LEHIGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

October 27, 2026

I. CALL TO ORDER. The Lehigh Township Board of Supervisors held their second monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Lehigh Township Municipal Building, 1069 Municipal Road, Walnutport. Chairman Mike Jones called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

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

II. 2027 BUDGET. Alice Rehrig provided the Board with an updated budget for the General Fund, State Fund, and Fire Tax Fund. All the budgets have been balanced. She noted that the Liquid Fuels estimate is a similar amount to 2026.

Jerry Pritchard questioned what the total legal fees were in the budget. Alice Rehrig commented regular legal fees are $28,000; labor related fees are $7,500 and Zoning Hearing Board fees are $18,000.

Cindy Miller questioned if the insurance company would be giving us a discount since we will be having the cameras on the vehicles. Alice Rehrig commented there isn't a specific discount; the workers comp carrier provided a grant towards the purchase of them. The rate for workers comp did not increase. Any cost increases are driven by payroll and claims. For 2027, our experience rating has decreased.

Cindy Miller questioned if the on line payments would be pursued in 2027. Alice Rehrig commented she can continue with that. **In speaking with vendors, there would be a 3% fee which would get charged to the users.** She questioned if there would be an interest in also allowing ACH payment so individuals can use a debit card. The costs to the Township would be minimal; it would just be for a machine if we were to accept a card at the window. The Board was in agreement to looking into both options.

Jerry Pritchard questioned the contribution to the library. It is almost like our residents are paying twice. They pay for it through the Township and they are also paying it through the School Tax. It was agreed that the contribution would be dropped to $2,000.

Cindy Miller commented she saw in the notes there was a question about how many dog bag dispensers were needed for Indiantrail Park. The Board agreed one should be enough and have it placed in the area of the pavilions.

Jerry Pritchard questioned if a LED sign for the Municipal Building is included in the budget and if it was grant dependent. Alice Rehrig commented the sign is still included. There is a grant outstanding.

Cindy Miller questioned the road list. She knows we were trying to keep the roads that were being done to one general area, but the list for 2027 seems to be spread out. The contractor would have to go from Deer Path, Spring, and Carl Drives out to Betel, North Dogwood and Delps. It would make more sense to move North and South Cypress to that list since they are coming off of Timberline. Alice Rehrig commented she was following the list from last year and looking at shorter roads to be included with Deer Path Spring and Carl trying to get the most done with the funding that will be available since only State Funds will be available for next year. She and Frank Zamadics can review the roads prior to the bids being finalized.

Cindy Miller commented looking ahead to 2029, there is a projector and screen expected to be replaced. These items can be removed since we have the screens in the meeting room.

Cindy Miller questioned if we are actually looking to buy and roller and paver in 2029. Alice Rehrig commented if they are needed to be replaced, it will be with used equipment. If they are still operating and not becoming a maintenance problem, the replacement will be pushed off. The current equipment that we have was also purchased used. New equipment for the type of use we have would not be reasonable.

Cindy Miller questioned if it was decided what we would be trying to obtain grant funding for. Alice Rehrig commented the 2026 LSA applications were for a police vehicle, generators, and a bucket truck. There have not been any discussions for 2027 funding. Those applications will not open until July 1, 2027, with anticipated awards in 2028.

Cindy Miller made a motion to authorize the advertisement of the 2027 Budget for adoption at the December 8, 2026, meeting. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

III APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. October 13, 2026. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve these minutes. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. Zach Szoke questioned if it was noted in the minutes that the Board's answer of "the Comp Plan" when he questioned the plan for the direction of the Township was included in the minutes. The Board confirms it was listed on Page 9. All voted aye. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE BILLS

A. General Fund Checks 30010 to 30046. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve these minutes. David Hess seconded the motion. Janet Sheats questioned if the contribution to the library was the 2026 contribution. Alice Rehrig confirmed it was. Katherine Mack noted the payment to Hanover Engineering totaled over $13,000. Mike Jones commented most of the items are for grading plan review. There is also some for meetings and SALDO/Zoning. She questioned what the cost will be above and beyond for the completion of the zoning ordinance since he is reviewing the ordinance as well. Cindy Miller commented the Engineer needs to review everything after the consultant completes their work, similar to how the solicitor needs to review it when it's complete. She also doesn't understand why the format of the bills has changed. It would prevent some of the questions if the residents had the details. Alice Rehrig commented she changed it because it saves her time by not needing to generate an additional report and paper. Carol Leithe commented she agrees that there should be details provided for the public. All voted aye. Motion carried.

V. OLD BUSINESS. There was no old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Pennsville Playground Equipment. The Recreation Board had been looking at getting new playground equipment for Indiantrail Park. The equipment they chose would include swings, a play area for children 2 to 5 years of age, and a play area for children 5 through 12 years of age. The total cost of the equipment is $143,130. The prices that were quoted are sales prices good through the beginning of December. The Jaindl Corporation owes the Township $92,000 for the land at the park and an additional $25,400 when they record their plan. They have agreed to advance the money that is due for the plan so that the final cost of the equipment would be $25,760 which would be paid by Recreation Fees. The equipment could be installed and ready for use for the spring rental.

Mike Jones questioned if the equipment will be going in the same place as the equipment that is currently at the park. Alice Rehrig commented it would be in that general area. The existing equipment would be removed by the Township. Mike Jones also questioned if they would be using the mulch or fiber. Alice Rehrig commented it would be playground mulch. The fiber is more costly and tends to cause issues with the mower when it gets kicked out into the grass.

Jerry Pritchard made a motion to move forward with the purchase of the equipment as proposed utilizing the fees from Jaindl Corporation and $25,760 coming from the Rec Land Fee Account. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. Linda Roman commented

there should be consideration given to activities for teenagers. There is nothing for teenagers to do. Shelly Dotta commented she likes the layout and is glad all ages are being included. Sherry Szoke requested the Board clarify what was received for the land at Indiantrail Park. Mike Jones commented the Township received $92,000 for the land and the partial loss of the baseball field. All voted aye. Motion carried.

B. Manager's Report. Alice Rehrig reported she checked into adding a light at the intersection of Route 145 and Washington Drive. PPL typically does not install area lights at an intersection; it would be a street light. The street light itself would cost approximately $15 per month, but the Township would be responsible for installation costs. PPL needs to get back to her with what that cost would be. The concern with the street light is once one is installed, how many additional requests will be received. When she and Frank Zamadics discussed this, he suggested adding white reflectors to the roadway. The Board agreed that the reflectors would be the better solution.

Alice Rehrig had also been at a meeting with the School District where they discussed the issues with the parking at the Elementary School. They are working on trying to resolve the issue, but the main issue is how early the parents are showing up to pick up their children because this is what is causing the cars to back up onto Blue Mountain Drive. Cindy Miller commented she spoke with Mr. Kovalchik and the parents are coming an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes early and some people are getting out of their vehicles to sign the children out. There have been four letters sent out so far, but it is not working. He asked that we give them another month to work this through. Mike Jones commented if they closed the gate at the road, the parents would either need to keep driving or potentially risk getting ticketed by the Police Department. Janet Sheats noted that the northbound traffic is at least getting off towards the shoulder, but the southbound traffic end up sitting in the road because they need to make a left hand turn. Jon Roth commented he doesn't believe there are any no parking signs along the road. Alice Rehrig commented in order for a PennDOT road to be posted, we need to get permission from PennDOT and then adopt an ordinance.

C. Solicitor's Report. Attorney Backenstoe commented there are a lot of zoning issues taking place. He has been working with the Zoning Officer on the more complicated matters. Jerry Pritchard questioned if these matters are all going to the Zoning Hearing Board. Attorney Backenstoe commented the Zoning Officer will send a general letter saying they are out of compliance and try to work with them to resolve the matter. If they don't cooperate, she sends an enforcement letter and if there is still not cooperation, zoning matters will go to the Zoning Hearing Board and code violations will go to the magistrate.

Katherine Mack commented there are some very serious zoning violations out there from squatters to all kinds of other things. There is a lot of time being spent on zoning by both Attorney Backenstoe and Attorney Ettinger because of how complicated things are.

Paul Nikisher questioned if the fees that are paid cover the legal expenses. Attorney Backenstoe commented there are no fees assessed for complaints when they are received. In some cases, he can file for a judgement to recover the fees, but the MPC prohibits the charging of solicitor fees for matters that go to the Zoning Hearing Board. Subdivision and planning related charges are charged directly to the applicant.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT. Katherine Mack again asked the Board to consider providing an exemption from the Earned Income Tax for the individuals who are earning less than $12,000. Cindy Miller questioned what the plan would be to make up the money that is lost. It would need to be made up somewhere and it always falls back onto the same people who are paying taxes. You would have to make it up somewhere. Alice Rehrig commented based on the finalized returns for the year 2024, there were 1,244 individuals who earned $12,000 or less. The loss could be as high as $74,600. Katherine Mack commented $74,000 is not a lot of money. There are people moving into the Township and they would be added to the rolls. Cindy Miller commented we have no way of knowing who or when someone is moving in. The County is currently operating in a deficit because they decreased the taxes and didn't do any type of increase and now residents are looking at a 43.5 percent increase. Katherine Mack commented she is looking out for the teenagers and the senior citizens. Cindy Miller commented this is not looking out for anyone. You are looking at decreasing. This all came about as a result of her land preservation and wanting to vote to increase taxes for it, yet on the other hand she is now saying she wants to decrease them. Katherine Mack commented she is not saying she is supporting land preservation; she is supporting the right to vote. She is looking out for those who are less fortunate. She would gladly pay more to help those less fortunate. Cindy Miller commented she is not against helping the less fortunate, but is also looking out for the ones who don't fall under the exemption and still have to pay their taxes and can't afford it. She is looking for the answer as to how the Township would make this up without raising their taxes. Jerry Pritchard commented we would have to go through line by line and cut. Cindy Miller questioned what Katherine Mack is proposing to cut. Katherine Mack commented she doesn't know the finances; the budget is not shared. Cindy Miller commented she should be aware, she files right to know requests for the information. Mike Jones commented the budget is also on line. Katherine Mack commented she is aware and does make copies of it. She just thought this is something the Board should discuss and place on the agenda for discussion. If it fails, it fails, then it is final. The Board is looking at the budget now. Maybe when she sees it, she can give an answer.

Shelly Dotta questioned how she could go about submitting a story to the newsletter. Mike Jones commented it would need to be given to Lori Lambert. Alice Rehrig commented the deadline for the spring newsletter will be around the beginning of January,

Tom Szoke commented he hopes the Township doesn't end up in a situation like the County where we need to have a large increase all at one time. He also questioned if all the culverts on Timberline were going to be replaced this year because he has a culvert on his property that he installed and wants to make sure it is tied into properly.

Carol Leithe commented she is glad the Board moved forward with adopting a Data Center ordinance before one is proposed in the Township, but also feels they should consider moving forward with the land preservation. If the voters approve it, it is not a tax levied by the Township; it is a tax the residents imposed on themselves. The fact that she is not able to vote on something as important as this, really hurts. The Board should take into consideration what other Townships have done and move this forward.

Mike Hock provided the Board with information regarding properties which are over 10 acres and have wetlands and steep slope. There are 293 parcels which are over 10 acres in size. These parcels total approximately 6,800 acres. There are 121 acres on these properties which have wetlands and streams with is about 1.7%. He also broke down parcels which have various degrees of steep slopes. Based on the analysis he ran, 97% of these parcels are eligible for development. There are not that many parcels that are naturally protected. It is a very limited amount. Jerry Pritchard commented with all these available acres, we don't really have developers beating down our doors. Mike Hock commented his opinion is that it is coming; development is moving north. By Lehigh Township's analysis, a growth rate of 15.6 percent is expected by 2040. If you follow those municipalities who have land preservation, it started in the south and grew to the north. Jerry Pritchard commented he hears from developers that our Planning Commission is very structured and don't let them get away with anything or slide anything through. They claim this and our Zoning makes it is very tough to build here. Cindy Miller commented the other part is that we don't have public water and sewer which encourages development.

Linda Roman questioned how the Township would meet their budget. The Township needs to live within their means like the residents. Putting things on-line is not the answer; not everyone is on-line. If you don't want data centers in the community, stop using phones and causing the need. She would also encourage everyone to go out and vote. Mike Jones commented the Township does everything they can to live within their means, but expenses continue to rise as well.

Paul Nikisher commented he has been trying to find out what the cost of sanctuary cities and counties cost taxpayers, but he has not been able to get the answer. He doesn't mind giving money charities, but he thinks when our tax money is used, people should be held accountable. He is glad to see the tree program was able to move forward. He also encourages everyone to go out and vote.

Zach Szoke commented he is working on scheduling more in-person presentations for land preservation. He agrees with Katherine Mack and there are some unfortunate people in the Township and agrees he'd like to help them as he can. As a professional engineer who has done work in various areas of the Lehigh Valley, our zoning, although good, is not extra special for limiting development. It's very par for the course with other municipalities in the area. Nothing near land preservation. Jerry Pritchard commented he thinks the government needs to get all the regulations off the people. He has a tough time with government having a strangle hold on the people. He doesn't like to see all the regulations on people because it just creates more expenses for people. People become burdened by petty things that are in the ordinance. Zach Szoke commented he would agree he would like less government. He also noted that the major goals that are listed in the 2023 Comp Plan are focused around limiting development in the Township, directing development to certain areas, preserving land, and protecting our natural resources. It is in their professional opinion, that as a Township, we are not accomplishing these goals. He and Mike Hock would like to make sure that everyone is on the same page with what we do. They feel it is time for everyone to sit down together in a non-public setting to talk through some of this stuff. He would like the Supervisors to consider this and have a discussion with them. He would like the disconnect between everyone to end. David Hess questioned if the Board can legally do this. Attorney Backenstoe commented the Board of Supervisors cannot have a prearranged gathering for the purposes of deliberating or taking official action. An exception to this is for informational purposes. If the Board is only meeting to gather information, they are able to meet. If the Board meets with Mr. Szoke and it is only to gather information, they could do it. Zach Szoke commented they are just looking to air their differences and clarify any misunderstandings. He would like to move in a positive direction, rather than having a tug of war. Jerry Pritchard commented he just wants to verify with our solicitor where the line is drawn between what is legal and what is not. Attorney Backenstoe commented if the purpose of the meeting is to gather information, the Board can do it. There cannot be any deliberation during that meeting.

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