

West Penn Township Board of Supervisors

27 Municipal Road

New Ringgold, PA 17960

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Regular 10AM Monthly Meeting

Monday, December 18, 2023

Present at the Meeting

Tony Prudenti – Chairman

Katie Orlick - Secretary

Tim Houser – Supervisor

Paul Datte – Solicitor

Glenn Hummel – Vice Chairman

Mike Begis – ARRO Consulting

Karen Wittig – Treasurer

I. General

A. Anthony Prudenti announced this meeting would be Tim Houser’s last meeting as Supervisor; his term will be up at the end of the year. Chairman proposed a toast to Mr. Houser, thanking him for his many years of service and his dedication to our Township. He will certainly be missed.

Chairman called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance & Introductions at 10:15AM.

Chairman presented Tim Houser with a Certificate of Appreciation and thanked him again for all he did for our community.

Chairman temporarily appointed Tim Houser as Chair to run the meeting. Tim Houser’s last meeting, his term is up 12/31/23. Tim Houser thanked everyone and then opened up the meeting. Tim Houser said he appreciates the honor.

B. Approval of Monthly Bills

Chairman Houser called for a motion to approve our monthly bills. Glenn Hummel made the motion.

Tony Prudenti seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion was carried. 3-0

II. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Delroy Haas – asked what the tax rate was last year. Treasurer said 4.50.

III. Land Use - NONE

IV. Old Business

A. Chairman Tim Houser said it is time to adopt the budget for 2024 and set the tax rate. Chairman Houser said the Board agreed not to raise taxes to 4.75 as previously discussed. Treasurer informed the Board that the Township received more EIT money than anticipated making it possible to keep the tax rate the same as last year. The Tax Rate will remain the same as last year at 4.50, with a balanced budget of \$2,547,051.00.

Chairman Houser called for a motion to adopt Resolution #29 of 2023 adopting the Balanced Budget of \$2,547,051.00 and fixing the tax rate at 4.50 for 2024. Glenn Hummel made the motion. Tony Prudenti seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion was carried. 3-0

V. New Business

A. **Request for Intermunicipal Transfer of Liquor License – Fegley’s Mini Mart, Inc.** – Attorney Datte explained that an approval is needed to move a Liquor License from outside the Township into West Penn Township. The Liquor License is from Alanna’s Tavern, 313 New Castle’s St., Minersville. The application would be to move Alanna’s Liquor License to Fegley’s Mini Mart, Inc. 551 West Penn Pike, which is within our Township. We would need to conduct a public hearing. We would have to give public notice in the Newspaper and we would have to post the publication at the Township. Attorney Datte recommends we have the hearing at our second meeting in January. Chairman Houser called for a

motion to advertise for a Transfer of a Liquor License, for a public hearing at the second meeting in January at 10AM. Attorney Datte said he will take care of the publication and he will inform the applicant. Glenn Hummel made the motion. Tony Prudenti seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion was carried. 3-0

Tony Prudenti said that Bob Miller reached out to him about an equipment company. The company sells surplus military equipment. Glenn Hummel said this company would strip the military equipment and build it to our specs. The cost difference from doing that and getting a new one from the factory is phenomenal. Tony Prudenti feels our Road Master should look into it.

VI. Business from Anyone on the Board

A. Reorganization Meeting will be held Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 5PM. The regular meeting will follow.

B. Auditor's Meeting shall be Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

VII. Correspondence - NONE

VIII. Public Comment on General Items

A. Bob Stabler – Requested an Incident Report from Chief Bonner. Mr. Stabler said Verizon was at his place and backed over his reflector. He could not call the cops because his phone did not work because someone stole the copper from the phone wires. They stole four pole lengths of wires. Mr. Stabler went to the Police Dept. to file a report. Chief Bonner went to Mr. Stabler's property to have the Verizon person move. Mr. Stabler asked the Verizon person about replacing his reflector. He said he would go to Tamaqua to get him a new one. Chairman Houser said he would refer Mr. Stabler's concern to the Chief of Police. Chief said he is working on it and he spoke to a Verizon Supervisor. Chief said his report is not ready yet. He is waiting for the Supervisor to get back to him with the outcome that he could documented in the report. Mr. Stabler expressed his frustrations. Chairman Houser also referred Mr. Stabler to Glenn Hummel because he was a former Verizon employee. Glenn Hummel stated that Verizon has right-of-way to the pole line. Glenn Hummel assured Mr. Stabler that Verizon would resolve the issue. Glenn Hummel said they would have contract services come out and do restitution for whatever is wrong. Mr. Stabler said the only thing he wants is his incident report. The Board said Chief Bonner would take care of that.

B. Jim Akins asked about the EIT and if we had a percentage or a dollar amount of the increase. He also asked if we knew what the trend looked like in the past two years. Treasurer said we do not have an exact amount or percentage. She said they give us an estimate. Treasurer said the past two years more money came in the last two months that anticipated.

Jim Akins also thanked Mrs. Houser for having to step into Chairman Houser's legacy for the second time. Mrs. Houser said the second time around has been much easier.

C. Delroy Haas would like to ask the Board to put a sound system back in. Delroy Haas expressed his concerns about the Liquor License. Chairman Houser also expressed his concerns about the Liquor License as well.

Val Coombe asked if the Township benefits tax wise with the Liquor License. Chairman Houser said, no. Val Coombe also expressed how shorthanded volunteers are.

Chairman Houser also spoke about the Township's police department. He expressed how very expensive it is to have a police department. He is frustrated that the state does not contribute additional funding for us to maintain our police department.

Glenn Hummel spoke about how we budget on 4% and how we project our budget. Glenn Hummel also said there are many grants for the Police Dept. available. We need to go after them. If we do not go after them, we are letting that money on the table. Glenn Hummel said the first thing he asked the

Police Dept. to do was to be accredited. So when we apply for grants or funds from the state, they would become easier to get with accreditation. Currently they are not accredited.

Val Coombe – said she is concerned about the Ambulance Corp. Tim Houser spoke about the budget and what we do to try to offset the budget to avoid raising taxes. Val Coombe asked if the Township would consider a Fire or EMS Tax. Val Coombe said the State requires them to be 24hrs/7days, which is killing their budget. Chairman said another factor against their budget is their payroll. Val Coombe said they could not get volunteers. Glenn Hummel asked Val Coombe if they approached Leighton or Tamaqua to merge. Val Coombe said she spoke to the Dept. of Health, which told her they could not do that unless the County comes up with a plan.

Jamie Lorah – asked the Treasurer about the Police Budget. Karen Witting said currently they are about \$7K over budget. Jamie Lorah said her husband is currently teaching DARE at the middle school. Jamie Lorah expressed her concerns about the middle school and how tough it is right now. She said that her child had been offered drugs, weed, edibles and alcohol during school. She said her husband is doing his best to try to educate the students and he is trying to help prevent drug use in the schools. Jamie Lorah thanked the Board for supporting that program for so many years. She would like to ask the Board to continue to fund this program in 2024 and continue funding it in the future. Glenn Hummel said we made the statement several times that we support the DARE program and the CSI camp. Chairman said we never considered not to support those programs. Jamie Lorah said she understands that there has been some questions about her husband's pay. He has to teach and he is on duty as well. Chairman feels that the DARE program is worth it even if it helps just one child. It is very important to educate about drugs. Tim Houser said we have no plans on cutting any of those programs. Tim Houser said he recommends her to go to the Tamaqua School Board with her concerns. Glenn Hummel said we communicated 4 months in a row that we are NOT considering on taking DARE or CSI Programs out of our Township. Glenn Hummel asked her to advocate for us to the community that the rumor of getting rid of those programs are not true. Tim Houser said we care about the kids. We are the only Township that set aside money of \$16K in our budget to harden access to the West Penn Elementary School. Glenn Hummel asked Karen Wittig if she ever told anyone that we were going to get rid of those programs. Karen Wittig said NO. Karen Wittig said she knows what Jamie Lorah is saying about wages because her husband worked 69hrs in one week. Karen Wittig said she asked Chief Bonner about it. Karen Wittig said we have to pay him time and a half even if he wanted straight time because of the labor laws. Karen Wittig said she needed to tell the Chief she could not pay him straight time because it was over 40 hours in the one week. Glenn Hummel continued to ask Paul Datte, Tony Prudenti, Tim Houser, himself, Katie Orlick, Jim Bonner and Jeremy Frable if any of those people said that we were stopping those programs. Everyone said, No, we did not tell anyone. Glenn Hummel stressed that the whole Board stated several times we are NOT getting rid of those programs. Chief Bonner asked Paul Datte if we could have some type of agreement with Jason Lorah that he does not want overtime for his DARE services. Attorney Datte said no, as long as the Township is the employer of the individual and is paying the individual, we have to go by the 40hr/week law.

Jaclyn Selitto – expressed her feelings if West Penn Township did not provide Police coverage, she would leave the Township. She expressed her concerns about support and funding for the Police Dept. as well.

Chairman asked James Akins who will be a Supervisor in the Township in 2024, if he had any intentions of getting rid of the Police Dept. or the DARE & CSI Programs. Mr. Akins said absolutely NOT.

Marie Houser – said her husband expressed sometimes that he did not like everything the Police Department did. That comment was misconstrued and the rumors are what came about it. He NEVER,

NeverEVER did he say that he was getting rid of the Police Department; Never did he say he wanted to get rid of DARE or the CSI Programs. He never said he did not support the Police Department. She said her husband is one of the most truthful people she knows and she is not just saying that because she is married to him. He would tell you the truth whether it hurt your feelings or not. Marie Houser thanked the Board and everyone for working and supporting Tim Houser during his term in office. Glenn Hummel thanked her for supporting him. He will be missed. We learned a lot from him and we hope the friendship continues with you and your family. We appreciate the opportunity of working alongside of him.

IX. Executive Session - NONE

X. Anything Else from the Board

A. Tim Houser thanked Paul Datte for his help on acquiring a piece of property that should have been demolished years ago.

Tony Prudenti thanked everyone on the Board for going above and beyond their call of duty.

XI. Adjournment

A. Tim Houser called for a motion to Adjourn at 10:53AM. Glenn Hummel made the motion. Tony Prudenti seconded the motion. All in favor for the last time of Tim Houser's term. Motion was carried. 3-0

Transcribed By:

Katie Orlick

West Penn Township Secretary