

Township of Lower Alsace, Berks County, PA

March 11, 2015

The Lower Alsace Board of Supervisors met in regular session on Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 6:30 P.M. in the Township Municipal Building, 1200 Carsonia Avenue, Reading, PA.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by Chairman James Oswald and then followed with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

ATTENDANCE

Board members present: James Oswald, John Theodossiou and Todd Weikel

Also in attendance were Homer Williams, Evan Weikel and Ed Weikel, Township Residents and Jim Snyder and Don Kerling from the Lower Alsace Fire Company and Sandy Klemmer and Don Nolan, Rick and Cindy Gerhart. Also in attendance was Commissioner Christian Y. Leinbach and County Chief Operating Officer, Carl Geffkin Rich Bitting, Township Road Foreman also attended along with Carol Duran, reporter for the Reading Eagle.

At this time Chairman James Oswald took the oath of office from three appointed, Lower Alsace Fire Department Fire Police Officers: Sandy Klemmer and Don Nolan and Richard Gerhart Jr. Each were sworn in and will serve as Lower Alsace Township Special Fire Police Officers according to Chapter 74 of PA Title 35 – Special Fire Police and shall be subject to the control of the Police Chief of the Central Berks Police Department in any area where the that the Police Chief is called up on to serve.

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Supervisor Theodossiou, seconded by Supervisor Weikel and all voted yes to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2015 Township Supervisors Meeting.

II. VISITORS

Evan and Ed Weikel attended the meeting to discuss concerns about the Jake's Stereo business. They expressed complaints about the noise from rap music and questionable language because the installations were not all occurring inside the building. They also complained about the parking of a trash dumpster on the public street because residential parking for many of the neighbors is very limited. Finally they questioned whether the property was an approved residence as the Berks County Assessment Office shows it as an Industrial rated property. The Supervisors said that the Zoning Hearing Board file for the property will be reviewed and if necessary discussed with the owner of the business.

Berks County Commissioner Christian Leinbach attended the meeting along with Chief Operations Officer, Carl Geffken upon invitation by the Supervisors to discuss several topics.

County of Berks Discussion:

Supervisor Oswald requested that in place of the long discussed use of the Earl Trust Tract now owned by the County Parks Department; they consider donating an area of land on the Angora Fruit Farm property for township residents to use for disposal of brush and the Township can use for disposal of leaves and shredded mulch. He also asked that consideration be given to the design of the future walking platform around the lake so the ice fishermen can slide their fishing huts onto the ice. His final request was to ask that the traditional clear view of the lake be maintained for the area residents. He said that many trees and brush are beginning to grow between the lake edge and Angora Road and it blocks the scenic view of the lake.

Supervisor Theodossiou suggested that the County consider a new method for funding the County's 911 Center in place of the \$3 million that is billed to the municipalities. In addition it was noted that the municipalities have been facing 18% increases on these fees each year with two more years for those increases to continue. He complained that municipalities are paying the costs to administer a Police Department then have to pay much higher fees than those who rely on State Police. He said since anyone in the county who makes a 911 call for police does so whether they are driving through a municipality with State Police or Local Police services, so it is not a fair funding formula.

Commissioner Leinbach agreed that the current fee structure is not fair. He stated further that while it has been in place for many years before he became a Commissioner, the county has looked at many ways to find a more equitable solution to fund this necessary service. He said that the County of Berks is the only county in Pennsylvania that follows this practice of invoicing the municipalities and then pointed out that when the 911 fees on telephone land lines were established, the fee was a flat fee and was never applied to cell phones. Due to the fact that so many people are cancelling their land lines in favor of cell phones, the revenue for Counties to fund their 911 centers has dramatically decreased. He said that without the funds from the municipalities, the County faces a \$3 million funding gap. Township Manager Styer then suggested that the County's Real Estate tax revenue should pay for the County 911 Center as it represents a very good example of regional services; spreads the payment out to all property owners and relieves the municipalities of this unfair approach to pay for these vital emergency services.

Supervisor Weikel requested that the county consider relieving the Lower Alsace Township taxpayers of the Antietam Lake Debt and to assume the \$1.4 million debt as a County expense for a County owned property. He suggested that this debt is a huge burden for the tax payers who are already paying the highest school taxes in the county. He also suggested if the debt repayment wouldn't be reconsidered, would the county be willing to assume the debt for the Township and change the Township principal payments only.

Commissioner Leinbach indicated that he would take all of these requests back to the Board of Commissioners for consideration. The Board thanked them both for their attendance.

III. ORDINANCE NO. 38

A motion was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Weikel and all voted yes to approve Ordinance No. 38 summarized as follows:

AN ORDINANCE OF LOWER ALSACE TOWNSHIP, BERKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, ENACTING AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL RECREATION COMMITTEE BETWEEN LOWER ALSACE TOWNSHIP, ST. LAWRENCE BOROUGH, MT. PENN BOROUGH, EXETER TOWNSHIP, MT. PENN BOROUGH MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY, AND THE ANTIETAM SCHOOL DISTRICT WHICH SHALL BE CALLED THE "RECREATION COMMISSION OF THE ANTIETAM VALLEY" AND AUTHORIZING THE PARTICIPATION OF LOWER ALSACE TOWNSHIP IN THE COMMISSION

IV. ENGINEER

- A. Joe Rogosky, P.E. updated the board on the Berks County Parks and Recreation's Storm Water permit submission to the DEP for park improvements.

V. SUPERVISOR LIAISON REPORTS SUBMITTED:

- A. Road Department –Rich Bitting attended the meeting to discuss the winter activities and resulting damage to the roads. Following a discussion regarding the return of an injured employee to light duty work, the Supervisors approved a pay rate of \$12.00 per hour for Matt Heizmann when he has been "medically released." It was determined that until Matt is released to work for the Road Crew, he will provide some office assistance with the first task being an evaluation of the Township's house numbers in cooperation with GIS staff assistance from the 911 Center; and to recommend corrections that will help to address some of the problem areas for emergency response calls.
- B. Central Berks Regional Police Commission –Supervisor Theodossiou
- C. Lower Alsace Fire Company and Ambulance Association and Parks Study Committee- Supervisor Weikel

VI. TREASURER'S REPORT / LIST OF BILLS

- A. Supervisor Oswald made a motion that was seconded by Supervisor Weikel and all voted yes to approve the 2/28/15 Treasurer's Report and to approve the payment of the list of bills as presented including \$1,253.95 from the Fire Tax Fund and \$91,207.82 from the General Fund.

VII. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL

A. Township Manager

1. Consideration for a Promissory Note between the Lower Alsace Ambulance Association and the Township of Lower Alsace Township was then discussed. A motion was made by Supervisor Weikel, seconded by Supervisor Theodossiou and all voted yes to approve and agree to the terms of promissory note (subject to final review by the Manager and Solicitor) between Lower Alsace Township and the Lower Alsace Volunteer Ambulance Association. This 10 year note with the principal sum of \$66,562 at 2.5% interest will be payable to the Township in semi-annual installments beginning June 1, 2016. Both the Borough Council of Mount Penn together with the Lower Alsace board of Supervisors have agreed to pay \$10,000 each as a down payment and further that the Ambulance will not be required to reimburse the first year of payments. During that first year, the Borough has agreed to provide payment to the lender equal to one half of the due amount for that period. The Township has agreed to do the same (or to waive that first year's payment from the Ambulance Association.)

B. Central Berks Police Department

1. Chief Serafin attended the meeting for questions on his February report.

C. Sewage Enforcement Officer

1. February report submitted

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Snyder, Fire Chief of Lower Alsace Fire Department attended the meeting to obtain more information regarding the Borough of Mount Penn's request for a meeting to discuss merging Fire Companies. The Chief was informed that what he read in the paper was correct and in addition to a meeting, it was suggested that the elected officials come up with a list of questions to send to the two Fire Companies in an attempt to engage their members and leadership for information such as long term goals before any meeting is established.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no additional comments, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for 6:30 PM March 25, 2015

Respectfully submitted,

Terry L. Styer
Manager/Secretary-Treasurer