

# LEHIGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

June 24, 2025

- I. CALL TO ORDER. The Lehigh Township Board of Supervisors held their second monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 24, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Lehigh Township Municipal Building, 1069 Municipal Road, Walnutport, Pa. 18088. Chairman Mike Jones called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

Present: Cindy Miller  
Janet Sheats  
Jerry Pritchard  
David Hess  
Mike Jones  
Alice Rehrig  
Attorney David Backenstoe

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- A. June 10, 2025. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve these minutes. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

III. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- A. General Fund Checks 28790 to 28821. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve these bills. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.
- B. State Fund Check 1623. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve this bills. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Recreation Consultant. Cindy Miller forwarded the final draft RFP to DCNR, but has not heard back from them yet. She is not expecting that there will be an issue because the items that were added are what they were looking for. She believes that we can move forward with getting this advertised.

Cindy Miller made a motion to approve the RFP for a recreation consultant and have the Manager advertise it. David Hess seconded the motion. Jerry Pritchard questioned where it would be advertised. Alice Rehrig commented she was going to put it on PennBid. They will push it out to consultants across the state and there are no costs for advertising. Since this is a professional service, there is no need to do a formal newspaper advertisement. All voted aye. Motion carried.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Manager's Report. The Jaindl Company is ready to start the borings on the land that will be transferred to the Municipal Authority for the new treatment plant. Since the

Township currently owns the land, they need permission from the Township to do the work. If there is no objection from the Board, they would like to start next week. Alice Rehrig will have them provide a certificate of insurance naming the Township as additional insured before doing the work. There was no objection by the Board as long as the Township was covered by their insurance.

The office is in the process of accumulating the articles for the fall newsletter. Zach Szoke had provided Alice Rehrig with an article for the newsletter regarding farmland preservation and Alice Rehrig wanted to verify that the Board still wanted that article included in the newsletter. Cindy Miller commented the article needs to include both sides, the pros and cons of this. The residents need to understand that there is a tax increase associated with this. Janet Sheats commented the Board needs to discuss what they want in the article. Mike Jones commented he thinks the Board should provide their comments as to what they want to see included. Jerry Pritchard commented the Board requested they do a presentation to a group of people at the Fire Company, which they did. Delaying this seems to be a stall tactic. Cindy Miller commented it is not a stall tactic. There were 81 people at the fire company; the newsletter will be going to 6,000 households. Gauging the people at the Fire Company, there were about a third for it, a third against it, and a third who didn't understand it. Jerry Pritchard commented he believes it was closer to a 75/25 split. Cindy Miller commented she is not going to gauge a tax increase on 81 people. Zach Szoke commented it will be up to the people to vote if they want the tax. Janet Sheats commented she would like to see it noted that it is a tax increase of up to .25 percent of individual income tax. Cindy Miller commented it should be noted in the article how many acres are preserved in the Township and what type of preservation. It should also be noted that the Township has zoning and subdivision ordinances and there are 2,000 acres owned by the State and the State Gamelands. There are over 10,000 acres in preservation. The article states there are 7,400 acres available for preservation, but we have no idea what type of land it is, does it contain wetlands or steep slopes which can't even be developed. Jerry Pritchard commented this is just a article for a newsletter. Eventually a decision needs to be made and the legal paperwork drawn up. Cindy Miller commented if you are doing an FYI, it should include all sides; not just one side. Mike Jones commented everyone can add what they want to add over the next week so it can go in the newsletter. Overall there was no objection to the information on the front page; the second page may not be needed. Zach Szoke noted his concern is that you won't be able to keep it to one page if additional comments are added. He believes the items listed on the front page are important key points. Cindy Miller commented the biggest con she is hearing from people is that they do not want to have their tax dollars being used to preserve someone else's property that they cannot use. Zach Szoke commented that is an opinion of preservation; not a fact. Tom Szoke commented as a taxpayer he doesn't want 16 cents for every dollar going to maintain all the developments that come

along. Jerry Pritchard commented it should also be included that there are programs that are currently available through the County for this. It should also be noted that it will not stop a developer from coming in and buying property if someone is willing to sell their farm to them. It does not stop development if people are willing to sell their farm. Zach Szoke commented his main goal was to get information into the newsletter. He has no problem doing more public outreach and doing more meetings to provide the facts about preservation. Cindy Miller commented she also believes that the public has the right to know that money will need to be spent upfront because an ordinance will need to be written and committees will need to be formed. Janet Sheats commented she also agrees at some point, there needs to be a Board of Supervisors meeting held at the Fire Hall for people to ask questions of the Board. Cindy Miller commented she also believes the public needs to know that we are in the process of updating our zoning and SALDO because it all works together. People need to come to the Ad Hoc meetings to understand what is being proposed.

Chris Amato commented this is just data. There are no pros, cons, good, or bad. It's data. You read the data; it is what it is. You let the people who you trusted to vote for you, vote for this. If there are going to be cons included, it should be written by a subject matter expert. As a citizen member of the Northampton County Farmland Preservation Board and a Lehigh Township resident, he can say that he is a subject matter expert; he has been the Chair of the Farmland Preservation Department and he is Chair of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. Cindy Miller commented if she would have anyone write this, it would be the consultant who is working on our zoning and SALDO. Zach Szoke commented he is a professional engineer and he has dealt with zoning.

Sandy Hopkins commented she doesn't understand why there is so much about pro and con. It is the Board's job to inform the people that there is a possibility of this happening and it may be placed on the ballot. If they want to know more about it, they can attend one of the meetings that are held. Cindy Miller commented if there is an article being placed in the newsletter, she wants the whole thing described. Some people can't come to meetings because they work. Others may need to read it to understand it. People digest things differently. If she is putting something in the newsletter, she is putting in all sides. Sandy Hopkins commented she doesn't know that it is the Board's job to provide pros and cons. It's the Board's job to inform people of what may be taking place. A sketchy introduction to this and letting the residents know they will need to vote on it is all that needs to be in the newsletter. Cindy Miller commented that the Board hasn't even decided if they will move this forward to be voted upon. They are not even at that point, but everyone is assuming that. Sandy Hopkins commented she understands, but all that is needed is something stating that this is coming up and you may have to vote on it and the voters need to decide what they want, not the five Board members. Cindy Miller commented she

doesn't have a problem with this going in the newsletter, but she wants people to understand what it means. People left the meeting at the Fire Company still not understanding it. She wants people to be fully aware and understand it when they take that vote. Mike Jones commented he would like to see a meeting date included in the newsletter so people can plan on attending the meeting. Linda Roman commented there are people in the community who don't drive at night and will not be able to come to meetings and others may have health conditions. We are becoming older residents. David Hess commented if there is more information included, maybe a phone number for someone to call with questions, people can ask questions without the need to come to a meeting.

Jerry Pritchard commented there comes a point where we need to put this in the newsletter. This Board is elected to make decisions. We can't just keep on saying we can't make a decision now. It's a stall tactic. Linda Roman commented she wants to have all the information up front.

Marc Kerksmar commented it seems like we are getting hung up on the pros and cons. It seems like there are five or six bullet points that the Solicitor discussed as to what the Township needs to do that should be included. Build on what the Solicitor stated that is required. If the program goes through, it is up to the residents.

Paul Nikisher commented he just needs the facts. He is not looking for opinions. Why keep dragging your feet on this? He doesn't understand why this cannot be on a referendum this year. Let people know there will be a few more meetings and let the people come out. At some point this needs to be moved on. People need to realize what they will be paying based on their income and that it will continue year after year. It could also grow much larger. The individual who was here from Moore Township indicated they were looking for someone to take their program over. That means another salary. Move it forward and let the people vote on it. If they make the wrong call, they make the wrong call. Cindy Miller commented if the people make the call to approve this, the Township will have to pay to implement everything that needs to be done. Once you do this, the only way it can come off is by another referendum that the community votes on. That needs to be stated in the newsletter. Jerry Pritchard noted it must stay in place for at least five years. Cindy Miller commented once the money is designated for land preservation, it must stay in that and cannot come out. Jerry Pritchard questioned what happens to the money if in five years it is voted to abolish the program. Attorney Backenstoe commented the money must stay in the account and can only be used for open space purposes or 25 percent can go towards park maintenance.

Janet Sheats commented if the Board votes to move this forward and it costs money to get the program started, can the money from the program be used to reimburse the

General Fund. Attorney Backenstoe commented the costs of the ordinances and advertisement would not come from the preservation funding. Once the program is in place, you can then use it for soft costs associated with the purchase of open space.

Zach Szoke questioned when the additional information from the Board would be provided. It was agreed that the information would be provided by Monday, June 30. Alice Rehrig commented the information will be forwarded to the company working on the newsletter by July 2.

Zach Szoke questioned if the Board will be voting to have this placed on the November ballot. Mike Jones commented it was stated all along that if they move this forward, it wouldn't be until the primary election. Janet Sheats commented the Board doesn't want to take the vote until all the information has been provided to the public. Jerry Pritchard commented that the information needs to be sent to the election office 13 weeks in advance. Attorney Backenstoe commented the Board needs to adopt a resolution to authorize the ordinance. Then the ordinance needs to be drafted, advertised, and adopted. This needs to be prior to the deadline of 13 Tuesday's before the election. Mike Jones commented he would like to have a big meeting by the Board at the fire hall after the information is out in the newsletter. If it is not well received, then there is no point in spending the time and money to do the ordinance. Zach Szoke commented he is willing to provide their presentation online for people have the opportunity to view it and then come to the meeting and ask questions. Jerry Pritchard commented he doesn't want to get out ahead of the public. If the Board votes on this before it goes in the newsletter, what was the point.

Tom Szoke questioned if the preservation would be eliminated from the Comprehensive Plan if this doesn't go to a vote until next spring. The Board commented that the two items are separate.

Chris Amato noted that the voter turnout for the spring elections typically is not that great because it is the primary. More people come out for the general election.

Zach Szoke questioned if this could be on the July 8<sup>th</sup> agenda to move this forward. He will provide whatever is necessary to get the word out. Janet Sheats commented she would like to see the article for the newsletter tweaked and do things one step at a time. Cindy Miller commented that when it comes to a tax increase to the residents, she is not going to rush something. Zach Szoke commented South Whitehall just voted to place the open space on the ballot for November. Cindy Miller commented South Whitehall is different than Lehigh Township. They are so developed because of all the commercial and residential development that has taken place. They also

don't have the topography that Lehigh Township has with the Blue Mountain and the amenities we have here in the Township. Zach Szoke commented this is taking place throughout the valley. Lehigh Township appears to be the most resistant to it.

Monica Brown questioned what the worse thing is that could happen if it were placed on the agenda for July 8<sup>th</sup>. Cindy Miller commented there are other things that the Board needs to address. They have a lot going on besides this. The Board has to do their homework and understand this. At this point, she doesn't know if the whole Board understands it. Monica Brown commented the newsletter will come out and people can understand it, maybe it can hit the November election because that is when the people will come out. Cindy Miller questioned why we want to push this so fast. Monica Brown commented she is just saying put it out to the people to decide. She is not affected by this because she is retired. Cindy Miller commented you would still be affected by this because there are upfront costs that come out of taxpayer dollars.

Tom Szoke commented there is too much controversy amongst the Board for the residents to understand why the Board is not doing this. It's a deadlocked situation. The Board is elected by the residents and the Board should be looking for direction from the residents as to where they want the Township to go to. If someone wants to be opposed this, he is okay with that, but they should be here to voice that. He is sensing that there are people on the Board who don't want to hear about this and there are others that are open to it. That is not what the Board is there for. They are there to hear the residents. Janet Sheats commented she is not happy about the idea of a tax increase, but she does believe that we owe it to the residents to let them decide what they want. The Board was elected to do the right thing. It shouldn't just be the Board's opinion. If someone dislikes this then it is their job to let the residents know what they are, but like it is the ones who are in favor of it to convince people to agree with them. Jerry Pritchard commented if the people vote no, we move on. If they vote yes, then so be it. He is a firm believer in the ballot box. David Hess commented people need to be notified in advance of any meetings. His concern is that this is something the County already does, but he also understands that the County does not accept everyone. His main thing is that it needs to go out to the residents and he wants to be at a meeting. Zach Szoke commented this has been talked about for the past four months and it keeps dragging on. They didn't do as much outreach as they would have liked because they really didn't know what was going on. If they know there is a November date, they have no problem doing whatever outreach is necessary.

Attorney Backenstoe commented the process that the Board would follow to initiate getting a referendum on the ballot would be to do a resolution authorizing him to prepare an ordinance. After he puts the ordinance together, the Board would need to

approve the advertisement of the ordinance which is about a month. If the ordinance is adopted, he would then have to draft the referendum and get it to the election Board 13 Tuesday's before the election. In order to meet this deadline, it would be very tight or not possible.

Zach Szoke commented the County's program would be more for the larger properties. A Township program would do the smaller properties and partner with the County for the larger ones.

Linda Roman commented it is easy sitting out in the audience as a resident. It is hard when you are sitting on the other side of the table.

Attorney Backenstoe was asked to review the timeline over the next few days to see if there was a way that this could possibly be on the November ballot. Attorney Backenstoe commented he doesn't believe it will be possible, but he will look into it.

1. Sergeant Interview. The testing process for Sergeant has been completed. The next step in the process would be for panel interviews to be conducted. The Department was seeking authorization to keep moving the process forward. There was no objection to continuing moving forward with the process.

Alice Rehrig also requested a brief executive session to discuss a personnel matter. No action would be required at this time.

Paul Nikisher questioned what the status is of filling the Zoning Officer position. Mike Jones commented applications are being accepted through July 3. A few applications have been received.

B. Solicitor's Report. Attorney Backenstoe did not have anything additional to report.

- VI. PUBLIC COMMENT. Cindy Miller reported the Senate has already passed the decommissioning bill. It will most likely go to the House for a vote, and she expects that it will pass there as well. Her suggestion is that when Senator Miller comes to visit with us, we talk to him about all these issues.

Kermit Geary of 1266 Riverview Drive commented he has had problems with trespassing on his property since the fire took place on the mountain. He was told by the police that they couldn't do anything about it unless he painted a three foot swath of purple paint across every public facing aspect of his property. Purple paint is hard to find, expensive and will not stick to grass. The alternative to that is to post purple no trespassing signs. He has been to print shops across the Lehigh Valley and not one of them will print him a

purple no trespassing sign. If the police will not enforce the no trespassing laws, a vigilante committee will need to be set up to prevent trespassing. Cindy Miller commented by State Law, the property needs to be marked in purple. Mr. Geary commented he understands the State law, but the police are going beyond State Law. They also don't bother to enforce the speeding that takes place at Route 145 and Route 248. You are supposed to stop at a red light before turning right and if you do that, you will be rear ended. If he makes noise on his property, they are right there; but the trucks can use jake brakes at anytime. Janet Sheats commented he should get the name of the officer who is giving him wrong information so that it can be addressed. She will speak with the Department and get back to Mr. Geary.

Tom Szoke questioned the law regarding trespassing and the posting. Janet Sheats commented the law requires no trespassing signs to be posted in a conspicuous manner that can be seen by someone entering the property. An alternative is to paint an 8 inch by 1 inch purple stripe in areas where placing a sign could be difficult.

Paul Nikishisher commented the grass is getting high on the vacant lot at Route 248 and Blue Mountain Drive and should be cut. He also questioned what was going in at the old Fore Scoops Drive In. Janet Sheats commented a brewery is going in.

- VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. The Board went into Executive Session. No action was taken.
- VIII. ADJOURN. Janet Sheats made a motion to adjourn. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.