

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS of NETHER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP – November 2, 2023

A public meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Nether Providence Township was called to order at 7:30 PM on Thursday, November 2nd, 2023—Legislative Meeting.

PRESENT:

Commissioner Cooper
Commissioner Garson
Commissioner McKenzie
Commissioner O'Connor
Commissioner Molloy
Commissioner Henry

ALSO PRESENT:

Dave Grady Township Manager
Charles Catania Township Engineer

EXCUSED:

Commissioner Barnes

1 member of the public was in attendance.

Ms. McKenzie chaired the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Government Relations Report by Max Cooper

CDBG Grant Agreement Approval- Mr. Cooper announced that the Township had been awarded \$125,000 in funding for the paving of roads in Garden City Manor through the 2023 Community Development Block Grant. Solicitor Scott reviewed the agreement. Mr. Cooper made a motion to approve the agreement, and Mr. Garson seconded the motion, which carried 6-0.

Public Safety Committee Report by Matt Garson

SHMS Exit – Left Turn Ban Study- Mr. Garson made a motion to apply to PennDOT to enforce the No Left Turn sign at the Middle School. Ms. McKenzie seconded the motion, which passed 5-1 with Mr. Molloy opposing.

Finance and Administration Committee Report by Kaitlin McKenzie

Computershare – Ms. McKenzie said this will be finalized at the next meeting.

2024 – General Fund Budget

Ms. McKenzie said the 2023 budget becomes the baseline for the 2024 budget process. Mr. Grady reviewed the budget and noted there were several projected increases from the 2023 fiscal year, including contractual pay increases and insurance costs. Ms. McKenzie listed several projects, and if all projects were included, a potential 7% increase was projected, higher than the typical 3% target due to increased costs and considerations for cost-of-living adjustments.

Ms. McKenzie said the main focus was discussing several potential projects for budget consideration, all of which were discretionary items. These projects included repairing the failing culvert under W. Possum Hollow Road, estimated at \$60,000 to \$65,000. Another proposal was for new trash and recycling cans for select parks, costing around \$5,000 due to the high expense of quality steel cans. Additionally, there was a discussion about revamping

the approach to road resurfacing with a proposed \$50,000 increase in the road budget. She said concerning retiring police officers, there was an estimation of costs related to their accrued sick time payout. A proposal from Dandelions Digital for digital marketing services was presented at \$42,000 annually, excluding potential extra costs. The contribution to the ambulance service was also mentioned, increasing from \$30,000 to \$80,000 due to higher demand, though there was no legal obligation to meet the increased amount. A proposal from ArcheWild, an environmental management firm, was discussed to address invasive species in Furness Park. Bamboo and other invasives had spread in the park since its acquisition in the '90s. ArcheWild provided various options priced at \$25,000, offering flexibility to choose specific treatments. For instance, kudzu removal alone would cost around \$5,000. The treatment plans involved a three-year process for bamboo eradication, starting at \$20,000 in the first year, then \$35,000 in the second year, and \$10,000 in the third, with a warranty. Other potential discretionary items included necessary repairs for a back loader, and contemplating a leasing model similar to one previously used for a skid steer. The outright purchase cost was around \$140,000, and they were exploring lease options to spread the expense over time due to the equipment's longevity.

The Board discussed the county aid received, the Liquid Fuels budget, road resurfacing expenditures, and the allocation of funds between liquid fuels and the general fund for road resurfacing. There were considerations about historical spending, financial sustainability, and the impact of a \$500,000 loan on Liquid Fuel funds, as about \$110,000 of Liquid Fuels funding is needed for repayment of the loan. Mr. Molloy suggested searching for grant funding to cover the costs of the ArcheWild proposals.

Ms. McKenzie said that the Township should be a good neighbor to the adjoining municipalities and help shoulder the increased costs for the EMS coverage with Media Fire, who is being forced to pay more to Main Line Health. Mr. Molloy expressed his frustration with the healthcare system and the extra burden that it is placing on taxpayers.

Ms. McKenzie said that if no projects were added, there was a potential for avoiding a tax increase, but she said that would not be in the best interest of the Township.

During the first budget reading, it was noted that there were limitations on how much the budget could be increased. The strategy discussed was, to begin with a higher budget and then trim it down if necessary because starting too low might require readvertising and delay the adoption date. Several factors were driving up costs, such as increased liability insurance and expenses related to meeting cyber insurance requirements. However, there were potential opportunities to reduce costs, including considering an Enterprise Fleet Management approach that could yield savings over time, starting from year one.

For the 2024 grant projects, there might be a slight reduction in the amount allocated to the grant fund to cover potential matches. Estimates for certain expenses like volunteer firefighters' coverage have not been received yet but are expected to increase. Mr. Grady mentioned that while they have not been overly conservative with revenue items, adjustments might be needed, especially for items like transfer tax, which involves some guesswork. They have increased interest revenue estimates based on current trends and previous earnings.

For the sewer budget, he mentioned the significant impact of the sewer rate, indicating an estimated 5% increase based on the CDCA number and an expectation for a similar range from DELCORA, which they didn't have confirmed yet. This estimate could lead to a 2.71% increase in the sewer rate, from \$664 to \$682. He highlighted the importance of maintaining a healthy balance in the sewer capital funds, currently around \$900,000, to cover potential major issues with sewer mains.

Adjournment - The next meeting is the workshop meeting on November 9th.