

**Pocono Township Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2024 | 6:29 p.m.**

The regular meeting of the Pocono Township Board of Commissioners was held on February 20, 2024 and was opened by President Rich Wielebinski at 6:29 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Jerrod Belvin, present; Ellen Gndt, present via Zoom; Natasha Leap, present; Mike Velardi, present; and Rich Wielebinski, present via Zoom.

In Attendance: Taylor Munoz, Township Manager; Leo DeVito, Township Solicitor; Jon Tresslar, Engineer; Pat Briegel, Public Works Director; Lindsay Scerbo, Zoning Officer present via Zoom; and Jennifer Gambino, Administrative Assistant.

Public Comment – None

Announcements

- The Pocono Township Ice Rink is open on a weather-permitting basis at TLC Park. Individuals interested in skating will find the latest information available on the Township Facebook page or can call the Township office in advance to check on current conditions. Please note that several days of below-freezing temperatures are needed to have a skateable surface.
- An executive session was held before the meeting to discuss litigation and potential real estate acquisition.

Presentations

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to approve the promotion of Detective Earl Ackerman to the position of Detective Sergeant for the Pocono Township Police Department. All in favor. Motion carried.

The swearing-in ceremony will take place in March due to illness.

Hearings – None

Resolutions

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by N. Leap, to approve Resolution 2024-02 approving the Township Manager as authorized signatory to execute the TASA reimbursement agreement for the SR 611/Learn Road (SR 611 sidewalk project). All in favor. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda

- Motion to approve a consent agenda of the following items:
 - Old business consisting of the minutes of the February 5, 2024 regular meeting and reorganizational meeting of the Board of Commissioners.
 - Financial transactions through February 15, 2024 as presented, including ratification of general fund expenditures, sewer operating expenditures and gross payroll; vouchers payable, sewer operating expenditures, construction fund expenditures, capital reserve expenditures and transfers.

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to approve the consent agenda. All in favor. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Personnel

J. Belvin made a motion seconded by M. Velardi, to approve a contract with James Wagner as Pocono Township Chief of Police. All in favor. Motion carried.

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by E. Gnadtt, to authorize the Township to begin the hiring process for one (1) new police officer. All in favor. Motion carried. Noted that this hire is to bring the Department up to the previous complement.

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to authorize the testing process to begin for the appointment of a new Corporal position within the Department. All in favor. Motion carried.

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by N. Leap, to approve updated 2024 contracts for the following employees: Taylor Munoz, Township Manager; Patrick Briegel, Public Works Director; and Paola Razzaq, Fiscal Administrator. All in favor. Motion carried.

2. Travel/Training Authorizations - None

Commissioner Comments

Richard Wielebinski – President

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by E. Gnadtt, to appoint Brian Winot as Zoning Hearing Board alternate. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to authorize COSTARS purchase orders for a new Peterbilt 548 tandem dump truck in the amount of \$159,548.39 and upfit in the amount of \$104,100.00 as provided for in the 2024 Capital Budget. E. Gnadtt asked if this covers everything including delivery. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to approve Payment No. 1 for the 2023 Sanitary Sewer Manhole Rehabilitation Project to PIM Corporation in the amount of \$33,115.50, per the Township Engineer letter dated February 14, 2024. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by N. Leap, to approve a Standard Verizon Underground grant for the work proposed along the TLC Park field adjacent to the sewer pump station as part of the utility relocation for the upcoming PennDOT SR 715 projects. R. Wielebinski clarified that the Township met onsite a couple months back to ensure the new Verizon lines are not installed in an area that interferes with the Park. E. Gnadtt asked for clarification pertaining to cost. All in favor. Motion carried.

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by J. Belvin, to provide a letter of recommendation to the Brodhead Creek Regional Authority (BCRA) in support of the addition of future water service areas in Paradise Township for inclusion with their DRBC Docket Renewal Application. Discussion – E. Gnadtt asked for confirmation that passage of this motion, or providing this letter, does not obligate the Township in any way to guarantee that these properties are served. L. DeVito confirmed it does not. All in favor. Motion carried.

Jerrold Belvin – Vice President

- Update – Continued issues with washout and flooding on Archer Lane. Asked L. DeVito for an update. Three enforcement notices were sent out, and the property owner is on the clock, but no further update yet at this time. Lindsay stated she has not received updates from the property owner but got the returned certified mail notice.
- Update – Laurel Lake Dam meeting – No update.
- Bartion Court Utility Lines – PPL has confirmed that they will replace poles in Bartion Court.

Asked J. Tresslar whether there has been an update on Turkey Hill's sidewalk installation.

J. Belvin shared a message regarding incorrect information being shared on social media pertaining to property owners along Stadden Road and misinformation pertaining to expanded sewer in the Township's Act 537 service areas.

Ellen Gndt – Commissioner

Asked whether there have been any updates on the SBA cell tower and whether the Township has been out to inspect Swiftwater Solar. Nothing has been received from SBA. LVL Engineering has been out to the site two times per week and no new violations have been observed at this time. The Conservation District cleared their violation, but they were also fined by the DEP.

Natasha Leap – Commissioner – No update.

Mike Velardi – Commissioner

Update provided regarding 229 Hemlock. Discussion regarding potential next steps with L. Scerbo.

Reports

Zoning - No current update.

Police Report

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to amend agenda for authorization of testing process for new detective. All in favor. Motion carried.

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by E. Gndt, to authorize the testing process to begin for the appointment of a new detective position within the PTPD. All in favor. Motion carried.

Ambulance Report – None

Public Works Report

- Current Public Works Projects – Road Crew has been doing a great job cleaning up after snowstorms.
- Mountain View Park Updates – Contractor will be at Park tomorrow to complete installation of the obstacle course. Looking to bring back two park crew on March 11, with the rest of the crew coming back on March 18, weather-permitting.
- TLC Park Updates – Tried to open the ice rink this morning, but it is not in good condition for skating.
- Old Learn Farm parking access – Aiming for mid-to-late March to resume and complete work that was started in the fall.

Administration – Manager's Report – No update.

Township Engineer Report

- Learn Road safety enhancement project and roundabout survey work – Received appraisals from Tom McKeown and next step will be for Board to make determination as to how to proceed.

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by R. Wielebinski, to engage in conversation with the identified property owners affected by the Learn Road Roundabout work. All in favor. Motion carried.

PPL is working on a preliminary layout for relocation of power lines. J. Tresslar will further evaluate whether the utility pole in the middle of the current intersection is in Township ROW.

- Update – TASA SR 611 sidewalk project – Completed plans for all temporary construction easements. One permanent easement is needed. There is a list of approved appraisers for the acquisition of temporary/permanent construction easements.

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by R. Wielebinski, to authorize T. Muñoz to work with an approved appraiser. All in favor. Motion carried.

J. Belvin asked if the timeline has changed at all. J. Tresslar confirmed the design must be complete by May 2024 for bid letting in August 2024.

- In Progress – Discussion and possible action regarding the Township’s revised Act 167 stormwater ordinance, incorporating changes to the ordinance as prepared by the Township engineer and as required by PA DEP – No new report.

Township Solicitor Report

- General legal update.
- March 4, 2024 – Liquor license transfer hearing for Wawa, Inc. at their 2977 Route 611 location.
- Zoning Hearing Board updates.
 - February 22 – PoconoPlaces, LLC – Authorized to attend hearing.
 - February 27 – MCTI Variance Hearing
 - March 6, 2024 – 154 Ruby Lane. Discussion whether solicitor to attend hearing regarding a special exception request to operate a dog kennel in conjunction with their intended residential use of the property. E. Gmandt asked for clarification. Discussion regarding the applicant’s need to go before the Planning Commission as part of the special exception process, timelines, and costs.
- Update – Johnson Appeal Commonwealth Court argument – Received STR decision from Commonwealth court. Township won the larger battle where the Court found the current zoning ordinance is constitutionally valid and permits short term rental uses in commercial and recreation districts. The Court carved out an exception for the Johnson property as a non-conforming use and the Board is currently evaluating whether to appeal decision. Requested information from Zoning and reached out to PSATS. Will report to BOC for final decision.

Public Comment

Wayne Mazur (Resident) – Representative of Cobble Creek Estates. Asked for a copy of the Commonwealth Court verdict pertaining to the Johnson case.

Jim Pellegrini (Resident) – Asked clarification questions pertaining to short term rentals and what is allowed as part of The Ridge project.

Adjournment

J. Belvin made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.