



Allen Township Board of Supervisors

Meeting Minutes – Budget Workshop

September 21, 2022

5:30 P.M.

A Budget Workshop Meeting of the Allen Township Board of Supervisors was held on Wednesday, September 21, 2022 at 5:30 P.M. at the Allen Township Fire Company Building, located at 3530 Howertown Road, Northampton, PA. Mr. Hassler led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

1. Roll Call:

Present: Dale Hassler; Gary Behler; Paul Link; Tim Paul; Jason Frack; Ilene Eckhart, Manager; Maurin Ritinski, Admin. Asst.; and Thomas Gogle, Public Works Crew Leader.

2. **Announcements and/or Actions to Add New Items to Current Agenda:** No announcements and/or actions to add new items to the current agenda.

3. Business Items

A. **2023 Draft Budget Presentation and Discussion:** Ms. Eckhart reported that the first draft of the 2023 budget was distributed to Supervisors on September 9th and that no major unforeseen expenses or uncharted revenues that were incurred since the printing of this first draft. Ms. Eckhart explained that this budget process has begun approximately one month earlier than previous years and that revenue was on track for the year. Ms. Eckhart provided the Board with some highlights including expansion and growth in Allen Township. She noted that industrial development expansion has led to a revenue increase and a stable employment base. Despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic lingering, local services tax and earned income tax revenues are trending upward this year.

Ms. Eckhart stated that the General Fund will be projected to be starting out with a gain of approximately \$430,000. Ms. Eckhart explained that the Commonwealth distribution on Liquid Fuels allocation had estimated in 2022 that there would be a slight net reduction in funds. Ms. Eckhart reported that this allocation had gained roughly \$20,000. Ms. Eckhart explained that with the future addition of new roads that meet the qualifications for Liquid Fuels, the Liquid Fuels allocation amount will increase. Liquid Fuels funds are used for street lighting, basic overlay of roads, along with asphalt maintenance applications.

Ms. Eckhart reports that expenses are well controlled. She praised the Public Works Department for their mindfulness of fuel consumption, idling, and unnecessary trips as fuel costs soared in 2022. Ms. Eckhart stated that fuel consumption for Public Works is expected to increase during the winter season due to the need to idle the trucks and plow and treat the roadways. The harshness of the snowfalls and ice storms will directly impact the fuel consumption this winter. Ms. Eckhart explained that fuel is bought on a bid platform and that it is beneficial to order larger quantities of fuel at a wholesale price.

Ms. Eckhart noted that the renovation to the Fire Company Property in preparation for the Municipal Office to transition to this space will be a major expense in the coming years. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued for this project and a site assessment was completed by the project engineer, D'Huy Engineering, on Wednesday, September 14th. This assessment of the 4714 Indian Trail Road and 3530 Howertown Road sites will outline the maintenance required on these buildings. Upon issuance of the site assessments, D'Huy Engineering will provide several concepts plans for the renovation of the former Fire Company Social Hall to

meet the needs and future needs of the Municipal Office. Ms. Eckhart expects the current Municipal Office to become a Public Works Compound.

Ms. Eckhart requested that Mr. Hassler provide an update regarding the Fire Capital Apparatus and the delivery estimate of the ordered Elevated Water Way Apparatus. Mr. Hassler stated that due to supply chain disruption, he was recently informed that the delivery date of the new apparatus is estimated to be July 2023. Mr. Hassler explained that they were originally expecting the delivery of the new apparatus by the end of 2022. Mr. Hassler also explained that the model of nozzle which includes a camera on it to assist with aim was specified on the order for the apparatus. Mr. Hassler stated that he learned today that the manufacture of this camera assembly has gone out of business effective immediately. He explained that comparable models are being explored as a replacement option. Ms. Eckhart reminded the Board that this apparatus, costing approximately \$1,000,000 is prepaid and will not be an expense in the 2023 Budget. Ms. Eckhart expects to further discuss combining and updating vehicles and apparatuses towards the end of 2023.

Regarding roads and bridges, Ms. Eckhart stated that the Snowhill Road Bridge, which has minimal traffic, still needs to be addressed as it is a noncompliant issue. Ms. Eckhart explained that she plans to work with the Township Engineer for remedies to repair the bridge. She believes there may be some permitting needs to address this. Ms. Eckhart also plans to explore funding opportunities in the Dirt and Gravel Road Program. Additional details will become available once the bridge report is received. Ms. Eckhart reported that the first phase of the Type II Slurry Seal is underway beginning next week. This work is being completed as a result of the road inspection that was completed earlier this year. Ms. Eckhart explained that there will be two additional phases that will work northward from Phase 1 roads. Ms. Eckhart also mentioned that one segment, White Circle, will require special care due to it being prone to sinkholes. The multiple repairs on this road will need to be analyzed prior to the Type II Slurry Seal being applied.

Ms. Eckhart discussed Public Works equipment and noted that as discussed previously, the 2003 CAT 430D Backhoe with 5588 machine hours is now beyond its useful life and is scheduled for replacement. The estimated cost for the replacement unit is \$159,900.00. This item was submitted for the 2022 cycle of funding consideration from the LSA grant program. The awards for this grant program are expected to be announced in the spring.

Ms. Eckhart reported that the next vehicle in the Public Works fleet that is scheduled for replacement is the 2008 Mack with a millage of 42,900. The proposed replacement is an equivalent model 2024 Freightliner with an estimated cost of approximately \$244,000.00. Mr. Gogle explained to the Board the substantial repairs that are needed every couple of years on the current 2008 Mack. Ms. Eckhart explained that the delivery would be over one year if the order was placed in a timely fashion. Mr. Gogle stated that he must secure an order slot to ensure a timely delivery of the unit. Ms. Eckhart reported that the estimated delivery of the 10 Ton Truck (replacement for the 2006 Freightliner with a millage of 42,095) to be March/April 2023. Ms. Eckhart encouraged the Board to allow the placement of this order as soon as possible due to the substantial supply chain delays. Mr. Hassler also stressed the importance of ordering now due to the likely increase in costs. He estimates that if the order is delayed there could be an additional 25% added onto the purchase price. Mr. Frack also noted that the estimated delivery dates could also be longer.

Ms. Eckhart also discussed the benefits of a mini excavator, which was discussed during the consideration of the LSA grant application. This is the most rented piece of equipment that Public Work utilizes and the rental need has increased each year. The mini excavator would be a great addition to the Public Works inventory as it would allow the crew to work in tight conditions such as high density residential districts or near buildings, such as in Howertown Park. This purchase would then phase out the 1996 Gradall. A substantial repair was recently completed on the 1996 Gradall. Ms. Eckhart recommends running this until the end of its life. A mini excavator would allow the crew to utilize this to work on the sewer.

Ms. Eckhart discussed the need to purchase curbside leaf collection equipment due to being newly mandated to offer curbside leaf collection. She explained that Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) provides newly mandated communities with a one-time “guarantee” for the first 902 Grant Funding round. There is a 10% match requirement for 90% PA DEP funding up to \$350,000.00. Ms. Eckhart reports that she has completed the Pre-Application meeting and Pre-Application Interview. The full application deadline is October 28, 2022. Ms. Eckhart proposes acquiring a new self-contained leaf collection truck for a purchase price of \$272,583.00 (Township match of \$27,583.00); two open top 20-yard roll off containers for the collection and transportation of yard waste materials for a purchase price of \$15,300.00 (Township match of \$1,530.00); and a mixed number of 32-gallon curbside recycling containers with detachable domed lids and 35-gallon cart type recycling containers with affixed lids for a purchase price of approximately \$61,200.00 (Township match of \$6,120.00). She advised that the Township take full advantage of the grant priority status of being newly mandated and maximize the request of the DEP funding to the full \$350,000.

Ms. Eckhart reported that the Walker Drive basin Pollutant Reduction Plan project has been completed. She notes that this was very labor intensive for Public Works. Ms. Eckhart reports that additional sites are being reviewed for access so that additional projects can be performed in order to comply with the three-year goal for the MS4 Pollution Reduction Program.

Ms. Eckhart reported that the Township took delivery of the sewer flusher. This was funded by the LSA grant. Public Works is currently training and becoming familiarized with the equipment. They plan to explore the smaller lines first and then explore the possibility of obtaining accessory equipment to access the larger interceptors. Ms. Eckhart expects periodic jetting of the major interceptor lines which will require some contractor involvement. The camera system is expected to be delivered in October 2022. Ms. Eckhart stated that an additional achievement in 2022 was the purchase and placement of permanent flow meters in key interconnection points between the Borough of Northampton and Allen Township. The data collected through these meters will address any disputes regarding flows and inflow/infiltration issues going forward. Ms. Eckhart also discussed the Willow Green sewer area. The Township’s goal is to have the sanitary sewer main stub to the south side of West Bullshead Road. This will be a requirement of the Willow Brook Farm project. The Township will be provided the opportunity and ability to convey the majority of the Willow Green sewer to the Catasauqua system and ultimately abandon the use of the existing problematic pump station. Ms. Eckhart explained that this will require engineering, permitting, and construction expenses which should be scheduled as a capital improvement project for the Township sewer system. The added benefit to abandoning the problematic pump station in lieu of a gravity connection is that it will also free up the equivalent number of EDU’s from the Northampton Borough System for transportation to the Catasauqua system, which has much greater availability.

Ms. Eckhart stated that the information technology budget is stable other than regular maintenance. Ongoing maintenance consists of hardware, firewall security maintenance, and off-site backup. Ms. Eckhart explained that the Township has an integrated VPN to work remotely as well as three IP phones that are utilized during building closures for emergencies. She recommended that the Board consider additional IT to surveillance and security at the Township properties. Ms. Eckhart also recommended purchasing and installing minimally expensive dash cameras in all Public Work vehicles.

Ms. Eckhart provided an update on parks and open space. She explained that she is still working with Norfolk Southern Rail (NSR) regarding the Private Crossing Agreement dated August 7, 2020 to upgrade the existing crossing. Until a formal reimbursement agreement can be executed with NSR, the authorization requests that NSR may incur and bill costs associated with the project coordination and the review of project plans in an amount not to exceed \$20,000.00. Ms. Eckhart anticipates the actual project cost to be around \$230,000.00. Ms. Eckhart stated that the Requests for Proposals (RFP) regarding the Master Site Development Plan will be received by October 11, 2022. Ms. Eckhart expects the costs for these plans to be around \$50,000.00 each to complete. Ms. Eckhart stated that she has provided the Board with a proposal for a Key Fob system for the Howertown Park Field House (\$6,583.00). She is also working on obtaining a quote for IT infrastructure upgrades to support a future camera system and access controls for the facility. Regarding the site survey of

Kreidersville Covered Bridge Park, Ms. Eckhart reports that she returned the document back to the engineer for additional overlay in order to show the grades. She expects to receive this back in a week or two so that the Board can view the site survey and tour the park property.

Ms. Eckhart stated that during executive session they will further discuss staffing, employee wages and benefits. She did stated that the current municipal employees are a very committed group that do show up for work daily. Ms. Eckhart obtained comparisons, especially regarding public works positions, from neighboring municipalities that detail the size of the crew, the job duties and responsibilities and the wages they are being paid. Ms. Eckhart explained that the Township currently maintains 28-miles of Township roads with a couple new road additions expected. In addition, there are about 14 miles of State roads that the Township maintains in the winter. Ms. Eckhart also pointed out that Public Works also maintains many miles of sewer lines, manholes, sewer mains, pump stations, interceptor lines, and force mains. Ms. Eckhart explained that many years from now Allen Township may decide to create a unit within Public Works with the sole purpose of water and sewer.

Ms. Eckhart reported that there are no active litigation cases.

Mr. Behler wished to discuss the trash and recycling options. Ms. Eckhart explained that the rate was floated due to the contract change. She reported there was a considerable carryover at the beginning of this contract. With the rate remaining the same, the carryover will be considerably less. Ms. Eckhart explained that the considerable carryover in the Municipal Waste and Recycling Fund account is due to a previous Board not adjusting the rate downward. Mr. Behler explained his reasoning for starting the conversation being that he would like to avoid the shock to residents in a few years when the rate drastically increases. He feels it would be best to slowly increase over a few years rather than having a large increase on their bill. Mr. Link agreed that he feels residents will question a substantial increase and that they would prefer the increase to be spread out over several years. Mr. Behler does not believe that there will be a decrease due to costs always increasing. Mr. Paul also agreed that the Board should “soften the blow” and increase slowly over each year. Ms. Eckhart explained that the increase would be set during on the fee schedule at the Reorganization Meeting at the beginning of the year. Mr. Behler further stated initiating a small increase of \$10.00 each year would be preferred over an increase of \$30.00 to \$50.00 in three to four years. Mr. Hassler anticipates negative resident feedback regarding the recent contract change to unlimited curbside collection followed by an increase in residential rates.

Mr. Behler also wanted to discuss the sewer and the residents serviced by Northampton Borough. He stated that a large quantity of funds were paid out to Northampton Borough due to the recent agreement. He stated that the Township is paying 85% and is charging 115%. He stated that while the rate charged could lowered, with a large amount of funds being depleted by the agreement with Northampton Borough, Mr. Behler would like to hold the rate to build a safety fund. He discussed the repercussions of a limited amount of funds if a major system failure were to occur. Mr. Behler feels that the rate may be able to be decreased for residents if a large enough fund is built up within the next couple of years. He also mentioned that he is a resident who is serviced by Northampton Borough for sewer. Mr. Hassler stated that he has no problem with not changing the rate. Mr. Link pointed out that they had previously discussed lowering the rate charged to residents. Ms. Eckhart stated that she received an update regarding the Act 537 Plan with Northampton Borough. She received an email from DEP today stating that the Act 537 Plan is not approved as of today. She reported that DEP has granted themselves an extension until December 5th. Ms. Eckhart reminded the Board that the agreement with Northampton Borough was comingled with the Act 537 Plan. She explained that DEP had cautioned the Township regarding the agreement, the structure for EDUs, and the limitation on EDUs. If DEP rejects the Act 537 Plan then the agreement with Northampton Borough will also be kicked back. Mr. Link feels that the sewer rate should be held at this time and be revisited in a year. Mr. Hassler stated that it has only been six months since the agreement. Mr. Frack also felt that it was too early to make a decision. Ms. Eckhart mentioned that there is growth in the system for new connections. The Willow Brook plan will result in connection fees which will provide a recovery for the overall fund. Ms. Eckhart plans to discuss the new tapping fee resolution with Ms. Martin to determine if this fee is adequate for this location or if it should be a district.

Mr. Behler also questioned the key fobs at Field House at Howertown Park and the reasoning for picking a keypad. Ms. Eckhart explained that with the keypad and codes there is an override system. When the key fob is issued to an individual a code will also be issued. The code can be changed to lock an individual out. Ms. Eckhart stated that the key fob and code will not be needed together to access the field house and that either the key fob or the code can be used. Ms. Eckhart stated that she is able to remotely change the code. Mr. Behler stated he prefers the key fob since it must be in the possession of an individual. He explained that the keypad code can be shared. Ms. Eckhart stated that if a person is notified that they no longer have access to and they try to enter, the system will note the attempted entry. Mr. Behler questioned if similar access can be set up for the shed. Ms. Eckhart stated that this can be arranged but would require a separate module on the doors. Mr. Link would like to see all Township doors equipped with this in time. Mr. Link also noted that if the system was designed for a fob-in, it may also be beneficial to have a fob-out to monitor the length of time an individual spent in the building. Ms. Eckhart noted that a new internet connection has been set up at the park. She requested that Mr. Gogle coordinate with RCN to have them come out to the utility room to complete the set up. Mr. Behler questioned the capability for security cameras at the park. Ms. Eckhart explained that she is working on obtaining a quote for cameras. She would like to reach the entire property to increase security at the site. An additional pole may be required on Short Lane to establish a connection point and reach the entire property. Ms. Eckhart noted that the proposed Wawa may bring additional people to the park. Ms. Eckhart will obtain quotes for the other buildings for the Board to review and will place this item on the agenda. Ms. Eckhart stated that there is a line item in the budget that covers some upgrades to the park. Ms. Eckhart will add an amount to the next draft. Mr. Hassler stated that he would like to implement this at the Fire Company as well.

B. Allen Township Facilities Study – Additional Item Site Plan for 3530 Howertown Road

Site: Ms. Eckhart explained that D’Huy Engineering begun the in-depth review of the facilities on Wednesday, September 14th. Ms. Eckhart stated that she will be sending out an assessment sheet to all Supervisors and all users of these buildings (4714 Indian Trail Road & 3530 Howertown Road). This assessment sheet will be for individual comments relating to the facilities for the conceptual work. In the bid for the facilities study D’Huy Engineering had provided a list of additional items that they are able to complete for an additional fee. One of these additional items was for a site plan of 3530 Howertown Road. Ms. Eckhart reported that this property was conveyed to Allen Township in August 2021 and the Township does not have a site plan that shows all the utilities and other details for this facility. D’Huy Engineering’s extra services details that a site plan for this facility would be \$20,000.00. Ms. Eckhart is seeking the approval to allow D’Huy Engineering to perform a site plan for 3530 Howertown Road. The Township Engineer, Barry Isett and Associates, is also capable of performing this service. Ms. Eckhart stated that she would be more comfortable with D’Huy Engineering completing the site plan. She reports that it took a considerable amount of time for Barry Isett and Associates to complete the property survey at the Kreidersville Covered Bridge property. The fee for Barry Isett and Associates to complete the site plan would be about the same as what D’Huy Engineering is charging. Mr. Link made a motion to approve the D’Huy Engineering additional item site plan for 3530 Howertown Road, seconded by Mr. Frack. On the motion, by roll call vote, all Supervisors present voted yes.

C. Consideration to Place Orders for Capital Equipment Replacement Items Public Works:

Ms. Eckhart questioned if the Board is supportive of replacing the 2006 Freightliner and requested authorization to place the order for the replacement unit. Ms. Eckhart stressed the importance of avoiding delays with the budget process and placing the order as soon as possible due to the timeframe of estimated deliveries. Ms. Eckhart explained that the unit would be funded in 2023 but the motion could be made now. Ms. Eckhart estimates the cost for the new truck to be about \$244,000.00. Mr. Gogle would like to secure the slot for a chassis by having the Board approve the purchase order. If the slot is not secured by the Township, the slot will be taken by another entity. Mr. Behler questioned if payment is needed upfront to secure the slot. Mr. Frack explained that a deposit may be required but that once the slot is secured the price will not change and that they will hold the slot. Ms. Eckhart explained that a deposit may or may not be required. Mr. Behler made a motion to place the order for the new truck at the estimate price of \$244,000.00, seconded by Mr. Link. On the motion, by roll call vote, all Supervisors present voted yes.

Ms. Eckhart would also like the Board to consider purchasing a mini excavator. She explained that a quote for a John Deere was obtained in the amount of \$74,000.00. This model is about 5-feet in width. This is the same size unit that is frequently rented by Public Works. Ms. Eckhart stated that this quote is under a COSTARS contract and she is able to get additional quotes. Mr. Link would like to look at other manufactures since the Township does not own any attachments for this equipment. Mr. Hassler questioned the break down for funding. He feels if the equipment is primarily going to be used for sewer projects then residents who do not have public sewer should not have to pay for this equipment. Ms. Eckhart explained that a certain percentage can be determined to split the costs between funds. Mr. Hassler would like Mr. Gogle to keep record of what projects and hours are being done with the rented mini excavator. He explained that they should not rely on municipal equipment to do sewer work. Ms. Eckhart explained that this can be pro-rated. Mr. Gogle stated that he also utilizes the mini excavator for stormwater projects in residents' backyards. Mr. Link felt that a mini excavator will be beneficial to the Township since it does not tear up backyards. Mr. Link made a motion to add a mini excavator into the budget and obtain additional quotes, seconded by Mr. Behler. Mr. Link requested an additional two estimates to compare with the John Deere quote. On the motion, by roll call vote, all Supervisors present voted yes.

D. Executive Session – Personnel: Mr. Hassler announced that the Board would now go into executive session to discuss personnel.

9. Public to be Heard: No public comment.

There being no further comments or business the meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM when the Board entered into Executive Session. No further business was conducted following the Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Ilene M. Eckhart