

approved

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

**CALL TO ORDER** - The March 3, 2025, meeting of the Lower Mount Bethel Township Board of Supervisors was held at 6984 S. Delaware Drive, Martins Creek, Pennsylvania. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson DeBerardinis at 7: 10 p.m. Also in attendance were, S. Disidore, C. Cook, D. Ascani, J. Mauser (zoom), J. Zator, J. Coyle, J. Smethers, and M. Mastrogiovanni. There were approximately 30 members of the audience present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. M. Deberardinis announced they held an Executive Session from 6:30 – 7:10 p.m. No action taken.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 1). Reg. Mtg. - February 3, 2025 – MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by C. Cook to approve the minutes as submitted. Vote: 5-0.
- 2). Special Mtg. - February 18, 2025 - MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by C. Cook to approve the minutes as submitted. Vote: 4-0-1, S. Disidore abstained she was absent.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR** – J. Matthews noted there are 1829 taxed households and 322 billed for street lights; which is 18% of the township population. J. Keifer asked if there are 2 Supervisors seats up for election, that should be posted on the Township website.

**1. Approval of Alcohol at Community Day/May Day Event – George Russo, Fire Chief.** George provided the Board with their one-day liquor license, they will be having a beer trailer like they had last year for May Day.

**SUBDIVISIONS / ZONING – None.**

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Consideration of Street Light Assessment Abolition or Amendment** - Tabled from January 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. D. Ascani suggested the township not bill the residents and the Street Lights get absorbed through the General Fund. Everyone in the township uses the streetlights, it's not designed for private property and provides safety of the streets. Kenny Brewer commented the topic needs to be pulled off the table before discussing. J. Zator explained according to Robert Rules of Order, as long as it's on the agenda, the Board can discuss it. J. Mauser noted over the past 20 years this topic has been discussed. The manager and secretary have been spending a lot of time on this, he would like to see this resolved and not discussed every year. C. Cook agreed this should be pulled out of the General Fund also it's a safety issue and need to keep the streetlights on. M. DeBerardinis mentioned when the billing process was instituted it was for residents of this lighting district, the whole purpose was for safety issues. Mike noted 50+ years later, the amount of office staff time, legal and financial burden is costly. This is safety driven, walking at night on low lit areas and lights are going to be replaced with LED. It could also allow us to provide future lighting at other dark spots in the township. S. Disidore indicated the streetlights in Martins Creek is a more densely area, it wouldn't be fair to the other residents if paid out of the General Fund. Susan mentioned it's \$5,000 to manage the streetlights vs the \$17,000 for the annual street light bills and the township would have to come up with 11,000 – 12,000 annually which is disproportionate.

M. DeBerardinis opened the floor for Public Comment.

- J. Matthews - He doesn't agree with the justification and doesn't want to pay for someone else's bills. Additionally, something big could come up that we would need to pay; maybe it can be put on the referendum for the residents to vote on.
- John Sandt – He referenced the public official and ethics act 93 of 1998. J. Zator explained his legal opinion of the statute. Mr. Sandt noted we shouldn't be spending all this money. Gravel Hill Rd. was paved two years ago and is already crumbling.
- Terry Dicker – She doesn't get the benefit of leaf collection or snow plowing, the streetlight doesn't even shine on her property, its across the street. Everyone drives through Martins Creek. Terry indicated it can be paid from the Liquid Fuels fund, she called other municipalities, and nobody pays for streetlights.
- Rich Grucella – The street light assessment has been critical and researched for a long time. It's a rural area with not a lot of development. Out of 2,500 municipalities, very few have a street light tax, none in the Lehigh Valley, he hopes they abolish it and put it to rest.
- Jeff Keifer – He sees the point on both sides and way back, the seniors wanted this street light assessment, with all the controversy, it should be put as a referendum on the ballot in May. J. Zator explained there are limited questions that can go on the ballot.
- Karen Brewer – She noted her disappointment, if you want lights you have to pay for it, also the outer district doesn't know what's going on with this discussion.
- Jeff Dicker – He noted the streetlight is 100 yards away from his house. Also, other residents benefit from leaf collection, snow removal and trails that he doesn't use, none of these are a benefit to him.
- Katherine Buehler – She is opposed to paying the Street Lights from the General Fund, it wasn't budgeted for. When you buy your house in the streetlight district, your aware of the street light tax, why should all residents pay for them. Gravel Hill Rd. and Geraldine Rd. Street light district signed a petition to get rid of the street light assessment and had the lights turned off. Maybe for safety purposes sidewalks can be put in.

J. Smethers discussed the different options for the streetlights she had prepared; spread out \$13.00 for every resident or \$78.00 if spread evenly for residents in the Martin Creek Street light district. M. DeBerardinis noted this option is the best and fairest way for everyone. There will be some savings once we change the streetlights to LED at no cost to the Township. We did petition to Penn DOT for sidewalks, but they are not permitted. Safety is key, our outer districts also have dark intersections. S. Disidore noted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Township Code allows for a streetlight district. M. DeBerardinis indicated he is glad they opened this up for discussion, lights for our right-of-way of our roads is important and this is a minor monetary amount expended from our budget. S. Disidore disagreed, the township has other things to pay for such as road equipment, road repairs, zoning, etc. and \$17,000 from the General Fund can be used somewhere else. There was further discussion about how the assessment is figured out. The Board recessed for Executive Session from 8:10-8:20 p.m. After a very lengthy discussion, **MOTION** by D. Ascani, second by J. Mauser to authorize J. Zator to prepare and ordinance abolishing the Street Light Assessment. Vote: 4-1, with S. Disidore voting "no".

1. **Discussion of Gravel Hill Camera** – Solar vs. Hard-wired. The camera ordered is not going to work with the wi-fi. We might want to look into putting it at the Centerfield Building since we paid for it already. Solar might be an option but doesn't work all the time. Tabled.

**2. Consideration of Purchasing a New Brush Truck for the Fire Company** – G. Russo submitted his proposal for the 2025 Replacement of 2641 Brush Apparatus. This truck is different than the one originally proposed, this is a better fit for their operations needs, ensures a more efficient purchasing process and provides significant benefits to the department and community. It is also available through COSTARS. The cost is slightly increased. The Board reviewed the different options for leasing through Community Leasing Partners. They are waiting to hear about the matching grant, this is right in line with the 17-year plan, and they have \$255,000.00 in the budget. If they don't get the Brush Truck grant, they still can make it work financially. J. Mauser announced he is going to make a contribution to purchase of the Brush Truck in the amount of \$100,000. G. Russo and J. Larrison thanked John for his generous contribution. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by C. Cook to approve purchase of the 2025 Brush Truck for the Fire Company at a loan term of 15 years at 6.10% interest. Vote: 5-0. G. Russo mentioned they will be looking at different maintenance packages for the trucks, there are a lot of different options.

**3. Changing Traffic Lights at Route 611 to LED** – Melissa and Chris had a conference call with Telco regarding their estimate, Telco and Hriczak are identical services. Telco's estimate is \$2,300.00 and Hriczak Electric estimate is \$3,687.46. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by D. Ascani to approve the estimate from Telco for replacement of the incandescent lamps with LED inserts in the amount of \$2,300.00. Vote: 5-0.

**4. Appointment of Matt Lewis, Barry Isett & Associates, as Code Enforcement Officer.** **MOTION** by D. Ascani, second by M. DeBerardinis to approve the appointment of Matt Lewis, Barry Isett & Associates, as Code Enforcement Officer. Vote: 5-0.

**5. Consideration to Purchase Park Signs for Riverton** – J. Smethers submitted to the Board of Supervisors her estimate for 8 signs totaling \$600.80. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by D. Ascani to approve purchase of the park signs for Riverton totaling \$600.80. Vote: 5-0.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Consideration of Meyner Center Proposal for Township Manager Search Services** – Nicole Beckett, Associate Director for the Meyner Center provided the proposal for assistance in recruiting the new Township Manager. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to approve the Meyner Center's proposal for recruitment of a new Township Manager. S. Disidore mentioned they had great success the last time. Vote: 5-0.

**2. Consideration of Proposal from J. Smethers to Assist During Staff Transition** - Jen submitted her proposal which includes hours per week, hourly wage and services anticipated. S. Disidore asked J. Zator if we need to put a title for Jen's interim position. J. Zator recommended that be done and that her bond stay intact. The Board discussed whether to make Jen interim Part-time Manager or interim Part-time Treasurer. **MOTION** by M. Deberardinis, second by D. Ascani to approve J. Smethers as interim Part-time Treasurer, to assist in the transition with duties as outlined in her memo and set pay as \$54.14 per hour (current hourly wage) for 10-12 hour a week maximum. Vote: 5-0.

**3. Approval of Benefits Paid Out for J. Smethers** – J. Smethers submitted her benefits payout memo to the Board of Supervisors. S. Disidore noted this is in accordance with the personnel handbook. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by D. Ascani to approve J. Smethers payout as submitted. Public Comment by J. Matthews – Mr. Matthews asked how much the payout is. M. DeBerardinis indicated that’s a personnel matter. Vote: 5-0.

**4. Slaters Baseball Request to Use Keifer Field**– Baseball’s annual request to use Keifer field from March - June 2024 and waive the fees. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by D. Ascani to approve Slaters Baseball request to use Keifer Ball Field and waive the fees. Vote: 5-0.

**5. Approval of the UMBT / LMBT Intermunicipal Agreement for Softball.** This is UMBT Softballs annual request to use the Riverton Field from April – July 2025 and waive the fees. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by D. Ascani to approve the UMBT / LMBT Intermunicipal Agreement and request to use the Riverton Field and waive the fees. Vote: 5-0.

**6. Authorize the Township Manager to Apply to the Lehigh Valley Greenways Mini-Grant for Trees at the Meadows** – The MCJWS submitted their proposal for the tree project. They received a \$2,500.00 grant from the Foundation of PA watersheds and had some left over from 2024. For planting 40 more trees, they are calculating they need around \$1,300.00 more. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by M. DeBerardinis to authorize J. Smethers to apply for the Lehigh Valley Greenways Mini-Grant for Trees at the Meadows in the amount of \$1,500.00. Vote: 5-0.

**7. Employee Medical Contributions Pre-tax vs. Post-tax** - J. Smethers explained she spoke with the auditors and Paul Mack stated that from his experience, most places do medical contributions as pre-tax as a benefit to the employee. This does not cost the employer anything and there are no tax implications for the township. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by S. Disidore to allow the employees to decided if they want their medical contribution pre-tax or post-tax. Vote: 5-0.

**CORRESPONDENCE** - All Correspondence is located in the Township office.

**APPROVAL OF THE BILLS** - **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis second by C. Cook to pay the bills in the amount of \$44,566.71. Vote: 5-0.

## **REPORTS**

**Township Engineer Report** – J. Coyle reported they had a coordination meeting for the Martins Creek Belvidere Hwy. drainage issues. Penn DOT is moving forward to replace the culvert. There was a Planning Commission Meeting in February to review the Bush Minor Subdivision. Justin is working with J. Smethers and M. DeBerardinis on the stormwater project for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Improvements including storm sewer pipe, catch basins, curbing and reconstructed roadway. Justin submitted his Concept Plans and Construction Cost Estimate, which can be broken down into two phases to remain under the maximum \$500,000. They will be working on the next rounds of grants and phasing the project.

**Township Solicitor Report** - J. Zator submitted his written report and thanked Jen for their working relationship at LMBT and Williams Township.

**Chairman's Report** – M. DeBerardinis will report under the Road Department.

**Board Members Reports**

**D. Ascani** – Dave reported there are problems with 4 wheelers, ATV's and dirt bikes at the Meadows. They are ripping it up every night and we should contact the State Police. The Road Department will also look at it.

**C. Cook** – Chris reported there is a drainage culvert problem by Dave Youngs house. M. DeBerardinis indicated he is looking into it. Chris also reported there is a big problem with New Enterprise not cleaning their trucks, we need to contract them. 611 is extremely dirty and the houses are filthy. J. Smethers will contact New Enterprise.

**J. Mauser** – John reported he talked to Fred about putting stream signs up on Little Creek Rd. and Martins Creek / Belvidere Hwy the end of March / beginning of April. R. Budihas is working on a grant request submittal to the dirt, gravel and low volume road maintenance program.

**S. Disidore** – Susan wished J. Smethers all the best with her new job, sad to see her go, but happy for her. Susan mentioned Jen has acquired almost 2 million dollars in grants for the Township.

**Township Manager Report** - J. Smethers thanked the Board, Melissa and the Road Department for the past 7 years working together.

**Road Department Report** – M. DeBerardinis reported there was a fire tonight at Gravel Hill, Shannon had to take the backhoe down there. They walked Miller Road and it needs a pipe replacement of 9,000 feet before paving it. The paving project will be almost 2 miles. We can only pave 1 mile annually within our budget.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**ADJOURNMENT** - The Board of Supervisors meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

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