

The Board of Supervisors of Dallas Township held their monthly meeting for November on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 6:30pm in the Administration Building located at 105 Lt. Michael Cleary Drive, Dallas, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania.

Those in attendance included: Supervisor Chairman William J. Grant, Supervisor Vice Chairman Elizabeth A. Martin, Supervisor Robert J. Wagner, Attorney Thomas J. Mosca, Township Manager Martin K. Barry, Police Chief Douglas Higgins, Roadmaster Gary Van Deutsch, Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer Russell Coolbaugh, EMA Coordinator Alan Pugh, and Secretary/Treasurer K. Gary Kirk. There was not anyone participating through GoTo Meeting. There were 7 other people were in attendance. David Landmesser set up Facebook Live to allow additional residents to participate in the meeting.

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Pay the Bills**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve the Minutes from the October 3, 2023 Monthly Meeting**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

There were not any **Employee Health Care Reimbursements** made in October. Total employee health care reimbursements made for 2023 was \$14,918.09.

Citizens' Comments Concerning Agenda Items:
None.

Agenda:

Supervisor Grant stated that there was a major rain storm on September 9, 2023 and a Declaration of Disaster Emergency was declared that day and has been continued through November 8, 2023. EMA Coordinator Pugh stated that the thresholds have been met to be able to receive FEMA funding but they have not decided yet. He recommended that the Declaration of Disaster Emergency be continued.

Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve a Declaration of Disaster Emergency until December 5, 2023 unless Terminated Sooner**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Attorney Thomas Brennan stated as part of the LSA grants received by Ecumenical Enterprises, Inc. (EEI) to construct a new sewer line which will be maintained by the Dallas Area Municipal Authority (DAMA), a cooperation agreement needs to be made between them, DAMA and us. Attorney Brennan worked on the LSA grant when he was the Dallas Township Solicitor and has been asked to represent Dallas Township on the cooperation agreement since Attorney Mosca is also the solicitor for EEI. Supervisor Martin made a **Motion to Approve the Cooperation Agreement between DAMA, EEI & Dallas Township**, seconded by Supervisor Wagner and carried.

Supervisor Grant provided a financial update as of October 31, 2023. We have received \$1,323,384 of Real Estate taxes which is 100.87% of our budget and is better than the previous 6 years. Earned Income Tax collections are at 80.06% of budget or \$1,232,944 which is better than the previous 6 years. Local Services Tax collections are at 79.72% of budget or \$139,510 which is better than the previous 6 years. Our Police Pension Plan is at 103.82% and our Non-Uniform Pension Plan is at 87.24% of the January 1, 2023 actuarial liability. Pension plan assets as of October 31, 2023 were \$5,490,277 for the Police Pension Plan and \$3,092,980 for the Non-Uniform Pension Plan. Our non-restricted cash balance is about \$3,540,000 and the Fire Protection account is about \$118,000.

Township Manager Barry stated that Township Engineer Thomas Doughton has reviewed the Geisinger Clinic-Dallas Clinic Expansion and that it meets the requirements to allow Dallas Township to release the financial security. The financial security is a Letter of Credit in the amount of \$446,155.07. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve Release the Financial Security on the Geisinger Clinic-Dallas Clinic Expansion**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Township Manager Barry stated we need a new street sweeper. There is one available through Medico with COSTARS pricing at a cost of \$371,858 if we purchase it in 2023. The price is expected to be over \$440,000 if we purchase one in 2024. We have approximately \$560,000 of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds remaining. We would be able to sell the current street sweeper. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve to Purchase a Street Sweeper at a cost of \$371,858 and to use ARP funds for the purchase**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Township Manager Barry stated a Police Chevrolet Tahoe is available through COSTARS at a cost of approximately \$70,000 which includes upfitting. We would be able to sell some older vehicles. After the purchase of the street sweeper, we have approximately \$188,500 of ARP funds remaining. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve to Purchase a Chevrolet Tahoe at a cost of \$70,000 and to use ARP funds for the purchase**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Township Manager Barry stated we previously approved the purchase of a 2023 Silverado for the Road Department and it was recently delivered to us. After the purchase of the street sweeper and Chevrolet Tahoe, we have approximately \$188,500 of ARP funds remaining. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve to Allocate \$48,990 of ARP Funds toward the Purchase of the 2024 Chevrolet Silverado**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Township Manager Barry stated we previously approved the purchase of a Mini-Dump Truck for the Road Department. The cost of the vehicle and upfitting is approximately \$135,000. After the purchase of the street sweeper and Chevrolet Tahoe and allocation of the Chevrolet Silverado, we have approximately \$91,300 of ARP funds remaining. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve to Allocate the Remaining ARP Funds toward the Purchase of the Mini-Dump Truck**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Supervisor Grant stated that after the above purchases and allocations, our ARP funds will have been completely used. Supervisor Martin made a **Motion to Approve to Close the ARP Bank Account after all the Purchases and Allocations are completed**, seconded by Supervisor Wagner and carried.

Supervisor Grant stated that our current health insurance plan has a \$1,000 deductible with the employee responsible for the first \$250 and the Township then reimbursing the employee through a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) for amounts between \$250 and \$1,000. The HRA has been between \$15,000 to \$20,000 over the past few years. If we change our plan in 2024 to a \$250 deductible without the HRA, our health insurance premiums will increase by about \$15,000. This would eliminate employees having to submit paperwork and staff having to process the HRA. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve to Revise our Health Insurance Plan Deductible from \$1,000 to \$250 beginning January 1, 2024**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Supervisor Grant made the first reading of the 2024 Budget. The budget includes a .30 mill increase in real estate taxes for the rate to increase to 2.25 mills. For a house assessed at \$150,000 it will result in a \$45 annual increase. The Fire Protection Tax millage rate will remain at .35 mills. The .30 mill increase will provide about \$200,000 in net revenue for the Township. The annual wage increases are \$71,000. Our Municipal Minimum Obligation to fund our pension plans increased by \$133,000 to \$390,400. This increase is due to reducing our expected rate of return in our pension plans from 8% to 5.75%. We hired a police officer in 2023 which will have a full year of expense in the 2024 budget and we are planning on hiring an Assistant Police Chief in 2024 to prepare for Chief Higgins retirement. These two items increased the budget by \$134,000. The budget includes \$475,000 for repairs to Goodman Road, Dorchester Drive and Main Road from the September 9, 2023 major rain storm. There is not any revenue included in the budget since we have not heard if we will receive any funds from FEMA for these repairs. We will have about \$50,000 of expenses for the Laird Group related to Phase II of the Southside Park. There are not any other expenses for the Park as we have not been received any additional grants. There are not any expenditures for the new Police Station as we are waiting to hear about grants for the construction. There is \$380,000 of expenditures for contracted milling & paving of Cloverleaf Drive, Oval Drive and Robbins Road and \$112,000 for tar & chipping of Goldsmith Road and Goodleigh Road. We will use \$761,230 of prior years' surplus to balance the budget.

Attorney Mosca stated that Geisinger is willing to enter into a lease agreement to have their signs for the Dallas Clinic on our property. The initial term of the lease is five years at a rate of \$4,200 per year. Supervisor Martin made a **Motion to Approve to the Sign Lease Agreement with Geisinger Clinic**, seconded by Supervisor Wagner and carried.

Attorney Mosca stated that the owners Mountainside Manor have requested a reduction in their Property Assessment for the years 2019-2024 and the reduction is from \$1,146,400 to \$688,140. Luzerne County agrees with the reduction. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve to the Mountainside Manor Property Assessment Reduction and for Attorney Mosca to Sign the Agreement**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Supervisor Martin made a **Motion to Approve Resolution 2023-20, Local Share Assessment Fund Statewide Grant Application of \$1,000,000 to be used for Site Development and Construction of a new Police Station and designation of Township Manager, Martin Barry, to execute all Documents**, seconded by Supervisor Wagner and carried.

Township Manager Barry provided an update on the September 9, 2023 storm damage. The Road Department has done some temporary repairs. There are many areas which need streambank restoration.

Township Manager Barry stated that with the purchase of the new street sweeper we will no longer need our existing street sweeper. We also have our old body camera system that is no longer being used. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve to Advertise to Sell Surplus Equipment on Municibid**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Township Manager Barry stated that there are some streets which are too narrow to have cars parked on them and some streets which should have an overnight parking ban from 10pm to 6am. Narrow

roads include Claude Street, Hildonia Avenue and Richard Drive. Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Approve to Advertise a Parking Ordinance Update**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried.

Township Manager Barry stated that we may approve by Ordinance a Real Estate Tax Credit for Volunteer Firefighters. Supervisor Martin made a **Motion to Approve to Advertise for a Volunteer Firefighter Real Estate Tax Credit and Schedule a Public Hearing on the Ordinance**, seconded by Supervisor Wagner and carried.

EMA Update:

EMA Coordinator Alan Pugh provided the EMA update. They are still working with Luzerne County 911 for a new communications tower which could be used by our EMA and as a backup to the County system. He also presented items to be purchased in 2023. They participated in the online training on Swatting. He believes the chances are good that we will receive FEMA funding for the recent storm damage.

Police Update:

Chief Higgins provided the Police Department update. Police Department Administrative Assistant Kimm Landmesser is taking a class this week conducted by the FBI on social media and dealing with the press. The Neighborhood Watch gave out 1,000 glow sticks for Halloween. Officer Gina Kotowski and Administrative Assistant Landmesser did a community event with kids at the Country Club Apartments. They participated in the Kunkle Rummage Sale and Fellowship Church Trunk or Treat. There have been many hours spent on the recent Dallas School District threats.

Road Department Update:

Roadmaster Van Deutsch provided the Road Department update. The Northwoods paving project has been completed. A mini-excavator was rented to do work on crossover pipes and swales. The leaf vac truck has been picking up leaves and will continue until the season is over. Bag leaf pick up begins the week of November 13th. The trucks are being prepared for the winter season and we have received anti-skid and rock salt. The Road Department participated in LTAP training on Public Works Safety.

Planning & Zoning Update:

Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer Coolbaugh provided the Planning & Zoning update. 32 permits were issued in October and rental inspections continued. There are still some problems with drain pipes in The Maples and issues at Country Club Apartments. Reminded people to not rake leaves on to the roads. We received a rating of 3 out of 10 with 1 being the best concerning our building codes and enforcement of the code.

Additional Citizens' Comments:

Alan Pugh asked about if the Volunteer Firefighter Real Estate Tax Credit would also be applied to EMA volunteers. The Supervisors will review this as part of doing the Ordinance.

David Guzinski wanted to make sure he was not in violation of our noise ordinance by playing his radio outside. Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer Coolbaugh has not received any complaints.

Charles Eckman owns the Solar Farms property and heard that there may be a road from Lt. Michael Cleary Drive to Industrial Drive. There was some discussion by the property owners about this, but it does not seem like it will be done at this time.

Brenda Pugh stated that the Christmas Tree Lighting will be December 9, 2023. She is currently looking for a tree. She also stated that her company sells Police Pursuit vehicles with COSTARS pricing.

Nicki Rismondo asked that since the Southside Park Phase II is on hold, does this mean that the additional parking will not be done at this time. We have received \$250,000 in grants towards an estimated cost of \$600,000 so we do not plan on proceeding with Phase II in 2024 unless we receive additional funding.

David Landmesser stated that Rachelle Pryor commented on Facebook "Thank you for keeping our children safe."

Adjournment:

Supervisor Wagner made a **Motion to Adjourn**, seconded by Supervisor Martin and carried. The Meeting adjourned at 7:35pm.

Respectfully submitted by,



K. Gary Kirk, CPA
Secretary/Treasurer

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