PA, 18063. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson DeBerardinis at 7:35 p.m. In attendance were M. DeBerardinis, C. Cook, D. Ascani, J. Mauser J. Smethers, and M. Mastrogiovanni. There were approximately 5 members of the audience present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – M. DeBerardinis announced there was an Executive Session held tonight from 7:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. to discuss Personnel.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Accept Township Manager’s Resignation. MOTION** by M. Deberardinis, second by J. Mauser to accept the Resignation letter of Jennifer Smethers, Township Manager. Vote: 4-0. The Board thanked her for everything she’s done. J. Smethers offered to work part-time during the transition period. M. DeBerardinis asked that she submit a proposal prior to the 3/3/25 BOS meeting including how many hours per week and hourly rate.
2. **Consideration of and Possible Decisions Regarding Personnel Recruitment.** J. Smethers indicated she received an email from the Meyner Center at Lafayette College with that the current rate is \$115.00 per hour, costs not to exceed \$8,500. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to have J. Smethers reach out to the Meyner Center to have them put together an official proposal, and possibly set up a meeting (zoom or in person) for the recruitment of Township Manager. Vote: 4-0. The Board asked Jen to obtain wages for the surrounding areas from PSATS and if they have a job Board on the PSATS website to post the position. D. Ascani asked if we should check with J. Zator about EOE (Equal Opportunity Employment) do we have to take resumes at the township also, or does everything do directly through the Meyner Center. The BOS will hold off on advertising for the position until after the meeting with the Meyner Center. Tabled to the 3/3/25 BOS meeting.

APPROVAL OF THE BILLS – MOTION by M. DeBerardinis, second by D. Ascani to approve the bills in the amount of \$44,573.93. Vote: 5-0.

REPORTS

J. Mauser mentioned they are having the meeting tomorrow morning at the Centerfield Building at 8:30 a.m. regarding the drainage issues on Martins Creek / Belvidere Hwy.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None.

ADJOURNMENT – The Board of Supervisor Special Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Mastrogiovanni, Township Secretary - Lower Mount Bethel Township