

LEHIGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

August 26, 2025

- I. CALL TO ORDER. The Lehigh Township Board of Supervisors held their second monthly meeting on Tuesday, August 26, 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: Janet Sheats
Jerry Pritchard
David Hess
Mike Jones
Cindy Miller
Alice Rehrig
Attorney David Backenstoe

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- A. August 12, 2025. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve the minutes. Cindy Miller seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

III. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- A. General Fund Checks 28953 to 28967. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve these bills. David Hess seconded the motion. Janet Sheats questioned the rental of an excavator in Check 28957. Alice Rehrig commented they needed to rent a mini excavator for the replacement of a pipe on Granger Road. All voted aye. Motion carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS. There was no old business.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Manager's Report. Alice Rehrig reported she started the audit process for the RACP grant and had her first audit meeting. It is expected that the audit will be completed in mid-September and our retainage should be released about 45 days after that.

1. Public Safety Grant. Alice Rehrig would like to apply for the Northampton County Public Safety Grant to start purchasing the required digital portable radios. She would like to apply for funding for 6 portable radios with desk and vehicle chargers for a total grant project of \$32,231.28. The grant is a 2 to 1 matching grant. If the maximum grant amount of \$20,000 is awarded, the required match by the Township would be \$12,231.28.

Cindy Miller made a motion to authorize the Manager to apply for the Public Safety Grant through Northampton County for digital radios. Janet Sheats

seconded the motion. David Hess questioned if it is necessary when there is a deadline on a grant for it to come before the Board. Attorney Backenstoe commented there are various circumstances that can be involved with a grant application where she wouldn't just go and apply for the grant. Some grants require a match by the Township and others may have costs involved in the application process. The Manager typically brings the information pertaining to the grant before the Board and then they make the decision if they want to move forward with the application. Janet Sheats commented everyone is applying for these grants because it will be expensive to replace all the radios when the digital switch over takes place. She hopes everyone will work together to accomplish what is needed for communications. All voted aye. Motion carried.

Cindy Miller questioned what the status was of the Recreation Consultant Bids. Alice Rehrig commented the bids are due September 3 and will be on the next meeting agenda for discussion.

B. Solicitor's Report

1. Opioid Settlement. Attorney Backenstoe reported he received an email from the Northampton County Solicitor regarding the next wave of settlements regarding opioids. In 2022 and 2023, there were massive class action suits brought by governmental agencies against large pharmaceutical companies which resulted in a settlement of billions of dollars. Municipalities can participate in different aspects of the settlements. In most cases, it is with counties rather than townships and boroughs. In 2023, J & J Pharmaceutical and Walmart Pharmaceutical entered into settlement agreements and Northampton County had joined in as a plaintiff and they asked the Township to join in to increase their funding possibility. The Township wouldn't receive any money directly from these settlements. It would go to the County, but then have a trickle down effect to benefit the Township with other services they provide, such as the 911 Center. There is a third wave of settlements coming up, one with Perdue and the other for 8 separate pharmaceutical manufacturing companies. The County solicitor is expecting that the County will participate and is requesting that the Township and other county municipalities join in again to give them a little more power in the settlement. If the Board is interested in participating in this again, they could authorize the Manager to register for the settlement.

Cindy Miller made a motion to authorize the Township Manager to move forward with the opioid settlement with Northampton County. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

- VI. PUBLIC COMMENT. Tim Faust, 1097 Blue Mountain Drive, currently has two tracts of land that are on one deed and would like to consolidate them into one parcel. The

Board recommended that Mr. Faust go to Planning. Attorney Backenstoe commented it is not uncommon for two separate parcels to be listed on one deed. He believes Mr. Faust thought he purchased one large parcel and came in for a permit for a fence. The permit was issued in error in that it spanned across both parcels. This by itself is not a concern. The concern came in when there was discussion regarding the construction of an accessory building which would have been placed on the vacant parcel which would make it a principal use which can't be done. If the two lots are consolidated, the accessory structure could be constructed to go with the home and there wouldn't be an issue. Under the Lehigh Township SALDO, in order to consolidate two parcels, you need to do a minor subdivision. Tim Faust commented he would be willing to place the structure on the tract with his home, but the question of him getting a permit was not answered because of the fence going across the two parcels. He figured the best way to do this was consolidate the two parcels because he has no intentions of selling one parcel off. Attorney Backenstoe agreed this would be the best solution. Janet Sheat questioned what the timeline would be for a lot consolidation. Attorney Backenstoe commented if Mr. Faust has a good engineer, it probably could be done in one Planning meeting and then he could come to the Board of Supervisors for final approval. Mr. Faust commented he is looking to be able to have a structure built for his horses before winter. Right now, he is making do with a temporary structure, but it is not for winter. Mr. Faust commented it was suggested to him that he could ask for a waiver of the land development requirements. Attorney Backenstoe commented that is an option and wouldn't be a concern as it is done like that in some other townships; however, Lehigh Township has not previously granted that type of waiver. The granting of the waiver could set a precedence for the Township. Katherine Mack commented it is her understanding that there are fees associated with a land development plan. Is there going to be a cost to him? It could cost him thousands of dollars to do that. Cindy Miller commented that is the process and it has never been waived. Everyone goes through the process. Katherine Mack questioned how this was different from when she had two parcels of property that she combined and all she needed to do was get approval from the Supervisors and have her lawyer draw up a new deed. Barry Haydt commented the Board has the ability to waive the process. Cindy Miller commented if the Board starts allowing this to be done, then everyone will want to do this, the process gets skipped, and the Planners are not reviewing anything and people are just doing what they want. Barry Haydt commented he agrees there are times when the Planners should review things, but in this case, it just doesn't make sense. He only wants to build a barn for his horses. David Hess commented his concern is the Township issued a permit for a fence and he has his horses there and is forced to use a makeshift shelter.

John Knobloch commented he knows the Township is applying for a grant for the digital radios and they are expensive, but this is not the only Township that is being affected. Will the County consider kicking this further down the road because not everyone will be able to afford these radios? Cindy Miller commented she has spoken with Northampton

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County Council people, the County Executive and sent emails telling them to please give the municipalities a heads up and enough time when they are going to migrate over to the digital radios. This is a huge expense for anyone needing the radios. She doesn't hear anything and then finds out that the County applied for a bond which will cover their digital radio expenses and their parking deck. As soon as this goes through, they will be ready to migrate to the digital system, but the Township's have no idea when that will take place or when the cut off will be for using the current system. Janet Sheats commented Lehigh County actually helped the fire departments and townships by providing grants towards the radios, but Northampton County is not doing that. Everyone will be struggling to make the change to the new radios. It could cost fire companies \$200,000 to get new radios. Cindy Miller commented she would be willing to write to the County again to try to find out more information. Anyone can write to anyone on County Council or to Lamont McClure, the County Executive. Tom Giovanni is our representative at the County.

Katherine Mack questioned when the monitors are going to be installed in the meeting room. Alice Rehrig commented she has ordered them through the IT Company and should be installed this year. Katherine Mack commented she feels they are important now that the budget is being discussed. People may be interested in seeing how the budget is being developed. Mike Jones commented the budget is not shared until it is completed. Katherine Mack commented it would be nice to know what is on the list of Capital Improvements that are being discussed. There was also a question of how much of the tax money that residents pay is actually being used towards the roads.

Katherine Mack commented she has also heard through the grapevine that the Board is taking a look at the shades for the dog park. She is hoping it will come up at the next meeting and the Rec Board will be making a recommendation. David Hess commented the Rec Board did make a recommendation to move it to the Supervisors. Sandy Hopkins will be bringing it up during the Recreation report.

Zach Szoke questioned what the status is of getting something in the newsletter regarding the land preservation. Cindy Miller commented she is working on it but has had limited time with her job. Zach Szoke commented he was told the information needed to be in back in July. Cindy Miller commented she was told she had until October. This is the first she was hearing that it needed to be done before then. Alice Rehrig commented the newsletter comes out in October. The information was already submitted for publishing. Mike Jones commented he thought it was going to be in the spring newsletter since there was no way to get this placed on the ballot for fall. There was no need to rush to get it into the newsletter. Zach Szoke commented that he and Mike Hock will do their own newsletter and not be part of the Township's newsletter. Waiting until spring is not enough time to get the information out. He would hope that what is published in the

Township newsletter will be factual, not an opinion. The idea of placing this in the spring newsletter was never discussed with him. Katherine Mack questioned if the newsletter is coming out in March and the election is in May, will there be a meeting for the public to attend and discuss the information at a meeting. Janet Sheats commented it would be up to Zach Szoke and Mike Hoch if they want to set up a meeting. Paul Nikisher understands the frustration that people have. Discussions that take place at meetings take weeks or months until a decision is made. This was discussed for months prior to the decision being made to move it to the ballot. He hopes there will not be additional delays in this. Mike Jones commented there is no requirement for the Board to hold special meetings or to publish information regarding what is on the ballot. The Board wants to provide the information so that people are informed, but it is really up to them to learn about what they are voting for. Cindy Miller commented there is a lot of information that she is working through. What she is putting together will be the factual. Zach Szoke commented the article should not be personal or pros and cons, just the facts. Cindy Miller commented she had previously stated that she used the wrong verbiage when she said pros and cons. She has been reading through the four laws that pertain to the preservation and there is a lot of information and facts that people need to know. Zach Szoke noted that Mike Hock is a professional who is involved in the preservation. He would know the facts. Katherine Mack commented she would hope that once the facts are put together Attorney Backenstoe will have the opportunity to review the article since he has been involved in this with other Townships and well versed in the law. Cindy Miller commented she has no problem with having Attorney Backenstoe reviewing what she puts together. She will also be providing the links to all the laws so people can read them for themselves.

Linda Roman wanted to thank the Township for taking down some of the trees that needed to be removed from Indiantrail Park.

- VII. 2026 Capital Improvements Plan and Budget. The Board reviewed the entire capital improvements plan for the items that are intended to be included in the budget. Specific discussions and questions were:

It was noted that the company that provides the financial software for the Township was purchased by another company. At some point in the future, the current software will be converted to the software that the new company provides. Based on preliminary estimates, it will be quite expensive, particularly on the annual maintenance fees. Alice Rehrig will be looking into other software packages. She is aware of at least one vendor who is able to convert the existing data into their software, and the cost is expected to be much more reasonable. This has not been included in the 2026 Budget, but it is something to be aware of for the future.

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Cindy Miller questioned if the wireless bridge, firewall, network gear, and server rack are being pushed into 2026. Alice Rehrig commented the firewall is expected to be completed this year. The bridge has been installed, and the rack may not be necessary. The network gear to do the tandem internet connection will be completed next year. The wi-fi upgrade can be pushed off because it is okay.

Cindy Miller questioned if the monitors will be installed in 2025 or 2026 since there is not a date listed in the plan. Alice Rehrig commented they are going to be done in 2025.

Janet Sheats questioned if there will be budgets submitted from all the departments. Alice Rehrig commented she has provided the plan and budgets to Frank Zamadics and John Henry and will be reviewing everything with them after they have had the opportunity to review it.

Cindy Miller commented RCN is listed as the internet provider. Will we be obtaining service through PTD as well and will there be an additional expense? Alice Rehrig commented service through PTD would be part of the tandem internet connections and there shouldn't be an additional expense because our franchise agreement states that they will provide one connection without charge.

Cindy Miller questioned if the email is still with GoDaddy and were we considering migrating to go somewhere else. Alice Rehrig commented the intention was to move the email at the beginning of 2025; however, when Keystone Technology reviewed the costs associated with moving to a different platform, GoDaddy was the most economical option with the security and archiving feature.

Cindy Miller questioned if the burglar alarm and fire alarm were completed. Alice Rehrig commented quotes were provided when the magnetic locks were installed. The Board would need to determine if they wanted to move to a monitored alarm system and have the added monitoring expense.

There is a police vehicle scheduled for replacement. It will need to be determined if the car that is being taken out of patrol will be repurposed to a detective vehicle, which currently is a 2015 Explorer or the spare vehicle which is a 2015 Charger since both vehicles have over 100,000 miles on. An alternative would be to take the vehicle that is coming out of patrol and sell it since it would have a higher value.

Mike Jones questioned what the truck was used for. Alice Rehrig commented it is mostly used for the truck enforcement details and limited patrol. Right now, there are one or two officers who are weighmasters and one officer who is a certified inspector; however, he is out injured.

Plans will also need to be made for the changing of the radios to the digital radios. The contribution to the fund is planned on being increased.

The roof for the Police Station will need to be watched as it is approaching time for replacement. It is listed as 2030 and Frank Zamadics believes it will make it to then, but it is something that will need watching.

Cindy Miller questioned what impact the potential hiring of two officers will have on the capital. Alice Rehrig commented it would be two more vests which are about \$1,400 per officer. The uniforms in total would be about \$2,000 to \$3,000 per officer. Handguns would also be needed and eventually portable radios. Cindy Miller questioned if an additional vehicle would be needed. Alice Rehrig commented there wouldn't be a need for another vehicle since there is an additional vehicle available.

Janet Sheats questioned how the phone system works for the police department would work if the power were to go out. Alice Rehrig commented that if the power goes out, the phones are automatically be transferred to the dispatch center.

Alice Rehrig commented the Fire Tax estimates will need to be adjusted slightly. The 2024 delinquent tax payments are starting to come in and these are the first ones that include a fire tax.

Cindy Miller commented she feels that the Fire Department Capital Plan should be updated so that only the items that are the Township's responsibility as outlined in the Fire Tax Ordinance and Resolution are the only ones that are listed.

Cindy Miller questioned if the Salt Shed is paid for. Alice Rehrig confirmed the salt shed is paid for. It should last for at least 30 years since it has a concrete base.

Cindy Miller noted the old fuel pumps can be removed from the capital plan. Alice Rehrig noted that the new system is listed twice and will need to be corrected.

Cindy Miller questioned how the sweeper is doing; it seems like we put a lot of money into it this year. Alice Rehrig commented mechanically it has not been an issue. It is the wearable parts, like the brooms and skirting, that need to be replaced each year.

Cindy Miller questioned if there is any on going maintenance that needs to be done on the new maintenance building. Alice Rehrig commented there are inspections and testing that is needed for the fire suppression system. She included them in the budget, but had not added them to the Capital Plan.

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The Rec Board has been discussing adding gates to the ballfield, enclosing the underside of the pavilions at Indiantrail Park, and adding shelters to the Dog Park.

The Rec Board has not yet made a recommendation regarding the refurbishing of the tennis court in Danielsville.

Mike Jones questioned why the estimate fire tax receipts were decreased in 2027. Alice Rehrig commented it looks like the Bethlehem Authority payment in lieu of taxes did not get picked up.

The Board agreed they would start the September 9th meeting at 6 PM with the budget being the first item of discussion.

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. The Board went into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. No action was taken.

IX. ADJOURN. David Hess made a motion to adjourn. Cindy Miller seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.