

Minutes of the Board of Supervisors Meeting Township of Lower Alsace, Berks County, PA September 14, 2023

The Lower Alsace Board of Supervisors met in regular session on Thursday, September 14, 2023, at 6:30 P.M. in the Township Municipal Building, 1200 Carsonia Avenue, Reading, PA.

I. ATTENDANCE

Board members in attendance included Jim Oswald, John Theodossiou, and Todd Weikel. Other officials in attendance were Central Berks Regional Police Department Chief Ray Serafin, Kelsey Frankowski (as Township Solicitor), Joe Rogosky (as Township Engineer), Homer Williams (representing the Township Planning Commission), Phil Salamone and Matt Stairecker (representing Lower Alsace Ambulance), and Carl Weikel (as Township Road Foreman). Residents in attendance were Brian Albrecht (2024 racing schedule for Antietam Cart Racing), John King (2024 racing schedule for Reading Gravity Racing), Matt Piatt (merger discussion update and Stokesay Castle development), William Howze and Kerry Gergen (Antietam School flooding and Antietam School District administration and school board), and Russell Hoffman ((no topic).

II. PRESENTATIONS

- 1) Phil Salamone and Matt Stairecker presented financial reports and projected budget needs for the Lower Alsace Ambulance Company. They discussed the current state of local ambulance companies and the ongoing financial issues they all face. The Supervisors stated that they will continue to do everything possible to support the ambulance company.

No presentations this evening.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

- 1) Brian Albrecht and John King discussed the intent of both of their organizations to race on High Street. Their initial requests for dates created 3 date conflicts which are a result of rain date requests. Prior to the meeting, both met to resolve the potential conflicts, and have agreed to share the road on those dates. No action to approve their permit applications for 2024 can be taken at this time, since both are waiting on insurance renewals. They expressed their gratitude to the Supervisors for allowing the groups to race on High Street.
- 2) Homer Williams requested that the Supervisors send a letter of support for State Bill HR-1619 restricting the use by utility companies of duplicate utility poles. A motion to prepare a letter stating the Supervisors' support for this bill was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Weikel, and all voted yes to approve.

- 3) Matt Piatt inquired about the public discussion on mergers of the school district and of the Township and Mount Penn Borough. The Supervisors stated the complications of a school merger and reiterated that, even though they would like a merger to be considered, their authority can only do so much to move this forward. They will be sure to be as engaged as possible in the process. As far as the Township and Borough, a meeting is being set to have the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Resources conduct a presentation on the process of a merger. The Township and the Borough will then need to have meetings to hear each other's ideas and see if common ground can be found to pursue this. The final step will be to have the proposal voted on by each municipality separately.
- 4) William Howze and Kerry Gergen spoke on the issues related to the school building damaged in the flood and the concerns regarding the communication and progress by the school board and administrators to move forward. They commented that the current situation is not ideal, and the financial situation and level of school real estate taxes will put the area in a level of distress. The Supervisors each commented that they will be engaged in their role as a watchdog for the community.

No additional public comment was made.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2023, Lower Alsace Township Supervisors meeting was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Weikel, and all voted yes to approve.

V. SUPERVISOR LIASON REPORTS

- A. Road Department – Supervisor Oswald had nothing new to report.
- B. Central Berks Regional Police Commission – Supervisor Theodossiou reported that all bids for the roof replacement at the Central Berks Police Department building are being rejected due to the cost of the project. The Commission is currently exploring a less expensive process which will be below the amount necessary for bidding. Supervisor Theodossiou also stated that the Police Department continues to develop their budget and will have additional meetings to discuss.
- C. Lower Alsace Fire Company – nothing new to report.
- D. Lower Alsace Ambulance Association – Supervisor Weikel discussed the LAS grant which the ambulance company has received.
- E. Antietam Valley Recreation Commission – nothing new to report.

VI. SOLICITOR

The Solicitor stated she had nothing additional to report other than items already on the agenda.

VII. ENGINEER

- A. The Engineer discussed the filing of the application of the new multimodal grant. The state indicated that the application looked strong, and the Township should hear more on the approval of the application later this year.
- B. The Engineer discussed the construction during the 2023 Road Paving Project. The Engineer mentioned that there were some issues during construction which have mostly been addressed. The Engineer is developing a punch list to verify all work has been completed according to the contract. As soon as those items are addressed, the Engineer will review any invoices submitted for payment.
- C. The Engineer provided a status update on the PennDOT Bridge Replacement project. PennDOT representatives indicated that the bridge is expected to be open to traffic sometime around the middle of October. Additional work will still need to be done, with an estimated completion date of early 2024. The Supervisors expressed their concerns related to the opening under the bridge and the area where the creek flows. The Engineer has reached out to state officials but he has yet to receive any responses at this time.

VIII. BOARD AND COMMISSIONS REPORTS

- A. Planning Hearing Board – the most recent meeting of the Planning Commission was held on November 2, 2022. No new meetings of the Planning Commission have been scheduled at this time.
- B. Zoning Hearing Board – the most recent meeting of the Zoning Hearing Board was held on May 17, 2023. No new meetings of the Zoning Hearing Board have been scheduled at this time..
- C. Antietam Valley Recreation Commission – no report.

IX. MANAGER - TREASURER'S REPORT / LIST OF BILLS

- A. A motion to approve the August 31, 2023, Treasurer's reports was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Theodossiou, the motion carried.
- B. A motion to approve the payment of the list of bills as presented was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Theodossiou, the motion carried.

X. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL

- A. Central Berks Police Department – the August 2023 report was presented.
- B. Central Berks Codes Department – the August 2023 report was presented.
- C. Sewage Enforcement Officer – the August 2023 report was presented.
- D. Zoning and Building Code Officer – the August 2023 report was presented.
- E. Lower Alsace Township Fire Company – nothing new to report.
- F. Lower Alsace Ambulance Association – nothing new to report.

XI. OLD BUSINESS

- A. An update on the status of the use and occupancy permit application for 1383 – 1385 Friedensburg Road was presented. No unpermitted activity has been observed.
- B. A discussion on the American Rescue Plan Local Funds occurred. Further talks will be held at future Township Supervisors' meetings. Some funds may be available for roof work which may be needed at the Township building.
- C. An update on discussions regarding a suggestion to close off all of Skyline Drive from approximately dusk to dawn took place. The Township Manager provided an update on the status of this discussion.
- D. A discussion on the progress on exploring a merger between Lower Alsace Township and Mount Penn Borough was held. The Township Manager discussed the availability of the state representatives from DCED to visit the area and make a public presentation. After a brief discussion, it was determined to set a meeting date of November 1, 2023. This will be confirmed by Mount Penn Borough Council.
- E. The Township Manager provided an update on the review of animal control services and all communication with both Safety Net Sanctuary and Animal Rescue League.
- F. A motion to amend the Township Traffic Ordinance to correct the speed limit signs on Service Court was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Theodossiou, and all voted yes to approve. The signs had been posted reflecting a 15 mile per hour limit. The Township Manager and Road Crew Foreman could not identify when those signs had been posted.
- G. A motion to approve the settlement of a Americans With Disabilities Act discrimination claim made by a former employee was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Theodossiou, and all voted yes to approve. The settlement was negotiated by Siana Law, representing the township's liability insurance company. The claim will be paid by the insurance company.

- H. A motion to approve the preliminary 2024 Non-Uniformed Minimum Municipal Obligation calculation for the Township's Defined Benefit Plan was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Theodossiou, and all voted yes to approve. The Defined Benefit Plan currently has no active employees covered by this Plan.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. A brief discussion on a burn permit for a bonfire to be conducted by the Antietam School District for their Homecoming celebration was held. A motion to approve the permit was made by Supervisor Oswald, seconded by Supervisor Weikel, and all voted yes to approve.
- B. The Township Manager gave an update on determining the cost of a Yard Waste Collection Program for disposing of grass clippings, flowers, and small shrubs was held. Further research into the matter will be necessary.
- C. An update on the process for the development of the Township's 2024 budget was held. Several large budget figures still need to be received in order to finalize the

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT

No additional comments made.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

No executive session was held.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM. The next regular meeting is scheduled for 6:30 PM on October 12th, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Pottiger, Manager, Secretary / Treasurer